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# Ways in Which Teachers Structure Reading Instruction for Bilingual Students with Disabilities: A Case Study Analysis

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WAYS IN WHICH TEACHERS STRUCTURE READING INSTRUCTION FOR  
BILINGUAL STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: A CASE STUDY ANALYSIS

by

Nikki Logan

A Dissertation Submitted in

Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

In Urban Education

at

The University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee

May 2015

ABSTRACT  
WAYS IN WHICH TEACHERS STRUCTURE READING INSTRUCTION FOR  
BILINGUAL STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: A CASE STUDY ANALYSIS

by

Nikki Logan

The University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee, 2015  
Under the Supervision of Professor Elizabeth Drame  
and Assistant Professor Susana Munoz

In partial fulfillment of candidacy for Ph.D. at the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee, this research study uses a single case study design to answer the question, *How do teachers structure reading instruction for bilingual students with disabilities in urban elementary settings?* Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Theory and critical race theory guided the study design and data analysis of interviews, observations, and documents to determine that teachers of bilingual students with disabilities experience unique challenges. Findings of the study include the topics of disability blindfolding; disjointed delivery; improper instruction due to assessment and progress monitoring; spatial implications; definitions impact instruction; and teachers' personal characteristics influence reading instruction. In addition to a discussion of the salient themes, implications for practice and theory, the significance of the study, and recommendations for future research are presented.

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*For Jay*

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>LIST OF FIGURES .....</b>	<b>XI</b>
<b>LIST OF TABLES .....</b>	<b>XII</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....</b>	<b>XIII</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>THE NEED .....</b>	<b>1</b>
ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS (ELLs) .....	1
STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES.....	1
BILINGUAL STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES .....	2
STUDENTS ATTENDING URBAN SCHOOLS .....	2
<b>STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>RESEARCH QUESTION .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>STUDY DESIGN.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS.....</b>	<b>5</b>
BILINGUAL SPECIAL EDUCATION .....	5
BILINGUAL EDUCATION .....	6
ELIGIBILITY FOR BILINGUAL SERVICES .....	6
URBAN.....	7
<b>CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>BILINGUAL EDUCATION .....</b>	<b>8</b>
ADDITIVE BILINGUAL PROGRAMS.....	9

VARIABILITY IN PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION .....	10
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT IN BILINGUAL PROGRAMS .....	11
SOCIETAL ATTITUDES .....	12
CONCLUSION.....	13
<b>SPECIAL EDUCATION .....</b>	<b>14</b>
SPECIAL EDUCATION SETTINGS .....	14
CONCLUSION.....	18
<b>BILINGUAL SPECIAL EDUCATION .....</b>	<b>18</b>
THE USE OF LANGUAGE AND CULTURE IN BILINGUAL SPECIAL EDUCATION .....	19
EMPIRICAL RESEARCH IN THE FIELD OF BILINGUAL SPECIAL EDUCATION .....	21
BARRIERS ENCOUNTERED .....	26
CONCLUSION.....	30
<b>READING FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES .....</b>	<b>31</b>
READING CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES.....	31
BEST PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES.....	32
BEST PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES AS COMPARED TO TYPICALLY	
ACHIEVING STUDENTS .....	42
BEST PRACTICE READING RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BILINGUAL STUDENTS.....	45
BEST PRACTICE READING RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BILINGUAL STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES .....	49
CONCLUSION.....	55
<b>CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>CHAPTER 3: DESIGN OF THE STUDY.....</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>RESEARCH QUESTION .....</b>	<b>58</b>

<b>THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....</b>	<b>58</b>
BIOECOLOGICAL THEORY (BRONFENBRENNER, 1994, 2005) .....	59
<b>THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE .....</b>	<b>63</b>
CRITICAL DISABILITY THEORY.....	63
<b>METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK.....</b>	<b>67</b>
CASE STUDY.....	67
DATA COLLECTION METHODS .....	72
METHODS OF ANALYSIS .....	77
BIOECOLOGICAL THEORY AND DATA COLLECTION METHODS .....	80
<b>CREDIBILITY .....</b>	<b>83</b>
<b>VALIDITY.....</b>	<b>83</b>
<b>RESEARCHER ROLE.....</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>POSITIONALITY .....</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>POSSIBLE PROBLEMS DUE TO STATUS.....</b>	<b>87</b>
<b>TRUSTWORTHINESS.....</b>	<b>87</b>
<b>CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>87</b>
<b>CHAPTER 4: SITE CONTEXT AND PARTICIPANTS.....</b>	<b>89</b>
<b>SETTING.....</b>	<b>89</b>
OTTUMWA SCHOOL DISTRICT .....	90
PRESCOTT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL.....	98
<b>PARTICIPANTS .....</b>	<b>104</b>
CLASSROOM TEACHERS.....	106
INTERVENTIONISTS .....	113



SUPPORT STAFF .....	118
DISTRICT AND SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS.....	121
OTHER INDIVIDUALS REFERENCED IN THE STUDY .....	125
<b>CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>126</b>
<b>CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS.....</b>	<b>127</b>
<b>THEME 1: DISABILITY BLINDFOLDING .....</b>	<b>128</b>
<b>THEME 2: DISJOINTED DELIVERY .....</b>	<b>132</b>
<b>THEME 3: IMPROPER INSTRUCTION DUE TO ASSESSMENT AND PROGRESS MONITORING ...</b>	<b>136</b>
FORMAL ASSESSMENTS.....	137
PROGRESS MONITORING.....	138
<b>THEME 4: SPATIAL IMPLICATIONS.....</b>	<b>145</b>
THE BILINGUAL GENERAL EDUCATION CLASSROOM .....	145
THE BILINGUAL SPECIAL EDUCATION ENVIRONMENT.....	152
<b>THEME 5: DEFINITIONS IMPACT INSTRUCTION.....</b>	<b>154</b>
DIFFERENT CURRICULAR MATERIALS (AND THEIR UNAVAILABILITY) DUE TO DISABILITY STATUS.....	155
DIFFICULTIES WITH COORDINATING SERVICE .....	158
<b>THEME 6: PERSON CHARACTERISTICS INFLUENCE READING INSTRUCTION.....</b>	<b>163</b>
PERSONAL KNOWLEDGE .....	164
PERSONAL EXPERIENCES.....	167
<b>CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>171</b>
<b>CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS .....</b>	<b>172</b>
<b>OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY.....</b>	<b>172</b>
<b>DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS RELATIVE TO EXISTING LITERATURE .....</b>	<b>172</b>

THEME 1: DISABILITY BLINDFOLDING.....	172
THEME 2: DISJOINTED DELIVERY.....	177
THEME 3: IMPROPER INSTRUCTION DUE TO ASSESSMENT AND PROGRESS MONITORING .....	181
THEME 4: SPATIAL IMPLICATIONS .....	184
THEME 5: DEFINITIONS IMPACT READING INSTRUCTION .....	186
THEME 6: PERSON CHARACTERISTICS INFLUENCE READING INSTRUCTION .....	190
<b>HOW DO TEACHERS STRUCTURE READING INSTRUCTION FOR BILINGUAL STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES IN URBAN ELEMENTARY SETTINGS? .....</b>	<b>191</b>
<b>THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS .....</b>	<b>194</b>
CRITICAL DISABILITY THEORY.....	194
BIOECOLOGICAL THEORY .....	195
<b>PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS .....</b>	<b>198</b>
FOR EDUCATORS.....	198
FOR TEACHER EDUCATION.....	199
<b>SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH .....</b>	<b>201</b>
<b>LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY .....</b>	<b>201</b>
<b>SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH .....</b>	<b>203</b>
<b>FINAL THOUGHTS .....</b>	<b>204</b>
<b>REFERENCES .....</b>	<b>206</b>
<b>APPENDIX A: SELECTION CRITERIA .....</b>	<b>227</b>
<b>APPENDIX B: CONSENT FORMS.....</b>	<b>230</b>
<b>APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS.....</b>	<b>240</b>
<b>APPENDIX D: ELECTRONIC QUESTIONNAIRE.....</b>	<b>257</b>

<b>APPENDIX E: DOCUMENTS TO GATHER FOR ANALYSIS .....</b>	<b>263</b>
<b>APPENDIX F: DOCUMENT ANALYSIS GUIDE .....</b>	<b>264</b>
<b>APPENDIX G: CLASSROOM SETTING OBSERVATION GUIDE.....</b>	<b>269</b>
<b>APPENDIX H: PHASES OF THE DATA COLLECTION PROCESS .....</b>	<b>272</b>

## **LIST OF FIGURES**

FIGURE 1: MICROSYSTEM	62
FIGURE 2: CASE STUDY'S FIT WITH METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK	72
FIGURE 3: ORGANIZATIONAL CHART OF STUDY PARTICIPANTS	106

## LIST OF TABLES

TABLE 1: SPECIAL EDUCATION SETTINGS.....	17
TABLE 2: OTTUMWA SCHOOL DISTRICT IN COMPARISON TO PRESCOTT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL .....	92
TABLE 3: STUDY PARTICIPANTS .....	105

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## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

### **The Need**

As evidenced by the achievement gap, not all students' needs are being met in the current educational system. Educators work to follow district mandates that are situated on research-based practices, however, these mandates and research-based recommendations frequently fail to address students with multiple needs. Diverse needs such as educating children learning two languages, educating children with special educational needs, and educating children from urban areas are often met separately although they occur within one child. Bilingual students with disabilities attending urban schools need educators who use research-based practices to educate the whole child, not their different identities separately.

### **English Language Learners (ELLs)**

Of the 25,683 students who are ELLs who took the Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examination (WKCE) during the 2011-2012 academic year, approximately 54% passed the reading portion of the state standardized test. In comparison, 83% of their peers who are considered to be English proficient passed. The term used by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction for ELLs is Limited English Proficient, however this study will refer to this group of students as ELLs. The difference between the scores of ELLs and non-ELLs is astounding with a 29% discrepancy.

### **Students with Disabilities**

Equally as deplorable, as related to the state standardized test, are the statistics of students with disabilities. Of the 60,633 students with disabilities who took the WKCE during the 2011-2012 academic year, about 40% passed the reading portion. Conversely,

88% of their peers without disabilities passed. The gap between the scores of students with disabilities and students without disabilities is 48% (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2013).

### **Bilingual Students with Disabilities**

A group similar to ELLs with disabilities is bilingual students with disabilities. ELLs receive only English instruction at school and bilingual students receive instruction in English and another language. These groups of students experience unique challenges when learning how to read due to their disability status and language proficiency level. The state, however, does not collect data on the reading achievement of students enrolled in bilingual education programs or bilingual special education programs. For students with disabilities who are also identified as ELLs, the gap can only be assumed wider due to the compounding factors of being an ELL and having a disability. In an era of high stakes testing and teacher accountability measures, combined with the desire for all students to succeed, effective research-based teaching methods must be used to increase the level of reading proficiency (and thus the standardized test scores) of students with disabilities, students who are English language learners, and students who are bilingual.

### **Students Attending Urban Schools**

Researching which instructional methods yield the best results, implementing those methods, and then studying the results so the methods can be refined is a way in which to increase the reading achievement of students with disabilities, ELLs, and bilingual students. This study sought to better understand reading instruction for bilingual students with disabilities in an elementary school in an urban city in the Wisconsin. An urban area was chosen because bilingual special education programs are



usually located in urban school districts. Additionally, statistics show students with disabilities who attend urban schools have a lower rate of reading proficiency. For example, 10.0% of students with disabilities in the Milwaukee Public School District (urban); 20.1% of students in the Mukwonago School District (rural); and 63.0% of students in the Whitefish Bay School District (suburban) scored proficient on the Wisconsin State Assessment System in the area of reading (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2013).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Instructional methods in the fields of bilingual education, reading, and special education must undergo a dissected improvement process. Currently, each of the three fields (bilingual education, reading instruction, and special education) are scrutinized by researchers, but little attention is paid to the field of bilingual special education and the reading success and failures those students experience (Baca & Cervantes, 1998). As schools become more diverse, practitioners will need to use research-based methods that work for diverse groups of students. Instead of drawing from research in isolated fields, practitioners need a body of cross-disciplinary research (bilingual special education, for example) from which to draw upon, so that truly all students can be successful. As scholarship in these fields evolves to examining how each complement each other and intersects, practice will need to evolve as well.

The purpose of this study is to identify what reading instructional practices educators are present when educating bilingual students with disabilities in urban, elementary settings. With this foundation, scholars can continue to address the lack of research in the highly specialized field of bilingual special education. From the current

reading instructional practices the study will uncover, future research can address the success of said practices.

### **Research Question**

How do teachers structure reading instruction for bilingual students with disabilities in urban elementary settings?

### **Study Design**

To determine the reading instructional practices used for bilingual students with disabilities, this study used a single case study method. The case being studied was the reading instructional practices of teachers of bilingual students with disabilities in an urban elementary school in Wisconsin. Through observations under natural conditions, document analysis, and educator interviews, data was collected to document the reading instructional practices bilingual students with disabilities experience. As its theoretical framework, the study used Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory (1994, 2005), which dictates there are four principle influences on a person's development; and critical race theory, which poses disability is a social construct and challenges the way in which society views and interacts with individuals with disabilities.

### **Importance of the Study**

The study seeks to set a foundation by identifying the current reading instructional practices that bilingual students with disabilities experience. Future studies can then continue the research path looking into the field of bilingual special education and effective reading instructional practices based on what the study determined are current practices.

### **Significance of the Study**

The results of this study will inform the field of the presence of research-based reading instructional practices and spark a discussion and future research agendas based on data to increase the reading achievement of bilingual students with disabilities. In addition, this study will add to the general body of research on the topic of bilingual special education by identifying current reading instructional practices used for teaching bilingual students with disabilities. As more research is conducted with bilingual students with disabilities, instructional practices can evolve and practitioners can use research-based methods to aid in closing the achievement gap between bilingual students with disabilities and their peers. By studying this group of students, there is a potential to create change, increase test scores, and achieve greater student success. The field can no longer continue on with two separate research agendas of two separate paradigms: bilingual education and special education. The unique and specialized group of students and professionals making up the area of bilingual special education need unique and specialized research-based practices.

### **Operational Definitions**

#### **Bilingual Special Education**

Bilingual special education is a program that uses students' first language/ culture and English to teach students who have special educational needs (Baca & Cervantes, 1998). At its most basic level, bilingual special education is a program that teaches students with disabilities academic content and social/functional skills (if necessary) in their home language and in English. These students must meet eligibility criteria for one of thirteen disability categories in order to be considered students with special

educational needs. (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2013) and Public Law 108-446:

The term “child with a disability” means a child— (i) with intellectual disabilities, hearing impairments (including deafness), speech or language impairments, visual impairments (including blindness), serious emotional disturbance (referred to in this chapter as “emotional disturbance”), orthopedic impairments, autism, traumatic brain injury, other health impairments, or specific learning disabilities; and (ii) who, by reason thereof, needs special education and related services (Individual with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, 2004).

They also must meet the criteria identified in the *eligibility for bilingual services* definition in order to be included in a bilingual special education program.

### **Bilingual Education**

This study uses the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction’s definition of bilingual education, “any of a number of approaches that use, to varying degrees, the language of the child and English in the teaching of academic content and literacy skills” (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, n.d.). The research site used a one-way approach where all students’ first language is Spanish and they learn in both Spanish and English.

### **Eligibility for Bilingual Services**

School districts determine which students are eligible for bilingual services; each school district has its own method to determine this. Often times, eligibility for bilingual services is determined through a parent questionnaire. Eligibility for bilingual services, as defined in the study, required a student’s first language to be Spanish and their English

language level to be 4 or lower [as measured by the Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State for English Language Learners Assessment (ACCESS for ELLs)] .

### **Urban**

The U.S. Census Bureau uses two main parameters to determine urban areas: urbanized areas have a population of 50,000 or more people and urban clusters have a population of at least 2,500 and less than 50,000 people (United States Census Bureau, 2013). The U.S. Census Bureau also published a list of qualifying areas for the 2010 Census. All urban areas in the country are listed in this Federal Register. For the purposes of this study, urban is defined as, “the main city of a metro area, but with less than 250,000 population” (Norman, 2004, p. 43). According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the school district chosen as the site for this study had a city population of 71,016 in 2013 (United States Census Bureau, 2013). The definition was based on locale codes and geographical classifications of school districts from the National Center for Education Statistics and the 2000 Census classifications of urban and rural. While this study uses a geographic perspective on urban, social science definitions including aspects of race, culture, socioeconomic status, language proficiency, and/or level of education also exist.

## **CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

The topic of bilingual special education is complex, as it encompasses the fields of bilingual education, special education, and the merged field of bilingual special education. In addition to these three areas, I must also review what the literature says about reading practices for bilingual students with disabilities, as this is the main focus of the study at hand. There is much research about the effectiveness of service delivery models of bilingual education, different program models, variability in implementing program models; and support and opposition of the field of bilingual education. In the review of the literature, I first take a look at what the research says about these topics, and then move onto relevant research about bilingual special education and reading practices for students with disabilities, students who are bilingual, and bilingual students with disabilities.

### **Bilingual Education**

Bilingual education is defined as instruction given in two languages (Davies & Elder, 2008). “In its ideal form, the purpose of bilingual education is to produce balanced bilingualism-biculturalism within the learners, that is to say, the ability to function equally well in two linguistic and cultural contexts (American and native)” (Condon, 1974). This means in addition to academic instruction in both languages, one of bilingual education’s central tenets is to provide a bicultural education; teaching of both languages’ cultures and customs. There are many ways, or service delivery models, through which schools can teach language, culture, and customs.

Schools who adopt a bilingual program model must choose from many common service delivery models of bilingual education. Such choices include late-exit and early-

exit programs and one-way and two-way immersion programs. Schools with English language learners not adopting a bilingual program, but serving English language learners through English-only instruction can decide between sheltered language, English as a Second Language (ESL), and structured immersion programs. Not all programs yield equal results, as some have been proven to be more effective for English language learners to learn a new language and maintain their first one.

