Teacher Perceptions of the Challenges of Teaching English Language Learners in Bilingual Education Versus English Immersion

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Concordia University–Portland
College of Education
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Teacher Perceptions of the Challenges of Teaching English Language Learners in Bilingual Education Versus English Immersion

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College of Education

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the College of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education in
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Concordia University–Portland

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding about the perceptions of teachers regarding the challenges experienced instructing ELLs in the English immersion and bilingual classrooms. The conceptual framework was centered on Cummins (1979) Linguistic Interdependence Theory suggesting that a student’s native and second language are interdependent and necessary for optimal language acquisition. This study addressed the research question: “What do teachers perceive to be the greatest challenges for teaching ELLs in English immersion classes as compared to ELLs in bilingual classes?” The non-probability purposive sampling was used in this study. The qualitative data collection process included two sets of interviews from six bilingual and six English immersion educators and lesson plans. The inductive analysis of qualitative data was used to analyze the data. Findings revealed the perceptions of English immersion and bilingual educators on the challenges of instructing ELLs. English immersion teacher perceptions indicated that beginning and intermediate ELL’s lack of English vocabulary created instructional challenges. Additionally, the lack of training and resources in English immersion required more instructional time from the teacher making it difficult to differentiate for all students. Bilingual teachers’ perceptions suggested that bilingual is more beneficial than English immersion since it provides more support for ELLs and the opportunity to develop two languages. Both sets of interviewed teachers perceived that younger ELLs would benefit more from English immersion since they are developing their first language, but older beginning and intermediate ELLs would benefit more from bilingual since they struggle with communication and comprehension.

**Keywords:** bilingual education, English immersion, English language learners, second language acquisition, limited English proficient
Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my father who has always been an inspiration and example of lifelong learning and faithfulness to God. He encouraged me to begin this journey and continually provided emotional support throughout the program. He has always believed that I can achieve anything. I am so grateful to have his ongoing support, love, wisdom, and prayers. I also want to dedicate this dissertation to my mother, and my beautiful, precious children, daughter-in-law, and grandchildren. I am so proud of the accomplishments of my children and grandchildren and their compassionate hearts. I hope that I can inspire my four little granddaughters, as my father has inspired me, to believe that they can do anything that God puts in their path. Finally, I want to dedicate this dissertation to my husband, who supported me emotionally through the rigor of this process and with technical setbacks.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

There are an increasing number of students entering the United States public education system who are non-English speaking. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2016), over 3 million students in the United States are considered Limited English Proficient, (LEP). Of the various native languages represented in the LEP population, more than 77% are Spanish speaking (U.S. Department of Education, 2015-16). According to Hansen-Thomas, Grosso Richins, Kakkar, and Okeyo (2016), LEP students who enter the public school system in the United States have the challenge of learning without being proficient in the English language and may be placed in all English classrooms to experience an English immersion form of education. Other students may have the option to be placed in various types of bilingual programs.

As many LEP students are placed in English instruction classrooms, they are expected to learn the English language through immersion. In the English immersion classrooms, LEP students may be unable to fully understand the English instruction and curriculum content. As a result, many of these students may be at an educational disadvantage as compared with their English-speaking peers. There is limited opportunity for bilingual education within public school systems that offer limited English speaking students the option of learning in their native language with the progression of English acquisition (Clayton, 2013). Teachers in each of these educational programs have the challenge of teaching LEP students both academically and linguistically.
Background, Context, History, and Conceptual Framework for the Problem

The History of the Bilingual Program

Initiated by a Texas bill following the move toward civil rights in the early 1960s, the United States enacted the Bilingual Education Act also called the Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 1968. According to Stewner-Manzanares (1988), Title VII allowed for federal funding of Limited English Speaking Ability (LESA) students through the bilingual program. This program was for the purpose of providing a more equitable education for LEP students and addressing their limited English proficiency educational need. As a result of Title VII, LEP students were given an opportunity for instruction in their home language and allowed cultural expression and recognition. Consequently, amendments to the Bilingual Education Act were introduced in 1974 since it did not require student participation and had vague guidelines.

Influencing the amendment to the Bilingual Education Act was the 1974 Equal Educational Opportunity Act and the case of Lau V. Nichols (Stewner-Manzanares, 1988). The Lau V. Nichols case was significant in the history of bilingual education since it addressed the educational inequality for Chinese LESA students receiving instruction in a second language and led to the court’s decision that a differentiated educational approach was necessary to meet the needs of LESA students. The Educational Opportunity Act, Title II Amendment, required school districts to implement bilingual instructional programs without consideration of state or federal funding. This civil right statute ensures students the opportunity for educational equality by states regardless of race or national origin (Developing ELL Programs: Glossary, 2015). Bilingual programs were defined by the Equal Education Act as instruction in both the English language and the home language which encouraged student academic progression and proficiency and was not insufficiently only an English as a Second Language (ESL) program.
The Bilingual program expanded in 1978 to include LEP students which was intended for students who had difficulty with reading, speaking, writing or comprehending the English language (Stewner-Manzanares, 1988). As a result of the increased need for state and federal funding and the growing LEP student population, new amendments were enacted in 1984. These amendments included funding for more flexible bilingual programs such as transitional, developmental, and alternative instructional bilingual programs. The transitional bilingual program includes English and native language instruction with as much as 40% of students being non LEP. The alternative bilingual program includes instruction in English with the opportunity for assistive services designed to promote English proficiency. The developmental bilingual program, known also as two-way or dual language, includes instruction in English and another language to facilitate proficiency in both languages (Developing ELL Programs: Glossary, 2015). These amendments also encouraged more parental involvement and awareness of the opportunity for bilingual instruction with the parental power to decide which program would best benefit their child. The amendments of 1984 also prompted school districts to rely less on federal funds and develop independent local district capacity to support LEP programs (Stewner-Manzanares, 1988).

The 1988 Hawkins-Stafford Elementary and Secondary School Improvement Act provided school districts with more flexibility to choose the most appropriate bilingual educational program to meet the diverse needs of the local LEP population. In addition, 25% of Title VII funding is allocated for staff training and to ensure the availability of competent personnel (Stewner-Manzanares, 1988). One option that school districts or parents might choose for ELL students within the public school system is English Immersion. Since the 1988 Hawkins-Stafford Elementary and Secondary School Improvement Act, states vary widely in their implementation of bilingual education both in the number and types of offered programs (Dual Language Education Programs: Current State Policies ... 2015).
**English Immersion**

English immersion for bilingual students includes instruction which is solely in the English language in a mainstream classroom and with a focus on English acquisition (Developing ELL Programs: Glossary, 2015). Since bilingual education programs vary from state to state in implementation and type, students are often placed in English only classrooms with little or no knowledge of the English language (Dual Language Education Programs: Current State Policies, 2015). In addition to learning a new language, bilingual students may also be immersed in a new and different culture than what they have ever known or experienced. Teachers receiving bilingual students into English only classrooms may have difficulty communicating and teaching bilingual students. As a result, bilingual students in English only classrooms may not make the academic progress of their English speaking peers and lose valuable instructional opportunities creating ongoing academic learning gaps (Hansen-Thomas et al., 2016). In English immersion classrooms, a brief daily pull-out or push-in meeting may occur with bilingual students which are called the ESL program. The ESL program focuses on teaching bilingual students the English language and curriculum content. The ESL program is instructed in English with little or no use of the student’s native language (Developing ELL Programs: Glossary, 2015). The ESL program may provide little support for bilingual students who are in the English immersion classroom with other students who all have differentiated academic needs (Hansen-Thomas et al., 2016).

As the English language learner (ELL) population continues to increase in public schools across the United States, there is a need for consistency in the identification process, classification and reclassification process, teacher preparation, and program implementation. ELL students should be afforded an educational opportunity equal to that of their English speaking peers regardless of the state, region, or school district in which they live or attend. However, the process for ELL identification, assessment, classification, and program implementation varies widely from
state to state and between school districts within each state (Samson & Collins, 2012). These inconsistencies hinder the academic progress of ELL students and create an educational disadvantage for the LEP population.

**The ELL Process of Identification and Classification**

Federal law mandates through the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and the Title III Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) that all ELL students be identified, annually assessed in English proficiency, and provided an appropriately modified or accommodated instructional curriculum in order to meet their individual and unique academic and language needs (Samson & Collins, 2012). This process of identification, assessment, and program implementation varies between each state depending on state and local decisions (Samson & Collins, 2012). The highest population of ELL students resides in the states of California, Florida, Massachusetts, New York, and Texas. Many of the states, including Texas, initially assess enrolling students when the parent indicates on registration forms that the language spoken at home is not English. Many states, including Texas, also administer a Home Language Survey (HLS) to parents upon student enrollments. The HLS has English language questions which vary between states, with some states not using the HLS to identify the English language proficiency (ELPs). Some example questions on the HLS include information about what language the child first learned and what language is mostly spoken in the home by the parent and by the child (National Research Council, 2011).

Following the administration of the HLS and ELL identification, parents, however, can decline to allow their child to enroll in the various programs including ESL or bilingual programs offered within the school district. This option creates the necessity to fully communicate the process and purpose of the ELL programs to the parent to ensure that the parent makes an informed decision on the educational program placement for their child. Many times, ELL parents are also LEP and are unable to make informed decisions for a lack of communicative
understanding of the program options and the process. In some cases, ELL students are not identified correctly or do not receive parental consent for ELL programs as a result of the lack of communication and understanding between the school staff and parents making educational decisions for ELL students. In addition, the process of identifying ELL students, assessing ELLs initially and annually, and the process of exiting students from the ELL programs vary from state to state and may include standardized state tests or other types of tests (National Research Council, 2011).

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this research is centered on Cummins (1979) Linguistic Interdependence Theory which suggests that a student’s native language and second language are interdependent and necessary for successful and optimal language acquisition. Also contributing to the conceptual framework for this research is the earlier cultural historical or sociocultural theory of Lev Vygotsky. Sociocultural theory suggests that cognitive development transpires through the learner’s social interactions in a shared cultural knowledge. As it relates to the language learners second language acquisition, this theory further implies that the language learner must first develop through social interactions or interpsychological development in order to progress to personal or intrapsychological development (Vygotsky, 1986).

Cummins’ (1979) theory emphasized that in order for a language learner to achieve academic and linguistic success in a second language, the learner must first be proficient in the first language. When a language learner has proficiency in the first language then there can be a connection and transfer of knowledge to the second language. Since academic vocabulary is more difficult for the language learner to acquire and takes a longer period of time to attain than conversational language, the language learner may have a difficult time cognitively processing academic content and vocabulary. However, if the first language and the second language have
commonalities, the language learner will be able to more efficiently transfer academic vocabulary knowledge from the first language to the second language. In addition, a language learner would be more likely to have the ability to transfer higher level academic vocabulary knowledge from first language to the second language if the first language is sufficiently developed in the higher level vocabulary. Students who are allowed to develop academically using their first language are more easily able to transfer to the second language since their proficiency in both languages is essential for optimal comprehension and academic progression (Cummins, 1979).

Lev Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory suggests that cognitive development transpires through the learner’s social interactions in a shared cultural knowledge. As it relates to the language learners’ second language acquisition, this theory further implies that the language learner must first develop through social interactions or interpsychological development in order to progress to personal or intrapsychological development (Vygotsky, 1986).

Swain and Lapkin’s (2002) research illustrates the necessity for social interaction and collaborative dialogue limn the language learner’s second language acquisition. Their study shows positive language learner outcomes for Vygotsky’s (1986) theory of a more knowledgeable person such as an instructor or peer in second language acquisition. The study included a small group of seventh grade French immersion students who were allowed to have collaborative dialogue through the learning process of reading and writing. Their findings showed that the peer social interaction, collaboration, and dialogue, positively influenced the students’ reading and writing achievement (Swain & Lapkin, 2002).

In addition, the sociocultural theory emphasized the importance of semiotic mediation in the development of language through the use of symbols or signs. For the second language learner, the internal first language connection to the external second language through the process of semiotic mediation is essential for second language acquisition. In early language development,
the language learner psychologically processes word meanings through social interactions and cultural experiences (Vygotsky, 1986). For second language learners, the bilingual classroom setting could provide an opportunity for transitioning from one culture to another and the first language support necessary to connect to second language semiotic meaning.

Another important theme in Vygotsky’s (1986) sociocultural theory is the Zone of Proximal Development which suggests that the learner has a greater opportunity for cognitive development through the process of collaboration with capable peers or adult support. The zone of proximal development is the amount of distance of the learners’ potential development and actual development. According to this theory, as the learner nears the proximity of cognitive development, a capable peer or adult can help scaffold or provide support for the learner to achieve success in problem solving and learning achievement. In the context of second language learners in a bilingual educational setting, teachers and peers who are knowledgeable in the first and second language could provide the necessary support to help the language learner connect and achieve second language acquisition more efficiently (Lantolf & Aljaafreh, 1995).

Statement of the Problem

Teachers experience a variety of challenges when instructing diverse populations of students with various needs and developmental levels. As a result, there is a need for relevant and applicable training which provides teachers with the necessary strategies and techniques for equitably addressing various students’ needs. The problem which this research addressed is that there is a lack of understanding about the experiences and perceptions of teachers regarding the challenges of instructing ELL students in the bilingual classroom as compared with the challenges they face in the English immersion classroom. According to Hansen-Thomas et al. (2016), many ELLs have been placed in all English speaking classrooms where instruction is delivered only in the English language. ELLs are expected to learn the language quickly through
the English immersion program. Moreover, teachers who are unable to communicate with non-English speaking students have the challenge of differentiating instruction to meet the academic needs of ELLs. Many times, teachers are instructing classes of students who all vary in academic needs which may add to the challenge of dedicating the amount of time and resources needed to instruct ELL students. Teachers instructing large class sizes with little or no ESL support may find themselves unable to have the necessary time and support to promote both English and academic progression for ELL students (Hansen-Thomas et al., 2016).

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding about the experiences and perceptions of teachers regarding the greatest challenges which they experience instructing ELL students in the English immersion classrooms as compared to the bilingual classrooms. A qualitative case study was an appropriate method for this study as opposed to other methods since the objects of this research involved the life experiences and perspectives of people in natural settings (Hatch, 2002).

**Research Question**

This study addressed the research question, “What do teachers perceive to be the greatest challenges for teaching ELLs in English immersion classes as compared to ELLs in bilingual classes?”

**Rationale, Relevance, and Significance of the Study**

The rationale for this study was to contribute research findings to the existing literature in an effort to provide support to educational leaders, teachers, and parents when making decisions on ELL programs and educational placements for ELLs. In addition, educational leaders may be provided with more information on the best training and support needed for teachers who are teaching ELLs in their classrooms. The results and conclusions of this study may help to provide
support for the best educational setting for ELLs to achieve optimal linguistic and academic achievement which is equal to their English speaking peers. In addition, this study addressed and contributed to the deficiencies existing in the literature and provides more support for current and prior research.

After reviewing the existing literature, a deficiency which emerged was the lack of research on teacher perceptions of the academic and linguistic progression of ELLs in the different bilingual and English immersion programs. This study provided teacher perspectives from both programs on the challenges of instructing ELLs, and teacher lesson plans provided further support for teacher challenges in instructing ELL students in each classroom setting.

Definition of Terms

The definitions of terms used in this research are as follows:

**Bilingual Education**

Bilingual programs were defined by the Equal Education Act as instruction in both the English language and the home language which encouraged student academic progression and proficiency and was not insufficiently only an ESL program (Stewner-Manzanares, 1988).

**Structured English Immersion**

The structured English immersion program for ELL students includes instruction which is solely in the English language in a mainstream classroom and with a focus on English acquisition. Teachers instructing in a structured English immersion classroom have an ESL certification or training in instructing ELL students (Developing ELL Programs: Glossary, 2015).

**Sheltered English Immersion**

The sheltered English immersion program for ELL students focuses on academic progression for ELLs using visual aids and an emphasis on academic vocabulary instruction (Developing ELL Programs: Glossary, 2015).
Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS)  

The TELPAS assessment is an instrument which the Texas Education Agency (TEA) designed for assessing all LEP students in four different levels of language proficiency including: beginning, intermediate, advanced, and advanced high. The language levels of proficiency are assessed in four domains which consists of; listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Cadena, 2018). The beginning level for ELLs is defined as having minimal to no English proficiency. The intermediate level ELL has limited English proficiency which includes simple language. The advanced ELL has the ability to comprehend grade level academic content with home language support. The advanced high ELL requires minimal home language support to comprehend grade level academic content (Cadena, 2018). The results of the TELPAS assessment help teachers and administrators determine the level of linguistic accommodations needed to instruct ELLs.

English Language Learners (ELLs)  

An English language learner is a student who has a home or native language other than English and has limited English proficiency (Developing ELL Programs: Glossary, 2015).

Limited English Proficient (LEP)  

A limited English proficient student has minimal knowledge of the English language (Developing ELL Programs: Glossary, 2015).

English as a Second Language (ESL)  

A curriculum program for instructing English language learner students (Developing ELL Programs: Glossary, 2015).

English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS)  

Curriculum standards for instructing English language learners in academic English (McCeig, 2019).
Assumptions, Delimitation, and Limitations

Assumptions

Assumptions are an integral part of research since it involves the individually held beliefs of the researcher which aide in the process of the study (Simon & Goes, 2013). An assumption in this study was that the interviewees would relate accurate educational accounts and reflections with integrity. This assumption was a result of careful intentional efforts to maintain complete confidentiality for the interviewees and conceal personal identity. In addition, an assumption in this study was the ability as a researcher to accurately transcribe and code interview data and successfully identify patterns, relationships, and themes which would provide findings addressing the research question. Finally, an assumption in this study was the belief that the data analysis method chosen would reflect accurate results of teacher perceptions of student linguistic and academic performance in both the bilingual and English immersion classroom settings and provide support for valid findings and conclusions in this research.

Delimitations

Delimitations are a result of the researcher’s specific choices concerning the research process (Simon & Goes, 2013). The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding about the experiences and perceptions of teachers regarding the greatest challenges which they experience instructing ELL students in the English immersion classrooms as compared to the bilingual classrooms. This study was not intended to address the challenges of teachers who are teaching ELLs in other state districts which may have different methods and programs for instructing ELLs. This decision was necessary in order to narrow the research to a feasible scope of time and focus. In addition, although this study could have included a wider range of teacher interviews, the decision to choose 12 teachers to participate in two interviews each and to contribute teacher lesson plans provided a representation with a more focused and efficient process for gaining
teachers’ general perspectives within the educational settings. The teacher interviews consisted of three bilingual educators with ESL college course training and ESL certifications and three English immersion educators with ESL college course training and ESL certifications. In addition, three bilingual educators with no ESL college course training and only ESL certifications and three English immersion educators with no ESL college course training and only ESL certifications were interviewed. Furthermore, these teachers were from similar grade levels and subject areas.

Another delimitation in this study was that the number of potential interview participants could be limited by the selection through the educators’ group social media site. This study was representative of the group of teachers on the educators’ social media group page and not a specific school district. To increase the possibility for a wider selection, it was requested of the viewers to also ask other staff members on their teams and campuses. Additionally, a delimitation of this study is the purposive sampling selection process of interview candidates. This process may have contributed to researcher bias but was necessary for ensuring relevant research criteria.

**Limitations**

Limitations are uncontrollable constraints which may possibly affect the outcome and conclusions of the study (Simon, 2011). In qualitative case study research, limitations might include researcher bias, validity, and reliability of the study (Hamel, 1993). In addition, qualitative case studies can be time consuming and involve detailed processes and complex analysis which add to the limitations in the study (Hatch, 2002). Furthermore, a limitation may be the lack of generalizability of a case study as a result of the small sample size (Simon, 2011).

In order to reduce the amount of researcher bias, interview questions were uniform and member checked to ensure accuracy and validity. Moreover, subsequent studies involving different state and district demographics may add to the findings of this study.
Summary

This chapter provides an introduction to the research study addressing the phenomenon of teachers’ perceptions of the greatest challenges for teaching ELLs in English immersion classes as compared to bilingual classes. This chapter further explains the background, context, history and conceptual framework for the research problem. In addition, this chapter discusses the problem and purpose of the study and provides the relevance, rationale, and significance of the study. Key terms for the research are identified and definitions are provided for further clarification. Finally, this chapter explains the assumptions, delimitations, and limitations of the study.

Chapter 2 provides an overview of the current research existing within scholarly literature which relates to this research topic and was foundational information and support for this research study’s findings. In addition, Chapter 2 contains the conceptual framework for this research and a review of research literature and methodological literature. Chapter 2 also includes a review of methodological issues and a synthesis and critique of research findings.

Chapter 3 provides an introduction for the research methodology which is the framework for the research study. Chapter 3 further explores and addresses the research design through discussion of the research question, the purpose and design of the study, the research population and sampling method, instrumentation, data collection, identification of attributes, and data analysis procedures. In addition, Chapter 3 includes the limitations and delimitations, validations, expected findings, and ethical issues of the research approach.

Finally, Chapter 4 includes a description of the sample, a discussion on the research methodology and an analysis and summary of the findings. In addition, Chapter 4 includes a presentation of the data and results. Chapter 5 includes the summary and discussion of the results and an explanation of the limitations. Furthermore, Chapter 5 includes implications of the results and recommendations for continued research.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

The National Center for Education Statistics reported that more than three million students in the United States are considered LEP. Teachers have the challenge of teaching these LEP students and the students have the challenge of learning without being proficient in the English language. LEP students may be placed in all English classrooms to experience an English immersion form of education. Other students may have the option to be placed in various types of bilingual programs (U.S. Department of Education, 2015-16).

The review of literature involved a search of peer-reviewed educational data based sources within the last five years using the search phrases of; English language learner (ELL), bilingual education, English immersion, language immersion, teacher perceptions of English immersion, dual language, second language, two-way immersion, limited English proficient, reclassification, bilingualism, English as a second language (ESL) and transitional bilingual education.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this research was centered on Cummins (1979) Linguistic Interdependence Theory which suggests that a student’s native language and second language are interdependent and necessary for successful and optimal language acquisition. This theory further emphasizes that in order for a language learner to achieve academic and linguistic success in a second language, the learner must first be proficient in the first language. When a language learner has proficiency in the first language then there can be a connection and transfer of knowledge to the second language. Since academic vocabulary is more difficult for the language learner to acquire and takes a longer period of time to attain than conversational language, the language learner may have a difficult time cognitively processing academic content and vocabulary.

However, if the first language and the second language have commonalities, the language learner will be able to more efficiently transfer academic vocabulary knowledge from the first
language to the second language. In addition, a language learner would be more likely to have the ability to transfer higher level academic vocabulary knowledge from first language to the second language if the first language is sufficiently developed in the higher level vocabulary. Students who are allowed to develop academically using their first language are more easily able to transfer to the second language since their proficiency in both languages is essential for optimal comprehension and academic progression (Cummins, 1979).

Furthermore, Cummins (1979) explained that students who are transitioning from a first language to a second language will have two possible thresholds of linguistic competency. If the language learner has not reached the first threshold level, the learner is considered to have limited linguistic competence since the learner is not competent in either the first or second language. The language learner’s limited linguistic competence in both the first and second language results in difficulty achieving development in either language. According to the threshold theory, once the language learner reaches the first threshold of linguistic development, the learner has achieved developmentally appropriate linguistic competence in the first language but remains limited in the second language. This threshold further consists of language learners who have not yet transferred linguistic knowledge from the first language to the second language but have a greater potential for second language acquisition. Finally, language learners who have reached the second threshold of linguistic competence have achieved age appropriate development in both the first and second language (Baker, 2017).

Cummins (1984) emphasized that language learners have different language proficiencies including basic interpersonal communication skills and cognitive academic language proficiency. The basic interpersonal communication skills consist of casual communication which is easily and quickly acquired over about a two year time frame. However, the cognitive academic language
proficiency may take between five to seven years to develop resulting in an academic long-term
disadvantage for the language learner.

Thomas and Collier, (2002) built on Cummins’ (1979) linguistic interdependence theory by
suggesting that dual language bilingual programs improve student academic outcomes. According
to the linguistic interdependence theory, as bilingual students are allowed to be instructed in their
native language, they are able to comprehend and then transfer their understanding to the
development of a second language. Students who are given the opportunity to fully develop both
languages and use their native language to receive academic instruction are less likely to have
learning gaps and are able to transfer and develop academically and linguistically (Cummins,
1979; Thomas & Collier, 2002). Students in a bilingual educational setting would have the
advantage of continuing to develop first language proficiency while also simultaneously
transferring first language knowledge to second language development.

Many English Language Learners (ELLs) may not have adequate support to successfully
achieve academic performance which equal to their English speaking peers. This is a result of
many ELLs being placed in all English speaking classrooms where instruction is delivered only in
the English language. According to, Hansen-Thomas et al. (2016), many ELLs may not understand
the instruction and are expected to learn the language quickly through immersion. Moreover,
teachers who are unable to communicate with non-English speaking students may have difficulty
engaging and differentiating instruction to meet the academic needs of ELLs. Teachers often are
instructing classes of 20 or more students who all vary in academic needs and may be unable to
dedicate the amount of time and resources needed to instruct ELL students. Teachers instructing
large class sizes with little or no ESL support may also find themselves unable to have the one on
one time with ELLs necessary to promote both English and academic progression.
Cummins (1979) Linguistic Interdependence Theory suggests that a student’s native language and second language are interdependent and necessary for successful and optimal language acquisition. Also contributing to the conceptual framework for this research is the earlier cultural historical or sociocultural theory of Lev Vygotsky’s (1896-1934). Sociocultural theory suggests that cognitive development transpires through the learner’s social interactions in a shared cultural knowledge. As it relates to the language learners second language acquisition, this theory further implies that the language learner must first develop through social interactions or interpsychological development in order to progress to personal or intrapsychological development (Vygotsky, 1986).