The following section is divided into several parts. As the program models are quite numerous, I solely describe the model used at the research study site: a one-way additive bilingual education program. I also present research describing the effectiveness of the bilingual education program, and describe different ways to implement the bilingual education program. Subsequently, I finish with a discussion of opposition of and support for bilingual education.

### **Additive Bilingual Programs**

Additive bilingual programs provide language development with the goal of reaching proficiency in two languages (Cummins, Chow, & Schecter, 2006). The one-way bilingual program is an example of an additive bilingual education program. One-way bilingual education programs teach one group of students both their first language and a second language (Collier & Thomas, 2004). In contrast to the two-way bilingual immersion program, where two language groups learn two languages, only one language group learns two languages in one-way bilingual programs. Teachers of one-way bilingual immersion programs are fluent in the students' first and second languages. Students receive instruction and support in both languages at specific times through the day. Collier and Thomas (2004) found that one-way and two-way bilingual immersion

programs are the only ones that have closed the gap between ELLs and their peers for whom English is their first language. They conclude that fifth grade students in the one-way bilingual immersion program scored in the 60th percentile in Spanish on the Aprenda 2 test and the 34<sup>th</sup> percentile in English on the Stanford 9 test. Taking into account the average number of years it takes to master a language is five to six years; these students have not reached that threshold and are still working to increase their English skills. Ultimately, “both one-way and two-way bilingual programs lead to grade-level and above-grade-level achievement in second language, the only programs that fully close the gap” (Collier & Thomas, 2004, p. 11). Even after a school has established it will use a one-way bilingual program model, it still must determine how it will implement the program. I describe different ways to implement bilingual programs next.

### **Variability in Program Implementation**

There are different ways of implementing each program. In a 90-10 model, as the student progresses through the grades, the amount of English instruction increases. A typical progression is 10% of instruction in English and 90% of instruction in Spanish in Kindergarten, followed by 20% of instruction in English and 80% of instruction in Spanish in first grade. The instruction evens out in fifth grade where students receive 50% of instruction in Spanish and 50% in English, and the English takes over as the dominant language of instruction in sixth grade where 40% is in Spanish and 60% is in English. Ultimately English becomes the only language of instruction. In a 50-50 model, instruction is equally balanced from the beginning between English and another language (Shneyderman & Abella, 2009); 50% of the student day, or week, is in Spanish. In practice, the one-way immersion program could instruct students in English for 90% of



the day and Spanish for 10% of the day in kindergarten using the 90-10 model. The percentage would then decrease to 80% Spanish and increase to 20% English in first grade. Conversely, with the 50-50 model the one-way immersion program could instruct students in English for 50% of the day and Spanish for 50% of the day in both kindergarten and first grade.

In bilingual programs, special care must be taken to determine the allotment of language each day. Alternate day plans, half day plan, mixed, and preview-review methods are four types of methods used in bilingual instruction (Baca & Cervantes, 1998). One language is used as a mode of instruction the whole day, and the other language is used the next day in the alternate day plan model. The half day plan utilizes one language for half of the day and the other language for the other half. The mixed plan dictates that specific subjects, or even lessons, are taught in a specific language, where the preview-review method orders the new lesson in the first language, a review in the second language, and finally a summary in the first language (Baca & Cervantes, 1998).

### **Student Achievement in Bilingual Programs**

Methodologically sound empirical research examining the language acquisition of second language learners shows students in bilingual programs reach a higher level of language proficiency in their first language than do their bilingual peers in English-only programs (Greene, 1999; Mortensen as cited in Krashen, 2001; Oller & Eilers, 2002) and experience English proficiency levels equivalent to their monolingual English-speaking peers (Mortensen as cited in Krashen, 2001).

Krashen (2001), however, concludes that research determining bilingual education is ineffective because it lacks an appropriate definition of bilingual education,

adequate sample sizes, or makes inappropriate comparisons. Furthermore, Krashen declares his analysis of research studies show that the more instruction in the first language a person receives, the more successful they are in acquiring English. This is due to evidence proving that when learning a second language, people rely on knowledge they learned from a good education in their first language (Krashen, 1996; Krashen, 2004). In addition, second language learners rely on literacy skills they learned in their first language when learning literacy skills in their second language (Krashen 1996; Krashen, 2004).

Despite the many benefits of bilingual programs, there is opposition to bilingual education programs and bilingualism, in general. These societal attitudes have an impact on schooling and bilingual individuals. The next two sections of this literature focus on opposition to and support of bilingual education.

### **Societal Attitudes**

Some individuals, as well as groups of people, are strongly opposed to bilingual education. Several organizations have made it their mission to make English the official language of the United States. Organizations such as English First, English for the Children, English Only, and activists like Ron Unz support English only education. Organizations such as these say that immigrants living or growing up in the United States should only learn English. Opponents of bilingual education claim that people need to leave behind their first language in order to more quickly learn English. Anti-bilingualism perspectives include the notion that we live in America and everyone should speak English (Collins, Toppelberg, Suarez-Orozco, O'Connor, & Nieto-Caston, 2011; Krashen, 1999). The pro-bilingual stance is based in research and states that second

language learners use their first language as a resource to aide them in the development of their second language (Verhoeven, 1994). Individuals with a strong literacy base in their first language are able to use that base to make faster gains when learning a second language.

On the other hand, some individuals support bilingual education. Maintaining a first language while learning a second language benefits the individual from a cognitive and social standpoint. Davies & Elder (2008) declare:

Researchers know that bilingual education does work. This knowledge comes from research that spans the globe. How well bilingual education works depends on how bilingual proficiency is defined and assessed. We know that if both (or all) languages are educationally supported, children will profit educationally, linguistically, and socially; indications are that they will also profit cognitively and economically. (p. 715).

Whilst different types of bilingual program have been known to exhibit a multitude of academic performance results, the bottom line is students must be provided a quality education, regardless of program model (de Jong, 2002).

## **Conclusion**

The necessity of continued first language development is evident when examined next to the adverse effects language assimilation can have on individuals (Collins, Toppelberg, Suárez-Orozco, O'Connor, & Nieto-Castañon, 2011). Collins and colleagues (2011) used comprehensive English language examinations and teacher reports on the behavioral and emotional status of the students. The scholars' results detail that using instructional practices to develop first and second languages is educationally,

linguistically, and psychologically beneficial, supporting the necessity of first language development.

Within this literature review section on bilingual education, I presented the one-way additive bilingual education program used at the research site. I also reviewed research regarding the effectiveness the bilingual education program and explained different ways to implement the bilingual education program. The study site, as explained previously, uses a 90-10 mixed plan model where educators teach in increasing amounts of the English language as students progress through the grade levels, doing so as divided by subject areas. Ultimately, I ended with a discussion societal attitudes of bilingual education. Forthcoming is a discussion of special education research and program models; and then bilingual special education, which experiences its own set of research, barriers, and program models.

### **Special Education**

Having detailed bilingual education program models and research, I now turn to special education. In the United States, approximately 49.7 million individuals have a disability (United States Census Bureau, 2012). Federally recognized disability categories include learning disabilities, mental retardation, traumatic brain injury, autism, serious emotional disturbance, speech/language disabilities, visual impairment, hearing impairment, other health impairment, and orthopedic impairment (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 2004).

### **Special Education Settings**

Students identified with a disability and enrolled in school typically have an Individualized Education Program (IEP), which details the services they require as a

result of their disability and the least restrictive environment (LRE) in which the services will be delivered. The LRE is often determined by the school's special education program model. The IEP team should take setting into special consideration because exposure to loud acoustics creates difficulties with levels of motivation, memory, and performance (Schneider, 2002; Shield & Dockrell, 2008). The determination of the appropriate setting must be based on each student's needs.

A vast amount of research has been done to measure the academic achievement levels of different types of special education program models, which range from full inclusion to self-contained (Cawley, Hayden, Cade, & Baker-Kroczyński, 2002; Sparapani, 1995; Marston, 1996; Sermier Dessemontet, & Bless, 2013). Some research shows that students with disabilities included in the general education classroom make strong peer relationships, miss less instructional time, and make greater academic gains (Carter and Hughes, 2006; Downing and Peckham-Hardin, 2007; Fisher and Meyer, 2002; Foreman, Arthur-Kelly, Pascoe, & King, 2004). Students with disabilities who are pulled out to receive services may be perceived as outcasts and may not receive the continuum of instruction they need (Causton-Theoharis, Theoharis, Orsati, & Cosier, 2011; Klingner, Vaughn, Schumm, Cohen, & Forgan, 1998; Marston, 1996). Furthermore, Peltier (1997) found teachers' amount of time and level of engagement to be unaffected when their classrooms included students with and without disabilities. In addition, including students with disabilities in the general education classroom does not adversely affect students without disabilities (Kalambouka, Farrell, Dyson, & Kaplan, 2007; Staub, 1999), in fact, the academic achievement of students without disabilities in

inclusive classrooms is similar to students without disabilities in non-inclusive classrooms (Ruijs & Peetsma, 2009).

Research comparing student achievement in different settings is mixed (Klingner, Vaughn, Schumm, Cohen, & Forgan, 1998; Matzen, Ryndak, & Nakao, 2010). Zigmond (2003) reviews the progression of research examining services provided in general education, special education, and combination settings. In the 1960s research prompted scholars to recommend educating students in the general education setting, however in the 1970s, scholars changed the recommendation to resource rooms. Throughout the 1980s, research revolved around determining the best setting for students based on their disabilities (for example, students with EBD and LD in resource and self-contained settings instead of general education settings) and using multiple placement settings for SWD. Studies during this decade and in the 1990s looked at academic as well as social gains in different settings. Ultimately, “effectiveness depends not only on the characteristics and needs of a particular student but also on the quality of the program’s implementation” (Zigmond, 2003, p. 197).

The classroom placement of students with disabilities is often decided by teachers and administrators, but can be influenced by parents as well. As a result of IDEA 2004, students with disabilities have the right to learn in the LRE; students’ LRE is based on their needs (Baca & Cervantes, 1998). Depending on severity of the disability, or the availability of services, students may be placed in a general education classroom, attend certain classes in a special education classroom, attend all classes in a special education classroom, or even go to an alternative school for students with disabilities (see Table 1). Any of the options presented in the table could be considered a student’s LRE. The LRE

is determined on an individual basis in response to student need; the IEP team may determine that the LRE for a student with significant behavioral needs will be a self-contained classroom, for example. According to the U.S. Department of Education (2014), 25% of students with disabilities are educated for 40-79% of the school day in the regular education classroom; 62% of all students with disabilities are educated for 80% or more of the school day in the regular education classroom; and 10% of all students with disabilities are educated less than 40% in the regular education classroom. These percentages are representative of students who are educated in a pull-out/resource room service delivery model. The U.S. Department of Education does not collect or provide data on the percentage of students who are educated in a full inclusion setting or a self-contained classroom, however 1% of all students with disabilities are educated in a separate school. The research site in this study utilizes the pull-out/resource setting.

Table 1: Special Education Settings

Setting:	Full inclusion	Pull-out / Resource room	Self-contained
Description:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a special education or general education teacher works with SWD in a general education setting (Valeo, 2008)</li> <li>SWD and Sw/oD are heterogeneously mixed together in a classroom</li> <li>there is typically a general education teacher and a special education teacher collaborating to teach the class</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SWD spend time in general education setting and special education settings</li> <li>they are removed from the general education class for more specialized instruction in specific areas of need</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>classes in which every student in the class has a disability</li> <li>SWD are homogeneously group as a result of their disability (Causton-Theoharis, Theoharis, Orsati, &amp; Cosier, 2011)</li> </ul>

Examples from literature:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SWD showed increased scores in academic areas and better attendance than students in a pull-out setting (Rea, McLaughlan, and Thomas, 2002)</li> <li>• higher numbers of SWD were at grade level proficiency as compared to SWD in pull-out settings (Myklebust, 2002)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SWD make strong peer relationships, miss less instructional time, and make greater academic gains (Carter and Hughes, 2006; Downing and Peckham-Hardin, 2007; Fisher and Meyer, 2002; Foreman, Arthur-Kelly, Pascoe, &amp; King, 2004)</li> <li>• SWD are outcasts of a class and may not receive the continuum of instruction they need (Causton-Theoharis, Theoharis, Orsati, &amp; Cosier, 2011; Klingner, Vaughn, Schumm, Cohen, &amp; Forgan, 1998; Marston, 1996)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SWD have lower academic achievement as compared to SWD in other special education placements (Lane, Barton-Arwod, Nelson, Wehby, 2008)</li> <li>• SWD have below average social skills (Lane, Barton-Arwod, Nelson, Wehby, 2008)</li> </ul>
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## Conclusion

Educators have the option to educate students with disabilities in a variety of settings. Research shows benefits and downfalls of each setting. IDEA 2004 dictates that students with disabilities receive an IEP, which details the least restrictive learning environment in which the students are to be educated. This decision is based on students' strengths and needs. Decisions on where to educate bilingual students with disabilities are difficult when bilingual special education programs are unavailable. The next section identifies research in the area of bilingual special education.

## Bilingual Special Education

In combining bilingual education and special education, teachers are able to use students' first languages and cultures to meet their educational needs. It is in this context that bilingual students with disabilities have the best chance for academic success. With a basic understanding of the bilingual education program model and now the special education program model utilized at the research site, it is fitting to turn to research about



the field of bilingual special education. Bilingual education and special education are often seen as two separate programs, but for a unique group of learners these separate programs must merge. They can merge in several different ways, dependent on the type of bilingual program and the type of special education program: a one-way 90/10 bilingual model intersecting with a pull-out special education model, as is the case at the research site.

### **The Use of Language and Culture in Bilingual Special Education**

Baca and Cervantes (1998) define bilingual special education as “the use of the home language and the home culture along with English in an individually designed program of special instruction for the student in an inclusive environment” (p. 21). Table 1 describes the inclusive environment (referred to as full inclusion in the left column) and provides examples related to special education. Baca and Cervantes detail that, “when our schools teach these students in their native language, they build on their cultural and linguistic strengths and foster achievement” (p. 4).

Bilingual special education services meet these students’ language and cognitive needs in inclusive settings (Liasidou, 2013). Students with special needs (language or otherwise) have the right to learn in the LRE. Full inclusion classrooms are regarded as the absolute least restrictive environment (Baca & Cervantes, 1998). Across settings, a language use plan, within the individualized education plan, identifies which language should be used at what times, why, and by whom (Baca & Cervantes, 1998). In addition, bilingual special education approaches in an inclusive environment should include culturally authentic and relevant instruction and materials, an integration of higher order and basic skills, collaborative learning, and various learning strategies (Baca &

Cervantes, 1998). All staff working with students with disabilities should be knowledgeable of their individualized education plan. In addition, they should be culturally sensitive and instructionally flexible (Baca & Cervantes, 1998).

As a result of research in the field, four statements can be made about bilingual students with disabilities. First of all, bilingual students with disabilities can learn multiple languages (Baca & Cervantes, 1998). People use their first language in the process of learning a second language; therefore students should ideally receive instruction in their first language prior to or while learning a second language. Secondly, language models should speak their strongest language around bilingual students with disabilities. This means educators should have a high level of language proficiency when educating bilingual learners. In addition, there may be a silent period for bilingual students with disabilities, when they comprehend more language than they are able to produce. Finally, bilingual students with disabilities may code-switch, using two or more language together. This does not mean a person is “semi-lingual.” The four statements, although also true for bilingual students without disabilities, specifically pertain to bilingual students with disabilities.

Teacher competencies for educating bilingual students with disabilities include understanding the curriculum; teaching in culturally competent manners; demonstrating classroom management, consultation methods, the ability to work with families of students; creating a collaborative classroom environment; accommodating diverse learners; competently assessing and adapting; and ultimately upholding the law (Baca & Cervantes, 1998, p. 308). Ideally, such teachers are bilingual and understand language acquisition theories in addition to engaging in linguistically responsive teaching

practices. Many of these suggestions overlap Garcia and Ortiz' (2006) recommendations such as teachers who are linguistically and culturally responsive work to create a positive learning environment where all educators have high expectations and believe all students can learn. In addition, the authors point out that educators need to create "accessible, inclusive, and equitable learning environments that develop bicultural/bilingual competence among all students" (Garcia & Ortiz, 2006, p. 65) and to collaborate with other individuals providing instruction bilingual students who struggle academically. Educators also need to look introspectively at themselves and the learning environment to address student shortcomings instead of seeing the students as the root of any failures (Garcia & Ortiz, 2006) and look outward at who their students are, their backgrounds, and previous life experiences (Athanases, Wahleithner, & Bennett, 2012). Linguistically responsive teaching also uses language objectives and supports students at the appropriate language level through dialogic teaching and academic language (Klinger, Boele, Linan-Thompson, & Rodriguez, 2014). The next section, empirical research in the field of bilingual special education, supports these recommendations and supplies additional ones for educating bilingual students with disabilities.

### **Empirical Research in the Field of Bilingual Special Education**

Research shows the benefits of bilingual special education. Four topics repeatedly present themselves in this research: content area instruction, bilingual special educators, the bilingual special education classroom, and bilingual special education systems.

**Content area instruction.** The first topic, content area instruction, is a combination of studies examining optimal learning environments (Ruiz, Vargas, & Beltran, 2002), writing instruction (Soriano, Miranda, Soriano, Nievas, & Felix, 2011),

reading program efficacy (Graves, Valles, & Rueda, 2000), reading instruction (Saenz, Fuchs, & Fuchs, 2005), and math instruction for bilingual students with disabilities (Rodriguez, Parmar, & Signer, 2001). Research questions in this topic area addressed variations in interactive writing instruction; the efficacy of a program seeking to improve reading fluency and text comprehension; the effects of Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies (PALS) on reading performance; and students' understanding of number line concepts.