Swain and Lapkin’s (2002) research illustrates the necessity for social interaction and collaborative dialogue in the language learner’s second language acquisition. Their study shows positive language learner outcomes for Vygotsky’s (1986) theory of a more knowledgeable person such as an instructor or peer in second language acquisition. The study included a small group of seventh grade French immersion students who were allowed to have collaborative dialogue through the learning process of reading and writing. Their findings showed that the peer social interaction, collaboration, and dialogue, positively influenced the students’ reading and writing achievement (Swain & Lapkin, 2002).

In addition, the sociocultural theory emphasizes the importance of semiotic mediation in the development of language through the use of symbols or signs. For the second language learner, the internal first language connection to the external second language through the process of semiotic mediation is essential for second language acquisition. In early language development, the language learner psychologically processes word meanings through social interactions and cultural experiences (Vygotsky, 1986). For second language learners, the bilingual classroom
setting could provide an opportunity for transitioning from one culture to another and the first language support necessary to connect to second language semiotic meaning.

Another important theme in Vygotsky’s (1986) sociocultural theory is the Zone of Proximal Development which suggests that the learner has a greater opportunity for cognitive development through the process of collaboration with capable peers or adult support. The Zone of Proximal Development is the amount of distance of the learners’ potential development and actual development. According to this theory, as the learner nears the proximity of cognitive development, a capable peer or adult can help scaffold or provide support for the learner to achieve success in problem solving and learning achievement. In the context of second language learners in a bilingual educational setting, teachers and peers who are knowledgeable in the first and second language could provide the necessary support to help the language learner connect and achieve second language acquisition more efficiently (Lantolf & Aljaafreh, 1995).

**Review of Research Literature and Methodological Literature**

LEP students who enter the public school system in the United States have the challenge of learning without being proficient in the English language and may be placed in all English classrooms to experience an English immersion form of education to accelerate the learning of the English language with minimal support from ELL programs such as English as a Second Language (ESL; Hansen-Thomas et al., 2016). Other students may have the option to be placed in various types of bilingual programs which provide the opportunity to learn the English language while still having the advantage of maintaining academic achievement through their first language.

**English Immersion Programs**

English immersion for bilingual students includes instruction which is solely in the English language in a mainstream classroom and with a focus on English acquisition (Developing ELL Programs: Glossary, 2015). In English immersion classrooms, a brief daily pull-out or push-in
meeting may occur with bilingual students which are called the ESL program. The ESL program focuses on teaching bilingual students the English language and curriculum content. The ESL program is instructed in English with little or no use of the student’s native language (Developing ELL Programs: Glossary, 2015). The ESL program may provide little support for bilingual students who are in the English immersion classroom with other students who all have differentiated academic needs (Hansen-Thomas et al., 2016).

**History of the Bilingual Program**

Initiated by a Texas bill following the move toward civil rights in the early 1960s, the United States enacted the Bilingual Education Act also called the Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 1968. According to Stewner-Manzanares (1988), Title VII allowed for federal funding of Limited English Speaking Ability (LESA) students through the bilingual program. This program was for the purpose of providing a more equitable education for LEP students and addressing their limited English proficiency educational need. As a result of Title VII, LEP students were given an opportunity for instruction in their home language and allowed cultural expression and recognition. Consequently, Amendments to the Bilingual Education Act were introduced in 1974 since it did not require student participation and had vague guidelines.

Influencing the amendment to the Bilingual Education Act was the 1974 Equal Educational Opportunity Act and the case of Lau V. Nichols (Stewner-Manzanares, 1988). The Lau V. Nichols case was significant in the history of bilingual education since it addressed the educational inequality for Chinese LESA students receiving instruction in a second language and led to the court’s decision that a differentiated educational approach was necessary to meet the needs of LESA students. The Educational Opportunity Act, Title II Amendment, required school districts to implement bilingual instructional programs without consideration of state or federal funding. This civil right statute ensures students the opportunity for educational equality by states regardless of
race or national origin (Developing ELL Programs: Glossary, 2015). Bilingual programs were defined by the Equal Education Act as instruction in both the English language and the home language which encouraged student academic progression and proficiency and was not insufficiently only an ESL program.

The Bilingual program expanded in 1978 to include LEP students, which was intended for students who had difficulty with reading, speaking, writing or comprehending the English language (Stewner-Manzanares, 1988). As a result of the increased need for state and federal funding and the growing LEP student population, new amendments were enacted in 1984. These amendments included funding for more flexible bilingual programs such as transitional, developmental, and alternative instructional bilingual programs. The transitional bilingual program includes English and native language instruction with as much as 40% of students being non LEP. The alternative bilingual program includes instruction in English with the opportunity for assistive services designed to promote English proficiency. The developmental bilingual program, known also as two-way or dual language, includes instruction in English and another language to facilitate proficiency in both languages (Developing ELL Programs: Glossary, 2015). These amendments also encouraged more parental involvement and awareness of the opportunity for bilingual instruction with the parental power to decide which program would best benefit their child. The amendments of 1984 also prompted school districts to rely less on federal funds and develop independent local district capacity to support LEP programs (Stewner-Manzanares, 1988).

The 1988 Hawkins-Stafford Elementary and Secondary School Improvement Act provided school districts with more flexibility to choose the most appropriate bilingual educational program to meet the diverse needs of the local LEP population. In addition, 25% of Title VII funding is allocated for staff training and to ensure the availability of competent personnel (Stewner-Manzanares, 1988). One option that school districts or parents might choose for ELL students
within the public school system is English Immersion. Since the 1988 Hawkins-Stafford Elementary and Secondary School Improvement Act, states vary widely in their implementation of bilingual education both in the number and types of offered programs (Dual Language Education Programs: Current State Policies ... 2015).

The history of bilingual education in the United States reflects a perception for the necessity for a more equitable educational program for bilingual students and provided background knowledge for this study. In addition, some research has led to the conclusion that bilingual instruction has greater academic, second language acquisition, biliteracy development, and cultural preservation outcomes for bilingual students than that of English immersion instruction (Hansen-Thomas et al., 2016; Maria, Alec & SREE, 2014; Marian, Shook & Schroeder, 2013; Montanari, 2014; Steele, Slater, Zamarro & Miller, 2015; Tran, Behseta, Ellis, Martinez-Cruz & Contreras, 2015; Valentino & Reardon, 2015; Vela, 2015).

Studies Comparing Bilingual Education with English Immersion

Studies have been conducted to compare the academic results of students in the bilingual program as compared with bilingual students who are instructed in an English immersion program and some results indicated that bilingual students instructed in bilingual classrooms had better academic achievement than those in English immersion classrooms (Iliana Alanís & Mariela Rodríguez, 2008; Keshavarz, & Ghamoushi, 2014; Maria, Alec & SREE, 2014; Steele et al., 2015; Tran et al., 2015; Valentino & Reardon, 2015; Vela, 2015). A study by Valentino and Reardon (2015) compared the academic achievements of bilingual students in four different instructional programs including; English immersion, transitional bilingual, two-way bilingual, and developmental bilingual. The findings of the research study, which included 1,500 Latino English language learners (ELL) students in second through seventh grade, indicated that the two-way bilingual program facilitated higher academic outcomes than the English immersion program.
Another study conducted by Marian et al. (2013) of third, fourth, and fifth grade Spanish speaking students, who were placed in bilingual two-way and transitional bilingual programs, academically outperformed their peers in the monolingual classroom in the subjects of math and reading as assessed on the Mann-Whitney U test and the State Standards Achievement Test both given to students in English. Similarly, a study by Maria, Alec and SREE (2014) of fourth through sixth grade ELL students showed a decline in math scores after students were switched from bilingual education to mainstream monolingual instruction.

Likewise, a study of about 2,000 ELL students in third grade also reflected a significantly higher academic outcome in math in the dual language bilingual program as compared to the English immersion program on standardized test results (Vela, 2015). Furthermore, a case study involving 60 students in an Italian and English dual language bilingual program suggested that the students were able to perform higher than grade level in English reading on standardized tests. The students were also able to transfer first language skills to second language development in reading skills (Montanari, 2014). Another study by Steele, Slater, Zamarro and Miller (2015) involving seven cohorts of Kindergarten students over a five year period indicated that the students in the dual language bilingual program performed better on all academic outcomes than students who were in the English immersion program. In addition, a study comparing the academic outcomes of third, fourth and fifth grade students in the dual language bilingual program and English immersion program showed that the bilingual dual language program students scored significantly higher in mathematics and science than English immersion students. The findings also suggest that the bilingual students made academic progression while also attaining biliteracy (Tran et al., 2015). Another longitudinal study which investigated the linguistic outcome of two cohorts of Spanish speaking students in Arizona who were placed in structured English immersion classrooms from kindergarten through third-grade resulted in more than half of the students
underperforming on grade level at the end of the study on state assessments in the areas of vocabulary, reading fluency, phonemic awareness, and reading language achievement. (Jiménez-Castellanos, Blanchard, Atwill & Jiménez-Silva, 2014).

However, a longitudinal study on language immersion was conducted on early childhood German students from the ages of two through six years over a time period of two and a half years. The study compared similar students in a partial English immersion and conventional educational setting. The students were assessed at four incremental times using pretests and posttests. The students in this study showed a greater performance of second language acquisition in the English immersion group as compared with the conventional group. The study indicated that early second language development is successfully achieved through immersion (Klatte, Steinbrink & Bergstr, 2016).

Although some research indicates an academic and linguistic advantage for ELLs in bilingual education, there are also studies which have demonstrated an advantage for ELLs instructed in English immersion (Alotaibi, 2015; Dong, Hu, Wu, Zheng & Peng 2018; Gleason, 2014; Klatte, Steinbrink & Bergstr, 2016; Meyer, 2018; Wood, 2014). The academic and linguistic results of prior research on the different bilingual and English immersion programs provided relevant information to support the findings of this study on teacher perceptions of each program and ELL achievement. There are different types and advantages of bilingual programs which school districts may choose to meet the various needs of LEP students and there are also different types of English immersion educational settings.

Types and Advantages of Bilingual and English Immersion Education

Of the various native languages represented in the more than three million LEP populations, more than 77% are Spanish speaking (U.S. Department of Education, 2015-16). LEP students who enter the public school system in the United States have the challenge of learning
without being proficient in the English language and may be placed in all English classrooms to experience an English immersion form of education to accelerate the learning of the English language. Other students have the option to be placed in various types of bilingual programs which provide the opportunity to learn the English language while still having the advantage of learning with their first language.

**Types of bilingual education.** There are different types of bilingual education within the various public school systems throughout the United States. One type of bilingual education is transitional bilingual which allows students to begin academic instruction in their native language and gradually transition to English. Another type of bilingual education is dual language immersion or two way bilingual education. This type is implemented for the purpose of teaching English and non-English students to read and write in a second language. Additionally, another bilingual education method is developmental or late exit bilingual which allows students to learn in their first language while simultaneously learning a second language (U.S. Department of Education, 2015-16). The types of bilingual programs add to the understanding of this study and provided relevant background knowledge for the comparison with the types of English immersion programs.

**Types of English immersion.** There are different implementations of the English immersion program which vary slightly. The structured English immersion program for ELL students includes instruction which is solely in the English language in a mainstream classroom and with a focus on English acquisition. Teachers instructing in a structured English immersion classroom have an ESL certification or training in instructing ELL students (Developing ELL Programs: Glossary, 2015). Another type of English immersion is sheltered English immersion. The sheltered English immersion program for ELL students focuses on academic progression for ELLs using visual aids and an emphasis on academic vocabulary instruction (Developing ELL
Bilingual education advantage in math and science. In addition to improved academic achievement in reading and vocabulary skills, studies also indicate that dual language immersion bilingual programs also increase bilingual students’ academic achievement in math and science (Tran, Behseta, Ellis, Martinez-Cruz & Contreras, 2015). Quantitative research using comparative statistical analysis conducted on students who were in a Spanish-English dual language immersion program showed substantially higher scores on standardized tests in math and science than bilingual students in English immersion programs (Tran et al., 2015). In addition, a quantitative study of an elementary school implementing a dual language program over a 10 year period showed improved and higher academic standardized test scores in reading, mathematics, and science over other students in schools within the school district (Iliana Alanís & Rodríguez, 2017). The academic results of the bilingual program may provide support for the findings of this study on teacher perceptions of each program and ELL achievement.

English immersion advantage in reading and vocabulary. Some studies indicate that ELL students instructed in English immersion have better academic outcomes than ELL students instructed in bilingual educational settings. A study conducted by Meyer (2018) reported an academic reading advantage for ELLs instructed in sheltered English immersion over dual language bilingual instruction. This study involved 206 students in three third-grade populations over a three year period. The ELL students who were instructed in sheltered English immersion over the three year period scored significantly higher on the Florida reading assessment in third grade. In addition, a comparative study was conducted on 170 middle school Chinese speaking students over a 10 month time period who were grouped in bilingual and English only classrooms. The students' scores were measured using standardized vocabulary assessments and analyzed using
The results of the study indicated that students in the English only classroom performed higher on vocabulary and reading comprehension (Dong et al., 2018).

**Bilingual Education Advantage Compared to Monolingual Education**

Studies have been conducted on the advantages of bilingual education programs over monolingual programs resulting in higher academic performance for students in bilingual programs (Anil, 2014; Burkhauser, Steele, Li, Slater & Bacon, 2016; Cortina & Makar & M.-C., 2015; Durán, Roseth, Hoffman & Robertshaw, 2013; Hussien, 2014; Johnson, 2016; Khan, 2015; Mehrseresht, 2015; Murphy, 2014; Nicolay & Poncelet, 2013; Relji, Ferring & Martin, 2015; Steele, Slater, Li, Zamarro & Miller, 2013; Vela, 2015). Some research has shown an academic advantage in reading, writing, and vocabulary skills using the bilingual program to instruct ELLs.

One quantitative study conducted by Burkhauser et al., 2016 using a population size of 1,284 students in 14 schools showed findings of improved academic achievement in reading and writing for students receiving dual language immersion in Spanish and Chinese. Dual language bilingual programs allow students to receive academic instruction in both the student’s native language and the targeted second language. The student is given opportunity to develop both languages which is consistent with Cummins’ (1979) theory of the transfer of literacy skills from the first language to the second language aiding in the improved academic achievement and second language acquisition.

A study conducted on sixty students enrolled in a dual language immersion program in California with a first language of Italian and a targeted language of English showed significant reading skill improvement in English at an efficient rate of growth (Montanari, 2014). In further support of the linguistic interdependence theory of the transfer of first language skills to the second language acquisition is the quantitative study conducted with 31 Russian-Hebrew bilingual preschool students. This research finding indicated that the bilingual students showed significant
improvement in vocabulary development of the targeted language through the development and transfer of first language skills (Schwartz, 2014). Many studies suggest that bilingual programs consistently and effectively support the academic achievement and language development of bilingual students over monolingual programs. The academic results of prior research on the different bilingual and monolingual programs provided relevant information to support the findings of this study on teacher perceptions of each program and ELL achievement.

Another study using a quasi-experimental research design and a population sample of 2,000 ELLs in third grade resulted in findings of significantly improved academic achievement in bilingual programs over ELLs in the English immersion program (Vela A., 2015). In addition, a comparison study of seven cohorts of bilingual students from kindergarten through fourth grade in a dual language immersion program and in an English immersion program resulted in finding that in the dual immersion program; students significantly outperformed English immersion students on all academic reading outcomes (Steele et al., 2015). Consistent with the theory that dual language programs support and enhance the academic outcomes of bilingual students is the quantitative comparative analysis findings of sixty public school students. The research indicated that bilingual students who were given academic instructions bilingually performed better and had increased academic outcomes (Khan, 2015).

Likewise, consistent with Cummins’ (1979) theory of the benefits of developing first language in the transfer of skills to the second language is the quantitative study of 45 third graders in comprehension. The study’s findings suggest that students who were instructed in their native language in science had improved academic outcomes over bilingual students who were limited to second language instruction (Vela J., 2015). Research also suggests that bilingual students have a higher level of comprehension when instructed bilingually as opposed to a monolingual approach as in the study involving surveys and interviews with 50 respondents. The study findings showed
that bilingually instructed students understood academic instruction more easily and with a greater comprehension level (Anil, 2014). These academic and linguistic results on the dual language program provided relevant information to support teacher perceptions for the findings in this study.

**English Immersion Advantage as Compared to Bilingual Instruction**

Although some studies indicate findings of increased student academic performance for ELLs in bilingual programs, there are also studies which show findings supporting English immersion over bilingual education. One study comparing the academic reading achievement of third grade ELLs in a dual language bilingual program with third grade ELLs in a sheltered English immersion program in Florida revealed findings of higher student performance in the sheltered English immersion program (Meyer, 2018).

Another study comparing the English language proficiency progression of ELLs in transitional bilingual programs and structured English immersion programs in California over a six year period indicated a slight English language proficiency advantage for students who were in the structured English immersion program (Wood, 2014). In addition, a study of ELL students in California in bilingual education classes and English immersion classes had equal results of English proficiency by fifth grade indicating that either program produced the same linguistic results (Gleason, 2014). Prior research on the academic achievement of ELLs in the English immersion program as compared to the bilingual program provided relevant information to support the findings of this study on teacher perceptions of each program and ELL achievement.

**The Advantage of Dual Language Immersion to Transitional**

In addition to studies on the advantages of the dual language immersion program, there is also research that compares the benefits with those of the transitional bilingual program. In a quantitative study observing and comparing two dual language classes and two transitional classes of Spanish speaking first graders, results indicated an advantage in the dual language program over
the transitional program with the opportunity for native language instruction and peer tutoring in second language acquisition and academic content (Murphy, 2014).

**The Benefits of First Language in Second Language Acquisition**

The growing number of LEP students in the United States creates an increasing demand for an educational model which meets the differential needs of LEP students. These students have a varying degree of proficiency in their first language and may benefit from further development of their native language in order to fully develop their second language and transfer knowledge and learning (Cummins, 1979; Thomas & Collier, 2002).

Cummins’ (1979) linguistic interdependence theory emphasizes the importance of allowing students to learn in their native language while developing a second language which are interdependent and necessary for second language acquisition. Students, who are allowed to develop academically using their first language, are more easily able to transfer to the second language since their proficiency in both languages is essential for optimal comprehension and academic progression (Thomas and Collier, 2002). Many studies have been conducted and have shown the benefits and improved outcomes of using the first language in second language acquisition (Feinauer, Hall-Kenyon & Davison, 2013; Granada, 2014; Khan, 2016; Montanari, 2014; Padilla, Fan, Xu & Silva, 2013; Poza, 2016; Rahmatian & Farshadjou, 2013; Santipolo, 2017; Schwartz & Shaul, 2013; Schwartz, 2014).

A study by Krashen (2003) indicated that children who are acquiring a second language will typically have a period of silence when they are initially exposed to a new language. This silent period can last for several months as the child is attempting to absorb the new language and make connections. During this initial stage of language development, the child may only attempt the second language using memorized sentences which are not fully understood by the child. The implications of an early childhood learner needing several months of exposure to the new language
presents the inevitable risk of a large academic learning gap to develop and progress as second language acquisition inhibits the cognitive development of the bilingual student. The bilingual child is at an academic disadvantage to the monolingual students in the classroom which creates an inequitable learning environment. The language developmental stages further progress from the silent period to a stage of basic vocabulary and simple sentences. It is during these early stages of second language development that proves to be most effective using a bilingual education model to provide LEP students with the opportunity to make connections and transfers between the first language and the second language (Krashen, 2003).

The Benefits of Using the First Language in Cognitive Development

There is much research which supports Cummins (1979) theory of the linguistic interdependence of the first language development in second language acquisition. A study by Granada (2014) indicated that students who are instructed in both the native language and the targeted language are more engaged in the instructional process and have a higher level of participation in the lesson with less interruption. LEP students benefit from the opportunity to hear academic content vocabulary in both the native language and the second language whereby knowledge of one language can be transferred to the second language allowing for greater understanding and linguistic connection.

In addition, LEP students who are reading in a second language may not have enough proficiency in the language to fully comprehend reading material (Bayat, 2017). Likewise, LEP students need to develop their writing skills in their first language in order to transfer to the second language in writing. These students may have an academic learning gap that increasingly progresses as they are missing the opportunity to understand the spoken and written second language and content vocabulary. The study further indicates that bilingual students are more successful in reading comprehension using their first language rather than the second language.
addition, there is a significant difference between monolingual and bilingual students’ academic reading performance (Bayat, 2017). The linguistic acquisition of ELLs in prior research may provide support for the findings of this study on teacher perceptions of each program related to linguistic achievement for ELL students.

**Parental and Student Favoring of Bilingual Education**

In addition to the cognitive and linguistic benefits of the bilingual education program, a study by Lopez (2013) where parents were interviewed about their preference of bilingual classrooms reported that they favored it over monolingual classrooms or English immersion classrooms. Parents indicated that the bilingual educational environment supported their cultural heritage and religious values. Furthermore, parents who were interviewed expressed their belief that the bilingual program would better support cognitive development and communication skills in their bilingual children. The parents of bilingual students in the study felt that their native language connected with their cultural identity and valued the opportunity to preserve and further develop their children’s first language while simultaneously developing a second language.

Similarly, studies involving bilingual students who were surveyed, interviewed, and given questionnaires also indicated that they favored the bilingual program over second language immersion (Ozfidan, 2017; Galali, & Cinkara, 2017). Bilingual students expressed that they felt more confident when allowed to use their first language in the classroom and felt it improved their cognitive skills. Additionally, students also indicated that they felt their cultural identity and heritage was valued and preserved as they were allowed to use their native language in the process of academic and second language development (Ozfidan, 2017). Bilingual students also favored the bilingual program for the purpose of allowing them the freedom to use the language and speech of their choice and providing them the ability to individually pace their second language acquisition. A study also revealed that bilingual students preferred using their first language in
order to make linguistic cultural connections to the second language (Galali, & Cinkara, 2017). They further emphasized in the study that having teachers who could communicate in their native language provided a better learning environment than the monolingual classrooms. Bilingual students’ need to transfer from their first language to their second language is supported by teachers who can provide opportunities for making connections through the use of the native language during instruction.

This bilingual approach is supported by Cummins (1979) theory of linguistic interdependence and the academic benefit of transferring skills from one language to another. Another study of student perception of the benefits of the bilingual program reflects students’ favoring the program and reporting that the level of native language use should be individualized according to student language proficiency in the second language (Anil, 2014). Studies consistently show student favoring of bilingual programs and the use of the native language in the facilitation of learning the second language as opposed to monolingual or English only classrooms (Debreli, & Oyman, 2015).

**Student Favoring of English Immersion**

Although some studies indicate that ELL students favor bilingual education over English immersion, a study by Alotaibi (2015) reported findings that consisted of 20 students’ whose first language was Arabic. The study revealed that the students favored learning the English language through English immersion education over a bilingual educational setting. Students perceptions of the different ELL programs help provide additional perspectives on the effectiveness of each program in ELL achievement.

**Teacher Preparation and Attitude toward Teaching ELLs**

LEP students entering the public school system in the United States has continued to increase over the last decades. The United States census bureau statistic in 2013 records that about
62 million individuals reported a home language other than English and over 25 million or 8% of ages five and up are believed to be LEP. (Zong, Zong, & Batalova, 2017). Within the United States, the greatest number of LEP individuals resides in the state of California with a total population of 19% and the state of Texas follows with 14%. Other states with a high population of LEP residents include; New York, Hawaii, Florida, Illinois, New Jersey, Nevada, New Mexico, Arizona, and Massachusetts (Zong et al., 2017). With the influx of immigrants who speak little or no English coming into the United States and public school systems, there is a need for a focus on preparing educators to provide the best educational environment for equitable academic and language developmental opportunities for LEP students.

**The need for appropriate teacher preparation in ELL instruction.** In the United States, statistics further indicate that one student out of every four are a part of migrant families whose home language is different than English (Zong et al., 2017). Such high statistics for ELLs in this country result in the high probability of having several ELL students in most public school classrooms. The diverse needs of ELL students require educators who are trained and prepared to skillfully and effectively provide opportunities for both language and academic development. In addition, ELL students have cultural backgrounds and customs which may be very different from the culture represented in the classroom and may further inhibit their ability to connect and comprehend academic content. Although there has been a national attempt to improve instruction for ELLs, the federal law only requires that instruction be modified to accommodate the varied learning needs of ELL learners through the process of bilingual education or English immersion with ESL support (Samson, & Collins, 2012). This research also indicates that improving ELL instructional strategies is considered more effective through selection and recruitment of educators, teacher professional development, preservice education for teachers, and retention of teachers.
The present state of teacher preparation. Currently in the United States, teachers are provided very little opportunity to gain knowledge of the best teaching practices in meeting ELL needs and are often unprepared to effectively ensure an equal educational environment for ELL students in the classroom (Hansen-Thomas et al., 2016). Texas teachers are encouraged to attain a supplemental ESL certification in order to better prepare for meeting the diverse academic and language development needs of ELLs (Samson, & Collins, 2012). However, the supplemental certification only requires the passing of a state test which involves little ELL knowledge and provides inadequate assessment for educator preparation in effectively instructing ELL students. Although there has been a national attempt to improve instruction for ELLs, the federal law only requires that instruction be modified to accommodate the varied learning needs of ELL learners through the process of bilingual education or English immersion with ESL. Research also indicates that improving ELL instructional strategies is considered more effective through selection and recruitment of educators, teacher professional development, preservice education for teachers, and retention of teachers (Samson, & Collins, 2012).