The PALS study explored reading performance of bilingual students with disabilities and the incidental benefits of PALS to ELLs with low, average, and high achievement in reading. The treatment group (utilizing a class wide peer-tutoring strategy) "improved the reading comprehension of English language learners with and without [learning disabilities] in transitional bilingual education classroom" (Saenz, Fuchs, & Fuchs, 2005, p 243).

In a study of writing, the optimal learning environment (as opposed to interactive journals, writer's workshop, and a combination of journal writing, brainstorming-planning, and spelling practice in the other conditions) produced the most "significant ongoing improvements in writing performance on compositions" after one year (Graves, Valles, & Rueda, 2000, p.1). In a study of reading fluency and text comprehension, the intervention treatment (40 training sessions, three times per week, 45 minutes each time, for a period of four months focusing on repeated readings, phonological awareness training, and grapheme-phoneme decoding) yielded significant gains in all areas except text comprehension, as indicated by the post-test (Soriano, Miranda, Soriano, Nievas, & Felix, 2011).

Finally, in a comparison between bilingual students with disabilities, students with learning disabilities, and students without learning disabilities, bilingual students with disabilities demonstrated the least success in solving problems using number line concepts. Students with learning disabilities (not linguistically or culturally diverse) had more success than linguistically and culturally diverse students; and ultimately, students without disabilities experienced the highest success rates out of the three groups (Rodriguez, Parmar, & Signer, 2001).

**Bilingual special educators.** The research in this area (Ruiz, Rueda, Figueroa, & Boothroyd, 1995; Paneque & Barbetta, 2006; DeLeon & Gonzalez, 1991; Paneque & Rodriguez, 2009) investigated bilingual special educators' responses to education reform, the correlations between teacher variables and efficacy, and the number, types, ethnic make up and other bilingual special education program information.

Paneque and Barbetta (2006) created their own teacher inventory (Exceptional Children who are English Learners – EXCEL). The EXCEL surveyed teachers of BSD and determined “proficiency in the language of their students was the teacher variable found to be associated with teacher efficacy” (Paneque & Barbetta, 2006, p. 184). Another survey study established there were not enough bilingual special education teacher training programs in order to meet the needs of current bilingual students with disabilities (DeLeon & Gonzalez, 1991)

Paneque and Rodriguez (2009) used an exploratory case study approach. In a study of language use by bilingual special education teachers, the researchers gathered data from classroom observations, audio recordings, and teacher interviews. Paneque and Rodriguez (2009) found bilingual special education teachers spoke in English

approximately 90% of instructional times. However, Spanish was specifically used over English when a student had a lower level of proficiency in English, needed content clarified, and/or for the purposes of redirection and praise.

Ruiz, Rueda, Figueroa, & Boothroyd (1995) used workshops, consultations, interviews, observations, and document analysis to collect data. Several conclusions were made based on the outcomes of the studies. Ruiz, Rueda, Figueroa, and Boothroyd (1995) identified three factors affecting teachers' shifting paradigms:

The more special education training in the teachers' background, the stronger their reductionist orientation; change involves shifts in instructional practices and shifts in beliefs, and they do not automatically go hand in hand; and change is most facilitated at the beginning stages of collaboration by including practicing members of the teachers' occupational community as agents of change. (p. 622)

With the information they learned through their study, the researchers developed and applied a working model for teacher-school and district-university collaboration.

**The bilingual special education classroom.** Ruiz (1995) spent 20 months as a participant observer completing an ethnographic investigation of a Spanish-English bilingual self-contained classroom for students identified as language learning disabled. Ruiz determined specific features of instruction aided in the development of children's language and literacy abilities (upper range) such as emphasis on communication, not language forms; topic choice; increased student initiations, student-directed discourse; functional use of language; whole texts; instruction centering on students' experiences and background knowledge. Likewise, specific features of instruction did not aid in the development of children's language and literacy abilities (lower range) such as syntactic

and lexical constraints in language; topic constraint; few student initiations, teacher-directed discourse; language use for teacher evaluation; fragments of text; and instruction centering on prepackaged curricular materials. Ruiz recommends using upper range skills, as these prove critical in creating an optimal learning environment.

Arreaga-Mayer, Utley, Perdomo-Rivera, and Greenwood (2003) examined the “instructional context, teacher behavior, and academic engaged behavior for English language learners at risk for developmental disabilities in general education and bilingual special education programs” (p. 28). The outcomes indicate that math, reading, and language arts were the most frequently taught subjects; instruction was most frequently given in English; and the time in which students were actively engaged in academic work was “slightly less than half of a typical school day” (p.28).

**Bilingual special education systems.** This section, bilingual special education systems, summarizes research about teacher assistance teams, IEP meetings, and student placement.

As teachers as participants, the researchers used a “collaborative story” utilizing field notes, transcripts, unstructured interviews, conference presentations, and documents produced by team members in order to investigate bilingual special education teacher assistance teams (Harris, 1995). Outcomes such as issues related to “perceptions of team members’ roles in the school, problems in assuming an active classroom consultation role, problems in supporting the maintenance of school-based teams, and differences in perceptions of the consultant’s status with respect to these school-based teams” (p. 339) were reported.

In a narrative account with Mexican mothers, Salas (2004) used a thematic analysis to determine that said mothers wanted to be involved in making educational decisions about their children and felt that their voices were silenced and unvalued during IEP meetings. Turning to students, Sullivan (2011) looked at predictors of special education placement among ELLs. In comparison to their white peers, ELLs are identified as having learning or cognitive disabilities at higher rates. Non-ELLs are more likely to be placed in the least restrictive or the most restrictive environment. In addition, Sullivan (2011) “also examined the influence of several district-level factors commonly explored in studies of racial disproportionality and found that these factors did not evidence similar relationships to the disproportionate representation of English language learners (p. 317).

Empirical studies utilizing bilingual students with disabilities and bilingual special education settings are sparse. Scholars, however, continue to contribute to the field and positively impact the education of bilingual students with disabilities.

### **Barriers Encountered**

There have been barriers throughout the history of bilingual special education. These include the limited availability of adequate training programs and teachers; lack of availability of resources; decoupled programs; and negative societal attitudes.

**Limited availability of adequate training programs and teachers.** A barrier to bilingual special education in schools is the limited availability of adequate training programs and teachers (DeLeon & Gonzales, 1991; Holtzman, 1987; Liasidou, 2013; Garcia & Ortiz, 2006). The population of bilingual students with disabilities is on the rise, however; there are few qualified teachers to educate this special group of students



(Harris, 1995). In a similar fashion, inadequate training of general education personnel is also cited as an obstacle to effective instruction (Baca & Cervantes, 1998). In response to the student need, schools are employing English-speaking teachers with bilingual paraprofessionals. This is not an ideal practice, as bilingual paraprofessionals are not adequately trained to be bilingual special education teachers (Baca & Cervantes, 1998). Inappropriate referrals of ELLs to special education is one effect of teachers who are lacking adequate training (Ortiz, Robertson, Wilkinson, Liu, McGhee, & Kushner, 2011). In fact, “findings across the three studies suggest that bilingual education teachers play a critical role in preventing student failure and in supporting struggling learners in their classrooms” (Ortiz et al., 2011, p. 325). The authors suggest using screening, assessment, and progress monitoring in the form of language and literacy assessments, and bilingual language and literacy profiles. Adequately trained bilingual teachers are able to implement such practices, thus preventing inappropriate special education referrals. The problem remains, however, a limited availability of adequate training programs and teachers.

Goldstein (1995) goes into more depth describing bilingual special education programs. He states that bilingual special education programs typically work to meet only one of the students’ two major needs; their needs as students with disabilities, not their needs as bilingual learners. The decision of which special education model (Table 1) is best for students is frequently made in isolation from which bilingual program model is best for the student, as they are seen as two separate programs as opposed to one integrated one. The two models operate without consideration for each other. Many times this group of students participates in English-only programming. In bigger school

districts located in urban areas, this group of students may have the opportunity to participate in bilingual special education programs, work with a bilingual paraprofessional, community volunteer, or bilingual classroom peer; much rarer is the opportunity to receive instruction from a bilingual special education teacher (Goldstein, 1995).

**Lack of availability of resources.** Another barrier encountered in the pursuit of implementing bilingual special education practices in inclusive school settings is resources. In the mid-1980s, Baca and Cervantes created *The Bilingual Special Education Interface*. This text serves as a critical resource in the integrated field of bilingual special education. As the field progresses, however, Figueroa (1999) notes the inappropriateness of seeing bilingual special education as two fields (bilingual education and special education) and trying to merge them into bilingual special education, instead of viewing the field as one (bilingual special education). Merging the fields of bilingual education and special education is problematic because the number of bilingual students with disabilities is small in comparison to bilingual students without disabilities or monolingual students with disabilities, therefore, programs are developed around bilingual students (bilingual education) and students with disabilities (special education), thus leaving educators of bilingual students with disabilities to choose a primary program model to follow regardless of the duality of the students' needs. Both aspects of the student are significant and can be difficult to provide instruction within one service delivery model. The Baca and Cervantes (1998) note that commercial materials exist for bilingual students, but the adaptation of these materials is necessary. The authors also

write, in reference to bilingual special education, minimal curricular materials were available at the time of the book publication.

**Decoupled programs.** A third barrier involves funding policies. Money from the federal government is given to states and school districts in separate funds for bilingual education and special education. Decoupled programs are problematic for merged fields such as bilingual special education (Skrtic as cited in Baca & Cervantes, 1998).

Decoupled programs often result in a lack of collaboration, inappropriate assessment procedures, and ineffective instructional practices (Baca & Cervantes, 1998). Baca and Cervantes (1998) call for an evaluation of disjointed programs in search for a combined bilingual special education program to remedy the program shortcomings. In addition to differentiated budgets, it is also appropriate to note the differentiation, or specialization, in disability categories, paperwork requirements, professional responsibilities, and other aspects of education. Although differentiated practices are being implemented in practice, the field of bilingual special education still requires inclusive accommodations in a collaborative, coupled manner.

**Negative societal attitudes.** A fourth barrier is attitudinal. Some question if bilingual education should be provided to students with disabilities, as they often struggle in learning academics and just one language (Baca & Cervantes, 1998). Contrary to this line of thinking, bilingual instruction builds on what the child already knows, as opposed to doing the opposite when only teaching in English. In addition to challenging attitudes toward the education practices of bilingual special education, Baca (1986) identifies this group of students as a “triple threat” because they have a disability, are English language learners, and frequently have a low socioeconomic status (Baca, 1986, p. 69). In addition

to attitudes, negative perceptions and expectations also yield lower student academic achievement (Baca & Cervantes, 1998). Instead of viewing these characteristics as deficits, educators must acknowledge them and create services to meet the needs of the whole child.

The English-only movement is one manifestation of a negative societal attitude. Ron Unz, an opponent of bilingual education supported Proposition 227: English for the Children Initiative, which attempted to prohibit bilingual education in school (Baker, 2001). The proposition passed in California in 1998. California legislators also passed Proposition 187 (in 1994) and declared it illegal for “children of undocumented immigrants to attend public schools” (Nieto, 2009, p. 64). In 1996, the House of Representatives declared English as the nation’s official language; however the Senate overturned this decision soon thereafter (Nieto, 2009). The English-only movement continued on into the twenty first century. In 2000, Proposition 203 (“English for the Children”) was passed in Arizona and in 2002 and Question 2 was passed in Massachusetts (Nieto, 2009). Question 2, which was left up to a popular vote, dismantled bilingual education in Massachusetts (Nieto, 2009).

## **Conclusion**

Specific factors must be in place for the successful education of all students. Factors differ based on student need. In this section of the literature review, bilingual special education, I presented best practice schooling recommendations for bilingual students with disabilities, empirical research in the field of bilingual special education, and barriers encountered in bilingual special education programs. I now turn to a review

of the literature for reading for students with disabilities, including those who are bilingual.

### **Reading for Students with Disabilities**

Using best practices in reading instruction is of the utmost importance to educate all learners. Best practices, however, is an ambiguous term that requires explanation. The definition of “best practices” used for this study is a method that evidence-based research deems effective for creating success. According to the National Reading Panel, in order for a method to be best practice it must be “causally linked to the improvement in reading achievement” (as cited in Foorman & Torgesen, 2001, p. 204). Thus, best practices cannot be educator beliefs about effective instruction, nor can they be what has “always been done.” Best practices are methods identified as a result of evidence-based research that shows the method causes increased achievement in reading.

### **Reading Characteristics of Students with Learning Disabilities**

More than half of students with learning disabilities have difficulties with reading (Bender, 2002; Lerner & Johns, 2009 in Gargiulo, 2012). Specific learning characteristics traditionally exist in many students with learning disabilities; the best practice recommendations should take these learning characteristics into account. Educators, then, need to be knowledgeable about specific instructional practices for educating students with learning disabilities.

Generally, students with learning disabilities experience difficulties with spoken and written language, memory, metacognition, academic success such as making adequate progress (Gargiulo, 2012) and reading fluency (Chard, Ketterlin-Geller, Baker, Doabler, & Apichatabutra, 2009; Invernizzi & Hayes, 2011; Sze, 2009); each of which

impact reading. Reading comprehension also may be poor in students with learning disabilities because of decoding errors (Sze, 2009). Likewise, difficulties with short-term memory and working memory can impede a student's progress in the area of reading comprehension (Gargiulo, 2012; Sze, 2009). Sze (2009) states that students with learning disabilities often process words individually, instead of making meaning from phrases. Metacognition, another area of difficulty for students with learning disabilities, is the student's ability to monitor his own cognitive processes. In general, "Many times a student with LD has difficulty in reading. The students just don't have all the skills necessary to put all the components of reading together to allow for a smooth and easy process" (Sze, 2009, p. 1017). Students who fail frequently or do not achieve sustained academic success may experience low self-esteem and/or a lack of motivation (Gargiulo, 2012; Van Ryzin, 2011). This also impacts reading achievement.

### **Best Practice Recommendations for Students with Disabilities**

Much of the research for reading and students with disabilities is merged with the research for struggling readers. As such, this literature review draws from recommendations for students with learning disabilities and for those identified as struggling readers. Seven best practice recommendations for reading instruction for students with disabilities are comprehensive literacy instruction; differentiated instruction; intensive and systematic support; explicit strategy instruction of key reading elements; instruction that leads to high levels of student motivation and engagement; frequent and purposeful assessment and progress monitoring; and various types of grouping. Comprehensive literacy instruction [attending to the major elements of reading: fluency, vocabulary, phonics, comprehension, and phonemic awareness (National

Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000)] and differentiated instruction (adapting instruction to meet the needs of students at various skill levels) are woven into the other best practice recommendations so are not addressed separately in this review.

Early intervention is a best practice recommendation for struggling readers (Al Otaiba & Fuchs, 2006; Foorman & Moats, 2004; Iaquinta, 2006; Parr, 2012; Torgesen, Alexander, Wagner, Rashotte, Voeller, & Conway, 2001; Vaughn, Levy, Coleman, & Bos, 2002; Vaughn, Linan-Thompson; Kouzekanani, Pedrotty Bryant, Dickson, & Blozis, 2003).

However, as this section pertains to students with disabilities and taking into consideration that early intervention typically operates in the time frame before an individual is identified with a disability, it was not included as one of the seven best practice recommendations for reading instruction for students with disabilities.

Nonetheless, all of the best practice recommendations could better meet the needs of students with learning disabilities if implemented early, when difficulties in reading present themselves.

**Intensive and systematic support.** Intensive and systematic support is a key component in effective reading instruction, especially since low progress readers typically make limited gains without such support (Al Otaiba & Fuchs, 2006; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000; Vaughn et al., 2002; Vaughn et al., 2003; Wharton-McDonald, 2011). Systematic instruction can be thought of as a process of teaching that is thorough and utilizes students' strengths and needs in combination with other best practice research recommendations. Intensive support means strong, concentrated, and thorough instruction. Incorporating intensive and systematic instruction positively affects the reading success of students with disabilities.

Struggling readers take more time and repetition to learn how to read (Foorman & Torgesen, 2001). Evidence shows that increasing intensity through grouping decreases the time it takes for elementary students with disabilities to be successful readers. In small group settings, students can display their skill sets and receive constructive feedback in addition to hearing peers read fluently (Vaughn, et al., 2003). Another way to increase intensity is peer pairings because struggling readers pay increased attention in a peer setting as opposed to a whole class setting where all students are learning from one teacher (Foorman & Torgesen, 2001). Peer pairing and small group instruction may be the most practical option for providing intensive and systematic instruction to struggling readers. Torgesen and colleagues' (2001) recommendation is "for the educational establishment to find ways to deliver both the quality and the intensity of instruction that many children seem to require" (p. 56).

Research done by other scholars uses third grade as a benchmark: teachers should use intensive supports "to help all children read by the end of third grade" (Al Otaiba & Fuchs, 2006, p.414) and "grade 3 and beyond requires greater intensity and more hours to be successful" (Foorman & Moats, 2004, p. 53). Cunningham, Zibulsky, Stanovich, and Stanovich (2009) promote systematic reading instruction in all grades, both prior to and after third grade. In a study by Denton, Fletcher, Anthony, and Francis (2006), 27 students in grades one, two, and three with severe reading difficulties and disabilities were provided an intensive tertiary 16-week reading intervention package. Students who already participated in the first and second tier interventions showed significant improvement in several areas of reading (decoding, fluency, and comprehension) as compared to students who did not receive the intervention.



**Explicit strategy instruction of key reading elements.** Explicit strategy instruction is a best practice recommendation for effective reading instruction for students with disabilities (Denton, Vaughn, & Fletcher, 2003; Vaughn, Gersten, & Chard, 2000; Duffy, 2002; Wharton-McDonald, 2011) and for disadvantaged students (Foorman & Torgesen, 2001). Explicit instruction means, “the teacher models and teaches skills and concepts clearly, rather than requiring the student to make inferences that may lead to confusion in less-proficient learners” (Denton, Vaughn, & Fletcher, 2003, p. 202).