Furthermore, in an English immersion classroom, teachers may know little if any of the ELL’s native language and the ELL student may likewise know little or none of the English language. Furthermore, educators across the United States have inconsistent requirements on preparation standards for teaching ELLs (Samson, & Collins, 2012). Some states require an additional certification and some require varying additional academic coursework, however, some states do not require any additional coursework or certifications. These teacher preparation inconsistencies create inequitable educational opportunities for ELL students in the classrooms across the country.

Teacher preparation essentials. In order to provide ELL students a more equitable education with that of their English speaking peers, teacher preparation programs should provide
the necessary knowledge and skills to develop academic and oral language skills (Samson, & Collins, 2012). In addition, cultural diversity should also be explored and developed in order to provide learning environments in which ELLs can make connections both linguistically and academically (Samson, & Collins, 2012). A study by Clayton (2013), comparing the perceptions and knowledge of two teachers in a bilingual program and two from a monolingual program, showed that exemplary teachers of ELL students had general knowledge including; linguistic content and cultural experiences. The study further revealed the need for better teacher preparation in effectively teaching ELL students and the necessary commonalities among exemplary teachers of ELL students. Although there has been a national attempt to improve instruction for ELLs, the federal law only requires that instruction be modified to accommodate the varied learning needs of ELL learners through the process of bilingual education or English immersion with ESL support. Research also indicates that improving ELL instructional strategies is considered more effective through selection and recruitment of educators, teacher professional development, preservice education for teachers, and retention of teachers (Samson, & Collins, 2012).

**Teacher attitudes toward teaching ELLs.** Teachers who are responsible for educating ELLs through the English immersion program are often frustrated by a lack of support through the limited amount of opportunity to meet the diverse needs of ELLs in the English only classroom (Hansen-Thomas et al., 2016). As teachers are also responsible for educating the varied learning needs and academic levels of the other students in the classroom, ELLs often do not get the time and attention needed for academic and language development. A study by Şener and Korkut (2017) of 41 university students in regards to their perception of the importance of using ELL students’ native language in second language acquisition and academic development showed multiple advantages for first language use in the classroom. According to the study, the advantages in first language use for ELL students include; student motivation, increased participation, and a
more secure and accepting classroom environment. This study also revealed that teacher attitudes toward teaching ELLs reflects that there is not enough teacher preparation for effectively teaching ELLs and that building competency and awareness of the importance of first language use in the classroom is beneficial for ELL success (Şener & Korkut, 2017).

Although some studies on teachers’ perspectives toward teaching ELLs in English immersion indicate a lack of ELL support, a study by Jones (2014) show positive teacher perspectives for instructing ELLs in English immersion. The study consisted of eighty teachers from two districts in grades kindergarten through eighth grade in the state of Arizona who were administered surveys. The findings of the study indicated that teachers perceived the English immersion program to be an appropriate setting for ELL second language acquisition and academic progression.

**Teacher attitudes on preparation for ELL instruction.** A study by Song (2016), of sixth through twelfth grade teachers, showed that teachers perceived that their attitudes and their teaching strategies improved through professional development on effective ELL instruction. Teachers often feel that they lack the necessary support, resources, and preparation necessary to successfully instruct ELLs in academic content and second language acquisition. Another study conducted by Hansen-Thomas et al. (2016) of ELL instructors from 10 different school districts in Texas showed that teachers often feel unprepared or inadequately trained to effectively teach ELLS but the study also indicated that more training and education in ELL instructional strategies improve teacher attitudes, confidence, and skills with ELL instruction. Prior research findings on teacher preparation programs for teaching ELL students add to the understanding of this study and provide additional support on teacher perceptions of the academic environments for ELL students.
English as a Second Language within the Immersion Program

Moreover, in some cases where ELL students are very limited in the English language, a on-one opportunities to receive English as a Second Language instruction (Samson, & Collins, 2012). However, this program is limited to a select few ELL students for a minimal time period in the day and is also instructed only in the English language. Teachers in many cases feel that this type of program for ELLs is ineffective and provides little if any support for adequately educating ELL students in language development or academic achievement (Hansen-Thomas et al., 2016).

ELL Classification and Reclassification

As the English language learner (ELL) population continues to increase in public schools across the United States, there is a need for consistency in the identification process, classification and reclassification process, teacher preparation, and program implementation. ELL students should be afforded an educational opportunity equal to that of their English speaking peers regardless of the state, region, or school district in which they live or attend. However, the process for ELL identification, assessment, classification, and program implementation varies widely from state to state and between school districts within each state (Samson & Collins, 2012). These inconsistencies hinder the academic progress of ELL students and create an educational disadvantage for the LEP population.

The ELL process of identification and classification. Federal law mandates through the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and the Title III Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) that all ELL students be identified, annually assessed in English proficiency, and provided an appropriately modified or accommodated instructional curriculum in order to meet their individual and unique academic and language needs (Samson & Collins, 2012). This process of identification, assessment, and program implementation varies between each state depending on state and local decisions (Samson & Collins, 2012). The highest population of ELL students
resides in the states of California, Florida, Massachusetts, New York, and Texas. Many of the states, including Texas, initially assess enrolling students when the parent indicates on registration forms that the language spoken at home is not English. Many states, including Texas, also administer a Home Language Survey (HLS) to parents upon student enrollments. The HLS has English language questions which vary between states, with some states not using the HLS to identify the English language proficiency (ELPs). Some example questions on the HLS include information about what language the child first learned and what language is mostly spoken in the home by the parent and by the child (National Research Council, 2011).

Following the administration of the HLS and ELL identification, parents, however, can decline to allow their child to enroll in the various programs including ESL or bilingual programs offered within the school district. This option creates the necessity to fully communicate the process and purpose of the ELL programs to the parent to ensure that the parent makes an informed decision on the educational program placement for their child. Many times, ELL parents are also LEP and are unable to make informed decisions for a lack of communicative understanding of the program options and the process. In some cases, ELL students are not identified correctly or do not receive parental consent for ELL programs as a result of the lack of communication and understanding between the school staff and parents making educational decisions for ELL students. In addition, the process of identifying ELL students, assessing ELLs initially and annually, and the process of exiting students from the ELL programs vary from state to state and may include standardized state tests or other types of tests (National Research Council, 2011).

**Texas assessment for ELL classification.** As an example of state assessments for ELL proficiency within the ELL program, in Texas, ELL students are assessed using the Texas English Language Proficiency (TELPAS) to measure their progress in English language development. This
assessment has multiple parts which assess the ELLs speaking, writing, listening, and reading proficiency in the English language (Educator Guide TELPAS Grades K–12 2017, 2018). ELL students are assessed on TELPAS using performance level descriptors (PLDs) to identify four different levels of English proficiency which include; beginning, intermediate, advanced, and advanced high (Educator Guide TELPAS Grades K–12 2017, 2018).

ELL students who have minimal or no English development may score in the beginning proficiency domain of the TELPAS assessment. ELLs who are limited in English proficiency with some development may score in the intermediate domain. ELL students who are able to proficiently engage in grade level English instruction with some language support may score as advanced, and ELL students who need minimal language support to successfully achieve grade level academics comparable with their English speaking peers may receive a score of advanced high (Educator Guide TELPAS Grades K–12 2017, 2018). Teachers and administrators collaborate in an effort to accurately identify the correct domain in which each ELL student scores using student writing samples and teacher observations. The process for identifying the correct domain for student levels of proficiency and progress may somewhat vary depending on individual teacher and administrator interpretation of PLDs. This can create some inconsistent or inaccurate classifications for ELLs which can result in too early of an exit from needed bilingual programs or language support.

**Reclassification.** In addition to the challenges of accurately identifying, assessing, and classifying ELL students in their level of English proficiency, another challenge is accurately reclassifying ELLs as they progress in academic content language development and second language acquisition. ELL students may be incorrectly reclassified as a result of inaccurate interpretation on assessments, discrepancies in opinions, pressure to demonstrate progression through language programs, and limited resources.
A study by Umansky & Reardon (2014) involving nine cohorts of Latino ELL students over a 10 year period indicated that it likely takes most ELL students several years of academic and linguistic support to successfully be reclassified to the mainstream classroom and exit the ELL program. In this study, 50% of ELL students needed language support for up to eight years in order to demonstrate sufficient English language proficiency to be successfully reclassified. However, many states and school districts mainstream and exit ELL students much sooner and in some cases after only one or two years. This study reflects the widespread problem for insufficient ELL support leading to progressing achievement gaps and increased dropout rates for ELLs (Samson & Collins, 2012).

Another study by Hong, Gagne & West (2014) of a cohort of 2,205 Spanish speaking Kindergarteners over a six year period of time revealed that at least four years of ELL support was necessary in order for English proficiency to occur. The results of these studies are consistent with prior studies and theories by Collier, (1987) and Cummins, (1981) that ELLs need at least four to nine years in order to obtain the necessary English proficiency skills to be successful in English and other academic areas comparable to their English speaking peers. However, many times ELL students are reclassified much sooner and expected to progress through the ELL program at a much faster rate. ELL students that are accelerated too quickly through the ELL program may receive limited support and be exited before reaching English proficiency. The classification and reclassification process for ELL students adds to the understanding of this study and provides additional support on teacher perceptions of the academic environments for ELL students.

**Limited resources.** In addition, limited resources within a school district may contribute to the process of accelerating ELL students too quickly through the ESL or bilingual program creating a disadvantage for ELLs. In some schools, there may be only one ESL teacher with more ELL students than can be adequately supported. This leaves the ESL teacher with the need to focus...
on ELL students who are at the most beginning level of ELP and not have the time to dedicate to
the ELL students who demonstrate an intermediate or higher level of language proficiency.
Furthermore, there may be a lack of instructional resources available to classroom teachers to
appropriately meet the diverse needs of ELL learners.

**Review of Methodological Issues**

Literature on the topic of English language learners in a bilingual educational setting as
compared with an English immersion setting revealed a variety of methodologies including
qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. The most common methodology reviewed in the
literature consisted of quantitative methodologies. Qualitative methodologies were the next most
common and mixed method was the least common. A review of the literature and methodologies
provided for the analysis of the methodological issues present in each of the studies.

**Quantitative Study**

The reviewed literature revealed primarily quantitative research which is more objective in
nature than qualitative and involves a systematic research approach investigating variable
relationships using numerical data (L., P. C., & Ivankova, 2016). In the reviewed literature, the
data collection instruments used was predominately various forms of assessment data. For
example, in one study, 134 Spanish speaking students in a bilingual programs in Chicago were
assessed on state standardized math and reading tests and achievement tests. The data analysis
consisted of using the Mann-Whitney U Test to compare the academic progression of the students
in the two bilingual program groups (Marian et al., 2013).

Another quantitative study revealed in the literature review involved nine cohorts of 5,423
Latino students over a 12 year period using history analysis to determine their rate of success in
bilingual programs (Umansky & Reardon, 2014). As these two studies illustrate, one of the
methodological issues with this type of research may be the variations in sample sizes. Although
the data is objective, the varying sample sizes in the quantitative research approach may affect the interpretation and significance of the data analysis findings.

**Qualitative Study**

According to Hatch (2002), researchers who use qualitative studies inquire to understand the perspective of participants in natural settings. The qualitative study focus of data collection consists of utilizing instruments such as, interviews, observations, and questionnaires. The common qualitative research instruments for data collection throughout the reviewed literature were identified as: surveys, questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups. Hatch (2002) emphasizes that one of the most prominent methodological issues with qualitative research is the subjectivity of the researcher’s interpretation of data.

As the researcher uses data collection instruments such as interviews from participants in natural settings, the inner motives of participants are not outwardly observable and are vulnerable to subjectivity. For instance, in one of the research studies reviewed in the literature, two teachers and 35 students were observed and interviewed to obtain their perspectives on the emergent bilingual experience in a monolingual classroom. The observation and interview findings indicated that the bilingual students had little support in communication and transition to the second language (Poza, 2016). This study illustrates the methodological issue of potential researcher assumptions and subjectivity through the data collection process of classroom observation and interview interpretation.

**Mixed Method**

In the mixed method approach to research, the researcher integrates the methodologies of both the qualitative and the quantitative forms of data collection and data analysis. This mixed approach may be beneficial for implementing the strengths of both forms of research in the data collection and analysis process (L., P. C., & Ivankova, 2016). The literature reviewed revealed a
few mixed method research approaches to determine participants’ perspective and student academic achievement.

One mixed method study used a sample of 82 student standardized test score data and teacher surveys to show a correlation between ELL academic achievements and peer networking (Johnson, 2016). Another study in the literature reviewed identified a mixed method research approach using 550 student reading test scores and teacher questionnaires to determine the reading comprehension levels of bilingual students (Bayat, 2017). Although the mixed method approach requires the researcher to use both quantitative and qualitative research designs, the process may provide a more comprehensive result (Creswell, 2014).

**Synthesis of Research Findings**

Research and review of the literature on bilingual education and English immersion education revealed several common themes of: bilingual education as compared with English immersion, the advantages of bilingual education, the advantages of English immersion, the benefits of first language development in second language acquisition, teacher preparation and attitudes toward teaching ELLs, and ELL classification and reclassification. Some of the literature review showed an advantage in achieving second language acquisition for ELL’s in bilingual education programs as compared to English immersion programs (Iliana Alanis & Mariela Rodríguez, 2008; Keshavarz, & Ghamoushi,, 2014; Maria, Alec & SREE, 2014; Steele, Slater, Li, Zamarro & Miller, 2015; Tran et al., 2015; Valentino & Reardon, 2014; Vela, 2015).

However, there was also literature which supported English immersion over bilingual education in ELL achievement (Alotaibi, 2015; Gleason, 2014; Meyer, 2018; Wood, 2014). In addition, some of the research reported the advantages of bilingual instruction in improved academic achievement (Tran et al., 2015). The benefits of first language development in second language acquisition was indicated in the research with findings suggesting improved academic
achievement and linguistic competence in the targeted language (Anil, 2014; Burkhauser et al., 2016; Cortina et al., 2015; Durán et al., 2013; Hussien, 2014; Johnson, 2016; Khan, 2015; Mehrseresht, 2015; Murphy, 2014; Nicolay & Poncelet, 2013; Relji et al., 2015; Steele et al., 2013; Vela, 2015).

The literature review revealed that teacher preparation for appropriately instructing ELLs is lacking and needs support and improvement to provide an educational environment equal to English speaking peers (Samson, & Collins, 2012). The literature further indicated that the process for ELL classification and reclassification needs improvement. ELL students are not always identified correctly or may not receive parental consent for ELL programs. In addition, the process of identifying ELL students, assessing ELLs initially and annually, and the process of exiting students from the ELL programs vary from state to state and are inconsistent (National Research Council, 2011). Although some of the research related to the theory of linguistic interdependence (Cummins, 1979) and findings were supportive of the academic and linguistic advantages of English language learners’ use of the first language in second language acquisition and achievement, there were also findings which supported English immersion in improved ELL achievement.

**Critique of Previous Research**

Review of the existing literature on the topic of English language learners in the United States and the methods for educating these students through various types of bilingual education and English immersion revealed common themes and interesting facts and information. Since there are three million students in the United States who are LEP, there should be bilingual educational programs in which all ELL’s have the opportunity to participate in order to more efficiently transfer knowledge from their first language to their second language thereby receiving a more
equal educational opportunity with their English speaking peers (Cummins, 1979; U.S. Department of Education, 2015-16).

The strengths of the existing literature included the foundation of the interdependence linguistic theory which supports much of the research designs. The research designs also included a wide range of quantitative, qualitative, and mixed research designs and encompass parent, teacher, and student perspectives on bilingual and monolingual education. The literature provided support in research findings in both academic achievement and linguistic competence for language learners in bilingual educational settings as compared to monolingual educational settings. The research also supported findings which indicated increased academic and linguistic achievement for ELLs instructed in English immersion classroom settings. An additional strength in the research was the variety of academic settings, sample sizes, cultural settings, participant ages, and varied targeted language acquisitions. The vast quantity of varied research on the advantages and disadvantages of each program provided significant support for the topic of research.

After reviewing the existing literature, a weakness which emerged was the lack of teacher perceptions on instructing ELLs in the different programs of bilingual and English immersion. These teacher perceptions could add to the existing research by providing a lens through which one may obtain an authentic view of the challenges instructing ELLs in the different educational settings. In so doing, implications concerning research, policy, theory, and practice may be established.

**Summary**

With more than three million bilingual students in the United States, which increases every year, there is a need for a focus on the most beneficial and equitable educational program for bilingual students which enables proficient English acquisition and optimal academic achievement. Many studies support the benefits and advantages of the dual language bilingual program in
achieving greater comprehension in instruction, higher academic achievement and a more successful development of both the native language and the targeted language development in ELLs. There are also studies which support the academic and linguistic benefits and advantages of English immersion for instructing ELLs. All ELLs should have the opportunity to learn in the most effective and equitable educational manner that will allow for the best educational setting for optimal learning.

There is an increasing demand to meet the differential educational needs of bilingual students in our diverse country. Understanding and implementing the most effective second language acquisition method is necessary for creating a more equitable learning environment for bilingual students to achieve both cognitive and linguistic development. As our country continues to experience an increase in the population of immigrants and ELL students in the public school system, there is an ongoing need to evaluate the current state of appropriate teacher preparation and effective ELL programs to best provide optimal and equitable educational opportunities for ELL students. The inconsistencies among the various states within the United States for educator coursework and certifications in preparing to teach ELL students reflects the lack of knowledge and focus on appropriate ELL education. Furthermore, the varied ELL programs across our nation indicate an inequitable learning environment and support for educators teaching ELL students.

There is a need for a consistency to be established across the nation for appropriate teacher preparation, effective educator support, and equitable learning environments for teaching ELLs. The inconsistencies and inaccuracies of classifying and reclassifying ELL students contribute to the ongoing and progressive problem of educational inequality in the United States’ public school systems for ELLs. The long-term effect of the lack of educational opportunity for ELL students, which represents more than three million students across the country, can lead to low academic performance, increased dropout rates, minimized higher educational opportunities, and decreased
workforce opportunities as compared to non-ELL students. With the increasing number of ELL students in American public school systems across the country, there is a need for a evaluating the current options for instructing ELLs.
Chapter 3: Methodology

LEP students who enter the public school system in the United States have the challenge of learning without proficiency in the English language and may be placed in all English classrooms to experience an English immersion form of education. (Hansen-Thomas et al., 2016). Other students may have the option to be placed in bilingual programs and experience a bilingual form of education. Teachers have the challenge of teaching these LEP students in each of these educational programs. In the English immersion classrooms, English language learners (ELL) students may be unable to understand English instruction and there may be limited opportunity for bilingual education within public school systems that offer non English speaking students the option of learning in their native language (Clayton, 2013).

According to Hansen-Thomas et al. (2016) many ELLs have been placed in all English-speaking classrooms where instruction is delivered only in the English language. Teachers who are unable to communicate with non-English speaking students may lack the ability to engage and differentiate instruction to meet the academic needs of ELLs. Teachers instructing large class sizes with little or no ESL support may find themselves unable to have the one on one time with ELLs to promote both English and academic progression (Hansen-Thomas, H., Grosso Richins, L., Kakkar, K., & Okeyo, C., 2016). The problem which this research addressed is that there is a lack of understanding about the experiences and perceptions of teachers regarding the challenges of instructing ELL students in the bilingual classroom as compared with the challenges they face in the English immersion classroom.

Chapter 3 explains the research design involving 12 elementary educators in Texas public schools. Three bilingual educators with ESL college course training and ESL certifications and three English immersion educators with ESL college course training and ESL certifications participated in two interviews each. In addition, three bilingual educators with no ESL college
course training and only ESL certifications and three English immersion educators with no ESL
college course training and only ESL certifications participated in two interviews each.
Furthermore, these teachers were from similar grade levels and subject areas for instructing ELLs.
In addition, Chapter 3 explains the research design involving teacher lesson plans to demonstrate
the instructional process for ELLs in bilingual education and English immersion.

This chapter explores and addresses the research design through discussion of the research
question, the purpose and design of the study, the research population and sampling method,
instrumentation, data collection, identification of attributes, and data analysis procedures. This chapter furthermore includes the limitations and delimitations, validations, expected findings, and ethical issues of the research approach.

**Research Question**

This study addressed the research question: What do teachers perceive to be the greatest challenges for teaching ELLs in English immersion classes as compared to ELLs in bilingual classes?

**Purpose Statement and Design**

The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding about the experiences of teachers instructing ELL students regarding the challenges which they face in the English immersion classrooms as compared to the bilingual classrooms.

There are different types of research approaches and processes for conducting a study inquiry including quantitative, mixed methods, and qualitative. According to Creswell (2018), some of the deciding factors in choosing a research method are to consider the research problem, process, audience, and personal experiences. In addition, the researcher should also consider individual perspectives and philosophical views when choosing a research approach.
In the quantitative research approach, the data collection process involves using instruments, numerical data, and statistical procedures in a deductive approach. The quantitative research design uses experimental and survey methods to test and support theories. The quantitative approach is an appropriate study for examining theories through objectivity and exploring the relationships between variables using statistical inferences and analysis. Unlike qualitative research, the quantitative approach does not involve researcher subjectivity, participants’ perspectives, or examining natural environments (Creswell, 2018).

A mixed methods approach includes both the research processes of quantitative and qualitative data collection which the researcher integrates for the purpose of clarity and support for the findings. The mixed methods approach provides the advantage of combined methodologies which may reduce researcher bias and strengthen the research findings with both objective and subjective data. Core designs within the mixed methods approach include; exploratory sequential, convergent, and explanatory sequential. These core designs vary in data collection and data analysis procedures (Creswell, 2018).

The qualitative approach involves words as opposed to numbers using data collections such as observations, interviews, surveys, and open ended questions. The findings in qualitative research are subjective to researcher interpretation and the data collection process involves the use of purposeful sampling. In addition, the qualitative research approach uses an inductive style which focuses on groups or individuals. Within the context of a qualitative research design, there are different types of research approaches including; narrative, grounded theory, phenomenology, ethnographies, and case studies. In the narrative research design, the researcher studies the life of a participant and creates a narrative which may be combined with the researcher’s own narrative life experience. In the grounded theory research design, the researcher forms a theory based on the perspectives of participants. When using the phenomenology research approach, the researcher
describes phenomenal experiences of participants and will use interviews as a primary data collection source. Ethnography is a research design involving the study of cultural behavior over time. Case study inquiry involves the evaluation and analysis of cases and individuals using varied data collection processes (Creswell, 2018).

A qualitative case study was an appropriate method for this study as opposed to other methods since the objects of this research involved the life experiences and perspectives of people in natural settings (Hatch, 2002). Furthermore, this study was more of a qualitative research approach since it involved the exploration and interpretation of a human or societal problem from the participant’s perspective in a naturalistic environment (Creswell, 2018).

According to Creswell (2018), researchers possess a world perspective which may influence the researcher’s approach and practice. These four philosophical views of the world include; postpositivism, constructivism, transformative, and pragmatism. In a postpositivism view, the researcher seeks to observe and measure a problem objectively and with validity. A postpositivist philosophical worldview might influence the choice of a quantitative research approach. In constructivism, the researcher desires to obtain meaning of social phenomenon by subjective interpretations, observations, and interactions. A constructivist might choose the qualitative research approach of study. A transformative philosophical worldview consists of the desire to transform political or social injustices through collaboration. A transformative philosophy might influence a researcher to choose a mixed method approach. Likewise, the pragmatist researcher might choose a mixed method approach since the pragmatist philosophical worldview consists of a practical approach to problem-solving.

This study aligned more appropriately with the research design of a qualitative case study inquiry and a social constructivist perspective involving participants in natural life settings since
the social constructivist perspective seeks to comprehend meaning through experiences, interactions, and interpretation (Creswell, 2018).

This qualitative case study involved 12 elementary educators in Texas public schools. Three bilingual educators with ESL college course training and ESL certifications and three English immersion educators with ESL college course training and ESL certifications participated in two interviews each. In addition, three bilingual educators with no ESL college course training and only ESL certifications and three English immersion educators with no ESL college course training and only ESL certifications participated in two interviews each. Furthermore, these teachers were from similar grade levels and subject areas for instructing ELLs. The first teacher interview provided teachers’ perspectives of academic and linguistic challenges faced when teaching limited or non-English-speaking ELLs in both English immersion and bilingual classrooms. The second teacher interview provided clarification from the first interview and teachers’ discussion on the strategies and techniques for instructing ELLs in the classroom. Teacher lesson plans were included during the second interview to support the findings of the research by providing the interviewer the opportunity to discuss the classroom strategies listed in the lesson plans for instructing ELLs. The research findings may benefit school districts, parents, and educational staff members when making decisions on ELL programs and teacher training to provide the best educational setting for ELLs.

**Research Population and Sampling Method**

**Research population.** The research population consisted of 17,361 teachers in Texas. According to the Texas Administrative Code 89.1210 (d), there are three options for ESL Texas state compliance. Texas English, language arts, and reading (ELAR) teachers must be ESL certified and provide support in the classroom, also known as inclusion, for ELL students. Texas ELAR teachers who are not ESL certified may also co-teach with another ESL certified ELAR
teacher and provide support to ESL students in the classroom. A last option for Texas state ESL compliance is for non-certified ESL ELAR teachers to have a pull-out ESL class which is instructed by a teacher holding both an ELAR and ESL certification. Considering all the different ESL compliance scenarios and the large number of Texas students who are ELLs, Texas teachers will often have ELL students in their classrooms (Texas AFT, 2018).

The desired study’s research sample included 12 elementary educators in Texas public schools. Three bilingual educators with ESL college course training and ESL certifications and three English immersion educators with ESL college course training and ESL certifications participated in two interviews each. In addition, three bilingual educators with no ESL college course training and only ESL certifications and three English immersion educators with no ESL college course training and only ESL certifications participated in two interviews each. Furthermore, these teachers were from similar grade levels and subject areas for instructing ELLs. The desired sample of educators sought were full-time teachers with three or more years of experience from multiple Texas public elementary classrooms.

Sampling. The non-probability purposive sampling was used in this study. This sampling type, in which the members of the population are chosen specifically for the purpose of the research, was necessary to ensure the sample included the appropriate respondents for the research (Harding, 2013). The process of recruiting interviewees who potentially fit the criteria and were willing to volunteer their time to participate in two interviews each and to provide teacher lesson plans involved an educational group social media posting to appeal for interest. After receiving back interest confirmations, three bilingual educators with ESL college course training and as a ESL certifications participated in two interviews. In addition, three English immersion educators with ESL college course training and ESL certifications participated in two interviews. Furthermore, three bilingual educators with no ESL college course training and only ESL
certifications and three English immersion educators with no ESL college course training and only ESL certifications participated in two interviews. All interviews took place in a face-to-face setting or on a phone call and teachers provided lesson plans for the discussion in the second interview. Participants were from similar grade levels and subject areas.

An exclusion criterion was that teachers with no ESL certification were ineligible to participate in the study. The 12 teachers were sought to participate in a first interview which consisted of questions on the challenges and experiences teaching ELLs in bilingual education and English immersion. In addition, the 12 teachers participated in a second interview which provided clarification from the first interview and teachers’ discussion on the strategies and techniques for instructing ELLs in the classroom. Teacher lesson plans were included during the second interview to support the findings of the research by providing the interviewer the opportunity to discuss the strategies listed in the lesson plans for instructing ELLs. Twelve bilingual and English immersion teachers were sought to participate in two teacher interviews each on the challenges and experiences teaching ELLs in bilingual education and English immersion. Six English immersion teachers and six bilingual teachers who volunteered to participate and met the criteria were interviewed. In addition, teachers provided teacher lesson plans at the time of or prior to the second interview in order to illustrate and facilitate discussion on the strategies used in the classroom for instructing ELL students.

Instrumentation

This study’s instrumentation consisted of two sets of teacher interviews and teacher lesson plans. Six of the interviews involved teachers who teach ELLs in an English immersion educational setting and six of the interviews involved teachers who teach ELLs in a bilingual educational setting. In addition, the instrumentation of this study included teacher lesson plans, which reflected how ELLs are instructed in each classroom setting. The interviewer collected the
lesson plans prior to or at the time of the interview. The lesson plans provided documentation of the strategies and techniques which the teacher uses in instructing ELLs in the classroom. The interviewee discussed and explained the strategies and techniques reflected in the lesson plans and discussed questions about the lesson plans during the second interview. This data source provided triangulation which added to the trustworthiness of the findings.

**Interviews.** Two sets of interviews from six bilingual education teachers and six English immersion teachers were recorded and transcribed. Interviews were chosen as an appropriate instrument of data collection since this research was a qualitative case study involving teachers’ perceptions and the evaluation and assessment of academic environments (Yin, 2018).

The interviews consisted of questions that allowed the interviewees to reflect upon and evaluate their teaching experience with ELLs and the learning experience of ELLs in the English immersion classroom and the bilingual classroom (see Appendix A). Probing questions were used to follow up on topics that the participants brought up while answering the interview questions. The answers to the questions provided data on what teachers perceived to be the greatest challenges of teaching ELLs in a bilingual educational setting as opposed to an English immersion educational setting. A second interview was conducted after analyzing the first interview in order to gather more data by asking further probing questions based on the participants’ responses during the first interview and to allow for member checking ensuring an accurate interpretation of the first interview data (Hatch, 2002). In addition, the second interview allowed the interviewer the opportunity to ask questions pertaining to the strategies and techniques for instructing ELLs in the classroom which are reflected in the teacher lesson plans provided before or at the time of the second interview (see Appendix B).

**Lesson plans.** Teacher lesson plans data were collected to demonstrate how each teacher in each program instructs ELLs in the classroom. Lesson plans were a useful data piece for answering
the research question in this study since the lesson plans demonstrated strategies and skills which teachers implement or omit within the classroom for instructing ELLs and providing academic support. The second interview provided the opportunity for the interviewer to ask the teacher being interviewed to explain and discuss the process for carrying out the written strategies and techniques written in the lesson plans for instructing ELL students in the classroom.

**Data Collection**

This study’s data collection procedure used qualitative methods. Two sets of teacher interviews and teacher lesson plans provided a triangulation of data which added to the integrity and trustworthiness of the research findings. Three bilingual educators with ESL college course training and ESL certifications and three English immersion educators with ESL college course training and ESL certifications were interviewed. In addition, three bilingual educators with no ESL college course training and only ESL certifications and three English immersion educators with no ESL college course training and only ESL certifications were interviewed. Furthermore, these teachers were from similar grade levels and subject areas. Interviews were scheduled with interviewees on agreed upon days and times using a standardized interview instrument and recording device.

The interview instrument consisted of interview questions which were aligned with the literature review research and the research question. Interviews were conducted verbally and in a face-to-face setting or phone call. Finally, teacher lesson plans provided support for the research findings by demonstrating how each teacher instructs ELLs in the different classroom environments. The selected data collection sources addressed the research question, “What do teachers perceive to be the greatest challenges for teaching ELLs in English immersion classes as compared to ELLs in bilingual classes?” This question was addressed by providing teacher perceptions from both the bilingual and English immersion classroom settings on the greatest
challenges for teaching ELLs and teacher lesson plans which reflected strategies for instructing ELLs in each classroom setting.

**Interviews.** Prior to the interviews, an informed consent form was explained and signed by the participants to allow participants to be informed about the scope of the study and to provide permission to use their information in the study. The informed consent was explained and the interviewees were allowed the opportunity for questions. The first interviews consisted of several questions seeking information pertaining to how many years of experience the teacher had with teaching ELLs and the English proficiency level of the ELLs typically taught each year. The first interview questions for English immersion teachers are located in Appendix C. The first interview questions for bilingual education teachers are located in Appendix A. In addition, the interview questions asked for information about the perceived challenges, advantages, and disadvantages of teaching ELLs in either a bilingual or English immersion classroom setting. Finally, the interview questions sought information on the support, training, and requirements for teaching ELLs in the bilingual classroom and the English immersion classroom which supports an educational environment promoting an equal educational opportunity for ELLs. Included in the interview questions was an opportunity for the interviewees to provide their opinion on whether ELLs might benefit more from a bilingual program or an English immersion program.

Interview participants also participated in a second interview in which the interviewee was able to review interview transcripts and correct any misconceptions. In addition, the second interview provided an opportunity for the researcher to ask questions which arose from the analysis of the first interview. The second interview allowed for increased clarification and accuracy of interviewee perspectives and provided an opportunity for the interviewer to ask probing questions to address participant responses. The second interview questions for English
immersion teachers are located in Appendix D. The second interview questions for bilingual teachers are located in Appendix B.

In addition, teachers provided a teacher lesson plan prior to or at the time of the second interview which allowed the interviewer to formulate questions on the strategies used for instructing ELLs in the classroom reflected in the lesson plans. The timeline and procedures for the second interview were reviewed with participants prior to the first interview (Hatch, 2002). Using the inductive analysis of qualitative data described by Hatch (2002), the transcriptions were carefully read through in order to fully comprehend the information provided. Once the transcripts were carefully read through, the main idea was recorded on a summary sheet for each interview. Each interviewee had separate summary documentation which contained the main idea of each excerpt. The interview data were coded using varied colors in order to differentiate categories and the data were analyzed for reoccurring themes, relationships, and patterns. The data were analyzed using the determined categories of the educator’s perspective on the perceived challenges, advantages, and disadvantages of teaching ELLs in either a bilingual or English immersion classroom setting. Additionally, the data were analyzed for the educator’s perspective on the amount of support, training, and requirements necessary for teaching ELLs in the bilingual classroom and the English immersion classroom which supports an educational environment promoting an equal educational opportunity for ELLs. A final category of analysis included teacher perspectives from classroom experience and specific examples on whether ELLs might benefit more from a bilingual program or an English immersion program.

As the researcher, I identified patterns from the interview transcripts, then, I analyzed the data to determine if there was sufficient data to support the findings. In addition, I reread the data to explore the possibility of identifying contradicting patterns and to determine if unexpected findings existed in the data. I then analyzed the data for relationships which might have been
present among the categories and for the possible conclusions which might have been drawn from the discovered patterns. I analyzed the separate sets of themes, patterns, and relationships for possible connections which provided further support for the findings. Once I identified relationships from the patterns, generalization statements were established using the analysis of the findings to ensure the analysis and findings could be clearly expressed. Finally, I selected excerpts, such as interviewee quotes, from the data in order to provide examples and support for the generalizations and data findings (Hatch, 2002).

**Teacher lesson plans.** In addition to the two sets of interviews, data collection consisted of collecting the interviewed teachers’ lesson plans. The teacher lesson plans provided an opportunity for the interviewer to formulate questions to ask interviewees during the second interview in order to demonstrate how each teacher in the different classroom settings instruct ELLs. This data piece was collected by requesting the interview participants to email them prior to the interview or bring them at the time of the interview.

**Identification of Attributes**

The attributes in this study include; bilingual education, English immersion, English language learners, and limited English proficiency.

- **Bilingual Education:** Bilingual programs were defined by the Equal Education Act as instruction in both the English language and the home language which encouraged student academic progression and proficiency and was not insufficiently only an English as a Second Language (ESL) program (Stewner-Manzanares, 1988).

- **Structured English Immersion:** The structured English immersion program for ELL students includes instruction which is solely in the English language in a mainstream classroom and with a focus on English acquisition. Teachers instructing in a structured
English immersion classroom have an ESL certification or training in instructing ELL students (Developing ELL Programs: Glossary, 2015).

- **Sheltered English Immersion**: The sheltered English immersion program for ELL students focuses on academic progression for ELLs using visual aids and an emphasis on academic vocabulary instruction (Developing ELL Programs: Glossary, 2015).

- **Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment (TELPAS)**: The TELPAS assessment is an instrument for assessing LEP students in four different levels of language proficiency including; beginning, intermediate, advanced, and advanced high. The language levels of proficiency are assessed in four domains which consists of; listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Cadena, 2018). The beginning level for ELLs is defined as having minimal to no English proficiency. The intermediate level ELL has limited English proficiency which includes simple language. The advanced ELL has the ability to comprehend grade level academic content with home language support. The advanced high ELL requires minimal home language support to comprehend grade level academic content (Cadena, 2018).

- **English Language Learners (ELLs)**: An English language learner is a student who has a home or native language other than English and has limited English proficiency (Developing ELL Programs: Glossary, 2015).

- **Limited English Proficient (LEP)**: A limited English proficient student has minimal knowledge of the English language (Developing ELL Programs: Glossary, 2015).

- **English as a Second Language (ESL)**: A curriculum program for instructing English language learner students (Developing ELL Programs: Glossary, 2015).

- **English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS)**: Curriculum standards for instructing English language learners in academic English (McCeig, 2019).
• **ESL Certification**: Texas teachers receive an ESL certification by passing a state test demonstrating proficiency with instructing ELLs. The certification must be renewed every 5 years by paying a state fee. This certification allows Texas teachers to instruct ELLs in the classroom.

**Data Analysis Procedures**

The data analysis procedure for this research included an inductive analysis of qualitative data described by Hatch (2002) using data from bilingual teacher interviews, English immersion teacher interviews, and teacher lesson plans which demonstrated how the interviewed teachers instruct ELLs in the classroom. Two sets of teacher interviews were conducted using guiding questions to elicit teacher perspectives concerning the academic and linguistic progression for ELLs in bilingual education classrooms and English immersion classrooms.

**Analysis: Interview data.** Two sets of interviews from six bilingual education teachers and six English immersion teachers were recorded and transcribed using the inductive analysis of qualitative data described by Hatch (2002). Hatch explained that qualitative case studies consists of using an inductive analysis approach where nine steps are taken in order to focus on the specific to general in research and establish connections from distinct characteristics. To analyze data inductively is to initiate the study with elements of evidence and to create a whole from the parts. The purpose of inductive analysis is to establish general statements from meaningful patterns within the data.

According to Hatch (2002), the nine steps of inductive analysis include the first step of reading over the gathered data and establishing frames to analyze. The second step consists of identifying semantic relationships from the frames and creating domains from it. Step three includes discerning salient domains and attaching codes. In step four, the process includes reading over the data and creating a record of relationships identified from the data and the salient
domains. Step five, requires the researcher to study the domains to ensure that the data provides support for the domains and to identify any inconsistent relationships. In step six, the researcher conducts a complete analysis within the domains. The seventh step involves searching the domains to identify emerging themes. Step eight consists of establishing relationships from the domains and recording on a master outline. The final step nine, involves the selection of data to reinforce the outlined elements.

Hatch (2002) elaborated on the steps of inductive analysis by explaining each step. According to Hatch (2002), as the researcher begins the inductive analysis process in step one of reading the data and establishing analysis frames, the perspective of the analysis frames or the parts of the data which will be analyzed, should be the focal point. The study’s purpose, nature, the research question and the data will all have an influence on the researcher’s decision about analysis frames. The second step of creating domains, which are based on the meanings revealed in the analysis frames, should show relationships in the data. As researchers’ create domains, the data should be read in order to find categories with particular semantic relationships. This step is vital in making sense of the data through domain analysis. Once the domains are analyzed, the researcher should determine which domains are relevant to the study and which can be eliminated. Identified domains can be assigned codes in order to categorize them and later refine them.

As a next step, the researcher should repeatedly read the data thinking through the domains and identifying semantic relationships. Domains which are inconsistent with the emerging relationships should be eliminated from the coding process. In order to obtain a deep level of understanding of the data, researchers need to analyze within the domains. Detailed coding in an outline form can provide the researcher with a tool for examining and analyzing data domains.

The analysis of qualitative data is furthermore achieved through the identification of themes which are present within the data domains. These themes can be identified by carefully
reading the data and asking general questions of the meaning. In addition, researchers can uncover themes by systematically comparing the identified domains for connect ability. With the process of identifying themes within the data, researchers may find it helpful to keep the purpose of the study in mind as the general whole that embeds the themes as parts of the whole. This process can be achieved through techniques such as using graphic representations or summary statements (Wolcott, 1995).

As themes within the data are identified, Hatch (2002) emphasized the importance of creating a final organizational form such as an outline. An outline can allow the researcher the opportunity for further analysis of the domains and themes within the data to determine relevancy and connectedness. A final step in the qualitative inductive analysis process consists of rereading the data in an effort to find excerpts which accurately support the researcher’s findings.

The transcriptions were carefully read through in order to fully comprehend the information provided. Once the transcripts were carefully read through, the main idea was recorded on a summary sheet for each interview. Following transcription, the interviewees had the opportunity to verify transcripts and clarify any misconceptions during a second interview. Each interviewee had separate summary documentations which contained the main idea of each excerpt. The interview data were coded using varied colors in order to differentiate categories and the data were analyzed for reoccurring themes, relationships, and patterns. The data were analyzed and organized into emerging themes. After patterns, relationships and themes were identified from the interview transcripts, the categories were analyzed to determine if there was sufficient data to support the findings. In addition, the data were re-read to explore the possibility of identifying contradicting patterns and to determine if unexpected findings existed in the data.

The data were analyzed for relationships which might have been present among the categories and for the possible conclusions which might have been drawn from the discovered
patterns. The separate sets of themes, patterns, and relationships were analyzed for possible connections which provided further support for the findings. Once the relationships were identified from the patterns or categories, generalization statements were established using the analysis of the findings from the categories to ensure the analysis and findings could be clearly expressed. Finally, excerpts, such as interviewee quotes, from the data were selected in order to provide examples and support for the generalizations and data findings (Hatch, 2002).

**Analysis: Teacher lesson plans.** Six lesson plans from bilingual teachers and six lesson plans from English immersion teachers were collected and read through for evidence of skills and strategies implemented within the instructional process for ELLs. Document data analysis was utilized in order to identify indicators of the various strategies and techniques reflected within the teacher lesson plans. According to Triad 3 (2016), document analysis is a qualitative research method which allows the researcher to obtain meaning from documents by implementing the data analysis process of coding and establishing themes. Triad 3 (2016) identified eight steps in the document analysis process for the researcher to explore. The first step of document analysis includes collecting texts which are relevant to the research. Secondly, the researcher should develop a scheme for the management and organization of the analysis. The third step involves creating copies from the originals in order to allow the researcher to make annotations. Fourthly, the researcher should examine the documents for authenticity. The final steps include the process of exploring the document for content, biases, purpose, and other general questions. Throughout the document data analysis process, the researcher can use the techniques of identifying and organizing the occurrences of content information relevant to the research question (Triad 3, 2016).

The data analysis for this research was conducted in order to determine the relationship between bilingual education and English immersion for LEP students as it relates to English
proficiency progression, academic progression, and teacher perceptions of the most supportive educational environment for ELL students in the two ELL programs. The data from the bilingual education teacher interviews, the English immersion teacher interviews, and the teacher lesson plans were analyzed and the findings interpreted and reported in this research study.

**Limitations and Delimitations**

**Limitations.** Limitations are uncontrollable constraints which may possibly affect the outcome and conclusions of the study (Simon, 2011). In qualitative case study research, limitations might include researcher bias, validity, and reliability of the study (Hamel, 1993). Researcher bias, including the subjective interpretation of the data, may influence the case study and affect the study’s reliability or validity.

To reduce the amount of researcher bias, interview questions were uniform and member checked to ensure accuracy and validity. Furthermore, a limitation of this study may have been the lack of generalizability of a case study as a result of the small sample size and the lack of ability to generalize the results to the wider population. Subsequent studies involving different district demographics may add to the findings of this study (Simon, 2011). Moreover, another limitation may have been that this qualitative case study would be difficult to replicate in potential future studies since the researcher was an interactive and integral part of the research process.

**Delimitations.** The purpose of this case study was to gain an understanding about the experiences and perceptions of teachers regarding the greatest challenges which they experience instructing ELL students in the English immersion classrooms as compared to the bilingual classrooms. This study was not intended to address the challenges of teachers who are teaching ELLs in other state districts which may have different methods and programs for instructing ELLs. This decision was necessary in order to narrow the research to a feasible scope of time and focus.
In addition, although this study could have included a wider range of teacher interviews, the decision to choose six teachers from a bilingual educational setting and six teachers from an English immersion setting provided a representation with a more focused and efficient process for gaining teachers’ general perspectives within the educational settings.

Another delimitation in this study may have been that the number of potential interview participants could be limited by the selection through the educators’ group social media site. In addition, this study was representative of the group of teachers on the educators’ group social media site and not a specific school district. To increase the possibility for a wider selection, it was requested of the viewers to also ask other staff members on their teams and campuses. Additionally, a delimitation of this study was the purposive sampling selection process of interview candidates. This process may have contributed to researcher bias but was necessary for ensuring relevant research criteria. Finally, a delimitation of this study was that it excluded teachers who have no ESL certification from the interview process.

Validation

Credibility and dependability. The research was conducted in a manner that was supported by credibility (trustworthiness) and dependability (reliability). Creswell and Miller (2000) emphasized that trustworthiness is demonstrated in a qualitative study when the results and findings accurately reflect the research and can be supported by the research data. Dependability in qualitative research is demonstrated in the reliability of the research findings (Creswell & Miller, 2000). In order to ensure a trustworthy and reliable study, triangulation data were used to present two sets of teacher interviews from bilingual education teachers, English immersion teachers, and teacher lesson plans. This data provided triangulation which gave support to the trustworthiness of the study.
Interviewees were selected using criterion which was consistent with the subject phenomenon of ELLs and had multiple years of experience in the relevant educational setting. In addition, the interviews were conducted in private locations with a face-to-face format or phone call to ensure authenticity. Interviews were further reflected upon and analyzed using a system of coding. Member checking was utilized to ensure the accuracy of the interview accounts, and rich and thick descriptions aided in the reader’s ability to transfer the findings of the study (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

**Expected Findings**

There are research findings within the literature review which support English immersion over bilingual education in ELL academic and linguistic performance (Gleason, 2014; Meyer, 2017; Wood, 2014). There are also research findings which indicate the academic and linguistic benefits of bilingual education over English immersion (Iliana Alanís & Mariela Rodríguez, 2008; Keshavarz, & Ghamoushi, 2014; Maria, Alec & SREE, 2014; Steele et al., 2015; Tran et al., 2015; Valentino & Reardon, 2014; Vela, 2015). The results of this study were expected to add to the existing literature by researching teacher perspectives on the challenges of teaching ELLs in the different educational programs of bilingual and English immersion. In addition, the expected findings of this research would demonstrate the benefits of each program in the progression of ELLs in academics and second language acquisition.

**Ethical Issues**

**Conflict of interest statement.** As the researcher in this study, I was not directly financially connected to any of the members of this study. In addition, I did not receive any professional benefits from participants in this study.

**Researcher’s position.** As the researcher, my experience as an educator involves more than 20 years of teaching ELLs in an English immersion classroom and no educational experience
teaching ELLs in a bilingual classroom. Therefore, researcher bias concerning the disadvantages of
instructing ELLs in an English immersion classroom could have been a risk in the accurate
findings of the study. In order to minimize or eliminate any researcher or educator bias, interview
questions were purposefully prepared to minimize the potential bias and encourage equitable and
fair responses. In addition, interview coding and follow up interview clarification was conducted to
assure accurate accounts of educator perspectives.

**Ethical issues in the study.** The research process involved two sets of teacher interviews
to obtain educators’ perspectives instructing ELLs in both a bilingual educational setting and an
English immersion educational setting. The 12 interviewees provided educator’s perspectives
which could have presented some potential for educator bias concerning the educational
environment for ELLs. In addition, researcher bias was also a variable which could have
negatively influenced the results and findings of the study (Stake, 2010).

Furthermore, to reduce bias and consider all ethical issues associated with this research, the
IRB reviewed and approved all aspects of this study and provided any necessary feedback for
revisions in the data collection process. Moreover, all interview participants were fully informed of
the interview process and research intent and given written consent opportunities prior to the
interview data collection process. In addition, participant electronic and physical data were
securely protected and stored. Interviews were recorded using a digital recorder and recordings
were deleted immediately following transcription and member-checking. All other study-related
materials will be kept securely for 3 years from the close of the study and then will be destroyed.
Any personal participant information provided was coded to eliminate identification. Participant
names or identifying information was kept securely via electronic encryption or locked inside a file
cabinet. When I looked at the data, none of the data had participant names or identifying
information. I used a secret code to analyze the data. Participant information was kept private at all times and all study documents will be destroyed 3 years after the conclusion of this study.

Following the interviews, a member check process further ensured a reduction in researcher bias and a fair objective account of educator perspectives. The member checking process included the opportunity for the participants to review transcripts and data analysis from the first interview and to provide clarification and feedback on researcher interpretations.

**Bias in the study.** Bias in research consists of any influencing factor which may skew the results of the research findings (Galdas, 2017). In any research study there will always be a potential for bias. According to Hatch (2002), qualitative researchers study phenomenon which are not explicitly observable and require subjectivity in judgment in order to interpret findings. In order to minimize the bias and reduce the impact it has on the research findings, researchers can self-reflect on researcher biases and make conscious attempts to reduce them. In an effort to reduce researcher bias, this research included interview questions which were open ended and allowed for the interviewees to express their ideas, attitudes, and perspectives freely which limited the influence of researcher bias.