Teachers should use explicit strategy instruction for the key reading elements of comprehensive instruction: vocabulary, phonemic awareness, phonics, comprehension, and fluency (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000). Explicit strategy instruction, although appropriate for all learners, especially in early intervention programs (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000), is important for less proficient readers (Denton, Vaughn, & Fletcher, 2003). On average, 121 special educators teaching students in first grade used more reading time for explicit instruction of the essential reading elements than they provided for independent reading (Cunningham et al., 2009).

Explicit strategy instruction in phonological and phonemic awareness most benefits students with learning disabilities, as compared to typical learners. Research by Foorman and Torgesen (2001) determined the more explicit the instruction, the better when comparing the outcomes of more and less explicit instruction. Atkinson, Wilhite, Frey, and Williams (2002) go as far as to say without explicit instruction, students with learning disabilities will never close the gap between them and their typically developing peers.

In a study conducted by Allinder, Dunse, Brunken, and Obermiller-Krolkowski (2001), 50 seventh grade students were assigned to a control or a treatment group. The control group members were told to do their best when reading and the treatment group members were given specific fluency-related strategies. The treatment group experienced significantly greater growth, demonstrating that explicit instruction, in fluency instruction for this study in particular, yields growth in reading performance.

It is not enough to simply expose students with learning disabilities to essential elements of reading; it takes explicit strategy instruction in those skills to see reading success with this group of readers (Atkinson et al., 2002). Explicit strategy instruction should be a part of a comprehensive reading program addressing all elements of reading (Foorman & Torgesen, 2001).

#### **Instruction leading to high levels of student motivation and engagement.**

Student motivation and engagement is an essential component in reading success (Duke & Pearson, 2002; Taylor, Peterson, Pearson, & Rodriguez, 2002). As defined by Skinner, Kindermann, and Furrer (as cited in Afflerbach, Cho, Kim, Crassas, & Doyle, 2013), engagement is “the quality of students’ participation with learning activities” and motivation “supports effort and attention as students become accomplished readers” (Afflerbach, Cho, Kim, Crassas & Doyle, 2013, p 443). There are several research-based methods to get students motivated and engaged in learning. Appropriately leveled books “motivate readers to improve and succeed” (Atkinson et al., 2002, p. 159) and small group instruction, when compared to whole group instruction, brought forth increased levels of student engagement (Taylor, Peterson, Pearson, & Rodriguez, 2002). High quality teachers are ones who can actively engage students in reading instruction (Taylor,

Peterson, Pearson, & Rodriguez, 2002). Engagement can be either passive or active. Passive engagement includes oral reading or listening to the teacher, while active engagement includes reading, writing, and manipulating (Taylor, Peterson, Pearson, & Rodriguez, 2002). Guthrie, Wigfield, and You (2002) note that engagement and motivation have the ability to improve reading comprehension specifically.

As a part of motivating students with disabilities, Foorman and Torgesen (2001) suggest these students need additional emotional and cognitive support “in the form of encouragement, feedback, and reinforcement” (p. 209). Students who experience difficulties in learning, experience decreased motivation (Presley & Gaskins, 2006). Effective literacy teachers understand this need and can meet it in order to aid in student success.

In a recent longitudinal study involving 740 participants, Becker, McElvany, and Kortenbruck (2010) investigated the effects of intrinsic and extrinsic reading motivation on students’ reading achievement. The same participants were probed in grades three, four, and six. Using a 4-point Likert scale, students reported their reading motivation (both intrinsic and extrinsic). Text comprehension, vocabulary, decoding, and reading amount were also measured. The researchers found that the connection between intrinsic motivation and reading literacy was statistically significant. Reading literacy was defined as being able “to understand, use and reflect on written texts in order to achieve one’s goals, to develop one’s knowledge and potential, and to participate effectively in society” (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2001, p. 21 as cited in Becker, McElvany, & Kortenbruck, 2010). They also found that students who read for extrinsic reasons tended to be poorer readers than those who had lower extrinsic

motivation.

Enthusiastic, optimistic teachers who give instructional level tasks, help students create short-term personal goals, give credible feedback for those goals, and check progress on the goals increase the motivation for students with disabilities. (Margolis & McCabe, 2004). Overall, it is evident that high levels of student engagement and motivation support increased levels of success in reading (Kamil et al., 2008; Shanahan et al., 2010).

**Frequent and purposeful assessment and progress monitoring.** Frequent and purposeful assessment and progress monitoring are essential to an effective reading program. Another way to think of assessment is the evaluation of a skill, where in turn, monitoring means checking the progress over a period of time. Assessment and monitoring allows teachers to determine their next steps in reading instruction (Duke & Pearson, 2002; Gersten et al., 2007; Pinnel & Fountas, 2009; Scanlon, 2011) and appropriately create flexible grouping (Dorn & Jones, 2012; Dorn & Soffos, 2001; Iaquinta, 2006).

Duke and Pearson (2002) point out the significance of ongoing assessment and progress monitoring, noting that the results assist teachers in determining students' effective and ineffective strategy use. Through the use of assessment and monitoring, teachers can determine strengths and areas of need in students. In turn, they can create flexible instructional groups (Iaquinta, 2006). Groups may be created with students needing explicit instruction in fluency, comprehension, vocabulary development, and so on; or they can be created by grouping students of a similar reading level together. Dorn

and Soffos (2001) and Pinnell and Fountas (2009) suggest progress monitoring aids teachers in selecting books at appropriate reading levels.

One of fifteen keys to a successful intervention design, identified by Pinnell & Fountas (2009), is to assess difficulties and monitor progress in valid and reliable ways. Initial and final assessments, continuous progress monitoring and taking anecdotal notes help document reading behaviors children control and struggle to control. Pinnell & Fountas (2009) emphasize, “without ongoing assessment to inform your daily teaching, you cannot design highly effective instruction” (pp. 500-501).

The Institute of Education Sciences (IES) Practice Guide recommends that educators “Monitor the progress of tier 2 students at least once a month. Use this data to determine whether students still require intervention” (Gersten et al., 2007, p. 24) and then develop a plan for students not making adequate progress. Although this recommendation is intended for struggling learners without an identified reading disability, research guiding the recommendation still applies to all struggling learners. The IES Practice Guide recommends progress monitoring struggling readers at least eight times per school year, while other researchers recommend doing so monthly. Doing so allows educators to document student progress as well as develop appropriate reading instruction that teaches for mastery.

A characteristic of students with disabilities is that they are often slow-progressing readers. With ineffective teaching practices, struggling readers often times maintain their reading proficiencies instead of increasing them (Denton, Vaughn, & Fletcher, 2003). For this reason, it is of the utmost importance to use purposeful

assessment and progress monitoring to make data-based decisions to guide instructional decision with this specialized group of learners.

**Varied grouping techniques.** Varied groupings are beneficial to students because they give students opportunities to learn from each other, to practice skills independently, and to learn from the teacher. In addition, students have the opportunity to teach each other and receive individualized instruction from the teacher. During reading instruction, teachers may use whole class instruction, small group instruction, peer pairing, 1:1 instruction, or independent exercises. Varied grouping techniques such as choral reading, partner reading, listening to a teacher read and independent reading should occur daily in the comprehensive reading environment (Atkinson et al., 2002). The smaller the group, the better able the teacher is able to reach the students' needs and differentiate instruction; but different groupings should be used to achieve various lesson objectives. Research exists as to when and why to use each type of grouping situation (Bender, 2002).

Whole class instruction is typically used for delivering instruction geared for all students. It can take the form of a read aloud where the teacher asks comprehension questions, discusses vocabulary, and allows students to listen to the teacher as a model of fluent reading (Duke & Pearson, 2002). High quality teachers instruct whole class lessons with the goal of at least 80% of students understanding the instructional objective.

Small group instruction has proven to be a more effective type of grouping than whole group instruction (Taylor, Pearson, Clark, & Walpole in Taylor, Peterson, Pearson, & Rodriguez, 2002). It also gives students a smaller setting in which to "express what they know and receive feedback from other students and the teacher" (Vaughn, Hughes,

Moody, & Elbaum, 2001, p. 133). Small group instruction was found to be particularly effective in kindergarten (Taylor et al., 2002) and for students with disabilities (Vaughn, Gersten, & Chard, 2000). Students with disabilities and students without disabilities were both found to make the most reading progress in small groups as compared to other group sizes (Elbaum, Vaughn, Hughes, Moody, & Schumm, 2000).

Small group instruction as compared to large group instruction in special education settings, however, proved to be more effective (Foorman & Torgesen, 2001). For example, Jitendra, Edwards, Sacks, and Jacobson (2004) found similar results, stating that “the effect sizes for individual instruction and instruction in pairs were the largest” (p. 319). For example, “Smaller group ratios increase the likelihood of academic success through student-teacher interactions, individualization of instruction, student on-task behavior, and teacher monitoring of student progress and feedback” (Thurlow, Ysseldyke, Wotruba, & Algozzine in Vaughn, et al., 2003, p. 301)

Partner activities such as partner reading can be beneficial for improving reading fluency (Chard, Vaughn, & Tyler, 2002). A more proficient peer can be utilized to model a skill during a partner activity (Duke & Pearson, 2002; Vaughn, et al., 2003). Peer pairing is practical for teachers, as the practice allows students to teach each other (Vaughn et al., 2001).

For students with disabilities, research shows the smaller the group size, the better (Vaughn, et al., 2003), as the teacher is better able to instruct the students according to their specific needs (Vaughn et al., 2001). In recent research studying the reading gains made by second grade students in 1:1, 1:3, and 1:10 group sizes, students in the 1:1 and 1:3 group sizes outperformed the students in the 1:10 group size. There was no

significant different in the results between the 1:1 and 1:3 groups, however (Vaughn, et al., 2003).

Independent exercises exist within comprehensive literacy instruction for students to independently practice the skills they have been taught (Duke & Pearson, 2002). Students are required to be more participatory in independent exercises, thus practicing the reading skill, as opposed to listening to a teacher or partner practice a reading skill.

In summary, 1:1 instruction and even 1:3 instruction can be more effective than small group instruction, or even paired activities and whole group instruction. Two caveats remain: the instruction provided has to integrate the other best practice recommendations and grouping practices should be varied (Vaughn et al., 2001). Ultimately, teachers will have to “decentralize some of their instruction” in order to meet the needs of all the learners in their class, including struggling readers (Vaughn et al., 2001, p. 133). Varied groupings positively impact the performance of students with disabilities, as they can have their intensive needs met by the teacher or peers, or practice skills independently.

### **Best Practice Recommendations for Students with Disabilities as Compared to Typically Achieving Students**

The best practice recommendations for reading instruction for students with disabilities identified in the previous section are intensive and systematic support; explicit strategy instruction of key reading elements; instruction leading to high levels of student motivation and engagement; frequent and purposeful assessment and progress monitoring; and various types of grouping. In general, reading instruction recommendations often begin as intervention strategies, but become best practice for all



students. Phonemic awareness instruction and flexible grouping are two such examples (Parr, 2012). Although some strategies are appropriate for all students, it often takes multiple best practices to positively impact the success in reading of students with disabilities.

Certain modifications in instruction for struggling readers identified with a disability can make a difference in their reading progress. Torgesen et al. (2001) indicate that instruction received in the general education setting is not as effective as instruction received in the special education setting. Vaughn and colleagues (2002) expand on this idea by saying that a greater amount of individualized instruction was provided to students with disabilities in the special education setting. However, in terms of minutes of instruction, one study found that students were provided the same amount of reading instruction in the special education setting as in the general education setting (Vaughn et al., 2002). Additionally, in a case study of one student with a learning disability, Zigmond and Baker reported less reading instruction time, but increased time on task in the general education classroom, as compared to the special education classroom (as cited in Vaughn et al., 2002). Perhaps this indicates the need for teachers and professional development focused on the best practice recommendations in the general education setting.

Guided practice of new concepts, one-on-one instruction, systematic strategy instruction, and phonics instruction are successful components of reading instruction for students with learning disabilities (Torgesen et.al, 2001). Typically achieving peers are able to learn to read with minimal help from the teacher whereas struggling readers require direct and explicit reading instruction from a high quality teacher. An effective

teacher is one who can identify students who require differentiated, explicit instruction with special emphasis on specific skill and strategy development and intensity, all in response to assessment and progress monitoring in an engaging manner (Denton, Vaughn, & Fletcher, 2003). Students with disabilities, unlike their typically achieving peers, need explicit instruction in the area of fluency development (Allinder, Dunse, Brunken, & Obermiller-Krolikowski, 2001), in addition to other essential elements of reading (phonemic awareness, phonic, vocabulary development, and comprehension). Doing so in small groups has been shown to yield more learning as compared to instruction for students not in small groups (Vaughn, Hughes, Moody, & Elbaum, 2001).

Research-based instructional methods for students with disabilities are often similar to their typically achieving peers. Ultimately, “there is little evidence to support the notion that struggling readers, even those with identified disabilities, need dramatically different reading instruction from students who learn to read more easily” (Atkinson et al., 2002, p. 159). The main difference, however, is the format in which it is delivered. Foorman and Torgesen (2001) note that these differences “are related to the manner in which instruction is provided. Specifically, instruction for children who have difficulties learning to read must be more explicit and comprehensive, more intensive, and more supportive than the instruction required by the majority of children” (p. 206). The scholars go on to suggest the majority of students will respond to phonemic awareness, fluency, and comprehension instruction from reading instruction. In comparison, the students who struggle with reading will need explicit, comprehensive, and intensive instruction in the same skills in a small group or one-on-one setting. Many of the best practice recommendations parallel that reading instruction for students with

disabilities should be intensive, systematic, explicit, and comprehensive and focus on comprehension, phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, and vocabulary skill development.

In summary, best practice reading instruction for students with disabilities mirrors that which is provided for typically achieving students. The difference comes in the explicitness, intensity, and degree of support in which it is provided.

### **Best Practice Reading Recommendations for Bilingual Students**

“Best practice” reading recommendations for bilingual students differ from those for students who are English language learners. Best practice reading recommendations for students who are English language learners are meant as strategies for providing reading instruction for students in an environment where they are learning English. Students who are bilingual and learning how to read in Spanish and students who are bilingual and learning how to read in English should be instructed with different best practice reading recommendations.

**Spanish reading instruction for bilingual students.** Although instructing bilingual students how to read in Spanish utilizes the same practices of teaching students how to read in English, there is an additional strategy specific to bilingual literacy instruction. Free voluntary reading allows children choice in reading. They are urged to read books that grab their interest, rather than teacher-assigned books, or reading activities that require they answer comprehension questions or complete a book report. Conversely, free voluntary reading, suggests children do not continue reading books in which they have no interest, even after starting to read the book. Reading in such a way increases children’s and adults’ reading levels (Krashen, 2004; Pucci, 1994). The

research supports the positive effects of free reading, “In-school free reading programs also effective for vocabulary development, grammar test performance, writing, and oral/aural language ability” (Greaney, 1970; Krashen, 1989 as cited in Krashen, 2004). In a six-week summer free voluntary reading program, students who freely read and discussed their books for approximately three hours per day increased their reading level by five months (Krashen, 2004). The author continues on to discuss further research detailing the literacy growth students learning how to read in a second language experience. Rodrigo, McQuillan, & Krashen (1996) promote free voluntary reading as a means to increase vocabulary development, as proven with 19 study participants who participated in free voluntary reading in Spanish and also spoke Spanish as their first language. Free voluntary reading, or recreational reading, is a research-based reading instructional strategy proven to be as effective, if not more effective, than traditional reading instructional strategies, especially for bilingual readers (Krashen, 2005).

**English reading instruction for bilingual students.** Ovando, Combs, and Collier (2006) relay the importance of bilingual education:

When students receive high-quality instruction in their first language, then academic skills, literacy development, concept formation, subject knowledge, and learning strategies will all transfer from  $L_1$  to  $L_2$  as the vocabulary and communicative patterns are developed in  $L_2$  to express that academic knowledge. Thus, in a bilingual language arts class taught in students’ primary language, the teacher is developing language skills that will enhance students’ cognitive and academic growth. (p. 159)

English reading instruction for bilingual students should come at a time after which their first language is sufficiently developed. Teaching English reading to bilingual students require an additional set of instructional strategies.

The Institute of Education Sciences (IES) Practice Guide details five recommendations for *Effective Literacy and English Language Instruction for English Learners in the Elementary Grades*: Screen for reading problems and monitor progress; provide intensive small-group reading interventions; provide extensive and varied vocabulary instruction; develop academic English; and schedule peer-assisted learning opportunities (Gersten, Baker, Shanahan, Linan-Thompson, Collins, & Scarcella, 2007). All recommendations are beneficial for struggling learners, not only English language learners. Two recommendations, in particular, are especially beneficial for English language learners, however: provide extensive and varied vocabulary instruction and develop academic English.

One research-based model that provides vocabulary instruction and develops academic English is the SIOP<sup>®</sup> Model (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2008). The SIOP<sup>®</sup> Model is a framework for lesson planning and delivering instruction. In particular, SIOP<sup>®</sup> Feature 9 requires key vocabulary to be emphasized and SIOP<sup>®</sup> Feature 27 requires a comprehensive review of key vocabulary. The SIOP<sup>®</sup> model realizes the importance of vocabulary development as it relates to increased reading proficiency and comprehension and promotes the use of academic language, an academic word list, and vocabulary instruction. Specific strategies for vocabulary instruction may include, but are not limited to, word sorts, personal dictionaries, word walls, cloze sentences, and vocabulary games (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2008).

The IES Practice Guide recommends that English language learners develop academic language. The SIOP<sup>®</sup> Model Feature 2 requires that language objectives are clearly defined, displayed, and reviewed with students and SIOP<sup>®</sup> Feature 24 requires that language objectives are clearly supported by lesson delivery. Overall, the use of academic language by educators and students and providing language objectives (what students should learn in terms of language) is beneficial for students who are learning a second language. Language goals are based on the content of the lesson and are delivered to student, in addition to content objectives, throughout the instruction of the lesson (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2008). A disclaimer should be made, however, that the entire SIOP<sup>®</sup> Model is an appropriate technique for the instruction of English language learners, not just in the areas of vocabulary instruction and academic language development.

A second instructional model that educators use to develop academic language is the Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA). The CALLA lesson includes listing major concepts, content objectives, language objectives, learning strategies, and the five lesson parts: preparation, presentation, practice, evaluation, and expansion (Chamot & O'Malley, 1994). As the name of the approach states, the goal, as integrated throughout the instructional delivery is to develop academic language. The development of academic language is essential in the reading proficiency of bilingual learners (Gersten et al., 2007; Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2008, Cummins 1981; Krashen, 1982).

The necessity of continued first language development is evident when examined next to the adverse effects language assimilation can have on individuals (Collins,

Toppelberg, Suárez-Orozco, O'Connor, & Nieto-Castañon, 2011). Collins and colleagues (2011) used comprehensive English language examinations and teacher reports on the behavioral and emotional status of the students. The scholars' results detail that using instructional practices to develop first and second languages is educationally, linguistically, and psychologically beneficial, supporting the necessity of first language development.

### **Best Practice Reading Recommendations for Bilingual Students with Disabilities**

**Elements necessary for success.** Research in the field of reading practices for bilingual students with disabilities is surfacing, as is the practice of including students with disabilities in general education settings (Ruiz, Vargas, & Beltran, 2002). Practices identified in the research include a comprehensive reading approach; differentiated instruction; explicit, intensive, and systematic instruction; the Optimal Learning Environment, and high quality instruction.

***Explicit, intensive, and systematic instruction.*** Using reading instruction that is explicit, intensive, and systematic is effective for struggling readers (Denton, Vaughn, & Fletcher, 2003; Vaughn, Gersten, & Chard, 2000). Explicit strategy instruction requires teachers to specifically tell students the definition of the strategy, how to use it, when to use it, and model the strategy for students with an example. Explicit strategy instruction can be used to teach the five key reading elements fluency, vocabulary, phonics, comprehension, and phonemic awareness (NICHHD, 2000).

Explicit strategy instruction is an effective practice for teaching bilingual students with disabilities because it takes the speculation out of learning how to read. Instead of solely exposing students to strategy use, they are explicitly instructed of its uses. Low

progress readers do not often make significant gains in reading without intensive and systematic support (Al Otaiba & Fuchs, 2006; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000; Vaughn, Levy, Coleman, & Bos, 2002; Vaughn, Linan-Thompson, Kouzekanani, Pedrotty Bryant, Dickson, & Blozis, 2003). Intensive and systematic support is well-planned instruction based on student needs and evidence-based research that is also frequent and/or individualized.

Intensive support can be provided in the form of additional instructional time or instructing in smaller groups. Systematic support should be given based on best practice recommendations in the field of bilingual education and special education, taking into consideration recommendations from research in bilingual special education.

***Optimal learning environment.*** One research-proven instructional strategy for bilingual students with disabilities and bilingual students without disabilities is the optimal learning environment (OLE) project (Ruiz, Vargas, & Beltran, 2002). The optimal learning environment employs 12 classroom strategies for effective language and literacy instruction: student choice; student-centered instruction; whole-part-whole approach; active participation; emphasis on meaning, followed by form; authentic purpose; approximations; immersion in language and print; demonstrations; response; community of learners; and high expectations (Ruiz, Vargas, & Beltran, 2002). Recent research suggests the OLE project contains elements of instruction proven effective for bilingual students with disabilities (Goldstein, 1995).

In a study described earlier, Graves, Valles, & Rueda (2000), found the optimal learning environment to yield significant results even a year after implementation. The optimal learning environment prevailed over instructional strategies such as interactive



journals, writer's workshop, and a combination of journal writing, brainstorming-planning, and spelling practice.

***Differentiated instruction.*** Differentiated instruction is a method of teaching that allows teachers to meet the needs of a group of diverse learners. This strategy is effective for students with disabilities, as well as bilingual students (Gersten, Baker, Shanahan, Linan-Thompson, Collins, & Scarcella, 2007) and therefore, can be assumed effective for bilingual students with disabilities. Teachers use various grouping techniques, modifications to activities, and specialized instruction when differentiating instruction.

For English language learners and students with disabilities, teachers should utilize small group work (Bauer, Manyak, & Cook, 2010; Chorzempa & Graham, 2006; Vaughn, Levy, Coleman, & Bos, 2002). Peer-assisted learning strategies, such as peer-tutoring, have been found to be effective for students with disabilities (Saenz, Fuchs, & Fuchs, 2005). Differentiating instruction in reading groups allows teachers to meet students' specific needs, such as additional vocabulary development, while other students not in need of such skill development are able to work on activities meaningful to their own learning, for example. Using differentiated instruction to meet the needs of each student is essential in successful reading instruction (Vaughn, Levy, Coleman, & Bos, 2002).

Research suggests first language acquisition develops through second language acquisition and second language acquisition develops through first language acquisition (Dworin, 2003). Teachers can use differentiated instruction to help students use background information and make connections to content. Because all students have

different background knowledge, learn in different ways, and acquire language differently, differentiated instruction is a means to meet the needs of diverse learners.

***A comprehensive reading approach.*** An element for success in reading for bilingual students with disabilities is a comprehensive reading approach. Unfortunately, research on this population of students reveals a reductionist approach, which is not effective in producing success (Ruiz, Vargas, & Beltran, 2002). Comprehensive reading instruction includes providing education in the five major elements of reading: fluency, vocabulary, phonics, comprehension, and phonemic awareness (NICHD, 2000). Bilingual students with disabilities need to develop proficiency each of the five major elements. Phonics and vocabulary instruction, specifically (Wessels, 2001), best meet the needs of this group of learners, however a comprehensive approach is best.

Wessels (2001) points out the before, during, and after stages of reading should all incorporate vocabulary instruction. The before stage is to activate students' background knowledge and learn new vocabulary. The during reading stage is to discuss the use of the vocabulary in the text (Wessels, 2001) and the after reading stage discuss the new vocabulary. Wessels (2001) even promotes using higher level questioning techniques or higher level activities to have students design, classify, or build additional vocabulary based on new vocabulary learned. Additional ways to develop vocabulary through reading are through teacher read-alouds and picture walks (Cunningham, 2006).

In addition to a comprehensive reading approach, which focuses on vocabulary development, comprehensive reading instruction for bilingual students with disabilities should also include instruction in phonics. Because some English and Spanish letters make different sounds, instruction in this essential element of reading is instrumental in

developing biliteracy. Perez Canado (2005) goes as far as to advocate for spelling instruction based on her empirical research. She also notes teaching spelling rules, patterns, and strategies are advantageous to student learning. Furthermore, instructing students of the differences in the English language and the Spanish language allows students to make connections and connect new learning to known information. The comprehensive approach to reading instruction focusing on vocabulary and phonics development is proven effective for both English language learners and students with disabilities (Gersten, Baker, Shanahan, Linan-Thompson, Collins, & Scarcella, 2007; Perez Canado, 2005; Ruiz, Vargas, & Beltran, 2002; Wessels, 2001). It supports bilingual students with disabilities, as they may struggle with multiple elements of the reading process. A proficient reader is one who is able to put all the elements (fluency, vocabulary, phonics, comprehension, and phonemic awareness) together.

***High quality instruction.*** From its inception in the 1970s, Baca (1974) and Sanua (1976) concluded bilingual education programs were effective in educating bilingual students with disabilities (DeLeon & Gonzales, 1991). In turn, experts recommend bilingual special education programs for bilingual students with disabilities. Research makes it clear that students participating in bilingual special education programs exhibit “linguistic, academic, and cognitive growth” (Rodriguez, 2009, p. 461). Factors of success, however, are somewhat dependent on a positive bilingual school with high quality teaching practices and developed special education placement procedures (Rodriguez, 2009).

An element of success for the area of reading for bilingual students with disabilities is high quality instruction. Unfortunately, English language learners are often

“taught by the least qualified and experienced educators, an issue that significantly contributes to their educational failure” (Liasidou, 2013, p. 13). In addition, although there are numerous studies outlining effective reading instruction practices for bilingual students, “it is estimated that only 20% of the 56% of public school teachers who have at least one [English language learner] student in their classrooms are qualified to teach [English language learners]” (Liasidou, 2013, p. 14). Minimize this area even more by requiring a special education teaching license and the percentage drops lower. Although there is a lack of highly qualified teachers, the ones available can use specific instructional techniques to create successful reading environments for their students, as previously discussed.

In the 1980s, there were minimal amounts of research available on the quality of teachers and types of services for bilingual students with disabilities (Maestas y Moores & Moores, 1984). Teachers have to plan systematic instruction while taking into consideration evidence-based best practices in the fields of both bilingual education and special education (Liasidou, 2013). In addition, they must assess this group of students based on multiple aspects including linguistic, cognitive, emotional, social, and cultural needs (Liasidou, 2013). Students who received support in their first language were three times less likely to receive special education services than those in English-only programming (Artiles et al. as cited in Liasidou, 2013). Teachers using highly effective practices consider the students’ cultural and linguistic background (Duran & Weffer, 1992), experiences, and interests to create meaningful interactive instruction, which focuses on the process (not the product) using authentic assessments (Liasidou, 2013).

They also work collaboratively with others to draw on their expertise (Liasidou, 2013); however educators often lack this key component for success (Harris, 1995).

### **Conclusion**

Research suggests the needs of struggling readers can be met by using the same strategies used for readers who do not struggle. Using techniques such as a comprehensive reading approach, differentiated instruction, explicit, intensive, and systematic instruction, the optimal learning environment, and high quality instruction are hallmarks of good reading instruction, but may be even more essential in the development of proficient bilingual readers with disabilities.

Bilingual special education is an international topic (Figueroa, Fradd, & Correa, 1989) that the field must pull together in order to address. Although there are an estimated one million bilingual students with disabilities, their needs are not being met due to a lack of resources and qualified educators (Liasidou, 2013). Ultimately, “the development of bilingual special education programs is certainly compatible with best practices in education and our strong legal commitment to human civil rights” (Baca & Cervantes, 1998, p. 14).

### **Conclusion**

Throughout the previous sections, reading characteristics of students with disabilities, best practice recommendations for students with disabilities, students with disabilities as compared to typically achieving students, bilingual students, and bilingual students with disabilities many recommendations were detailed. A majority of the recommendations were redundant across each group of students. It is apparent that educators of bilingual students with disabilities must come together to use research-based

strategies to deliver sound reading instruction. Educators must use appropriate modes of instruction and collaborate with each other, families, and communities in order to make appropriate educational decisions.

### **CHAPTER 3: DESIGN OF THE STUDY**

It was the middle of my third year as an elementary school bilingual special education teacher and I felt so lost. I asked questions of literacy coaches, instructional coaches, administrators, and program support teachers, but I did not want to reveal my secret: I still felt like I did not know what I was doing. As I contacted other bilingual special education teachers in my school district, I realized they had the same questions and encountered the same challenges I did. Because I could not get answers about teaching reading to bilingual students with disabilities from my colleagues, I consulted the literature. Here too, I was surprised to learn there was not much guidance for teaching bilingual students with disabilities. This is where I began my journey to learning how to better do my job and working to fill a gap in the literature.

The study at hand investigates the current practices teachers of bilingual students with disabilities employ to provide reading instruction. I knew that if I was anxious someone would realize I was an imposter and did not truly know the best ways to teach bilingual students with disabilities how to read, that teachers I would come into contact with may have the same feelings. Therefore, it was of the utmost importance that I carefully designed the study at hand to protect future study participants and while still gathering information that would advance the field of reading instruction for bilingual students with disabilities.

Chapter three details the research question I sought to answer both as a former bilingual special education teacher and a future contributor to the field of bilingual special education. I explain the theoretical framework that focused this study and discuss why it is the one most suitable. It is in this chapter I also discuss the study's conceptual

and methodological framework as well as present my data collection methods and describe my rationale for selecting these methods given the research question. In addition, I review the methods I used to analyze the data collected from the study and I describe how the bioecological theory and critical disability theory align with the data collection methods. As the final part of chapter three, I summarize the study's credibility, validity, trustworthiness, my relationships to the topic, and possible problems due to status. The design of the study is the core of this project, from which, I have the opportunity to impact bilingual students with disabilities and their teachers.

### **Research Question**

At the heart of the study is the goal to determine what reading instructional practices current teachers of bilingual students with disabilities use. In order to document this, my research question is, *How do teachers structure reading instruction for bilingual students with disabilities in urban elementary settings?* As a means to explore this question and gain insight of the field, I used Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory coupled with critical disability theory. These theories provided a structure from which I was able to explore relationships and the instructional environment.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The study sought to document the reading instructional practices of teachers of bilingual students with disabilities. As such, I needed to be sure to document the current instructional practices of the teachers and also they implement those specific instructional practices. I did so through setting up my study with guidance from Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory.



### **Bioecological Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1994, 2005)**

The study looked at the instructional methods and decision-making process of adults providing reading instruction to bilingual students with disabilities. The four principle components of the bioecological theory create a model for the design of the study.

**Four principle components of the bioecological theory.** The four principle components are process, person, contexts, and time. I will describe each of these four below and after I present the data collection methods, I will discuss how they molded the study design.

***Process.*** The first principle component, process (or proximal processes) are the interactions between the “organism” and environment. These interactions help us understand the world around us. Proximal processes include interactions between people and within people and objects/symbols (Bronfenbrenner, 1998). Within these proximal processes, Bronfenbrenner outlines two propositions.

Proposition 1 states that “Human development takes place through processes of progressively more complex reciprocal interactions between an active, evolving biopsychological human organism and the persons, objects, and symbols in its immediate external environment” (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2005, p. 117). This proposition typically occurs as a part of the learning process. In U.S. schools, the complexity of reciprocal interactions becomes increasingly challenging throughout the school year and throughout the course of their educational careers. Proposition 1 says that reciprocal interactions occur between human organisms and the environment. Proposition 2 states interactions affect development in different ways. How much, how, and the areas in

which individuals develop, among other factors, are affected by interactions. These factors and development change over time.

**Person.** The three most influential person characteristics, according to Bronfenbrenner, are dispositions, resources, and demand. Dispositions, also thought of as attitudes or tendencies, have the ability to trigger proximal processes (interactions). Personal resources are those of “ability, experience, knowledge, and skills required for the effective functioning of proximal processes at a given stage of development” (Bronfenbrenner, 1998, p. 995). The third, demand characteristics, elicit reactions from others in the environment. Examples of these are age, gender, height, weight, race, etc. People react, to some degree, based on the physical appearance of others. The second component, person, includes the three most influential person characteristics separately and the interaction of the three, which also influence the first principle component of the model, proximal processes.

**Context.** The third principle component of the model is contexts. According to the theory, there are five contexts, or systems, that influence development: microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. The microsystem is the immediate environment of a person including their surroundings and relationships. This study looks at the involvement of only the microsystem in relationship to reading instruction for bilingual students with disabilities. The microsystem is the interactions between individuals and their environment. Thus, the two main concepts of the microsystem are the relationships and the setting. More specifically, Bronfenbrenner (1994) describes that

A microsystem is a pattern of activities, social roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given face-to-face setting with particular physical, social, and symbolic features that invite, permit, or inhibit, engagement in sustained, progressively more complex interactions with, and activity in, the immediate environment. (p. 1645)

The theoretical framework, drawing on Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory, serves to guide my study with educators of bilingual students with disabilities through setting up a framework looking at the microsystems of the school processes, educators, students, and reading instruction. For the purposes of my research, I used the key elements of the microsystem to guide me to determine which factors to study. In addition to the five systems that influence development within the third principle component, Bronfenbrenner (1998) proposes a fourth principle component of the Bioecological Model.

***Time.*** Time, the final principle component of the model is placed within three levels (micro, meso, and macro). It is not within the scope of this study to examine meso and macro time, therefore, microtime was the only one documented and analyzed. A proposition of the model states that significant interactions take place regularly for an extended period of time (Bronfenbrenner, 1999). As a result of documenting time, the final principle component of the bioecological model, I can conduct a deeper analysis of the district models, teacher practices and reasoning behind the practices, and fidelity to the models.