**Summary**

In summary, Chapter 3 explained the research design for investigating English Language Learners’ (ELLs) progression of academic achievement and second language acquisition in both the English immersion and bilingual classroom settings. The qualitative research design with a case study approach from a social constructivist perspective was compared with other research designs and justified as an appropriately aligned design for this study. The research population, sampling, and data collection process was explained and described and included teacher interviews from both an English immersion and bilingual educational setting. Qualitative data from two sets of teacher interviews in both bilingual education and English immersion was collected and

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analyzed to provide comparisons of the two educational environments. Furthermore, teacher lesson plans were collected to demonstrate the instructions which ELLs receive in each classroom program. The attributes of this study were identified to provide further clarification of the research process and limitations and delimitations were explained. In addition, ethical issues and possible researcher bias was addressed and expected findings were considered in concluding this chapter of methodology. Chapter 4 provides the data analysis and research results for this study.
This study explored and analyzed teacher perceptions of the greatest challenges for teaching ELLs in English immersion classrooms as compared to bilingual classrooms. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2016), over three million students in the United States are considered LEP. Since LEP students are not proficient in the English language, teachers have the challenge of teaching these students in the different educational programs. This research study examined the perceptions of teachers of LEP students in both the English and bilingual classroom settings to explore their greatest challenges. The research question addressed was: “What do teachers perceive to be the greatest challenges for teaching ELLs in English immersion classes as compared to ELLs in bilingual classes?” Teacher perceptions of the greatest challenges of teaching LEP students in both settings was important to understand the most effective approach and setting for ELLs to develop academically and linguistically. The purpose of this research was to provide findings which may benefit school districts, parents, and educational staff members when making decisions on ELL programs and teacher training to provide the best educational setting for ELLs.

This chapter describes and explains the sample, methodology, analysis, and results of the research study. This study’s research design consisted of a qualitative case study inquiry and a social constructivist perspective which involved participants in natural life settings since the social constructivist perspective seeks to comprehend meaning through experiences, interactions, and interpretation (Creswell, 2018). This study’s qualitative data collection procedure consisted of two sets of teacher interviews and teacher lesson plans to provide a triangulation of data which added to the integrity and trustworthiness of the research findings. The data analysis procedure for this research included the inductive analysis of qualitative data described by Hatch (2002) using data from bilingual teacher interviews, English immersion teacher interviews, and teacher lesson plans which demonstrated how the interviewed teachers instruct ELLs in the classroom. The data
analysis for this research was detailed in this chapter in order to determine the teacher perceptions of the challenges of teaching ELLs in bilingual education and English immersion as it relates to English proficiency progression, academic progression, and the most supportive educational environment for ELL students in the two ELL programs. The data from the bilingual education teacher interviews, the English immersion teacher interviews, and the teacher lesson plans have been analyzed and the findings interpreted and reported in this research chapter.

As the researcher, my experience as an educator involves more than 20 years of teaching ELLs in an English immersion classroom and no educational experience teaching ELLs in a bilingual classroom. In order to minimize any researcher bias, interview questions were purposefully prepared to minimize the potential bias and encourage equitable and fair responses. In addition, interview coding and follow up interview clarification was conducted to assure accurate accounts of educator perspectives. This research reflected data which consisted of interview questions that were open ended and allowed for interviewees to express their perspectives freely, whereby limiting the influence of researcher bias. This chapter provides a methodology and analysis, summary of the findings, and presentation of the data and results of this study. Chapter 5 consists of a discussion and summary of the results including how it relates to the literature review in Chapter 2. In addition, Chapter 5 encompasses the limitations and implications of the results of this study followed by recommendations for further research.

**Description of the Sample**

Non-probability purposive sampling was used in this study. This sampling type, in which the members of the population are chosen specifically for the purpose of the research, is necessary to ensure the sample includes the appropriate respondents for the research (Harding, 2019). The process of recruiting interviewees who fit the criteria and were willing to volunteer their time to participate in two interviews each and to provide teacher lesson plans involved a social media
educators’ group posting to appeal for interest. The social media post included the expected criteria in the recruitment request. After receiving permission to post a recruitment request from the educators’ group social media site and receiving back interest confirmations, three bilingual educators with ESL college course training and ESL certifications and three English immersion educators with ESL college course training and ESL certifications were selected to participate in two interviews in a face-to-face setting or phone call. The participants also agreed to provide teacher lesson plans for the discussion in the second interview. In addition, three bilingual educators with no ESL college course training and only ESL certifications and three English immersion educators with no ESL college course training and only ESL certifications were selected to participate in two face-to-face or phone call interviews and the participants also agreed to provide teacher lesson plans for the discussion in a second interview. Furthermore, these teachers were from similar elementary grade levels and core subject areas.

Table 1 shows the teacher participants’ years of teaching experience, grade levels, and prior ELL college training.

Table 1

*Participant Credentials for Instructing ELLs*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Participants</th>
<th>Years of Experience</th>
<th>Instructional Grade</th>
<th>ELL College Training</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P 1 (EI)</td>
<td>9 years</td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P 2 (EI)</td>
<td>14 years</td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P 3 (EI)</td>
<td>20 years</td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P 4 (EI)</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P 5 (EI)</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P 6 (EI)</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>4th</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P 7 (B)</td>
<td>18 years</td>
<td>4th</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P 8 (B)</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P 9 (B)</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P 10 (B)</td>
<td>9 years</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P 11 (B)</td>
<td>25 years</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P 12 (B)</td>
<td>13 years</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*EI—English Immersion  *B-Bilingual
Teachers who did not have ESL certifications were ineligible to participate in the study. The 12 teachers were sought to participate in a first interview which consisted of questions on the challenges and experiences of teaching ELLs in bilingual education and English immersion classroom settings. In addition, the 12 teachers participated in a second interview which provided clarification from the first interview on the strategies and techniques for instructing ELLs in the classroom and provided an opportunity for member checking. Teacher lesson plans were also included during the second interview to support the findings of the research by providing the interviewer the opportunity to discuss the strategies listed in the lesson plans for instructing ELLs.

The sample population expected on the educators’ group social media site was over 15,000. From the total expected population, 42 teachers responded, with the first 12 being selected who met the criteria and were willing to participate. The interview participants included five Caucasian females, four Latino females, one African American female, and two Indian females. The participants had a range of teaching experience from a minimum of three years to 25 years. After eliminating one participant who decided not to follow through with the first interview, another was selected from the respondents. After that, all of the selected 12 participants completed all parts of the research study including two interviews and lesson plan discussions.

**Research Methodology and Analysis**

This study’s instrumentation consisted of two sets of teacher interviews and teacher lesson plans. Interviews were chosen as an appropriate instrument of data collection since this research is a qualitative case study involving teachers’ perceptions and the evaluation and assessment of academic environments (Yin, 2018). Six of the interviewees involved teachers who teach ELLs in an English immersion educational setting and six of the interviewees involved teachers who teach ELLs in a bilingual educational setting. In addition, the instrumentation of this study included teacher lesson plans which reflected how ELLs are instructed in each classroom setting. The
The interviewer collected the lesson plans prior to or at the time of the interview. The lesson plans provided documentation of the strategies and techniques which the teacher uses in instructing ELLs in the classroom. The interviewee discussed and explained the strategies and techniques reflected in the lesson plans and discussed questions about the lesson plans during the second interview. Two sets of interviews from six bilingual education teachers and six English immersion teachers were recorded and transcribed. The interviews consisted of questions that allowed the interviewees to reflect upon and evaluate their teaching experience with ELLs and the learning experience of ELLs in the English immersion classroom and the bilingual classroom. Probing questions were used to follow up on topics that the participants brought up while answering the interview questions. The answers to the questions provided data on what teachers perceived to be the greatest challenges of teaching ELLs in a bilingual educational setting as opposed to an English immersion educational setting.

A second interview was conducted after analyzing the first interview in order to gather more data by asking further probing questions based on the participants’ responses during the first interview and to allow for member checking ensuring an accurate interpretation of the first interview data (Hatch, 2002). In addition, the second interview allowed the interviewer the opportunity to ask questions pertaining to the strategies and techniques for instructing ELLs in the classroom which were reflected in the teacher lesson plans provided prior to or at the time of the second interview. Teacher lesson plans data were collected to demonstrate how each teacher in each program instructs ELLs in the classroom. Lesson plans were a useful data piece for answering the research question in this study since the lesson plans demonstrated strategies and skills which teachers implement or omit within the classroom for instructing ELLs and providing academic support. The second interview provided the opportunity for the interviewer to ask the teacher being
interviewed to explain and discuss the process for carrying out the written strategies and techniques written in the lesson plans for instructing ELL students in the classroom.

Data Collection

This study’s data collection procedure used qualitative methods. Two sets of teacher interviews and teacher lesson plans provided a triangulation of data which added to the integrity and trustworthiness of the research findings. Three bilingual educators with ESL college course training and ESL certifications and three English immersion educators with ESL college course training and ESL certifications were interviewed and recorded using an electronic recording device. In addition, three bilingual educators with no ESL college course training and only ESL certifications and three English immersion educators with no ESL college course training and only ESL certifications were interviewed and recorded using an electronic recording device. Furthermore, these teachers were from similar elementary grade levels and core subject areas.

Interviews were scheduled with interviewees on agreed upon days and times using a standardized interview instrument and recording device. The interview instrument consisted of interview questions which were aligned with the literature review research and the research question. Interviews were conducted verbally and in a face-to-face setting or phone call. Finally, teacher lesson plans provided support for the research findings by demonstrating how each teacher instructs ELLs in the different classroom environments. The selected data collection sources addressed the research question, “What do teachers perceive to be the greatest challenges for teaching ELLs in English immersion classes as compared to ELLs in bilingual classes?” This question was addressed by providing teacher perceptions from both the bilingual and English immersion classroom settings on the greatest challenges for teaching ELLs and teacher lesson plans which reflected strategies for instructing ELLs in each classroom.
setting. Prior to the interviews, an informed consent form was explained and signed by the participants to allow participants to be informed about the scope of the study and to provide permission to use their information in the study. The informed consent was explained and the interviewees were allowed the opportunity for questions.

The first interviews consisted of several questions seeking information pertaining to how many years of experience the teacher has with teaching ELLs and the English proficiency level of the ELLs typically taught each year. The first interview questions for English immersion teachers are located in Appendix C. The first interview questions for bilingual education teachers are located in Appendix A. In addition, the interview questions asked for information about the perceived challenges, advantages, and disadvantages of teaching ELLs in either a bilingual or English immersion classroom setting. Finally, the interview questions sought information on the support, training, and requirements for teaching ELLs in the bilingual classroom and the English immersion classroom which supports an educational environment promoting an equal educational opportunity for ELLs. Included in the interview questions was an opportunity for the interviewees to provide their opinion on whether ELLs might benefit more from a bilingual program or an English immersion program.

Interview participants also participated in a second interview in which the interviewee was able to review interview transcripts and correct any misconceptions. In addition, the second interview provided an opportunity for the researcher to ask questions which arose from the analysis of the first interview. The second interview allowed for increased clarification and accuracy of interviewee perspectives and provided an opportunity for the interviewer to ask probing questions to address participant responses. In addition, teachers provided a lesson plan prior to or at the time of the second interview which allowed the interviewer to
formulate questions on the strategies used for instructing ELLs in the classroom which was reflected in the lesson plans. The timeline and procedures for the second interview were reviewed with participants prior to the first interview (Hatch, 2002). In addition to the two sets of interviews, data collection consisted of collecting the interviewed teachers’ lesson plans. The teacher lesson plans provided an opportunity for the interviewer to formulate questions to ask interviewees during the second interview in order to demonstrate how each teacher in the different classroom settings instructs ELLs. This data piece was collected by requesting the interview participants to email them prior to the interview or bring them at the time of the interview.

Data Analysis

According to Creswell (2014), the data analysis process involves disaggregating the phenomenon as a whole into groups according to categories. The process of breaking the data apart into categories provides an opportunity for the researcher to accurately and effectively communicate the research findings. Two sets of interviews from six bilingual education teachers and six English immersion teachers were recorded and transcribed using the inductive analysis of qualitative data described by Hatch (2002). Using the inductive analysis of qualitative data described by Hatch (2002), the transcriptions were carefully read through in order to fully comprehend the information provided. Once the transcripts were carefully read through, the researcher summarized the main idea and recorded it on a summary sheet for each interview. Each interviewee had a separate summary documentation which contained a summary of the main idea of each excerpt (see Appendix E). The interview data were coded using varied colors in order to differentiate categories and the data were analyzed for reoccurring themes, relationships, and patterns. The interview data were analyzed for the educator’s perspective on the perceived challenges, advantages, and disadvantages of teaching ELLs in either a bilingual or English immersion classroom setting. Additionally, the data were analyzed for the educator’s perspective
on the amount of support, training, and requirements necessary for teaching ELLs in the bilingual classroom and the English immersion classroom which supports an educational environment promoting an equal educational opportunity for ELLs. A final category of analysis included teacher perspectives from classroom experience and specific examples on whether ELLs might benefit more from a bilingual program or an English immersion program.

After the researcher identified patterns from the interview transcripts, the researcher analyzed the categories to determine if there is sufficient data to support the findings. In addition, the researcher re-read the data to explore the possibility of identifying contradicting patterns and to determine if unexpected findings existed in the data. The researcher then analyzed the data for relationships that might have been present among the categories and for the possible conclusions that might be drawn from the discovered patterns. Once the researcher identified the relationships from the patterns, generalization statements were established using the analysis of the findings to ensure the analysis and findings could be clearly expressed.

Finally, excerpts, such as interviewee quotes, from the data were selected in order to provide examples and support for the generalizations and data findings (Hatch, 2002). The researcher also analyzed teacher lesson plans to determine strategies that teachers implement within their lessons for ELLs. Similar to the interview transcript analysis, the lesson plans were carefully read through in order to fully comprehend the information provided. After a carefully read through, the researcher coded the lesson plan documents using varied colors in order to differentiate categories and the data were analyzed for reoccurring themes, relationships, and patterns. The lesson plan data analysis focused on the educator’s implementation of strategies within the lesson to provide support for ELLs.

**Summary of the Findings**

This study explored and analyzed teacher perceptions of the greatest challenges for
teaching ELLs in English immersion classrooms as compared to bilingual classrooms for the purpose of benefiting school districts, parents, and educational staff members when making decisions on ELL programs and teacher training to provide the best educational setting for ELLs. The perceived challenges for both English immersion teachers and bilingual teachers indicated the similar perceptions that beginner ELLs struggle to communicate which affects their ability to interact and comprehend the academic content. In addition, English immersion teachers reported that the time it takes to support beginning ELLs is difficult to manage with all of the other needs in the classroom. Furthermore, teachers in both groups indicated that the time spent creating resources and continually checking for understanding and providing re-teaching opportunities for ELLs created an educational challenge for the teacher and other students in the classroom.

Moreover, teachers in both bilingual and English immersion indicated that there are insufficient resources provided by the district or campus to meet the needs of ELLs. Teacher’s also expressed that resources and training are limited and teachers lack support with the implementation of strategies. English immersion Teachers expressed negative perceptions on the process of identifying ELLs and rating their proficiency levels on TELPAS and had negative perceptions about being consistent in remembering to implement all of the required accommodations for ELL students each day. The challenge of accurate ELL identification and classification was emphasized by English immersion teachers for ensuring that ELLs receive appropriate content and language support in order to provide them a more equal educational opportunity. Both bilingual and English immersion teachers indicated the importance of ELL cultural awareness and values in the classroom. Overall, English immersion teacher perceptions reported that although the English immersion classroom expedited English language acquisition, beginning and intermediate ELLs lack of vocabulary and language comprehension created academic gaps in their learning.
Bilingual teacher perceptions indicated that although bilingual education provided an environment for ELLs that has limited exposure to English speaking students, it is more beneficial than English immersion since it provides more strategies and support for ELLs and the opportunity to develop proficiency in two languages. Bilingual teacher perceptions were similar to English immersion teachers indicating that younger ELLs would benefit more from English immersion since they are still developing their first language, but that older beginning and intermediate ELLs would benefit more from a bilingual education program since they struggle with communication and comprehension in English immersion and have the opportunity to transition from their native language to English.

Presentation of the Data and Results

The Challenges of Teaching Beginning ELLs

After interviewing teacher participants in English immersion and bilingual education for their perceptions on the challenges of instructing beginning ELL students, patterns and relationships emerged. The patterns that surfaced in the data with English immersion teacher perceptions, regardless of the amount of prior ELL training, indicated difficulty in communication. The communication struggle between teachers and ELLs and ELLs and peers resulted in time spent creating teacher made visual aids, repeated instruction, small group re-teaching and tutoring, and frequent checks for understanding. One English immersion teacher responded in her interview:

I watch these kids just struggle just being able to communicate with their peers, being able to communicate with me, and be able to do any of our second grade work. They just weren’t able to. And I can remember, I would print out pictures for like spelling words and also print out any kind of sentence stems for them to try to help them but it was definitely a challenge. (Participant 3, Interview 1)
The bilingual education teachers had similar perceptions with the English immersion teachers that beginning ELLs struggle to understand concepts, vocabulary, and lessons concepts. As one bilingual teacher reported, “The challenge with them is that they cannot understand the lesson taught. It is very challenging to find the time and the way to get them immersed in the English language (Participant 9, Interview 1). Other bilingual education teachers responded that it is challenging for the beginning ELL to integrate Spanish and English when the ELL is much stronger in Spanish but at a beginner level in English (Participant 10, Interview 1). Another bilingual teacher perception emphasized the challenge of teaching beginning ELLs who were not proficient in either the native language or English (Participant 11, Interview 1).

In addition to the communication challenges for ELLs with their teachers and peers, other patterns and relationships which emerged in the interview data consisted of both bilingual and English immersion teachers reporting a lack of time to create the needed resources for beginning ELLs to be successful. Teachers also added that beginning ELLs need significant re-teaching and tutoring time spent with the teacher which makes it difficult to meet the varied needs of all of their students and to sufficiently differentiate for all the learning needs of their classrooms. English immersion teachers also explained the challenge of academic struggles for beginning ELLs. This pattern indicated that ELLs who are significantly limited in the English language are not able to comprehend all of the instruction resulting in academic gaps and delayed academic progression.

One English immersion teacher with additional college course ELL training reported:

A challenge that I’ve also noticed is when we’re doing whole group activities sometimes they’ll be unengaged gazing off because they’re not understanding and not keeping up with the language. There’s a language barrier, so I think they’ll understand a couple of words here and there, but because they don’t understand the majority of it, they just think, oh I
can check out or oh I’m not going to understand what she’s saying so I’m kind of lost already. (Participant 4, Interview 1)

The perceived challenges for both English immersion teachers and bilingual teachers indicated the similar perceptions that beginner ELLs struggled to communicate with the teacher and peers which affects their ability to interact and comprehend the academic content. In addition, both the bilingual and English immersion teacher categories reported that the time it takes to reteach, continually monitor understanding, and create visual, academic, and linguistic supports for ELLs is difficult to manage with all of the other needs in the classroom.

**The Challenges of Teaching Intermediate ELLs**

English immersion and bilingual teacher perceptions on the challenges of teaching intermediate ELLs responded showing interview data patterns of ELL struggles in comprehension as a result of a lack of academic vocabulary and understanding of the English language such as; multiple meaning words and figurative language. Teachers in both categories indicated that intermediate ELLs’ lack of understanding of English vocabulary creates the challenge of teachers needing to spend classroom instructional time with ELLs to continually check for understanding, re-teach in small group instruction, and create additional resources to provide the support for ELLs to progress academically and linguistically. One English immersion teacher reported:

Teachers need to take the time to pre-teach the vocabulary. Taking the time to explain the text, which is a lot more work for the educator, I would say is really challenging. In my case, almost half of my classroom has been ELLs and trying to make sure that they have that vocabulary or understand what’s being said, takes up a lot of time. (Participant 5, Interview 1)

English immersion teacher participants also indicated that the amount of time required for the teacher to spend supporting ELLs in the classroom prevents the teacher from providing enough
time to differentiate for all the learning needs of her students. One teacher reported, “I feel like I’m not really able to differentiate for the high students as much as I would like because I have so many ELLs and I have to try to meet them where they are” (Participant 5, Interview 1). Another teacher elaborated on the challenge to provide an equitable learning environment for all students while spending the needed time with ELLs. She responded about one of her ELLs:

He needs one on one time which is a challenge because when I’m with him helping him read and write, that takes away from my ability to help the other kids in the classroom. So I’ve got to be conscious that I have to be in two places at once and spread myself as much as possible without taking away from anyone. (Participant 1, Interview 1)

Bilingual teacher interview data also showed patterns of the challenge of teaching ELLs in two languages. One of the challenges reported was integrating learning in two languages when proficiency levels are different in each such as, if ELLs are more proficient in Spanish than English, it creates the challenge for learning the content in the weaker proficiency language. In addition, as ELLs transition more from their first language to their second language, it creates a challenge for confusing the two. Another bilingual teacher participant explained that the challenges of teaching ELLs in the bilingual classroom include teaching both academic content and language and connecting the two languages for ELLs. One bilingual teacher responded, “I feel that the greatest challenge is reaching all of my children with such different academic and linguistic levels and teaching them both content and two languages at the same time” (Participant 11, Interview 1).

English immersion and bilingual teacher interview data revealed patterns on the challenges of teaching ELLs in the classroom in the amount of time and effort to pre-teach vocabulary, provide schema, and additional academic and linguistic support before, during, and after the lesson.

Table 2 shows the teacher participants’ perceptions on the challenges of instructing beginning and intermediate ELLs in the bilingual and English immersion classrooms.
### Table 2

*Teacher Perceptions on the Challenges of Instructing ELLs*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Participants</th>
<th>Beginning ELL Instructional Challenges</th>
<th>Intermediate ELL Instructional Challenges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P 1 (EI)</td>
<td>Academic struggles</td>
<td>Academic struggles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Struggle to communicate</td>
<td>Lack of background knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Extra time needed re-teaching</td>
<td>Struggles with multi-meaning English words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Differentiating struggles</td>
<td>Struggles in comprehension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P 2 (EI)</td>
<td>Language Acquisition is difficult for older ELLs</td>
<td>Lack of academic vocabulary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P 3 (EI)</td>
<td>Communication struggles Visual aids necessary</td>
<td>Academic struggle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of support for teaching beginning ELLs</td>
<td>Communication struggle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Academic disadvantage</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of cultural understanding</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P 4 (EI)</td>
<td>Language barrier of ELLs not understanding instruction</td>
<td>Lack of understanding instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Small group re-teach and peer tutoring needed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P 5 (EI)</td>
<td>Communication struggles Needs repeated instructions Check for understanding</td>
<td>Needs pre-taught vocabulary and textual meaning explained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Needs visuals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P 6 (EI)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Communication struggles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of understanding figurative language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Time demands to pre-plan instructional strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P 7 (B)</td>
<td>Communication struggles</td>
<td>Communication struggles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P 8 (B)</td>
<td>Challenges teaching ELLs not proficient in the native or second language</td>
<td>Time demands to provide background knowledge and visuals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P 9 (B)</td>
<td>Lack of vocabulary</td>
<td>Limited vocabulary and comprehension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Time demands to plan strategies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P 10 (B)</td>
<td>Struggles integrating learning in two languages when proficiency levels are different in each</td>
<td>Struggles with transitioning from first to the second language in reading and writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P 11 (B)</td>
<td>Teacher struggles to bridge and connect two languages</td>
<td>Teacher struggles to teach both academic content and language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P 12 (B)</td>
<td>Lack of parental support with English homework</td>
<td>Challenges teaching English specifically vowel sounds</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
District and Campus Support through Resources and Training

**Resources.** Teacher interviews showed patterns on the challenges of teaching both beginning and intermediate ELLs in the area of district and campus support. Teachers in both bilingual and English immersion indicated through interview data that there are insufficient resources provided by the district or campus to meet the needs of ELLs in the classroom. Teachers reported that the limited resources provided were mostly inaccessible, irrelevant, and ineffective. Most teachers emphasized the challenge of having to create their own resources such as visuals, vocabulary support, and sentence stems in order to support their ELLs various needs in the classroom. An English immersion teacher responded:

> You want them to all learn at their highest potential. You feel like you want to do those things but you don’t have what it takes to do it, whether it’s because you don’t have the support, or you don’t have the time, or you don’t have the resources (Participant 3, Interview 1).

In addition, all teacher categories responded that there is only one staff member designated as an ELL coach to work with the campus teachers and ELL students throughout the school year. Teachers indicated in their interviews that having only one ELL coach was an insufficient resource since there were too many ELL students on campus to sufficiently support with one ELL coach. One English immersion teacher reported about her campus ELL coach after 10 weeks of school, “it’s still pretty early on in the year where we haven’t gotten much because I know she’s still testing all the students and doing paperwork and things like that” (Participant 4, Interview 1). The limited resources contribute to teachers’ perceived challenges for teaching ELLs in both the English immersion classroom and the bilingual classroom.
Training. After interviewing teachers on the perceptions of the type of training they have received for instructing ELLs, most teachers responded that training for ELLs is limited and mostly teacher initiated. Teachers’ perspectives on training included that it is very limited and insufficient and lacks the support with the implementation of strategies. Teachers also verbalized that the trainings are not always relevant or sufficient. One English immersion teacher elaborated, “I feel like I’ve had the same training over and over and I really don’t feel like I’ve had anything that’s really in-depth which would be a lot more helpful to me as a teacher who deals with ELLs” (Participant 3, Interview 1).

The bilingual teachers’ perceptions on types of training received for instructing ELLs were somewhat more positive with a couple of responses including that bilingual teachers receive more training than monolingual teachers and are better equipped to successfully teach ELLs and meet their various academic and linguistic needs. One bilingual teacher responded:

bilingual teachers are given much more training and support. There is always the issue of some materials not being available in Spanish, but the training the bilingual teachers have received has always been much more in-depth and relevant than my monolingual colleagues.” (Participant 11, Interview 1)

In addition, the bilingual teachers were able to recall more specific training for instructing ELLs than the English immersion teachers. Some of the specific trainings the bilingual teachers expressed were Guided Language Acquisition Instruction (GLAD), Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP), and Spanish Language Arts and Reading (SLAR). Another bilingual teacher also expressed that teacher training for instructing ELLs is sufficient and includes peer-teacher observation time and strategies for ELLs.

Table 3 shows the teacher participants’ perceptions on the resources and training received to instruct ELLs in the bilingual and English immersion classrooms.
Table 3

*Teacher Perceptions on Resources and Training for Instructing ELLs*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Participants</th>
<th>Resources</th>
<th>Training</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P 1 (EI)</td>
<td>Only one staff member for the campus to support ELLs</td>
<td>Training is limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More ELL support needed in the classroom</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P 2 (EI)</td>
<td>Lack of support</td>
<td>Training is limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher made visuals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Peer tutoring</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P 3 (EI)</td>
<td>One language coach</td>
<td>Teacher initiated training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Irrelevant and ineffective resources</td>
<td>Repetitious and irrelevant training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P 4 (EI)</td>
<td>Limited resources</td>
<td>Training is limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>One language coach</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P 5 (EI)</td>
<td>Limited resources</td>
<td>Training is limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>One language coach</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P 6 (EI)</td>
<td>Vocabulary cards</td>
<td>Limited training and mostly teacher initiated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ELL coach each day for 45 minutes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P 7 (B)</td>
<td>Limited support</td>
<td>Training is limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P 8 (B)</td>
<td>Insufficient resources</td>
<td>Training is limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P 9 (B)</td>
<td>Professional development</td>
<td>Professional development during the school year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Curriculum resources</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bilingual Coordinator</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Instructional Specialist</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P 10 (B)</td>
<td>Strategies for instructing ELLs</td>
<td>Sufficient training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quarterly meetings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Peer-teacher observations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strategies for instructing ELLs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P 11 (B)</td>
<td>Same classroom materials for both English students and ELLs</td>
<td>Specialized training for ELLs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adequate resources,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P 12 (B)</td>
<td>Insufficient resources and mostly teacher created</td>
<td>Various training and some teacher-initiated or involving peer teacher mentoring</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Teacher Requirements for Instructing ELLs

Teachers have specific requirements in the state of Texas for instructing ELLs and supporting their academic and linguistic progress. One of the requirements is to administer the Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS). The TELPAS is a test for ELL students to take in the areas of listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

**TELPAS.** The TELPAS test rates the ELL student in the domains of beginner, intermediate, advanced, or advanced high. ELL students who have minimal or no English development may score in the beginning proficiency domain of the TELPAS assessment. ELLs who are limited in English proficiency with some development may score in the intermediate domain. ELL students who are able to proficiently engage in grade level English instruction with some language support may score as advanced, and ELL students who need minimal language support to successfully achieve grade level academics comparable with their English speaking peers may receive a score of advanced high (Educator Guide TELPAS Grades K–12 2017, 2018). Teachers and administrators collaborate in an effort to accurately identify the correct domain in which each ELL student scores using student writing samples and teacher observations. The process for identifying the correct domain for student levels of proficiency and progress may somewhat vary depending on individual teacher and administrator interpretation of proficiency level descriptors (PLDs).

English immersion teachers had negative perceptions on the process of identifying ELLs and rating their proficiency levels on TELPAS. Teachers stated that the ELL TELPAS rating training and test every year created stress and was a struggle to pass. One English immersion teacher explained:

The TELPAS test that we have to take to be raters is ridiculous because it is harder than it needs to be. Teachers who are so competent are having to take the test two or three
times. That’s not how we should do it. I don’t think teachers should be stressed out taking the TELPAS (Participant 2, Interview 1).

Teachers further explained that they are required to complete training and pass the raters test and that the subjectivity of the rating process makes it inaccurate and inconsistent for ELL identification (Participant 4, Interview 1). One teacher responded:

we ask the students what they would like to learn this year, and we rate them based on their responses. . . . They are graded between beginner, intermediate, advanced, and high advanced. Their grade depends on if they give a complete sentence or a complete thought. By the end of the year in Kindergarten, we just rate them on speaking, listening, and reading . . . I don’t know if I would consider that a great one to rate them on. I think they need something more authentic like just day to day conversations where they’re sitting and listening. I think that’s a better way of assessing them rather than just asking them one question and getting a response. (Participant 4, Interview 1)

**Accommodations.** In addition to TELPAS rating for ELLs, teachers are required to implement instructional accommodation for ELL students and document the accommodations which were implemented throughout the year in order to help them be successful in the classroom. English immersion teachers had negative perceptions about being consistent in remembering to implement all of the required accommodations for ELL students each day. One English immersion teacher reported, “I think that’s one of the biggest things is remembering the accommodations because you want to give them all of the support that they need and not hinder them from learning because you didn’t remember to provide an accommodation” (Participant 1, Interview 1).

Teachers have different methods for remembering to implement accommodations including tools such as daily spreadsheets or checklists. Although teachers must comply with the requirements for supporting ELLs in their academic and linguistic progression, many of the
English immersion teachers perceived that it is not sufficient for ensuring ELL success and an equal educational opportunity.

**Educational Opportunity for ELLs**

ELLs have varying levels of English language proficiency and comprehension which requires teachers to make purposeful plans for meeting the diverse needs of ELLs in the classroom in order to ensure that they receive an equal educational opportunity as compared with their English proficient peers. English immersion teacher interview data referring to the perceived educational opportunity of ELLs in their classrooms reported a mostly negative view of ELL equal educational opportunity due to unidentified or misidentified ELL classification, cultural differences, lack of effective resources and training, use of native language to help transition to second language, and parental miscommunication. One English immersion teacher explained about ineffective resources:

> I feel like it’s just the bare minimum. I would like it to go deeper to tell me what to do. What do I do if they’re struggling with comprehension? . . . I might be given what to do if ELLs are struggling with reading, but what if they’re struggling with skills that are even deeper than that? Where do I go? What do I do? (Participant 3, Interview 1).

However, bilingual teachers had a more positive perception of ELLs equal educational opportunity due to their ability to use their native language to transition to the second language, to have transitional time to develop a second language, and to have bilingual instructional resources to provide support for linguistic and academic learning. In addition, the bilingual teachers perceived the classroom environment to be more culturally familiar and welcoming to the ELLs. A bilingual teacher responded, “Bilingual teachers are highly trained in language acquisition, contrastive grammar, and strategies to help students develop skills in both languages” (Participant 11, Interview 1).
English immersion teachers indicated in the interview data that they perceived ELLs to be lacking an equal educational opportunity. One reason identified was that some ELLs are not accurately identified as English language learners in need of academic and linguistic support. One English immersion teacher explained why ELLs are not always receiving an equal educational opportunity by responding:

If the parent does not mark the language they speak at home, for either fear it’s going to label their kid, or not understanding it themselves, they don’t get any help from our district. So then, they don’t get any other accommodations and they’re expected to do things at the same level as their native speaking peers. And that is just unfair (Participant 2, Interview 1).

Unidentified ELLs. In addition to teacher’s perceptions on ELL misclassification due to the subjectivity of the TELPAS rating system, teachers also expressed concern for unidentified ELLs as a result of parent misunderstanding of the purpose, and process of the ESL program. Many states, including Texas, administer a Home Language Survey (HLS) to parents upon student enrollments. The HLS has English language questions which vary between states, with some states not using the HLS to identify the English language proficiency (ELPs). Some example questions on the HLS include information about what language the child first learned and what language is mostly spoken in the home by the parent and by the child (National Research Council, 2011).

Following the administration of the HLS and ELL identification, parents, however, can decline to allow their child to enroll in the various programs including ESL or bilingual programs offered within the school district. As the English immersion teacher indicated in her above response, in order for ELLs to receive ESL or bilingual services in Texas, the parent must give consent (Texas Education Agency, 2019).
This option creates the necessity to fully communicate the process and purpose of the ELL programs to the parent to ensure that the parent makes an informed decision on the educational program placement for their child. Many times, ELL parents are also LEP and, according to some teachers’ perceptions, are unable to make informed decisions for a lack of communicative understanding of the program options and the process. In some cases, ELL students are not identified correctly or do not receive parental consent for ELL programs as a result of the lack of communication and understanding between the school staff and parents making educational decisions for ELL students (Participant 2, Interview 1).

English immersion teachers expressed in the interview data that through this process, in some cases, ELLs were not being identified for the ESL program due to parental fear of their child being labeled an ELL and fear of their child missing regular classroom instructional time due to ELL services. These unidentified ELL students may not receive any added content or language support services or instructional accommodations to provide them a more equal educational opportunity. One English immersion teacher elaborated:

I think a lot of parents are afraid that the kids will either get labeled or get pulled out of the classroom and they may not receive the same instruction, so they will just say that they speak English. I think there’s a stigma that’s associated with being an English language learner and maybe the parents feel that the child will not benefit if they are being pulled out of the classroom, and they don’t really understand what ESL means. The parents don’t understand what kind of services they will receive if they’re truly identified as an ELL. Maybe parents just need to be more educated on what it’s all about . . . they don’t all understand the forms that they fill out for ELL identification.(Participant 5, Interview 1).
ELL identification and classification is one of the perceived challenges expressed by English immersion teachers for ensuring that ELLs receive appropriate content and language support in order to provide them a more equal educational opportunity.

Cultural values. In addition to ELL identification and accurate classification, both bilingual and English immersion teachers expressed a perception of the importance of ELL cultural awareness and values in the classroom for creating an equal educational opportunity for ELLs. English immersion teacher interview data showed perceptions of lacking cultural awareness and values in the classroom creating a challenging teaching and learning environment which was culturally unfamiliar and disconnected for ELLs, whereas, bilingual teachers perceived that ELLs felt more culturally valued and connected in the bilingual education classrooms. A bilingual teacher responded:

I believe the advantage that our ELLs have is due to the bilingual program’s nature; we’re able to be more culturally aware . . . I always provide my students with information about how cultural influences impact their learning. I try to be very cognizant as to where my students are from and include information about those cultures and traditions in my lessons.

(Participant 12, Interview 1)

Another bilingual teacher elaborated on how her culturally rich classroom creates a learning environment which is welcoming and comfortable for ELLs by elaborating:

When someone comes in new, especially from another country, it can be hard for the child socially and to feel comfortable and like part of that unity. The bilingual education class lends itself to more opportunity for building that cultural aspect than English immersion. I feel that it’s easier for kids to make mistakes or have a hard time with their peers that are similar to them and have similar experiences. They’re usually very encouraging to each other. They know sometimes that it is hard to learn a new language. . . . You know
sometimes they get embarrassed when they are with their monolingual counterparts and they can’t say something right. (Participant 10, Interview 1)

English immersion teacher interviews indicated perceptions of the learning environment lacking cultural acknowledgment and values which creates more of a challenge for instructing and connecting ELLs in the classroom and lessons by responding, “I think what we tend to do is we almost want them to erase their identity and that’s not right. You have to value their culture” (Participant 2, Interview 1). Another English immersion teacher explained:

I wish more parents of our ELLs would come in and kind of sit down with the teacher and tell them their background because we have no way of knowing. . . . I’ve had two students come in from Mexico. I didn’t know they were from Mexico until somebody actually, said to me, “Oh they don’t speak any English and the parents don’t speak any English.” It’s very hard to be able to communicate with those kids or be able to communicate with the parents. (Participant 3, Interview 1)

Bilingual teachers had a more positive perception on the cultural learning environment for ELLs in bilingual education and how it positively contributes to the learning experience of ELLs, whereas, English immersion teachers perceived cultural awareness and acknowledgment to be more of a challenge for instructing ELLs.

**English Immersion**

English immersion for ELL students includes instruction which is solely in the English language in a mainstream classroom and with a focus on English acquisition (Developing ELL Programs: Glossary, 2015). In English immersion classrooms, a brief daily pull-out or push-in meeting may occur with ELL students which are identified to qualify for the ESL program. The ESL program is instructed in English with little or no use of the student’s native language (Developing ELL Programs: Glossary, 2015).
**Advantages.** English immersion teacher perceptions on the advantages of English immersion for instructing ELLs showed that for beginning ELLs, the English immersion classroom expedited English language acquisition, however, ELLs lack of vocabulary and language comprehension created academic gaps in their learning. As a result, English immersion teachers perceived that beginning ELLs might benefit more from bilingual instruction. In addition, English immersion teachers indicated that for more advanced ELLs, the English immersion classroom, with vocabulary support, might be the best placement. Another English immersion participant perception indicated that English immersion provided an opportunity for younger ELLs to have an easier transition to the second language with the exposure to an English only classroom. She also expressed that older students, who are learning a second language, would benefit more from a bilingual classroom. The participant explained that ELLs are sponges for the second language and learn it easily and that early childhood ELLs acquire a second language easier than older students (Participant 4, Interview 1).

Overall, English immersion teacher perceptions indicated that the advantages of English immersion for ELLs were expedited language acquisition and linguistically beneficial for early childhood students who are in the beginning stages of learning language and also higher level ELLs who may not require much support.

**Disadvantages.** English immersion teacher perceptions on the disadvantages of English immersion for instructing ELLs showed that beginning ELL students in intermediate or upper grades struggle to communicate, comprehend academic vocabulary and content, and assimilate socially and culturally. As a result, English immersion teachers perceive beginning ELLs to have a disadvantage in English immersion due to their lack of ability to communicate and comprehend instructions and directions. One English immersion teacher responded, “They need more one-on-one time that they are probably not getting from the teacher” (Participant 1, Interview 1).
Another English immersion teacher elaborated on the disadvantage of English immersion for beginning ELLs, “It’s like taking the training wheels off before they even can learn how to ride a bike” (Participant 2, Interview 1).

One English immersion teacher expressed on the challenge of instructing beginning ELLs in the classroom as:

The hardest thing is having 20 to 21 kids in the classroom and if you’re having to spend, let’s say, 75% of your day with just these ELL newcomers, then it’s very hard to balance. I need to make sure I am meeting the needs of all my other students and also helping this newcomer. I feel like it does take away from the other kids in the class who may have learning disabilities or other needs. Making sure you’re meeting those needs at the same time can make you feel like you’re spread very thin and you can’t get to all the kids that you need to during the day because you’re one person. If this one little ELL newcomer that doesn’t know any English is depending on just you, it can be very much of a challenge . . . it can really frustrate you as a teacher and make you feel like you are not reaching anybody.

(Participant 3, Interview 1)

Overall, English immersion teacher perceptions were that it is challenging to instruct beginning and intermediate ELLs in English immersion classrooms since they struggle both academically and with communication. English immersion teachers shared that the lack of support and resources required more time from the teacher to instruct ELLs creating an instructional inequality and lack of time for differentiating for all students.

**Bilingual Education**

Initiated by a Texas bill following the move toward civil rights in the early 1960s, the United States enacted the Bilingual Education Act also called the Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 1968. According to Stewner-Manzanares (1988), Title VII allowed for
federal funding of Limited English Speaking Ability (LESA) students through the bilingual program. This program was for the purpose of providing a more equitable education for LEP students and addressing their limited English proficiency educational need. As a result of Title VII, LEP students were given an opportunity for instruction in their home language and allowed cultural expression and recognition.

**Advantages.** Bilingual teacher perceptions on the advantage of instructing ELLs within the bilingual program were that it provides the opportunity for the ELL to be proficient in two languages. In addition, bilingual teachers indicated that ELLs could transfer learning from their native language to their second language and achieve greater comprehension of the content. Bilingual teachers further expressed that teachers within the bilingual program are better trained to work with ELLs than in English immersion and that the bilingual program is more beneficial for ELLs in building confidence and cultural familiarity. Bilingual teacher perceptions reflected that ELLs receive more support in the bilingual education program. One bilingual teacher expressed:

> I think students who have a strong foundation in their first language, once we start integrating English; they are more easily able to go from one language to the other. When the ELLs can learn first with their dominant language and then have English added, it kind of cuts out the part of worrying about learning English and then learning the skill too. (Participant 10, Interview 1).

**Disadvantages.** Bilingual teachers expressed their perceptions of the disadvantages of bilingual education by responding that ELLs sometimes rely too much on their native language instead of focusing on learning a second language. In addition, bilingual teacher perception were that ELLs have limited exposure to fluent English speaking students within the bilingual program and also may get confused with the academic content when learning in two different languages. Moreover, bilingual teachers also elaborated that a disadvantage to the bilingual program may be
that ELLs are segregated from monolingual students. One bilingual teacher expressed, “Often bilingual students are grouped together and do not have the opportunity to develop relationships with monolingual peers. . . . It often creates a segregation between the bilingual and monolingual children” (Participant 11, Interview 1).

**Bilingual versus English Immersion**

Although some research indicates an academic and linguistic advantage for ELLs in bilingual education, there are also studies which have demonstrated an advantage for ELLs instructed in English immersion (Alotaibi, 2015; Dong et al., 2018; Gleason, 2014; Klatte, Steinbrink & Bergstr, 2016; Meyer, 2018; Wood, 2014). Teachers in both English immersion and bilingual education expressed their perceptions on the challenges of instructing ELLs in bilingual education and English immersion.

English immersion teacher perceptions reported that although the English immersion classroom expedited English language acquisition, beginning and intermediate ELLs lack of vocabulary and language comprehension created academic gaps in their learning. In addition, the lack of support and resources in the English immersion classroom requires more time from the teacher to instruct ELLs creating an instructional inequality and lack of time for differentiating for all students. However, for more advanced ELLs, the English immersion classroom might be the best placement with vocabulary support. Further perceptions were that English immersion provided an opportunity for younger ELLs to have an easier transition to the second language with the exposure to an English only classroom but older students learning a second language would benefit more from a bilingual classroom. One English immersion Kindergarten teacher participant elaborated about younger ELLs, “they’re sponges so when they hear, they’re just soaking it all in . . . right now, we are learning our letters and that is a very basic level. That’s where everyone starts out” (Participant 4, Interview 1).
Bilingual teachers expressed that an advantage to bilingual education is the development of dual language proficiency for ELLs. Bilingual teachers also expressed that ELLs need more time to develop academic language and that teachers need more training to instruct ELLs. Bilingual teacher perceptions indicated that although bilingual education provided an environment for ELLs that has limited exposure to English speaking students, it is more beneficial than English immersion since it provides more strategies and support for ELLs and the opportunity to develop proficiency in two languages.

Bilingual teacher perceptions were similar to English immersion teachers reflecting that younger ELLs would benefit more from English immersion since they are still developing their first language but that older beginning and intermediate ELLs would benefit more from a bilingual education program since they struggle with communication and comprehension in English immersion. Bilingual teachers also perceived that bilingual instruction builds confidence in ELLs and allows them to retain their cultural heritage, identity, and native language. One bilingual teacher felt that a disadvantage of bilingual education is the segregation between bilingual and monolingual students. The bilingual teacher explained, “Often bilingual students are grouped together and do not have the opportunity to develop relationships. While this builds strong bonds between the bilingual children, it often creates a segregation between the bilingual and monolingual children” (Participant 11, Interview 1). Overall, bilingual teachers expressed the advantage of ELLs developing proficiency in two languages and transferring learning more efficiently in bilingual programs.

Table 4 shows teacher participant perceptions’ on the bilingual versus English immersion program for the best placement for instructing ELLs.
Table 4

**Teacher Perceptions on Bilingual Education versus English Immersion**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Participants</th>
<th>Bilingual Education versus English Immersion for ELL Instruction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P 1 (EI)</td>
<td>Bilingual education is beneficial for beginning ELLs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P 2 (EI)</td>
<td>Language acquisition is easier for younger versus older ELLs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P 3 (EI)</td>
<td>Beginning ELLs would benefit from bilingual education as a result of ELLs lack of academic understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P 4 (EI)</td>
<td>English immersion is more beneficial for ELL language development in English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P 5 (EI)</td>
<td>Bilingual education is beneficial for older students who are limited in English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P 6 (EI)</td>
<td>Bilingual education is beneficial for ELLs but there are pros and cons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P 7 (B)</td>
<td>Bilingual education is beneficial for ELLs to become proficient in two languages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P 8 (B)</td>
<td>Bilingual education is beneficial for limited English ELLs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P 9 (B)</td>
<td>Early childhood ELLs benefit more from English immersion since they are still developing both languages, however, older ELLs benefit more from bilingual.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P 10 (B)</td>
<td>Bilingual education is beneficial for ELLs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It builds confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It allows for easier learning and transition to the second language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P 11 (B)</td>
<td>Bilingual education is beneficial especially for younger ELLs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P 12 (B)</td>
<td>Bilingual education is beneficial for ELLs to be proficient in two languages.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Second Interview and Lesson Plan Strategies**

After interviewing teacher participants in English immersion and bilingual education for their perceptions on the challenges of instructing beginning ELL students in a second interview, member checking, receiving clarification on first interviews, and looking at their lesson plans to discuss strategies which are implemented into instruction to support ELLs both academically and linguistically, patterns and relationships emerged.
Lesson Plan Process

English immersion teachers and bilingual teachers both reported that their structure and format of lessons consistently begin with an engagement activity to attain the learner’s attention, and stimulate the learner’s schema through the introduction of a topic or concept. Following the engagement portion of the lesson, teachers in both groups reported that they have a direct teach and encourage students to talk with one another and participate in the lesson through whole class and random response strategies. The lesson plan process then progresses to a guided practice and independent practice when students are placed in collaborative groups and work together to practice concepts. Finally, teachers consistently explained that a small group re-teaching opportunity was provided to ELLs and struggling learners using additional strategies and manipulatives. Most teachers explained that they ended the lesson cycle by providing students the opportunity to share and reflect in their collaborative groups or whole class.

Pre-Teaching Activities for ELLs

Both sets of teachers consistently expressed that they use visuals to aid in comprehension, connection, and relevancy for the learner and build on background knowledge through scaffolding. Both sets of teachers also discussed similar strategies implemented in their lessons to ensure ELL understanding and to provide the support necessary for success. Strategies which most teachers elaborated on using in lessons for ELLs were sentence stems or frames to help ELLs produce complete and accurate sentence structure while building their confidence in initiating sentence formation. In addition, most of the teachers in bilingual and English immersion expressed that they often pre-teach vocabulary providing visuals and activities to reinforce comprehension and retention of the text. One English immersion teacher explained, “The strategies help them to feel included and part of the lesson. In addition, it reassures them and provides them additional support
that they otherwise wouldn’t have and gives them a sense of belonging” (Participant 1, Interview 2).

**Teacher Strategies for Instructing ELLs**

During the direct teach portion of the lesson, both sets of teachers consistently reported that students are encouraged to collaborate with one another throughout the lesson to provide opportunities for ELLs and all students to practice language, share ideas, and learn from one another. Teachers in both programs explained that they use anchor charts, video clips, pictures, and modeling strategies to provide varied learning style opportunities to students and additional support for ELLs who are learning the language and content. Teachers discussed the need for whole class responses and random calling responses which allows all students to prepare to participate and gave ELLs the opportunity to answer questions in class. Teachers indicated that one of the strategies that are most effective is to require ELLs to answer in complete sentences and to provide modeling and support to practice correct sentence structure and responding in a complete thought. One English immersion teacher responded:

One thing that is important for ELLs is wait time. Just because an ELL student is not the first one to shoot their hand in the air, does not mean they don’t have a response. For many, they may think in their native language and are trying to translate it before they respond. I believe that I need to give them the time that they need to do so. I try to use as many images, videos, illustrations, text with graphic features as I can. Also, I try to connect with them and use stories that are deeply rooted in their culture. I think it is important to get them involved, and when I do, I really see them shine. (Participant 6, Interview 2)

Teachers in both categories discussed the importance of checking for understanding often, repeating directions, and providing visuals and manipulatives to aid ELLs in guided and independent practice during the lesson cycle.
Finally, both sets of teachers explained that they provided support throughout the lesson and after the lesson by implementing collaborative groups, peer tutoring, and teacher small group re-teaching instruction. A few English immersion teachers reported that they used Google Translator with beginning ELL newcomers who were significantly limited in the English language. Some of the bilingual teachers explained that they use listening stations to further develop ELL listening and speaking skills. Most of the bilingual teachers and a few of the English immersion teachers discussed the importance of creating a classroom environment and lessons with cultural diversity to provide familiarity and comfort to the ELLs.

**Summary**

This research study examined the perceptions of teachers of LEP students in both the English and bilingual classroom settings to explore their greatest challenges. The research question addressed was: “What do teachers perceive to be the greatest challenges for teaching ELLs in English immersion classes as compared to ELLs in bilingual classes?” Teacher perceptions of the greatest challenges of teaching LEP students in both settings was important to understand the most effective approach and setting for ELLs to develop academically and linguistically.

This chapter described and explained the sample, methodology, analysis, findings, and results of the research study. This study’s research design consisted of a qualitative case study inquiry involving participants in natural life settings (Creswell, 2018). This study’s qualitative data collection procedure consisted of two sets of teacher interviews and teacher lesson plans to provide a triangulation of data which added to the integrity and trustworthiness of the research findings.

The perceived challenges for both English immersion teachers and bilingual teachers indicated the similar perceptions that beginner ELLs struggled to communicate with the teacher and peers which affects their ability to interact and comprehend the academic content. In addition, both the bilingual and English immersion teacher categories reported that the time it takes to re-
teach, continually monitor understanding, and create visual, academic, and linguistic supports for beginning ELLs is difficult to manage with all of the other needs in the classroom.