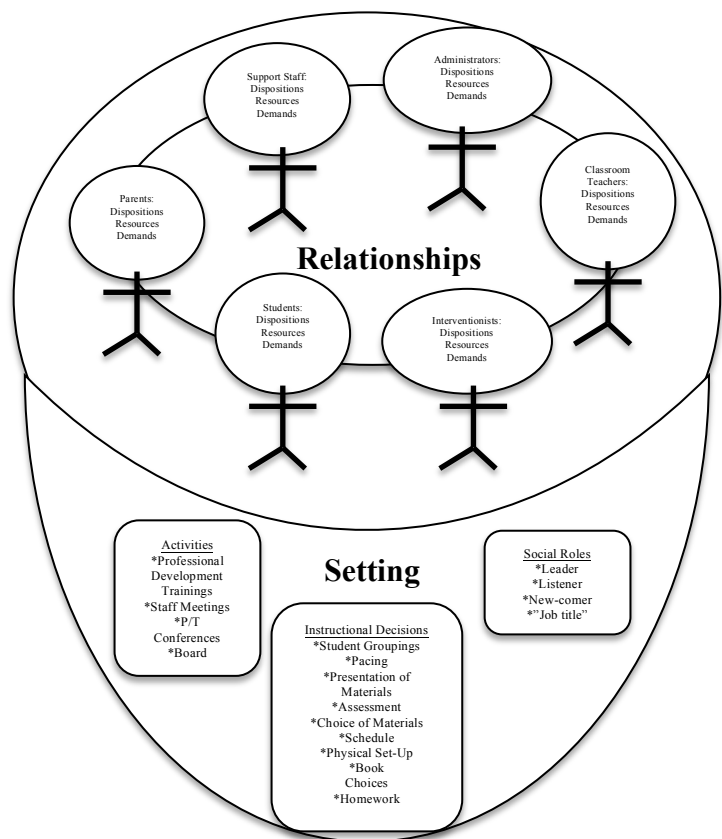
The figure of the microsystem from Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory (Figure 1), as it applies to the school environment that I developed, shows the two main concepts of the microsystem: relationships and setting. Individuals are a part of the relationships. Individuals within a school setting significant to this study are support staff, administrators, classroom teachers, interventionists, parents, and students. Although I did not include parents or students as participants in my study, they still are a part of the school context and their relationships with each other and with the participants influence the reading

Figure 1:

### Microsystem

instructional decisions. I also made mention of dispositions, resources, and demands within

my figure because Bronfenbrenner states these are the three main "person" characteristics. As a part of the setting, as it relates to my study, I included activities, instructional decisions, and social roles. Again, these components make up the school setting and have an impact on reading instructional decisions educators make for bilingual students with disabilities. The arrows between the setting and relationship parts of the figure indicate that relationships impact setting and likewise, setting impacts



relationships. I now present the theoretical lens through which I set up the study and analyzed the data.

## **Theoretical Perspective**

### **Critical Disability Theory**

Critical disability theory examines and seeks to challenge the way in which persons with disabilities are viewed and partake in society (Devlin & Pothier, 2006). Society sees individuals with disabilities in a deficit mindset; as less capable than individuals without disabilities. Generally speaking, critical disability theory poses that “disability is a social construct, not the inevitable consequence of impairment” (Hosking, 2008, p. 7). This occurs through language, attitudes, and values of society, among other factors. There are many more layers to the theory, some of which I will discuss.

Scholars have typically taken the main idea of critical disability theory and proposed related themes specific to their research. For this reason, the concept of critical disability theory remains the same throughout research, but the specifics of how it is applied in each context differs. The majority of studies reference Devlin and Pothier’s (2006) four central themes: language, definitions, and voice; contextual politics and the politics of responsibility and accountability; philosophical challenges; and citizenship/dis-citizenship. I will describe language, definitions, and voice; contextual politics and the politics of responsibility and accountability; and philosophical challenges, as these three central themes align with the study at hand.

**Language, definitions, and voice.** The first central theme is language, definitions, and voice. This concept proposes that the language individuals use to describe and talk about persons with disabilities contributes to negative assumptions

about the capabilities (or lack of abilities) of persons with disabilities. Society has evolved into working toward using person first language. Person first language proposes acknowledging the individual before the disability, as the disability does not define the individual. Common occurrences, such as referring to athletes ineligible to play in a football game as on the “disabled list,” is proof of how the language our society uses has pejorative undertones. Society has advanced from the eugenics movement (selective breeding and elimination based on disability status) to talking about persons with disabilities as such, instead of disabled persons.

Definitions, or what qualifies as a disability, are another part of critical disability theory. Do physical, intellectual, psychiatric, and sensory disabilities qualify? To some in society yes; to others, no. Devlin and Pothier (2006) point out individuals typically take an us versus them mindset, as opposed to a “hybrid” mindset where all individuals are on a spectrum of having different characteristics and abilities. No matter how individuals are defined however, the authors write, “Rather, depending on what is valued (perhaps overvalued) at certain socio-political conjunctures, specific personal characteristics are understood as deficits and, as a result, persons are *manufactured* as disabled” (Devlin & Pothier, 2006, p. 5).

The final part of this triad of a theme is voice. Here, I would simply like to call attention to the movement of advocates of persons with disabilities (both those with disabilities and those without disabilities) in the field of disability studies and who speak out as a voice for individuals with disabilities.

### **Contextual Politics and the Politics of Responsibility and Accountability.**

Power(lessness) and context are two main political aspects of critical disability theory. In

short, the power(lessness) factor speaks to the value, or lack of value, and equity society place on persons with disabilities. Again, socially society implies a level of misfortune in actions around life events; selective abortion at a preventative level, treatment as an attempt to cure, and rehabilitation as a coping mechanism, for example. Devlin and Pothier (2006) eloquently point out, “To start from the perspective that disability is misfortune is to buy into a framework of charity and pity rather than equality and inclusions” (p. 10). Not only is society sending a message to persons without disabilities through these actions, it is also sending a strong message to those with disabilities. The second main political aspect of critical disability theory is context.

To a large extent, the way a person’s disability affects him and society’s presumptions depend on the situation in which he partakes. As an example, stairs as the only means to entering a restaurant present a different context for a person with an intellectual disability as it does for a person who uses a wheelchair; the intellectual disability could be considered an invisible disability in this context. Critical disability theory does not promote ignoring differences, or disability; rather “pay[ing] attention to difference without creating a hierarchy of difference – either between disability and non-disability or within disability” (Devlin & Pothier, 2006, p. 12). This task is a large philosophical challenge, the third central theme I reference from Devlin and Pothier (2006) and apply to my study.

**Philosophical Challenges.** I began this section on critical disability theory by introducing the theoretical perspective as society’s reaction to disability. One way to look at philosophical challenges is to recognize that “the social disadvantage experienced by disabled people is caused by the physical, institutional and attitudinal (together, the

‘social’) environment which fails to meet the needs of people who do not match the social expectation of ‘normalcy’ (Hosking, 2008, p.7). Philosophical challenges include the way society views and responds to disability through exclusion, marginalization, discrimination, and even individuals with disabilities trying to pass as an individual without a disability. Examples such as these are responsible for the us versus them mindset and pitying those with disabilities. As I previously stated, the charge of critical disability theory is not to ignore differences, but to challenge society’s philosophies of persons with disabilities.

Simply put from a critical disability theory perspective, persons with different capabilities (or disabilities, depending on the language used) exist, but it is how society reacts to the different capabilities (in terms of power and context, for example) that create philosophical challenges (such as such as assumptions and structures). This study uses critical disability theory as a lens through which to collect, examine, and interpret the data. The way in which the district, school, and individuals define and use language about disability will give insight as to how they conceptualize disability and thus their instructional methods for bilingual students with disabilities. Likewise, the contexts study participants describe and those which I observe also have an impact, through a critical disability lens, on the reading instruction bilingual students with disabilities receive. Necessary and unnecessary accommodations in large, small, and individual settings are one example of this. In a similar fashion, district, school, and individuals’ philosophies on disability will provide insight as to their decision-making processes and again to their reading instructional delivery. Critical disability theory is the most appropriate because I seek to uncover how reading instruction is provided to bilingual



students with disabilities primarily in response to their disability-related needs as opposed to their reading or language needs. Looking at all aspects (disability, reading, and language) is not within the scope of this single study, though is essential to do in order to develop a more complete understanding of reading instruction for bilingual students with disabilities. Now that I have presented the study's theoretical framework (Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory) and its theoretical lens (critical disability theory), I present the methodological framework.

### **Methodological Framework**

The study at hand uses a single explanatory, instrumental case study design. In the subsequent sections, I will discuss what a single site explanatory case study is and my rationale for choosing this design, however, I first describe case study methodology.

#### **Case Study**

The case study design presents a method to study a phenomenon. Its design is popular in qualitative research (Gerring, 2004; Tight, 2010). A case study, as described by Glesne (2011), is the study of a case. At a most basic level, a case is the phenomenon that is being studied, oftentimes an event, program, individuals, group, or activity. Moreover, Gerring (2004) seeks to create a concrete, cohesive definition, "as a substitute for these flawed definitions, I define the case study as *an intensive study of a single unit for the purpose of understanding a larger class of (similar) units*" (p. 342). Nonetheless, a case can be defined in many ways; although, a case must be bounded, because without boundaries, it is not a case (Stake, 1995). The term boundary is not concrete, as there are no set limitations for the case study research design (Given, 2008). Boundaries may include time or place, but ultimately, the case study (whether single or multiple) is based

on “extensive data collection” (Creswell, 2012, p. 465) as it relates to the case, or phenomenon. Tight (2010) expands on case boundaries by describing a case as being dependent on research design and sampling strategy.

In the context of my research, I will utilize the case as an object of my study and employ certain methodological choices such as interviews, observations, and document analysis as a way to gain insight and understanding of the case. Once I established the methodological framework as a case study design, I needed to determine if the case study would be a single or multiple case study.

**Case study designs.** There are many different types of case studies and different ways to classify cases. Researchers choose single or multiple-case study designs based on which they see most appropriate to guide them to answer their research question and best understand their case. As a means of determining whether to utilize a single case study design or multiple case study design, I referred to Yin (1994). He explains that single-case designs are appropriate when the case “represents the critical case in testing a well-formulated theory” (p. 38), “represents an extreme or unique case” (p. 39), or when there is new access to a phenomenon as in the “revelatory case” (p. 40).

Single study designs are appropriate to study occurrences at one site. My study is a single site case study. It used a single case study design utilizing the bilingual special education teacher and the general education teachers with whom she worked. I sought to develop a general understanding of the case in terms of what, how, and why the educators chose the instructional strategies they did to teach bilingual students with disabilities. Before conducting the study, however, I needed to determine the purpose and type of single case study I would carry out.

**Purposes of case studies.** Case studies serve three main purposes: to explore, describe, or explain (Yin, 1994). The problem is not clearly identified in exploratory case studies. An exploratory study determines the best research design/model, data collection methods, and selection of subjects and variables (Creswell, 2007). Descriptive case studies describe data and characteristics, programs or activities, but do not typically answer the questions how, why, or when (Wallen & Fraenkel, 2001). My study is an explanatory case study. Explanatory case studies are a means to answering more causal relationships determining how two or more variables co-vary (Creswell, 2012).

In the case of my study, the purpose of the study is to explain a phenomenon (reading instruction being provided to bilingual students with disabilities). The case study is explanatory instead of descriptive because descriptive case studies report what is happening without discussing how or why, while my explanatory study examines with teachers the rationale behind their instructional decisions. As there are different purpose of case studies, there are, too, different types of case studies. I have already established that the study will be a single site explanatory case study; now let's look at another factor in the case study design.

**Types of case studies.** Within the case study design, the researcher is responsible for determining the degree of structure. This could range from unstructured to structured researcher roles (participant, participant observer, nonparticipant observer, etc.) and natural to artificial environments (a classroom, cafeteria, clinic, hospital, etc.) (Cohen & Manion, 1994). My role will be a nonparticipant observer within the natural environment of a school.

Moreover, researchers make use of three different types of case studies: intrinsic, instrumental, and collective (Creswell, 2012; Glesne, 2011; Stake, 1995). Intrinsic case studies serve to develop a better understanding of the case itself (Stake, 2006). An intrinsic case study is one in which the researcher has a specific interest in the case (Stake, 1995, 2000). In collective case studies, researchers collect data on multiple cases, describing and comparing cases in order to develop a better understanding of a phenomenon (Creswell, 2012). Finally, instrumental case studies serve to answer a question or provide insight and understanding (Stake, 1995). This is the case of my study; I am seeking to develop a better understanding of reading instructional practices used with bilingual students with disabilities so that I can develop a better understanding of the practices. Now that I have described the rationale behind choosing an explanatory, instrumental case study, I can detail how I selected the case.

**Selection of my case.** The selection of a case is an important part in the case study research process. As I have begun to explain, my case is the reading instructional practices of teachers of bilingual students with disabilities in an urban elementary school in Wisconsin. It is a single case study occurring within one location (Prescott Elementary School within the Ottumwa School District) and utilizing the bilingual special education teacher and the other teachers with whom she works. (In order to protect the anonymity of study participants, the names of the school district, school, and study participants have been changed.) I conducted observations and interviews, and collected documents as they related to the case; Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory informs what influences the case. The four principle components (process, person, context, and time), as well as the research question guided the definition of the case and the data to be collected. I talk

more about the case study approach in relationship to Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory in the next section.

**How the case study method fits with the methodological framework.** The case study approach calls for an emphasis in “designing the study to optimize understanding of the case rather than to generalize beyond it” (Stake, 2006, p. 443). A case study is appropriate for this study because I am not attempting to solve an issue or apply any gained understanding to other cases as a result of this study. When studying a small group, only a smaller number of understandings can be applied to other similar cases because every case is different. I worked to gain an understanding of the instructional delivery and the choices behind the instructional practices for a small group of learners in order to direct future research and after that, possibly direct future practice. A case study is an appropriate method because I spent time in the field and observed, conducted interviews, and collected documents. My research question allows me to understand the case, while it also relies on the perspectives of my subjects; all appropriate for the use of a case study. Figure 2 is a visual representation of how the case study method fits with my methodological framework.

## Data Collection Methods

**Site selection.** In order to identify bilingual special education programs, I did an Internet search to find a list of all of the CESA special education directors in Wisconsin; there are twelve. Then, I sent an email asking if they were familiar with any bilingual special education programs in their CESA. I recorded the directors' responses and emailed those that did not respond a second time. If they did not respond

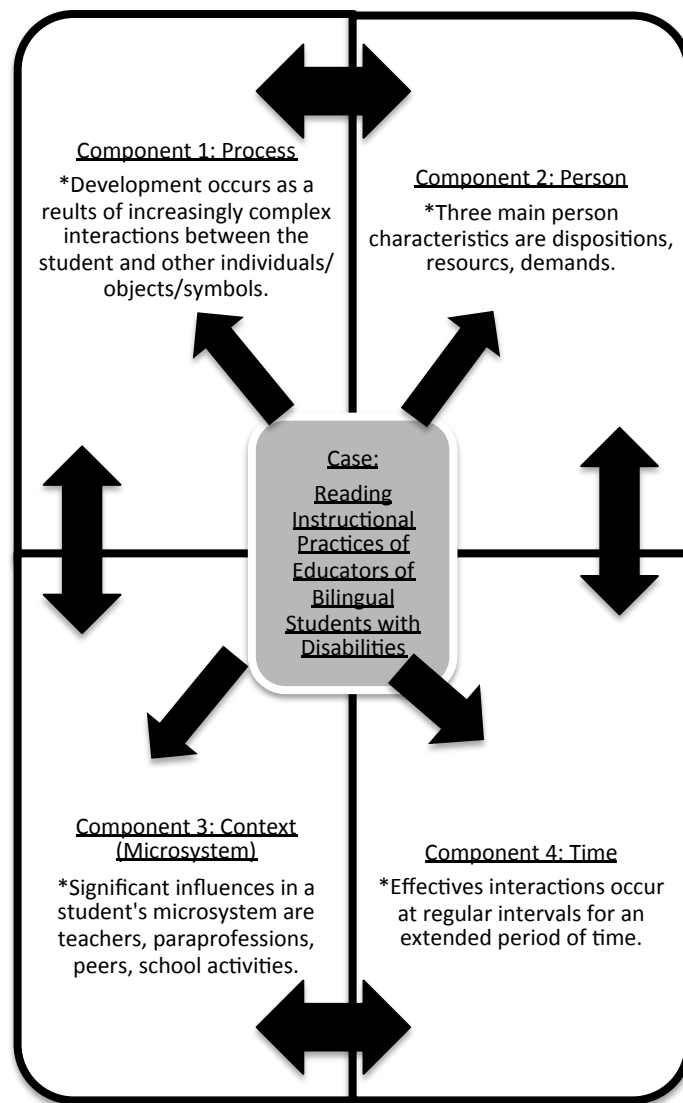


Figure 2: Case Study's Fit with Methodological Framework

again, I left them a voicemail asking for the same information. If I did not get a response, I contacted the CESA director of instruction or director of English language learners/bilingual education. I inquired to get a list of the schools with bilingual special education programs in the CESAs that responded that they have such a program. Next, I searched the Wisconsin Information System for Education website to see which school districts that meet the district selection criteria (Appendix A). Once I had a list of school

districts that met criteria, I researched which schools in each district meet school selection criteria (Appendix A) by contacting the school principals/bilingual special education teachers with a list of general questions. I also obtained UWM IRB approval (Appendix B) and external research approval from Ottumwa School District in order to be granted access to the school setting. The school that met the nonnegotiable conditions and the greatest number of nonnegotiable participant selection criteria (Appendix A) was the one I chose as the study site.

**Participant selection.** I chose the only bilingual special education teacher at the study site and the bilingual general education teachers (a bilingual Title I teacher and two bilingual classroom teachers) with whom she worked. Observing both bilingual general education (including the bilingual Title I teacher) and bilingual special education teachers provide valuable information about the bilingual special education reading instruction given to bilingual students with disabilities. For each teacher, I observed the instruction they provided to bilingual students with disabilities during their reading block. I also interviewed the teachers, additional support staff, and administrators to gain insight in the decisions guiding their instructional delivery.

**Data sources.** In order to better understand bilingual special education reading practices, it was imperative to use multiple data sources in the study. For this reason, I used teacher interviews, documents, and observations. I audio recorded teacher interviews and took detailed field notes.

**Interviews.** I required bilingual general education teachers, the Title I teacher, and the bilingual general education teacher to complete an electronic questionnaire (Appendix D). Electronic questionnaires with teachers focused on the reading curriculum, schedule,

demographics of the bilingual students with disabilities, teacher qualifications/preparation, and additional resources/supports they had or felt they needed.

Then, I interviewed bilingual general education teachers, the special education teacher, bilingual Title I teachers, and the educator effectiveness coach to gain additional information about relationships, instruction, and instructional decisions (Appendix C). I conducted a series of four interviews with teachers who directly provided reading instruction to bilingual students with disabilities. Christina agreed to the interviews and Elaine did not (both were bilingual general education classroom teachers). I also conducted interviews with Francis who provided reading instruction to the first graders with disabilities in Christina's classroom. Jean agreed to be interviewed as the bilingual special education teacher providing reading instruction to bilingual students with disabilities in Christina and Elaine's classrooms.

In addition to interviewing teachers who directly provide reading instruction to bilingual students with disabilities, I also conducted one interview with Linda (school principal), Joan (assistant superintendent of student services), Ana (the director of instruction: world languages, bilingual education, and ESL), Holly (educator effectiveness coach), and Mariah (bilingual Title I Teacher). These district administrator interviews focused on special education, bilingual education, and reading program models; and instructional decisions and relationships.

The semi-structured interviews detailed the educators' description of the implementation of reading instructional practices for bilingual students with disabilities, their reading lessons, and reflections. In addition, the questions served as a means to collect information about relationships; one of the components of Bronfenbrenner's



bioecological model. The interviews allowed me to ask additional questions about the responses individuals gave on their questionnaire and clarify questions formed from my reading instruction observations, as well as explore themes of relationships and instructional choices about individuals' teaching practice.

Additionally, I conducted interviews with the afore mentioned district administrators to gain additional information about district policies, programs, and their personal dispositions about bilingual special education. Interviewing these individuals provided me with a way to gain more information about the case from an external viewpoint, the district policies and procedures about bilingual education, special education, and bilingual special education; and assisted me in collecting documents. They provided information about the bioecological theory components of process and person.

**Observations.** Concurrently, I observed teachers' reading instructional practices. Semi-structured observations looked at the physical make up of the learning environments, the actual allocation of time to each language and during which content area, and the interactions between students and teachers, and students and paraprofessionals and other adults. Observations served as a means to gain information about the bioecological theory components of process, context, and time. To address the research question, *How do teachers structure reading instruction for bilingual students with disabilities in urban elementary settings?* the observations targeted the instructional delivery of the teacher, but also included interactions between students and the teacher participants. I took observational notes of the reading instruction being provided to bilingual students with disabilities by Christina, Elaine, Jean, and Francis. I noted the structure of the reading block; student-student, adult-adult, and student-adult interactions;

the environment; and the instructional methods used. I adapted the Classroom Setting Observation Guide (Appendix G) from Guest, Namey, and Mitchell (2012).

In order to answer the research question, I must have observed during the students' reading blocks. According to Denscombe (2011), observations should not occur on the same day every week. I conducted observations on every day of the school week. During observations, I used a narrative observation recording technique. In narrative recordings, the researcher takes detailed notes in her own words (Kumar, 2011). This descriptive way of documenting observations works well when observing one teacher at a time and for noting multiple factors about the phenomena being observed. Throughout the site visits, I also collected documents for a document analysis.

***Document analysis.*** I conducted a document analysis to look at the school's and district's support of reading instruction for bilingual students with disabilities (Appendix E; Appendix F). The document analysis included viewing teacher schedules, professional development materials, teaching materials, etc. I gathered documents from trainings teachers attended about district reading instruction procedures, literacy trainings, and other district documents detailing instructions for special education teachers. I collected documents throughout the course of the study. Jean, Christina, Francis, Linda, Ana, Mariah, and Holly provided me with documents about the school's bilingual, special education, and reading models, assessment procedures, and reading lessons, among other topics. Joan was the only study participant that agreed to provide documents to me, but did not follow through on delivering them. This data source provided information about the bioecological theory's components of process, context, and time and about philosophies of disability.

**Phases of the data collection process (Appendix H).** I observed the bilingual special education and each Kindergarten/first grade general education teacher who taught a bilingual student with a disability. I worked in the school during the months of April, May, and June, for a total of 8 weeks. I observed each teacher from 9-12 times. To note the ways in which the teachers provided reading instruction to bilingual students with disabilities, I took narrative field notes during each observation. I repeated the observations in each setting where bilingual students with disabilities received reading instruction. In addition, I spent time at the site when I was not observing collecting documents, analyzing the physical setting, and interviewing teachers. Throughout the data collection stage, I transcribed the interviews. After exiting the field, I continued to transcribe, summarize, and code the data, in addition to writing up my findings and conclusions.

In summary, three sources were used to collect data in the study at hand. I used district staff interviews, reading instruction observations, and document collection in order to gather data for the study. Using three sources of data allows the researcher to identify themes and subthemes with substantial cross-source evidence to warrant their inclusion as such. I now present an explanation of how I analyzed the data.

### **Methods of Analysis**

In order to determine how the case study method fits with the analysis strategies, I present my analysis strategies, followed by an explanation of the relevancy of the case study design to the analysis strategies.

**Analysis strategies.** Saldaña (2009) details several first cycle coding methods. General first cycle methods include grammatical methods, elemental methods, affective

methods, literary and language methods, exploratory methods, procedural methods, and themeing the data. Within each method, he provides several ways to engage in first cycle coding. For the purposes of analyzing the data in this study, I used descriptive coding; one of the ways to engage in elemental first cycle coding. In order to analyze the observations, interviews, questionnaires, and document analysis notes collected, I used descriptive coding to depict the basic idea of the data (Saldaña, 2009). This method of coding, appropriate for qualitative research, requires the researcher to read data in chunks and describe each salient topic with a word or phrase. For this study, I read through the transcripts, observation notes, and documents, and made a phrase, or a code, to describe any relevant text. Reading at the text level is “a filtering process, in which you choose which parts of your text you will include in your analysis, and which parts you will discard” (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003, p. 42). I engaged in several rounds of recoding during the first cycle. During the recoding stage I updated, reclassified, rearranged, and refined the codes. After descriptively coding the data during the first cycle, I used pattern coding to reorganize and reanalyze the data during the second cycle.

Pattern coding, utilized in second cycle coding, often follows descriptive coding, a method used in first cycle elemental coding. I grouped similar descriptive codes to create a pattern code. Pattern coding allowed me to develop major themes from the data. The pattern coding helped me to “understand the complexity of the case” (Creswell, 2007). In doing so, I was able to find patterns, or themes, within the data. While looking through the data, I coded it to reflect themes that emerged throughout as a part of the theoretical framework with a critical disability theory lens. During this stage, I noticed that some of the themes I created were too broad. At this point, I heeded Auerbach and

Silverstein's (2003) recommendation and looked for distinctions between the excerpts coded and then broke up the theme into several different themes or smaller subthemes. After the data analysis stage, I used member checking via email with the educators, director of bilingual education, director of special education, and principal if they wished. This served as a means to confirm appropriate representations of instruction, decision-making processes, relationships, and observations. Throughout this process, I used an online qualitative data analysis tool called Dedoose to support the review of the data.

**Fit of data analysis with the case study method.** Researchers using a multi-case study method in qualitative research usually examine themes within each case (within-case analysis) and themes across the cases (cross-case analysis) (Creswell, 2007). I will be using a single study design and will use this method to look at themes within the teachers' practices. I first used descriptive coding and pattern coding to look for themes among the practices of the educators of bilingual students with disabilities. As opposed to using a variable-oriented analysis, which examines variables and predicts their effects on the outcomes; I detailed a comprehensive case-oriented analysis which examines variables within each case and then across cases, looking for patterns, similarities, and making generalizations (Kohn, 1997). Within a case study approach, it is essential to use the theoretical and conceptual frameworks when determining what data to collect and while analyzing the data. I describe how these study factors intersect now.

**Fit of data analysis with critical disability theory.** Throughout the data analysis stage, I sorted through and analyzed the data with a critical disability theory mindset. I considered three of the four central themes present in the theory: language, definitions, and voice; contextual politics and the politics of responsibility and

accountability; and philosophical challenges. I looked for language within documents, transcripts, and observation notes that could give me insight into the language and definitions the participants, school, and district used when referring to students with disabilities. I kept this theoretical perspective mindset, specifically contextual politics and the politics of responsibility and accountability, when analyzing observation notes and participant interviews. Observations I did in the settings where instruction occurred and participant interview transcripts specifically described the context where instruction occurred. As I analyzed transcripts and created themes, I referred to the philosophical challenges theme of critical disability theory. Critical disability theory served as my theoretical perspective when analyzing data, as well as throughout discussing the study findings.

### **Bioecological Theory and Data Collection Methods**

The bioecological study is defined by four principle components (process, person, contexts, and time), all four of which I used to create a model for the design of the study and used to discuss study findings in Chapter 6. There are many reasons the bioecological theory is appropriate for the study. The first is that Bronfenbrenner's bioecological cites specific spheres of development, such as family, school, and peers, as influences on one's development. The theory cites school as one influence on a person's development, making it an appropriate choice for the study's theoretical framework. This study used the school sphere of development to frame and document the reading instruction provided to bilingual students with disabilities. To address a second component of the study, I investigated the teachers' decision-making processes (why they do what they do) in order to determine if the school district or other source provided

guidance, or if the teachers relied on themselves to devise the current instructional practices. A second reason the bioecological theory is the most appropriate for the study is that it also details four principle components: process, person, contexts, and time. The four principle components provided guidance and a framework for what types of information to collect and a context in which to analyze the data collected.

The first principle component, process, guided me to look at the interactions between individuals and between individuals and their environment. I noted these interactions in my observations and document analysis and asked about interactions and relationships during interviews. Interviews one and four asked participants about their processes (how they prepare, plan, choose lesson objectives, collaboration, etc.) and interview three asked participants about relationships (with each other, with students, and with the teacher's assistants).

The second principle component, person, can be broken down into many different person characteristics. The main ones guiding the study were dispositions, resources, and demand. Again, I used interviews and observations to record teacher dispositions. Interviews two and four included questions about the teachers as people (when they felt successful, challenged, etc.) and the general questionnaire I sent out asked about the teachers' educational and personal backgrounds. Through using interviews, observations, and document analysis I was able to look at resources and demands. The person component of the bioecological study provided me with a basis from which I can interpret the data, especially data regarding the effect of educator training, relationships, materials, disability, language, culture, and so on. I was able to use the person component of Bronfenbrenner's theory to discuss the data and draw conclusions.

The microsystem, the only part of the context principle component I used, includes interactions between individuals and their environment. It consists of people, relationships, and systems. I documented relationships and the setting (main components of the context: microsystem) again through interviews, observations, and document collection. I noted how the teachers interacted with other teachers and with students, what materials/instructional methods they used to provide reading instruction to bilingual students with disabilities, and what factors (or systems) influence their decisions.

The last of the four principle components of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory is time. I documented and analyzed this principle through interviews, observations, and document collection about the setting. Interview questions and the general questionnaire asked about time allotments; the document analysis did so as well; and observations focused on events such as teaching practices, learning activities, instructional materials, student engagement, length of activities, number of times an activity occurred, language choice, and so on. Bronfenbrenner states that effective interactions occur at regular intervals for an extended period of time, which is precisely what occurs over the course of the school year as teachers provide reading instruction. As I analyzed the data I was able to see the role time played in the reading instruction provided. Bronfenbrenner's spheres of development and four principle components make up the bioecological theory and created a basis for the study design. I now turn to a discussion of the study's credibility, validity, trustworthiness, and my relationship to the topic.



### **Credibility**

In an attempt to create trustworthiness, Shenton (2004) points out, “ensuring credibility is one of the most important factors in establishing trustworthiness” (p. 64). In one respect, credibility means being believable, plausible, or likely to happen. In another respect, credibility “advances a social agenda a social agenda or offers cultural criticism” (Creswell, 1998, p. 201-203, as cited by Glesne, 2011, p. 49). In order to establish credibility in my study, I (1) created a literature review based on current research in the field of reading and students with disabilities, bilingual education, and bilingual special education. This created a research-based foundation for the question and methods used in my study and allowed me to (2) write interview questions that reflect an understanding of current research trends in relationship to the research question; (3) develop my data analysis techniques to be similar to those of comparable projects; and (4) gain familiarity with the study setting, without prolonged engagement, through observations of the schools before interviews, surveys, observations, and document analysis begins. Through the above listed methods, I worked to establish credibility in my study.

### **Validity**

Joppe (2000) (as cited by Golafshani, 2003) defines validity as the level of truthfulness and the ability of the study to answer the research question. Dueling perspectives note that this definition may be more applicable to quantitative research, but nonetheless, validity attributes to the reliability, credibility, and trustworthiness of the study. As one way to establish validity, I triangulated the data. I used multiple sources to gather the same information (interviews, observations, and

document collection). Secondly, I investigated the data to disconfirm evidence (negative evidence). I must be mindful that the negative evidence not outweigh the confirming evidence (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Next, I used member-checks to ensure that I had reported true, appropriate information.

Auerbach and Silverstein (2003) discuss the justifiability as an alternative to validity. The authors suggest transparency, communicability, and coherence as substitutes. Transparency means a researcher is clear about the steps taken to arrive at the interpretation of the data; communicability is the ability for the researcher to relay his/her constructs, themes, and repeating ideas; and coherence is the researcher's constructs, themes, and repeating ideas ability to tell a story. There are many ways to interpret data, not one right way. The important part is the researcher's ability to make the way they analyzed and interpreted the data transparent, communicable, and coherent.

### **Researcher Role**

Within Banks' categorizations of researchers' roles, I am an external-outsider. Banks (1998) states, "The external-outsider is socialized within a community different from the one in which he or she is doing research" (p. 8). I was raised speaking one language and the community I investigated was learning to be biliterate and bilingual. In addition, I grew up in a suburban community and the research site is located in an urban community. Banks goes on to write, "The external-outsider has a partial understanding of and little appreciation for the values, perspectives, and knowledge of the community he or she is studying and consequently often misunderstands and misinterprets the behaviors within the studied community" (p. 8). Although, I believe I have an elevated knowledge of bilingual and bicultural programs as compared to most people living in Wisconsin, I

do think that I only have a partial understanding and as a result may not completely understand the behaviors and beliefs of the culture. Another researcher role I have is my observational role. I will be a nonparticipant observer. This means I will record observations, but I will not partake in the educational activities that the educators and students do. By taking a nonparticipant observer role, the participants were able to carry on with as little intrusion and disruption in their daily routines as was possible. Taking a role as nonparticipant observer was appropriate as I was an unfamiliar individual entering an unfamiliar site.

### **Positionality**

It is within this chapter that I must identify my positionality because my personal philosophies affect how I design the study, the way in which I take observational notes and develop interview questions, how I analyze the data I collect, how I interpret my findings, and the conclusions that I draw (Creswell, 2012). As a former bilingual Spanish special education teacher, I have a strong relationship to the research topic and an insider perspective on school systems. I interacted with and provided reading instruction to bilingual students with disabilities, had relationships spanning several years with parents and the staff with whom I worked. I hold teaching licenses in special education, regular education, English as a second language, and bilingual/bicultural education. My educational background has given me a strong academic background in the topic of elementary education, special education, and bilingual education. My professional background has given me a strong experiential background in bilingual special education.

To this study, I bring my own philosophies about special education and bilingual education. I believe that students with disabilities should be included, to the maximum

extent possible, with peers without disabilities. I believe in an individualized approach to planning instruction and programming for students with disabilities. I believe that educators should not make broad decisions to include all children full time in the general education setting. I do believe, however, that most students could be included near full time in the general education setting. Currently, this is not done as much as it should be. I believe that attitudes and resources (mostly financial) are the main barriers to including more students with disabilities in general education settings for greater percentages of the school day.

I also have strong convictions on bilingual education. I believe bilingualism is an asset. There is a common saying in bilingual education, “El que habla dos lenguas vale por dos.” (Anyone who speaks two languages is worth two people.) Not only is an individual who is bilingual able to navigate two languages, many times they have an understanding of two cultures as well. I believe school systems provide a great service to students when they offer one-way and two-way dual language programs. These types of programs give home language Spanish-speakers an opportunity to strengthen their Spanish language skills and strengthen, or learn, English; or give home language English-speakers an opportunity to strengthen their English language skills and strengthen, or learn Spanish. Bilingual individuals have an advantage over monolingual individuals in the workplace, as well as in many personal situations.

I write about my positionality knowing that it is fluid. As I continue to read about these two paradigms, engage in experiences in these settings, and reflect on my philosophies, I also continue to question and modify my beliefs. I am in a constant state of inquiry about my views on special education and bilingual education.

### **Possible Problems Due to Status**

I may encounter some problems due to my status. The teachers may have assumed my viewpoint and may have based answers on what they thought I believed. On the contrary, my status may have allowed me insider information because the participants may have felt more comfortable because they may have felt I could relate to them.

### **Trustworthiness**

If I engage in the aforementioned steps to create validity and credibility, my study will be trustworthy. In addition to those steps, I identified my bias as a previous bilingual special education teacher. Identifying my biases was an additional way I created trustworthiness in my study.

### **Conclusion**

My research question, theoretical framework, methodological framework, data collection methods, and methods of analysis came from a place of experiencing first hand the struggles of providing reading instruction to bilingual students with disabilities. In this chapter I detailed my research question, which seeks to expose what reading instructional practices are being used to educate bilingual students with disabilities. Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model is made up of four principle components; process, person, context, and time. I utilized each of these components to guide me in determining the parts of the school component on which to focus data collection and analysis. With the bioecological model as my theoretical framework, I determined a single site case study would be the most appropriate to answer the research question and concluded descriptive first cycle coding and pattern second cycle coding to aid in the recognition of themes. To conclude chapter three, I ended with a summary of the study's

credibility, validity, trustworthiness, my relationships to the topic, and possible problems due to status. Chapter four follows with a detailed description of the research site and study participants.

## **CHAPTER 4: SITE CONTEXT AND PARTICIPANTS**

A significant part of the case study methodological approach is painting a rich picture of the study setting and participants. I do so in this chapter through in-depth descriptions of the settings where the study took place including the Ottumwa School District (their district reader's workshop, dual language program, and special education philosophies); Prescott Elementary School (their dual language and special education models); and ultimately the study participants (classroom teachers, interventionists, support staff, district and school administrators, and other individuals referenced in the study). In order to paint a rich picture of the study, I start with describing the setting.