Furthermore, English immersion and bilingual teacher interview data revealed patterns on the challenges of teaching intermediate ELLs in the classroom in the amount of time and effort to pre-teach vocabulary, provide schema, and additional academic and linguistic support before, during, and after the lesson. Teachers in both groups indicated that the time spent creating resources and continually checking for understanding and providing re-teaching opportunities for ELLs created an educational challenge for the teacher and other students in the classroom.

Teachers in both bilingual and English immersion indicated through interview data that there are insufficient resources provided by the district or campus to meet the needs of ELLs in the classroom. Moreover, mostly English immersion teacher’s perspectives on training included that it is very limited and insufficient and lacks the support with the implementation of strategies. Teachers reported their perceptions on the teacher requirements every year for instructing ELLs and expressed negative perceptions on the process of identifying ELLs and rating their proficiency levels on TELPAS. Teachers stated that the TELPAS training and test every year created stress for teachers and is a struggle to pass. Teachers also had negative perceptions about being consistent in remembering to implement all of the required accommodations for ELL students each day.

ELL identification and classification is one of the perceived challenges expressed by English immersion teachers for ensuring that ELLs receive appropriate content and language support in order to provide them a more equal educational opportunity. Moreover, both bilingual and English immersion teachers expressed a perception of the importance of ELL cultural awareness and values in the classroom for creating an equal educational opportunity for ELLs.

Overall, English immersion teacher perceptions reported that although the English immersion classroom expedited English language acquisition, beginning and intermediate ELLs
lack of vocabulary and language comprehension created academic gaps in their learning. In addition, the lack of support and resources in the English immersion classroom requires more time from the teacher to instruct ELLs creating an instructional inequality and lack of time for differentiating for all students.

Bilingual teacher perceptions indicated that although bilingual education provided an environment for ELLs that has limited exposure to English speaking students, it is more beneficial than English immersion since it provides more strategies and support for ELLs and the opportunity to develop proficiency in two languages. Bilingual teacher perceptions were similar to English immersion teachers reflecting that younger ELLs would benefit more from English immersion since they are still developing their first language, but that older beginning and intermediate ELLs would benefit more from a bilingual education program since they struggle with communication and comprehension in English immersion.
Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a presentation and evaluation of the results of this research. Researcher interpretations and evaluations will be presented according to how it relates and contributes to existing literature and the educational community. The research question will be addressed in relation to this research and a summary and discussion of the results will be explained. This chapter will also provide researcher recommendations for possible further research.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2016), over 3 million students in the United States are considered LEP. According to Hansen-Thomas et al. (2016), LEP students who enter the public school system in the United States have the challenge of learning without being proficient in the English language.

The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding about the experiences and perceptions of teachers regarding the greatest challenges which they experience instructing ELL students in the English immersion classrooms as compared to the bilingual classrooms. This study addressed the research question: “What do teachers perceive to be the greatest challenges for teaching ELLs in English immersion classes as compared to ELLs in bilingual classes?”

The results of this research may benefit school districts, parents, and educational staff members when making decisions on ELL programs and teacher training to provide the best educational setting for ELLs.

After reviewing the existing literature, a deficiency which emerged was the lack of research on teacher perceptions of the challenges of instructing ELLs both academically and linguistically in the bilingual and English immersion programs. This study provided teacher perspectives through teacher interviews and teacher lesson plans on the challenges of instructing ELLs in both the bilingual and English immersion programs.
Summary of the Results

This study addressed the research question: “What do teachers perceive to be the greatest challenges for teaching ELLs in English immersion classes as compared to ELLs in bilingual classes?”

Theories. The conceptual framework for this research is centered on Cummins (1979) Linguistic Interdependence Theory which suggests that a student’s native language and second language are interdependent and necessary for successful and optimal language acquisition. Cummins’ (1979) theory emphasized that in order for a language learner to achieve academic and linguistic success in a second language, the learner must first be proficient in the first language. When a language learner has proficiency in the first language then there can be a connection and transfer of knowledge to the second language.

Since academic vocabulary is more difficult for the language learner to acquire and takes a longer period of time to attain than conversational language, the language learner may have a difficult time cognitively processing academic content and vocabulary. However, if the first language and the second language have commonalities, the language learner will be able to more efficiently transfer academic vocabulary knowledge from the first language to the second language. In addition, a language learner would be more likely to have the ability to transfer higher level academic vocabulary knowledge from first language to the second language if the first language is sufficiently developed in the higher level vocabulary. Students who are allowed to develop academically using their first language are more easily able to transfer to the second language since their proficiency in both languages is essential for optimal comprehension and academic progression (Cummins, 1979).

Another theory which contributed to the framework of this research is the Lev Vygotsky’s (1896–1934) sociocultural theory which suggests that cognitive development transpires through
the learner’s social interactions in a shared cultural knowledge. As it relates to the language learners’ second language acquisition, this theory further implies that the language learner must first develop through social interactions or interpsychological development in order to progress to personal or intrapsychological development (Vygotsky, 1986).

**Significance.** The problem which this research addressed is that there is a lack of understanding about the experiences and perceptions of teachers regarding the challenges of instructing ELL students in the bilingual classroom as compared with the challenges they face in the English immersion classroom.

The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding about the experiences and perceptions of teachers regarding the greatest challenges which they experience instructing ELL students in the English immersion classrooms as compared to the bilingual classrooms. A qualitative case study was an appropriate method for this study as opposed to other methods since the objects of this research involved the life experiences and perspectives of people in natural settings (Hatch, 2002).

The significance of this research is to contribute research findings to the existing literature in an effort to provide support to educational leaders, teachers, and parents when making decisions on ELL programs and educational placements for ELLs. In addition, educational leaders may be provided with more information on the best training and support needed for teachers who are teaching ELLs in their classrooms. The results and conclusions of this study may help to provide support for the best educational setting for ELLs to achieve optimal linguistic and academic achievement which is equal to their English speaking peers. In addition, this study contributes to the deficiencies existing in the literature and provides more support for prior, current, and future research.
**Methodology.** This research methodology consisted of a qualitative research approach involving words as opposed to numbers using data collections such as observations, interviews, surveys, and open ended questions. The findings in this qualitative research were subjective to researcher interpretation and the data collection process involved the use of purposeful sampling. In addition, this qualitative research approach used an inductive style which focused on groups or individuals. Within the context of a qualitative research design, there are different types of research approaches including; narrative, grounded theory, phenomenology, ethnographies, and case studies. This qualitative research design included the case study inquiry approach involving the evaluation and analysis of cases and individuals using varied data collection processes (Creswell, 2018). A qualitative case study is an appropriate method for this study as opposed to other methods since the objects of this research involved the life experiences and perspectives of people in natural settings (Hatch, 2002).

The perceived challenges for both English immersion teachers and bilingual teachers indicated the similar perceptions that beginner ELLs struggle to communicate which affects their ability to interact and comprehend the academic content. In addition, English immersion teachers reported that the time it takes to support beginning ELLs is difficult to manage with all of the other needs in the classroom. Furthermore, teachers in both groups indicated that the time spent creating resources and continually checking for understanding and providing re-teaching opportunities for ELLs created an educational challenge for the teacher and other students in the classroom. Moreover, teachers in both bilingual and English immersion indicated that there are insufficient resources provided by the district or campus to meet the needs of ELLs. Teacher’s also expressed that resources and training are limited and teachers lack support with the implementation of strategies. English immersion teachers expressed negative perceptions on the process of identifying ELLs and rating their proficiency levels on TELPAS and had negative perceptions
about being consistent in remembering to implement all of the required accommodations for ELL students each day.

The challenge of accurate ELL identification and classification was emphasized by English immersion teachers for ensuring that ELLs receive appropriate content and language support in order to provide them a more equal educational opportunity and both bilingual and English immersion teachers indicated the importance of ELL cultural awareness and values in the classroom. Overall, English immersion teacher perceptions reported that although the English immersion classroom expedited English language acquisition, beginning and intermediate ELLs lack of vocabulary and language comprehension created academic gaps in their learning.

Bilingual teacher perceptions indicated that although bilingual education provided an environment for ELLs that has limited exposure to English speaking students, it is more beneficial than English immersion since it provides more strategies and support for ELLs and the opportunity to develop proficiency in two languages. Bilingual teacher perceptions were similar to English immersion teachers indicating that younger ELLs would benefit more from English immersion since they are still developing their first language, but that older beginning and intermediate ELLs would benefit more from a bilingual education program since they struggle with communication and comprehension in English immersion and have the opportunity to transition from their native language to English.

Discussion of the Results

As the researcher, my initial expectation was that the findings of this study would add to existing literature by researching teacher perspectives on the challenges of teaching ELLs in the different educational programs of bilingual and English immersion. In addition, the expected findings of this research would demonstrate the benefits of each program, through teacher perceptions, in the progression of ELLs in academics and second language acquisition.
My experience as an educator involves more than 20 years of teaching ELLs in an English immersion classroom and no educational experience teaching ELLs in a bilingual classroom. Therefore, I expected that researcher bias concerning the disadvantages of instructing ELLs in an English immersion classroom could be a risk in the accurate findings of the study. In order to minimize or eliminate any researcher or educator bias, interview questions were purposefully prepared to minimize the potential bias and encourage equitable and fair responses. In addition, interview coding and follow up interview clarification was conducted to assure accurate accounts of educator perspectives.

Some of the research findings were consistent with my initial expectations and previous literature. However, some of the findings were unexpected and added to more clarified understanding of teacher perceptions in both programs. The research findings appropriately addressed the problem in this study which was that there is a lack of understanding about the experiences and perceptions of teachers regarding the challenges of instructing ELL students in the bilingual classroom as compared with the challenges they face in the English immersion classroom. The research findings also addressed the purpose of this study which was to gain an understanding about the experiences and perceptions of teachers regarding the greatest challenges which they experience instructing ELL students in the English immersion classrooms as compared to the bilingual classrooms. Furthermore, the research findings addressed the research question, “What do teachers perceive to be the greatest challenges for teaching ELLs in English immersion classes as compared to ELLs in bilingual classes?” Overall, using the triangulation data analysis process, the findings led to researcher interpretation and evaluation of the results.

**The challenges of teaching beginning ELLs.** The patterns that surfaced in the data with English immersion and bilingual teacher perceptions indicated teacher challenges instructing ELLs as a result in ELLs’ struggle to communicate. Teachers reported that the communication struggle
between teachers and ELLs and ELLs and peers result in time spent creating teacher made visual aids, repeated instruction, small group re-teaching and tutoring, and frequent checks for understanding. This creates a teacher frustration and an inequitable classroom learning environment which hinders the differentiation for all students. A bilingual teacher reported, “The challenge with them is that they cannot understand the lesson taught. It is very challenging to find the time and the way to get them immersed in the English language” (Participant 9, Interview 1).

Further results from the research findings suggest patterns which indicated that ELLs who are significantly limited in the English language are not able to comprehend all of the instruction in English resulting in academic gaps and delayed academic progression. An English immersion teacher responded, “A challenge that I’ve also noticed is when we’re doing whole group activities sometimes they’ll be unengaged gazing off because they’re not understanding and not keeping up with the language” (Participant 4, Interview 1).

The challenges of teaching intermediate ELLs. Teachers in both bilingual and English immersion have the challenge of teaching intermediate ELLs in English. Teachers in both categories indicated that intermediate ELLs lack of understanding of English vocabulary creates the challenge of teachers needing to spend classroom instructional time with ELLs to continually check for understanding, re-teach in small group instruction, and create additional resources to provide the support for ELLs to progress academically and linguistically. An English immersion teacher explained, “Teachers need to take the time to pre-teach the vocabulary. Taking the time to explain the text, which is a lot more work for the educator, I would say is really challenging” (Participant 5, Interview 1).

English immersions teacher data results suggested that they perceive a challenge in instructing intermediate ELLs in the classroom and finding the equitable time to differentiate for all the other student needs. An English immersion teacher responded, “I feel like I’m not really
able to differentiate for the high students as much as I would like because I have so many ELLs and I have to try to meet them where they are” (Participant 5, Interview 1).

Bilingual teacher results showed challenges of instructing ELLs in two languages when proficiency levels are different in each and confusion in transitioning from the first language to the second language. A bilingual teacher elaborated, “I feel that the greatest challenge is reaching all of my children with such different academic and linguistic levels and teaching them both content and two languages at the same time” (Participant 11, Interview 1).

Both bilingual and English immersion teachers reported challenges instructing intermediate ELLs. Teachers’ perceptions indicated a need for additional staff and district provided resources for supporting ELLs academically and linguistically. Teachers in both programs expressed that additional staff and resources for instructing ELLs would allow for more time to differentiate for the needs of all students.

**District and campus support through resources and training.** Data from teachers’ perceptions in both bilingual and English immersion suggest that they perceive a challenge instructing and meeting the needs of beginner and intermediate ELLs in their classrooms due to insufficient resources provided by the district or campus. Bilingual teachers had a somewhat more positive perception of district and campus resources and support. Insufficient resources require the teachers to spend time creating resources which take away from time which might be spent differentiating for other student needs.

English immersion teachers’ data results reflected that they perceive a challenge instructing ELLs to be the lack of relevant and effective training. An English immersion teacher explained, “I feel like I’ve had the same training over and over and I really don’t feel like I’ve had anything that’s really in-depth” (Participant 3, Interview 1). Bilingual teachers had more positive perceptions on the amount and relevancy of teacher training reporting,
bilingual teachers are given much more training and support. There is always the issue of some materials not being available in Spanish, but the training the bilingual teachers have received has always been much more in-depth and relevant than my monolingual colleagues. (Participant 11, Interview 1)

Teachers need effective resources provided by the district which align with the curriculum for supporting ELLs academic vocabulary. In addition, teachers need relevant and effective training which provides specific explanation on instructional implementation. Teachers in both the bilingual program and English immersion program indicated a need for more relevant and effective training. The state and district should implement consistent, adequate, and effective ELL training for teachers who are instructing ELLs in their classrooms.

**Teacher requirements for instructing ELLs.** English immersion teacher results indicated negative perception on the teachers’ requirement to pass a raters test every year in order to rate ELLs in the categories of speaking, listening, reading, and writing. One English immersion teacher responded, The TELPAS test that we have to take to be raters is ridiculous because it is harder than it needs to be. Teachers who are so competent are having to take the test two or three times” (Participant 2, Interview 1). English immersion teachers’ data also showed negative perceptions in the requirement of remembering to implement accommodations for ELLs.

Teachers should be provided more effective training on ELL classification and the rating process. Moreover, the yearly TELPAS calibration should be evaluated for its effectiveness in preparing teachers for the ELL rating process. Furthermore, it would be beneficial for English immersion teachers to be relieved of the responsibility of rating ELLs each year and instead English Language Coaches or other ELL trained staff should have the yearly responsibility to assess and rate ELL students in collaboration with teachers.
**Educational opportunity for ELLs.** English immersion teacher interview data indicated that they have a negative perception of ELL educational opportunity in their classrooms due to unidentified or misidentified ELL classification, cultural differences, lack of effective resources, training, and parental miscommunication.

However, bilingual teachers had a more positive perception of ELLs’ equal educational opportunity due to their ability to use their native language to transition to the second language, to have transitional time to develop a second language, and to have bilingual instructional resources to provide support for linguistic and academic learning. In addition, the bilingual teachers perceived the classroom environment to be more culturally familiar and welcoming to the ELLs.

Limited English speaking parents who are enrolling their children in school should have staff support to understand the ELL process, program, services, and overall comprehension of the enrollment form. Although parents who are enrolling ELL children have the option to be provided a translator by the district, teachers perceive that these parents may not always fully understand the benefits of ELL programs. Texas school districts should ensure that parents are thoroughly informed, through an appropriate translator, on the bilingual and English immersion programs and ESL services in order to fully comprehend and have the opportunity to make the best educational decisions for their children.

**English Immersion**

**Advantages.** English immersion teacher perceptions indicated that the English immersion classroom expedited English language acquisition for ELLs, however, ELLs’ lack of vocabulary and language comprehension created academic gaps in their learning. As a result, English immersion teachers perceived that beginning ELLs might benefit more from bilingual instruction and that more advanced ELLs might benefit more the English immersion classroom with vocabulary support.
**Disadvantages.** English immersion data reflect that beginning ELL students in intermediate or upper grades struggle to communicate, comprehend academic vocabulary and content, and assimilate socially and culturally. As a result, English immersion teachers perceive beginning ELLs to have a disadvantage in English immersion due to their lack of ability to communicate and comprehend instructions and directions.

Teacher perceptions indicated a need for more support with beginning ELLs through a bilingual education option. English immersion classrooms should be provided with strong staff support and teacher resources to accelerate ELLs academically and linguistically.

**Bilingual Education**

**Advantages.** Bilingual Teacher perceptions on the advantage of instructing ELLs within the bilingual program were that it provides the opportunity for the ELL to be proficient in two languages. In addition, bilingual teachers indicated that ELLs could transfer learning from their native language to their second language and achieve greater comprehension of the content. Bilingual teachers further expressed that teachers within the bilingual program are better trained to work with ELLs than in English immersion and that the bilingual program is more beneficial for ELLs in building confidence and cultural familiarity.

**Disadvantages.** Bilingual teachers expressed their perceptions of the disadvantages of bilingual education by responding that ELLs sometimes rely too much on their native language instead of focusing on learning a second language. In addition, bilingual teacher perception were that ELLs have limited exposure to fluent English speaking students within the bilingual program and also may get confused with the academic content when learning in two different languages. Moreover, bilingual teachers also elaborated that a disadvantage to the bilingual program may be that ELLs are segregated from monolingual students.
Bilingual versus English immersion. English immersion teacher perceptions indicated that English immersion classrooms expedite English language acquisition; however, beginning and intermediate ELLs lack of vocabulary and language comprehension create academic gaps in their learning. In addition, the lack of support and resources in the English immersion classroom requires more time from the teacher to instruct ELLs creating an instructional inequality and lack of time for differentiating for all students. However, for more advanced ELLs, the English immersion classroom might be the best placement with vocabulary support. Further perceptions were that English immersion provided an opportunity for younger ELLs to have an easier transition to the second language with the exposure to an English only classroom but older students learning a second language would benefit more from a bilingual classroom.

Bilingual teachers expressed that an advantage to bilingual education is the development of dual language proficiency for ELLs. Bilingual teacher perceptions indicated that although bilingual education provided an environment for ELLs that has limited exposure to English speaking students, it is more beneficial than English immersion since it provides more strategies and support for ELLs and the opportunity to develop proficiency in two languages. Bilingual teacher perceptions were similar to English immersion teachers reflecting that younger ELLs would benefit more from English immersion since they are still developing their first language but that older beginning and intermediate ELLs would benefit more from a bilingual education program since they struggle with communication and comprehension in English immersion. Bilingual teachers also perceived that bilingual instruction builds confidence in ELLs and allows them to retain their cultural heritage, identity, and native language. Bilingual teachers expressed the advantage of ELLs developing proficiency in two languages and transferring learning more efficiently in bilingual programs.
Parents whose children are beginning or intermediate ELLs should be provided the opportunity for a bilingual program which would allow their child the option of being proficient in two languages and to connect learning from the first to second language. In addition, parents who are enrolling beginning or intermediate ELLs should be thoroughly informed on the bilingual and English immersion programs in order to fully comprehend the best educational placement for their child.

**Discussion of the Results in Relation to the Literature**

This study investigated the perceptions of six bilingual teachers and six English immersion teachers on the challenges of instructing ELLs in each program at the elementary level. This discussion section attempts to associate the results of this study to the existing research literature. Several themes emerged from the research data which directly correlate with the research question, “What do teachers perceive to be the greatest challenges for teaching ELLs in English immersion classes as compared to ELLs in bilingual classes?”

**The challenges of instructing beginning ELLs.** This research study data revealed that both bilingual teachers and English immersion teachers perceived that the greatest challenges for instructing beginning ELLs in both programs was the lack of communication ability between the teacher and ELL and ELL and peers. In addition, the beginning ELLs struggles to understand concepts, vocabulary, and lessons concepts since they lack basic English language skills. The literature research reflected similar findings revealed through the conceptual framework for this study which is centered on Cummins (1979) Linguistic Interdependence Theory which suggests that a student’s native language and second language are interdependent and necessary for successful and optimal language acquisition. In addition, Cummins (1984) emphasized that language learners have different language proficiencies including basic interpersonal communication skills and cognitive academic language proficiency. The basic interpersonal
communication skills consist of casual communication which is easily and quickly acquired over about a two year time frame. During this beginning ELL time frame, students struggle to communicate and comprehend directions, instruction, and lesson content. This finding relates to a study within the literature conducted by Burkhauser et al., 2016) using a population size of 1,284 students in 14 schools which showed findings of improved academic achievement in reading and writing for students receiving dual language immersion in Spanish and Chinese. Dual language bilingual programs allow students to receive academic instruction in both the student’s native language and the targeted second language. The student is given opportunity to develop both languages which is consistent with Cummins’ (1979) theory of the transfer of literacy skills from the first language to the second language.

Teacher perceptions in both programs reported that beginning ELLs need significant re-teaching and tutoring time spent with the teacher which makes it difficult to meet the varied needs of all of their students in the classroom. Consistent with the literature review, a study by Hansen-Thomas, Grosso Richins, Kakkar, and Okeyo (2016) indicated that many ELLs may not understand the instruction and are expected to learn the language quickly through immersion. Moreover, teachers who are unable to communicate with non-English speaking students may have difficulty engaging and differentiating instruction to meet the academic needs of ELLs.

The challenges of instructing intermediate ELLs. This study data indicated that teachers in both bilingual and English immersion perceived an instructional challenge with intermediate ELLs to be their lack of academic vocabulary and ability to comprehend lessons and concepts. This finding relates to the literature through a study by Bayat (2017) which showed LEP students who are reading in a second language may not have enough proficiency in the language to fully comprehend the reading material. As mentioned before, Cummings (1984) emphasized that language learners have different language proficiencies. The basic interpersonal communication
Skills are acquired over about a two year time frame. However, the cognitive academic language proficiency may take between five to seven years to develop resulting in an academic long-term disadvantage for the language learner. Teachers in both programs indicated that they needed to consistently pre-teach vocabulary and provide other resources to support ELLs in developing academic language and comprehension.

**Training and resources.** The research data revealed that teachers in both programs perceived resources for ELLs to be lacking and that the time required for teachers to create resources to support ELL comprehension and linguistic acquisition inhibited their time to differentiate for other student needs in the classroom.

In addition, English immersion teachers perceived that training for ELL academic and linguistic support to be irrelevant, repetitious, and ineffective. However, bilingual teachers had a more positive perception of teacher training to meet ELL needs citing specific examples of ELL training which provided in-depth information and strategies.

This finding relates to the literature similarly revealing that teachers are provided very little opportunity to gain knowledge of the best teaching practices in meeting ELL needs and are often unprepared to effectively ensure an equal educational environment for ELL students in the classroom (Hansen-Thomas et al., 2016). This finding further relates to the literature indicating that teacher attitudes toward teaching ELLs reflects that there is not enough teacher preparation for effectively teaching ELLs and that building competency and awareness of the importance of first language use in the classroom is beneficial for ELL success (Şener & Korkut, 2017).

Texas teachers are encouraged to attain a supplemental ESL certification in order to better prepare for meeting the diverse academic and language development needs of ELLs (Samson, & Collins, 2012). However, the supplemental certification only requires the passing of a state test which involves little ELL knowledge and provides inadequate assessment for educator preparation.
in effectively instructing ELL students. Teachers perceptions of insufficient training relates to a study by Song (2016), of sixth through twelfth grade teachers which showed that teachers perceived that their attitudes and their teaching strategies improved through professional development on effective ELL instruction. Teachers often feel that they lack the necessary support, resources, and preparation necessary to successfully instruct ELLs in academic content and second language acquisition. Another study conducted by Hansen-Thomas et al. (2016) of ELL instructors from 10 different school districts in Texas showed that teachers often feel unprepared or inadequately trained to effectively teach ELLs but the study also indicated that more training and education in ELL instructional strategies improve teacher attitudes, confidence, and skills with ELL instruction.

**Classification and reclassification.** Teachers shared their perceptions of ELL classification and reclassification for this research study and the data revealed that English immersion teachers perceived ELLs to have significant classification and reclassification errors. This perception relates and is consistent with the literature. As mentioned earlier in the study, federal law mandates through the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and the Title III Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) that all ELL students be identified, annually assessed in English proficiency, and provided an appropriately modified or accommodated instructional curriculum in order to meet their individual and unique academic and language needs (Samson & Collins, 2012). However, according to the literature review and English immersion teacher perceptions in this study, ELLs are not consistently receiving appropriate instructional accommodations or modifications due to the subjectivity and miscommunication in the rating and initial enrollment process of ELLs.

A study by Umansky and Reardon (2014) involving nine cohorts of Latino ELL students over a 10 year period indicated that it likely takes most ELL students several years of academic
and linguistic support to successfully be reclassified to the mainstream classroom and exit the ELL program. In this study, 50% of ELL students needed language support for up to eight years in order to demonstrate sufficient English language proficiency to be successfully reclassified. This is also consistent with Cummings (1984) theory emphasizing that language learners’ cognitive academic language proficiency may take between five to seven years to develop.

However, many states and school districts mainstream and exit ELL students much sooner and in some cases after only one or two years. This study reflects the widespread problem for insufficient ELL support leading to progressing achievement gaps for ELLs (Samson & Collins, 2012). Another study in the literature review by Hong et al. (2014) of a cohort of 2,205 Spanish speaking Kindergarteners over a 6-year period of time revealed that at least 4 years of ELL support was necessary in order for English proficiency to occur. English Teacher perceptions in this study revealed connections to the literature in misclassifications resulting from insufficient training, subjective rating, parental misunderstanding and communication barriers in initial ELL identification. Overall, as a result of the classification errors, teachers perceived the academic and linguistic support for ELLs in the classroom to be insufficient for meeting their needs for and equal educational opportunity.

**English immersion program teacher perceptions.** This research study investigated teacher perceptions on the English immersion program for ELL placement. Teachers perceived that beginning ELLs would benefit more from a bilingual program since they struggle to communicate and to comprehend instruction, academic content, and vocabulary. This finding relates to the literature through a study by Şener and Korkut (2017) of 41 university students in regards to their perception of the importance of using ELL students’ native language in second language acquisition and academic development which showed multiple advantages for first language use in the classroom. Teachers who are responsible for educating ELLs through the
English immersion program are often frustrated by a lack of support through the limited amount of opportunity to meet the diverse needs of ELLs in the English only classroom (Hansen-Thomas et al., 2016).

However, English immersion data indicated that teachers perceive the English immersion program to be beneficial for intermediate to advanced ELLs who have basic English language proficiency and need only academic vocabulary support and scaffolding. This teacher perception correlates with Vygotsky’s (1986) sociocultural theory’s Zone of Proximal Development which suggests that the learner has a greater opportunity for cognitive development through the process of collaboration with capable peers or adult support. The Zone of Proximal Development is the amount of distance of the learners’ potential development and actual development. According to this theory, as the learner nears the proximity of cognitive development, a capable peer or adult can help scaffold or provide support for the learner to achieve success in problem solving and learning achievement. English immersion teacher perceptions indicated that although the English immersion classroom expedited English language acquisition, beginning and intermediate ELLs’ lack of vocabulary and comprehension created challenges for instructing ELLs in the English immersion classroom.

**Bilingual program teacher perceptions.** Similar to English immersion teacher perceptions, bilingual teacher data reflected that they perceived beginning ELLs to be more appropriately placed in the bilingual classroom in order to have the opportunity to transition from their native language to the English language and to make connections between the two languages. This finding relates to the literature through a study by Granada (2014) which indicated that students who are instructed in both the native language and the targeted language are more engaged in the instructional process and have a higher level of participation in the lesson with less interruption. In addition, another study by Bayat (2017) indicated that LEP students need to
develop their writing skills in their first language in order to transfer to the second language in writing.

The study further indicated that bilingual students are more successful in reading comprehension using their first language rather than the second language. Bilingual teachers perceived challenges instructing beginning ELLs when the ELL was not proficient in the first language or the second language. This relates to Cummins’ (1979) theory emphasizing that in order for a language learner to achieve academic and linguistic success in a second language, the learner must first be proficient in the first language. When a language learner has proficiency in the first language then there can be a connection and transfer of knowledge to the second language. In addition to the academic and linguistic connection between two languages, bilingual teachers also perceived an advantage to the bilingual program to be the opportunity to be proficient in two languages. Bilingual teacher perceptions indicated that although bilingual education provides an environment for ELLs that has limited exposure to English speaking students, it is more beneficial for beginning ELLs than English immersion since it provides more support, cultural awareness, and allows ELLs the opportunity to develop proficiency in two languages.

**Cultural values.** This study’s data revealed teacher perceptions of cultural value in the classroom relating to ELL achievement, language acquisition, and confidence. Bilingual teacher perceptions indicated that the program was more culturally aware than the English immersion program and that beginning ELLs displayed more confidence and comfort in the bilingual program. Consistent with the literature, a study by Lopez (2013) where parents were interviewed about their preference of bilingual classrooms reported that they favored it over monolingual classrooms or English immersion classrooms. Parents indicated that the bilingual educational environment supported their cultural heritage and religious values.
Also contributing to the conceptual framework for this research is the earlier cultural historical or sociocultural theory of Lev Vygotsky’s (1896-1934). Sociocultural theory suggests that cognitive development transpires through the learner’s social interactions in a shared cultural knowledge. As it relates to the language learners second language acquisition, this theory further implies that the language learner must first develop through social interactions or interpsychological development in order to progress to personal or intrapsychological development (Vygotsky, 1986).

Swain and Lapkin’s (2002) research illustrates the necessity for social interaction and collaborative dialogue in the language learner’s second language acquisition. Their study shows positive language learner outcomes for Vygotsky’s (1986) theory of a more knowledgeable person, such as an instructor or peer, in second language acquisition. The study included a small group of seventh grade French immersion students who were allowed to have collaborative dialogue through the learning process of reading and writing. Their findings showed that the peer social interaction, collaboration, and dialogue, positively influenced the students’ reading and writing achievement (Swain & Lapkin, 2002). This research involved qualitative case study methods which were aligned with the existing literature using multiple teacher interviews and lesson plans. In addition, this research included confidentiality for participants, validity measures, and addressed biases.

**Limitations**

Limitations are uncontrollable constraints which may possibly affect the outcome and conclusions of the study (Simon, 2011). In qualitative case study research, limitations might include researcher bias, validity, and reliability of the study (Hamel, 1993). This qualitative case study was time consuming and involved detailed processes and complex analysis which add to the limitations in the study (Hatch, 2002). Furthermore, a limitation of this study may be the lack of
generalizability resulting from a small sample size which was necessary for the scope and focus of this study (Simon, 2011). In addition, a limitation in this study was that the participants in this study were all female and further research involving male perceptions may lead to different outcomes and conclusions. This research study’s objective was to obtain a greater concept of the perceptions of teachers on the challenges of instructing ELLs in both the bilingual and English immersion programs. Subsequent studies involving different state and district demographics may add to the findings of this study.

**Implication of the Results for Practice, Policy, and Theory**

This study was constructed upon the conceptual framework of Cummins (1979) Linguistic Interdependence Theory which suggests that a student’s native language and second language are interdependent and necessary for successful and optimal language acquisition, and the sociocultural theory of Lev Vygotsky’s (1896-1934) which suggests that cognitive development transpires through the learner’s social interactions in a shared cultural knowledge. This study aimed at understanding the perceptions of teachers on the challenges of instructing ELLs in a bilingual and English immersion classroom. There is much research in the literature on the academic performance of ELLs in different educational settings such as; bilingual, monolingual and dual-language (Anil, 2014; Burkhauser et al., 2016; Cortina et al., 2015; Durán et al., 2013; Hussien, 2014; Johnson, 2016; Khan, 2015; Mehrseresht, 2015; Murphy, 2014; Nicolay & Poncelet, 2013; Relji et al., 2015; Steele et al., 2013; Vela, 2015). However, a weakness or gap in the literature is the teacher perceptions of instructing ELLs in the different programs of bilingual and English immersion. These teacher perceptions could add to the existing research by providing a lens through which one may obtain a unique and authentic view of the challenges instructing ELLs in the different educational settings. In so doing, implications concerning prior research, policy, theory, and practice may be established.
Implications for practice. Many of the teachers in both the bilingual and English immersion programs reported that there is insufficient support for ELLs both academically and linguistically. The support perceived as lacking is the availability of English Language Coaches. Teachers indicated that having more English Language Coaches to provide the needed support for more ELL students would lessen the challenges for instructing ELLs in the classroom. Many of the teachers explained that there is only one ELL coach for each campus. Teachers reported that the time spent in small groups to re-teach ELLs and ensure understanding, created a lack of ability to meet the needs of all the other students in the classroom. Based on these findings, it is recommended that school districts hire more staff to aide in the needed support for ELLs within the classroom.

In addition, both bilingual and English immersion teachers indicated that there were insufficient resources provided to support pre-teaching strategies and that teachers had to use their own time to create teacher-made resources. The time required to create resources on an ongoing basis reduces valuable class time that might be devoted to instruction for all students. Teachers further indicated that it would be helpful for the district or campus to provide the needed resources to teachers to lessen the challenge of using individual teacher time. As a result, it is recommended that more resources be provided by the district or campus to support ELL instruction.

Furthermore, English immersion teacher perceptions suggested that teacher training for ELL instruction was irrelevant, ineffective, consisting of a pamphlet or PowerPoint with information previously and repetitively covered during trainings. It is recommended that in addition to providing new and more relevant training, trainers or ELL support staff should come into the classrooms to model the implementation of effective strategies for ELL instruction.

Implications for policy. Many of the English immersion teachers indicated through interviews their frustration with the current policy of classifying and reclassifying ELLs to
determine the amount of support they would receive in accommodations and modifications. Since the current policy requires that parents must initially identify their child as an ELL upon enrollment and give consent for ESL services, many English immersion teachers perceived that parents were misinformed, uninformed, or could not understand the form or process needed to accurately identify their child for ELL support. Based on these findings, it is recommended for the enrolling parent of an ELL to have staff support with understanding the form, the process, and the opportunity for services.

In addition to the initial identification process, most of the English immersion teachers perceived that the state rating test (TELPAS) which teachers instructing ELLs must take possibly multiple times and attempt to pass is subjective and stressful. Furthermore, the teachers perceived that this test is unnecessary to take every year and is the cause of some ELLs being misclassified according to their language proficiency level. Based on this finding, it is recommended that the test be eliminated and replaced with a yearly training supported by the ELL staff within the district. In addition, to relieve the responsibility on teachers, it is recommended that the ELL coaches be responsible for assessing and rating ELL students each year in collaboration with the teachers.

**Implications for theory.** This research confirmed prior research on the challenges which ELLs face in the classroom both academically and linguistically from teachers’ perspectives in both the bilingual and English immersion program. This study validated the Cummins (1979) theory, through bilingual teacher perspectives, that ELLs connect and transition from a first language to a second language in second language acquisition. Furthermore, this study confirmed prior literature suggesting that teachers perceive training and resources to be lacking for ELL support in the classroom (Hansen-Thomas et al., 2016). Finally, this study validated prior literature on the inconsistencies with classification and reclassification of ELLs (Samson & Collins, 2012). Prior research indicated the benefits of using the first language in second language acquisition
(Feinauer et al., 2013; Granada, 2014; Khan, 2016; Montanari, 2014; Padilla et al., 2013; Poza, 2016; Rahmatian & Farshadjou, 2013; Santipolo, 2017; Schwartz & Shaul, 2013; Schwartz, 2014). However, some of the teachers’ perceptions suggest that for younger aged ELLs, English immersion is the best educational placement for expediting English acquisition with comparable academic achievement. As a result, there should be more studies on the implications early childhood has on the linguistic and academic progression of ELLs in both settings of bilingual and English immersion classrooms.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

This study revealed teacher perceptions on the challenges of instructing ELLs in both the bilingual and English immersion program. To help fill the gap in the existing literature, and to add to the perceptions of the small sample of teachers in this study, more might be researched on the validity and effectiveness of the current Texas state rating test, TELPAS, in accurately rating ELLs’ English proficiency levels. Moreover, since this study involved participants who taught in grades Kindergarten through fourth, further research could explore teacher perceptions in grades fifth through twelfth. In addition, more could be researched on the accuracy and fairness of the initial identification process for ELLs to determine if ELLs are receiving the appropriate accommodations, modifications, and support to be successful in language acquisition and academic progress. Another possible topic for further research may involve a different process for more accurately rating and classifying ELLs for language proficiency.

Lastly, teacher training and resources might be further studied for relevancy and best practices for successful ELL support with appropriate implementation. Finally, since this study involved a small sample size, subsequent studies involving different state and district demographics may add to the findings of this study.
Conclusion

The United States public education system continues to increase with the number of students who are non-English speaking or are limited in the English language. These students experience academic and linguistic challenges in the classroom due to a lack of academic vocabulary, English language skills, and cultural differences. Their teachers also experience challenges instructing these limited English speaking students who have varying English language proficiency levels and comprehension skills.

This study explored and investigated the perceptions of teachers in order to gain an understanding about the greatest challenges which they experience instructing ELL students in the English immersion classrooms as compared to the bilingual classrooms. The themes which emerged in this qualitative research indicated that participant perceptions of the greatest challenges of teaching ELL students in both bilingual and English immersion are similar in many ways and consistent with much of the literature and prior theories. English immersion teacher perceptions indicated that although the English immersion classroom expedited English language acquisition, beginning and intermediate ELLs’ lack of vocabulary and language comprehension created academic gaps in their learning. In addition, the lack of support and resources in the English immersion classroom requires more time from the teacher to instruct ELLs creating an instructional inequality and lack of time for differentiating for all students. Bilingual teacher perceptions suggested that although bilingual education provided an environment for ELLs that has limited exposure to English speaking students, it is more beneficial than English immersion since it provides more strategies and support for ELLs and the opportunity to develop proficiency in two languages. Bilingual teacher perceptions were similar to English immersion teachers reflecting that younger ELLs would benefit more from English immersion since they are still developing their first language, but that older beginning and intermediate ELLs would benefit
more from a bilingual education program since they struggle with communication and comprehension in English immersion.

This study sought to contribute research findings to the existing literature in an effort to provide support to educational leaders, teachers, and parents when making decisions on ELL programs and educational placements. In addition, this study provides educational leaders with teacher perceptions on appropriate training and support needed for teaching ELLs in their classrooms. The results and conclusions of this study may help to provide support for the best educational setting for ELLs to achieve optimal linguistic and academic achievement.
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Appendix A: First Interview Questions for Bilingual Education Teachers

1. How many years have you taught in a bilingual education classroom?

2. What is the percentage of ELLs in your classroom?

3. What challenges are involved with teaching the average ELL learner with moderate English skills?

4. Have you ever had ELLs that did not speak any English or were so limited in English that you had significant difficulty communicating and teaching them in English?

5. What challenges are involved in teaching the significantly limited English learners?

6. Are there any advantages to ELLs being in bilingual education?

7. Are there any disadvantages?

8. Do you feel that you are appropriately trained, provided resources and support to educate your ELLs equal to their English speaking peers? If not, what is lacking?

9. What type of training have you had to meet the various learning needs of ELLs? What resources have you been given? What support is provided to you?

10. What support from the district or campus did you receive to help ELLs through the academic process?

11. Do you feel that your ELLs receive an equal educational opportunity as compared with their English speaking peers? Why or why not?

12. What do you think helps you as a teacher to provide an equal educational opportunity to your ELLs.

13. Do you think that ELLs would benefit more from a bilingual program or an English immersion program? Why?
Appendix B: Second Interview Questions for Bilingual Teachers

1. Will you explain the structure, format, and process of your lesson plan?

2. What materials and resources are indicated in your lesson plans for instructing and supporting ELLs?

3. What if any pre-teaching activities are indicated in your lesson plans for supporting ELL academic success?

4. What strategies and techniques do you use in teaching ELL students?

5. Explain any strategies for instructing ELLs within your lesson plans and discuss how this strategy supports ELL students.

6. What other instructional support, accommodations, or modifications are exemplified in your lesson plans for instructing ELLs during and after the lesson?
Appendix C: First Interview Questions for English Immersion Teachers

1. How many years have you taught in an English immersion classroom?
2. How often do you have ELLs in your classroom?
3. What challenges are involved with teaching the average ELL learner with moderate English skills?
4. Have you ever had ELLs that did not speak any English or were so limited in English that you had significant difficulty communicating and teaching them in English?
5. What challenges are involved in teaching the significantly limited English learners?
6. Are there any advantages to ELLs being in English immersion?
7. Are there any disadvantages?
8. Do you feel that you are appropriately trained, provided resources and support to educate your ELLs equal to their English speaking peers? If not, what is lacking?
9. What type of training have you had to meet the various learning needs of ELLs? What resources have you been given? What support is provided to you?
10. What support from the district or campus did you receive to help ELLs through the academic process?
11. Do you feel that your ELLs receive an equal educational opportunity as compared with their English speaking peers? If not, why?
12. What do you think would help you as a teacher to provide an equal educational opportunity to your ELLs.
13. Do you think ELLs benefit more from a bilingual program or an English immersion program?
Appendix D: Second Interview Questions for English Immersion Teachers

1. Will you explain the structure, format, and process of your lesson plan?

2. What materials and resources are indicated in your lesson plans for instructing and supporting ELLs?

3. What if any pre-teaching activities are indicated in your lesson plans for supporting ELL academic success?

4. What strategies and techniques do you use in teaching ELL students?

5. Explain any strategies for instructing ELLs within your lesson plans and discuss how this strategy supports ELL students.

6. What other instructional support, accommodations, or modifications are exemplified in your lesson plans for instructing ELLs during and after the lesson?
Appendix E: Interview Summary Sheet Example

Coding Interview 1

Themes

Beginner ELLs
(Academic struggles)
(Teacher’s struggle to communicate with beginning ELL)

Challenges Teaching Beginning ELLs
(ELL academic gaps)
(Teacher challenges spending needed time with ELLs and differentiating)
(Instruction inequality with all students)

English Immersion Advantages
(Higher ELLs have an advantage in English immersion for language acquisition)
(English immersion allows for an opportunity for a tolerance of differences)

Disadvantages of English Immersion
(Not enough teacher time to meet ELL needs)
(Insufficient resources and support)
(Instructional inequality differentiating for all students)

Challenges of Teaching Intermediate ELLs
(Academic struggles resulting from different educational backgrounds)
(Lack of ELL background knowledge in academic content)
(ELL linguistic struggles with multi-meaning English words)
(ELL struggles in comprehension)

District and Campus Support for ELLs
(Only one staff member for the campus to support ELLs)
(More ELL support needed in the classroom)
(Lacking sufficient staff support for ELLs)

Educational Opportunity for ELLs
(ELLs who do not get extra support may not be receiving an equal educational opportunity)

Teacher ELL Training
(Appropriate training but lacking support with the implementation of strategies)
(More training needed for modeling implementation)

Teacher Training and Resources
(Training is limited throughout the school year)
(Some training is teacher-initiated)

Teacher ELL Requirements
(Teachers struggle with the requirement to implement ELL accommodations)
(Teachers are required to pass an ELL raters’ test every year)

Bilingual Education vs. English Immersion
(Bilingual education is beneficial for beginning ELLs)
(Beginning ELLs struggle in English immersion)

Memoing

The participant seemed to express in the interview that beginning ELLs struggle both academically and linguistically in the classroom. Beginning ELLs’ different academic backgrounds and lack of ability to communicate make it a challenge for teachers to teach the academic content and creates a frustrating learning experience for beginning ELLs. As a result, beginning ELLs often experience academic gaps in learning.

The participant also indicated that the amount of time required for the teacher to spend supporting ELLs in the classroom prevents her from providing enough time to differentiate for all the learning needs of her students. In addition, the participant expressed concern that with only one ELL staff member on campus, there are not enough resources and support to meet the needs of beginning ELLs in the classroom. The participant indicated, however, that English immersion provided ELLs the advantage of English language acquisition and encouraged tolerance for the different language and cultural backgrounds of others. She further expressed that intermediate ELLs struggle with understanding English multi-meaning words and comprehension.

The interview also seemed to reveal that the teacher’s perspective on training is that it is very limited and insufficient and lacks the support with the implementation of strategies. She also indicated that some of the training that she receives is self-initiated. She expressed that teachers struggle with the state requirement to implement ELL accommodations in the classroom and to pass an ELL raters’ test every year.

The participant seemed to think that beginning ELLs would benefit more from a bilingual education program and that they typically struggle in English immersion.
Appendix F: Consent Form

**Research Study Title:** Teacher Perceptions of the Challenges of teaching English language learners in Bilingual Education versus English Immersion.

**Principal Investigator:** Dea Wheeler

**Research Institution:** Concordia University

**Faculty Advisor:** Dr. Kara Vander Linden

**Purpose and what you will be doing:**
The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding about the experiences and perceptions of teachers regarding the greatest challenges which they face instructing ELL students in the English immersion classrooms as compared to the bilingual classrooms. I expect approximately 12 volunteers. No one will be paid to be in the study. I will begin enrollment on July 22, 2019 and end enrollment on January 22, 2020.

To be in the study, you will participate in an initial interview which will consist of several questions seeking information pertaining to how many years of experience you have with teaching ELLs and the English proficiency level of the ELLs typically taught each year. In addition, the interview questions will ask for information about your perceived challenges, advantages, and disadvantages of teaching ELLs in either a bilingual or English immersion classroom setting. Finally, the interview questions will seek information on the support, training, and requirements for teaching ELLs in the bilingual classroom and the English immersion classroom which supports an educational environment promoting an equal educational opportunity for ELLs. Included in the interview questions will be an opportunity for you to provide your opinion on whether ELLs might benefit more from a bilingual program or an English immersion program.

Doing these things should take less than an hour of your time. You will also be asked to participate in a second interview which will take less than an hour of your time and which will allow you to clarify any misconceptions from the first interview. You will be asked to provide a lesson plan to the interviewer prior to or at the time of participating in the second interview and also answer questions pertaining to the lesson plan. The second interview will also include questions about the structure and format of your lesson plan, instructional materials and resources for ELLs indicated on your lesson plans, and strategies used in instructing ELLs before, during, and after the lesson.

**Risks:**
There are no risks to participating in this study other than providing your information. However, I will protect your information. Interviews will be recorded; recordings will be deleted immediately following transcription and member-checking. All other study-related materials will be kept securely for 3 years from the close of the study and then will be destroyed. Any personal information you provide will be coded so it cannot be linked to you. Any name or identifying information you give will be kept securely via electronic encryption or locked inside a file cabinet. When I look at the data, none of the data will have your name or identifying information. I will only use a secret code to analyze the data. I will not identify you in any publication or report. Your information will be kept private at all times and then all study documents will be destroyed 3 years after I conclude this study.
**Benefits:**
Information you provide will help parents, school administrators, and educators, make more informed educational decisions for English language learners to provide the best educational setting for academic achievement and second language acquisition. In addition, the information you provide will help educational leaders provide the best training and support for teachers to instruct ELLs in the classroom. You could benefit this by providing your professional educator input on your experiences teaching English language learners in the English immersion classroom or bilingual education classroom.

**Confidentiality:**
This information will not be distributed to any other agency and will be kept private and confidential. The only exception to this is if you tell me abuse or neglect that makes me seriously concerned for your immediate health and safety.

**Right to Withdraw:**
Your participation is greatly appreciated, but I acknowledge that the questions I am asking are personal in nature. You are free at any point to choose not to engage with or stop the study. You may skip any questions you do not wish to answer. This study is not required and there is no penalty for not participating. If at any time you experience a negative emotion from answering the questions, I will stop asking you questions.

**Contact Information:**
You will receive a copy of this consent form. If you have questions you can talk to or write the principal investigator, at [redacted]. If you want to talk with a participant advocate other than the investigator, you can write or call the director of our institutional review board, Dr. OraLee Branch (email obranch@cu-portland.edu or call 503-493-6390).
Your Statement of Consent:
I have read the above information. I asked questions if I had them, and my questions were answered. I volunteer my consent for this study.

_________________________________________                   ___________
Participant Name                           Date

_________________________________________                   ___________
Participant Signature                      Date

_________________________________________                   ___________
Investigator Name                          Date

_________________________________________                   ___________
Investigator Signature                     Date

Investigator: Dea Wheeler email: [redacted]
c/o: Professor Dr. Kara Vander Linden
Concordia University–Portland
2811 NE Holman Street
Portland, Oregon  97221
Appendix G: Statement of Original Work

The Concordia University Doctorate of Education Program is a collaborative community of scholar-practitioners, who seek to transform society by pursuing ethically-informed, rigorously-researched, inquiry-based projects that benefit professional, institutional, and local educational contexts. Each member of the community affirms throughout their program of study, adherence to the principles and standards outlined in the Concordia University Academic Integrity Policy. This policy states the following:

Statement of academic integrity.

As a member of the Concordia University community, I will neither engage in fraudulent or unauthorized behaviors in the presentation and completion of my work, nor will I provide unauthorized assistance to others.

Explanations:

What does “fraudulent” mean?

“Fraudulent” work is any material submitted for evaluation that is falsely or improperly presented as one’s own. This includes, but is not limited to texts, graphics and other multi-media files appropriated from any source, including another individual, that are intentionally presented as all or part of a candidate’s final work without full and complete documentation.

What is “unauthorized” assistance?

“Unauthorized assistance” refers to any support candidates solicit in the completion of their work, that has not been either explicitly specified as appropriate by the instructor, or any assistance that is understood in the class context as inappropriate. This can include, but is not limited to:

- Use of unauthorized notes or another’s work during an online test
- Use of unauthorized notes or personal assistance in an online exam setting
- Inappropriate collaboration in preparation and/or completion of a project
- Unauthorized solicitation of professional resources for the completion of the work.
Statement of Original Work (Continued)

I attest that:

1. I have read, understood, and complied with all aspects of the Concordia University–Portland Academic Integrity Policy during the development and writing of this dissertation.

2. Where information and/or materials from outside sources has been used in the production of this dissertation, all information and/or materials from outside sources has been properly referenced and all permissions required for use of the information and/or materials have been obtained, in accordance with research standards outlined in the *Publication Manual of The American Psychological Association*.

Dea Wheeler

Digital Signature

Dea Wheeler

Name (Typed)

4-2-2020

Date