### **Setting**

Choosing the study setting was an important decision because I needed to be assured the setting was a good fit for the study. This study took place at Ottumwa School District in the state of Wisconsin. Study criteria dictated the school district must be identified as an urban district that had a bilingual special education program at one of its elementary school sites. Ottumwa School District qualified as an urban school district according to the Wisconsin Atlas of School Finance (Norman, 2004, p. 43) because it was, "the main city of a metro area, but with less than 250,000 population." The Wisconsin Atlas of School Finance definition was based on locale codes and geographical classifications of school districts from the National Center for Education Statistics and the 2000 Census classifications of urban and rural.

Ottumwa School District had four elementary schools with bilingual special education programs. I chose Prescott Elementary School according to site selection criteria such as teacher experience, willingness to participate in the study, number of

bilingual students with disabilities, an inclusive bilingual special education program model, and teacher credentials, among other descriptors. School district personnel also recommended to me Prescott Elementary School as a study setting. Next, I turn to a discussion of this very responsive school district and then a more in-depth description of the elementary school.

### **Ottumwa School District**

My first interactions with the school district were hopeful. I emailed about the lengthy research study application the school district had to approve before I would be allowed to collect data and asked about their 60-day approval timeline. The assistant Superintendent of Student Services, Joan Martinez, told me if I sent the research application to her on a Friday, she would get it back to me the following Monday. I appreciated their willingness to work with me, as I felt like a burden asking for their time commitments and submitted my application within the next couple of weeks. It was not until half way through the study that I had a reason to go to the district central office. There were several houses and duplexes in the area, many cars parked on street, and businesses integrated throughout the neighborhood. The district office building was previously a technical college building prior to when the school district took it over. Upon entering the building, I was unsure where to go, as there was construction in every direction and a lack of informative signs. Nonetheless, after several wrong stops and being misdirected, I arrived at the location of my scheduled interview. Now I turn to school district demographic information to provide facts about the district, followed by a description of the elementary school where I gathered additional study data.

Ottumwa School District was an urban school district located in Wisconsin. The



district had 25 schools (14 elementary, 3 middle, 3 high, 5 charter schools) and was the seventh largest school district in Wisconsin. Ottumwa School District employed over 850 teachers, 300 instructional aides, 70 support staff, 100 custodial/maintenance staff, and 60 district and school administrators (Ottumwa School District, 2011). At the end of the 2012-2013 academic school year, 84% of Ottumwa students graduated high school on a 4-year track and 51% of those students enrolled in postsecondary institutions the fall following graduation. Two percent of students dropped out of school. During the 2012-2013 academic school year, the Ottumwa School District spent \$11,051 per student (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2013). School district students spoke 39 languages and three of the elementary schools had Spanish bilingual programming. The district mission statement was, "To educate and graduate students by providing equal access to quality education with high academic standards that develops socially responsible citizens with the skills, attitudes and behaviors necessary for lifelong learning, higher education and employment" (Ottumwa School District, 2011). While the district mission statement and shared beliefs were mutual with Prescott Elementary School, many of the student demographics were different than the district facts. Table 1 illustrates additional demographic information comparing the Ottumwa School District with Prescott Elementary School. While I described Ottumwa School District and compared the school district with Prescott Elementary School in these paragraphs, next, I present more detailed information about the district reader's workshop philosophy, dual language program philosophy, and district special education program philosophy. I follow this with a description of the elementary school where I collected the majority of the data.

	Total Pupil Enrollment (2013-2014 School Year)	Economically disadvantaged (2013-2014 School Year)	Students with disabilities (2013-2014 School Year)	English language learners (2013-2014 School Year)	Males (2013-2014 School Year)	Race (2013-2014 School Year)						Reading Portion of the Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examination (WKCE) or Wisconsin Alternate Assessment-Students with Disabilities (WSAS-SwD) (2013-2014 School Year)				Habitually Truant (2012-2013 School Year)	Suspensions (2012-2013 School Year)
						White	Hispanic	Black	Asian	2 or more	American Indians or Pacific Islanders	Advanced	Proficient	Basic	Minimal		
<b>Ottumwa School District</b>	13,678 (Pre-K-12 <sup>th</sup> grade)	35%	13%	8%	51%	70%	18%	5%	4%	2%	<1%	6%	38%	34%	19%	5%	2%
<b>Prescott Elementary School</b>	447 students (73 in K; 77 in 1 <sup>st</sup> grade)	60%	14.5%	40%	48%	49%	47%	2%	1%	2%	0%	9%	31%	38%	24%	5%	0%

Table 2: Ottumwa School District in Comparison to Prescott Elementary School

(Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, n.d.)

**District reader's workshop philosophy.** Ottumwa School District used the reader's workshop model for students in Kindergarten through seventh grade. While the majority of the website described the reader's workshop model it also revealed two key district philosophies. The district website stated the model was "simple and powerful" and that they believed that "children learn by doing" (Ottumwa School District, 2011). The staff buy-in of the reader's workshop model was generally positive, as my discussions with study participants showed most individuals supported and believed in the workshop

model. Next, I will discuss the reader's workshop curriculum and general education and special education programs use.

*Reader's workshop curriculum.* General education. As their reading curriculum, Ottumwa School District used the reader's workshop in their elementary school settings. Jean, the bilingual special education teacher, described the model as it related to the general education setting, "It is a 90-minute block that includes independent reading, flexible guided reading groups, conferring, and progress monitoring" (personal communication, May 18, 2014).

The Prescott Elementary School principal, Linda, expanded,

Reader's workshop, in dual language classrooms, overall follows a similar structure with whole group, small group, whole group. There are times that whole group instruction may be longer in terms of what needs to occur with teaching for biliteracy strategies, building background, bringing in academic vocabulary, some additional things that teachers need to do so there are some differences in terms of that. The overall structure is similar. Small group guided reading instruction that occurs, there being strategy instruction and whole group teaching that happens at the beginning and wrap-up at the end. Conferring in the middle as well. (personal communication, June 3, 2014)

Linda confirmed the reader's workshop is used both in the English-only classrooms and in the dual language classrooms. Mariah, the bilingual Title I resource teacher, talked about why reader's workshop was a fit for Prescott Elementary School,

I think it's just important to know about the responsiveness, that's the key behind the whole motivation behind using the workshop model as the instructional design

so that teachers can be responsive and it's not that we will all be on page 66 on the third day of the third week. We don't do it that way at all. (personal communication, June 5, 2014)

Many school districts use the reader's workshop model for this reason. School districts believe the reader's workshop allows teachers to tailor instruction based on student needs. They find the basal readers and prescribed teacher manuals do not allow for flexibility based on student need.

The Ottumwa School District Comprehensive/Balanced Literacy Program Year at a Glance – First Grade document confirmed that the reader's workshop includes the following components: whole group instruction (20-30 minutes, 5 days per week), reader's workshop (45-60 minutes, 5 days per week), word study (10-15 minutes, 3-4 days per week), and writing workshop (45-60 minutes, 3 or more days per week). During the whole group instruction component, the document detailed the teacher and students should be engaged in an interactive read aloud, shared reading with strategy or skill focus, and shared writing with strategy or skill focus). During the reader's workshop component, the document detailed the teacher and students should be engaged in a 5-10 minute mini-lesson, followed by work time, and then share time. The work time is broken down into conferring, independent reading, guided reading/flexible groups (6 or fewer students; teacher led), and a mid-workshop teaching point. The document broke down the guided reading/flexible group subcomponent more to say this time should include a picture walk, strategy reminder, first reading, strategy teaching, comprehension, second reading, and responding to text. It should take place a minimum of 3-5 times per week per group with a 10-20 minute allotment per group. In addition, the groups should be

flexible for all students and include instructional level texts. The word study component was another pertinent part of The Ottumwa School District Comprehensive/Balanced Literacy Program Year at a Glance – First Grade document. The document explained the subcomponents of word study are early literacy concepts, phonological and phonemic awareness, letter knowledge, letter/sound relationships, spelling patterns, high frequency words, word meaning, word structure, and word solving actions.

Some of my observations confirmed the presence of the reader's workshop. My observational notes outlined a gathering time at the beginning of the reading block, followed by work time, and occasional share time at the end of the reading block. The special education teacher also used the reader's workshop curriculum to provide reading instruction to students with whom she worked.

Special education. Sometimes districts use a different special education curriculum than they do general education curriculum. When asked if Ottumwa School District uses a different reading curriculum for their students with disabilities Joan replied that they do not. The reading program for students with disabilities was the reader's workshop, as was it for students without disabilities. Joan stated that the reader's workshop "instruction should be a pitch it where they can hit it model" (personal communication, May 12, 2014). She went on to state that the reader's workshop model should be responsive to the students' needs, which is why it was adequate for students with disabilities in the general education setting.

Jean used Hopscotch SIL as her guide for providing reading instruction to bilingual students with disabilities at Prescott Elementary School. She worked with students in a small group setting and used the Hopscotch SIL as a direct instruction

method for its books and guided reading directions (personal communication, April 25, 2014). She went on in a different interview to state, “It is a curriculum that has a few different activities. First it is a running record of familiar text, then flashcards, walk through of new text, reading of new text, word work, and then comprehension through writing” (J. Jones, personal communication, May 18, 2014). General education teachers used the same components during their large and small groups as a part of their reading block; however, Jean used the Hopscotch SIL kit as guidance.

The documents I collected confirmed the lesson plan set up described by Jean for the Hopscotch Intervention. One Hopscotch SIL lesson plan collected included the students reading the alphabet cards and the high frequency word cards. Then, the lesson plan told the teacher to review students’ prior knowledge about the topic in the lesson’s book and give an introduction of the book. Next, the students read the book and the lesson plan told the teacher which reading behaviors to take notes about (ie: reading with emotion, self-monitoring, looking at the pictures). If the students have trouble reading a word, the lesson plan suggest the teacher use magnetic letters to help the student focus on initial, medial, and final sounds. Finally, the students reread the book and then write one to two sentences about the book to test their comprehension and practice writing. The lesson plan, again, gives the teacher observable writing behaviors for which they should watch when the students are writing. The lesson plan ends with additional activities. Some of these include working with magnetic letters, syllable flashcards, and filling out additional workbook pages practicing medial sounds or filling in sentence blanks.

Observational notes and document collection confirmed the presence of the Hopscotch SIL as the reading guide used by the bilingual special education teacher as she

provided literacy instruction to bilingual students with disabilities. The bilingual special education teacher not only had to abide by the reader's workshop program model and philosophy, but the dual language program model and philosophy as well.

**District dual language program philosophy.** Throughout my interactions, the importance of the dual language program to district staff members was evident. The district website linked to a page explaining their district dual language program. They have two sections; one that described their one-way program and one that described their two-way program. The dual language program at Prescott School was a one-way program, of which the district website explained students are taught in Spanish while being exposed to English at school. As the students move through the grades, they become a part of English as a Second language instruction. The district believed that fostering a child's first language is important to do before teaching them a second. They believe the culture at the one-way schools was inclusive and that they were supporting their students in becoming bilingual (Ottumwa School District, 2011).

I can attest that the culture at Prescott School was genuinely to support students in becoming bilingual and that their Spanish language skills were truly an asset to them. The school district was clearly knowledgeable about research stating when students develop a foundation in their first language, they are able to learn a second and maintain proficiency in their first with greater proficiency and success. The district dual language program philosophy speaks to the school district's attitudes about bilingual education. Now, I turn to a description of the special education program philosophy of the district.

**District special education program philosophy.** The district special education philosophy was not as clear as their dual language program philosophy. The district

website mainly reviewed key legal information. It was clear they support family involvement and collaboration in the students' education. Throughout the majority of the website the district discussed the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) and Wisconsin law. District philosophy about special education was one that supported school and community-based instruction (for students with cognitive disabilities) and developed specialized IEPs in collaboration with school professionals, the child, and the family (early childhood services). Their philosophy was also to place children in the least restrictive setting (early childhood services and emotional/behavioral disability services, deaf and hard of hearing services), commit to slow progress if need be (emotional/behavioral disability services), and collaborate with other professionals (vision impaired services) (Ottumwa School District, 2011). I was unable to find any information about the district philosophy of students with autism or specific learning disabilities, or any general beliefs about students with disabilities.

The district's special education philosophy is one way to better understand the rationale behind special education models employed in the schools. I now describe Prescott Elementary School and its dual language model and special education program model.

### **Prescott Elementary School**

An important component of presenting case study research is developing a clear understanding of the study site. I have described the school district where in the study took place, and now I seek to depict the specific elementary school. Prescott Elementary School served students in pre-kindergarten through fifth grade. The school was built in 1968 and at the time of the study had two multi-age classrooms, both kindergarten/first



grade mixes. All bilingual kindergarteners were educated in the K/1 classrooms, while there was one other first grade bilingual classroom at Prescott Elementary School. Prescott Elementary School employed 20 classroom teachers, 3 special education teachers, 2 speech/language pathologists, and a variety of other support staff. Prescott Elementary School had a dual language one-way bilingual program, as well as an English-only program (Ottumwa School District, 2011).

All of my interactions with Prescott Elementary School were friendly. First, I emailed the principal to tell her about the research study and ask permission to conduct the study at Prescott Elementary School. She informed me it was okay with her as long as her staff was willing. The principal stated concerns with the time commitment I would be asking of her staff and said it was “a steep expectation...on top of [their] already overflowing plates.” After additional correspondence with the principal and permission to contact the bilingual special education teacher, I emailed the bilingual special education teacher to ask about the bilingual special education program and her background. I was made aware in all of my interactions with staff that they were busy and I was welcome to use them as my study site as long as I worked around their schedule and was aware of their other obligations. For example, when detailing what the bilingual special education teacher expectations would be to participate in the study, the bilingual special education teacher told me the interviews would have to occur at the beginning of the teacher workday (not before or after) because she had a child to drop off and pick up at daycare. I told her I would work around her schedule. The bilingual special education teacher forwarded an email I wrote to bilingual general education teachers asking for their participation in the study and I received one reply. The K/1 bilingual general education

teacher agreed to participate in the study, but reiterated the same concerns with making time for interviews around an already busy meeting schedule. Nonetheless, the teachers agreed to participate and I schedule my first day at the school.

As I drove to Prescott Elementary School on the first day of data collection, I questioned whether the school district was truly in an urban area. The houses in the area were large and single-family; the yards were well-landscaped, the cars were expensive, and the school looked as if it was in a suburban area. After teaching for the first and fifth largest urban school districts in Wisconsin, the neighborhood surrounding this area was nothing like the ones surrounding the schools where I previously worked. There were no cars parked in the road and the houses had generously-sized yards. Upon leaving the school for the day, I looked up home prices in the neighborhood and found a house selling for nearly \$400,000. This, among other observances in the neighborhood, guided me to reexamine my information that Ottumwa Public School District was an urban school district. Based on my initial definition of urban area, however, the Ottumwa Public School District is classified as urban.

I parked in the street, as I did not know if I would be permitted to park in the parking lot and I did not want to upset anyone my first day. As I entered the school's main office, I was greeted by a friendly secretary and asked my business at the school. After explaining, the secretary called the bilingual general education teacher, who said she was not aware of me or my study. The secretary and myself determined there were two teachers by that first name and she had called the wrong one. She then sent me down the hallway to the classroom where I was to meet the bilingual special education teacher and bilingual general education teacher. There were lines on the floor in the hallway and

students walking followed the lines. Some gave me silent waves and cheery smiles.

Overall, the school made a pleasant first impression. Teachers hung student work outside their classrooms and both Spanish and English languages were present in the flyers and signs on my walk to the classroom.

As I entered the bilingual general education teacher's classroom, I was greeted with a smile and a feeling of chaos. Students were engaging in literacy activities throughout the room while the teacher was checking in with students and looking through instructional materials. She saw me enter, gave me a warm welcome, and told me where I could sit. She also informed me that the bilingual special education teacher (with whom I set up a meeting at that time) was running late because of an IEP meeting at another building. I thanked her and told her I would just sit at the designated spot and wait for the teacher to arrive, and she could continue as if I was not there. Students in the classroom waved and smiled at me as I looked around the room. The walls were full of student work and anchor charts and the classroom area was overflowing with students, desks, books, and instructional materials. The classroom reminded me of a familiar setting: most bilingual general education classrooms at my previous job. Throughout my time at Prescott Elementary School, I met many individuals and interacted on a deeper level with the study participants. I move on to present the school dual language and special education model, followed by a description of the study participants.

**School dual language model.** Prescott Elementary School had a one-way dual language program. The director of bilingual education and world languages, Ana, explained, "It's basically a developmental bilingual program. [...] The only difference between the one-way and the two-way models is who participates in that program, but

really as we are recognizing that more of our kids are simultaneous [learners]. Who participates is getting cloudier every day” (personal communication, May 7, 2014). One important aspect to understand of Prescott’s dual language program was its language allocation. Often times in bilingual programs, percentages, minutes, or subjects are divided by language. At Prescott Elementary School, the teachers allocated language time by subject, not minutes. Ana detailed,

So basically start out in kindergarten, first grade 90% Spanish, 10% English; and then 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> is 70/30 and 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> is 50/50. [...] I’ll just give you an example of a second grade. Second grade gets Spanish and English literacy instruction either every day or every other week model. The reason why some schools choose every other week is for monitoring. It used to be that they’d do it every other day but then we discovered that we couldn’t tell when it was happening, we couldn’t monitor the practice, we couldn’t tell what it looked like, what small groups look like. So most are doing every other week. So their literacy instruction is actually 50/50. In second grade, math instruction is in Spanish with a bridge to English and science instruction is in Spanish with ELA with language arts aligned and that’s in Spanish and they bridge to English. Fourth grade math just moves over to English. And that’s it. Easy peasy. (personal communication, May 7, 2014)

The school district and dual language schools and teachers worked to provide the best instruction for bilingual students, as was evident by their decision regarding language allocation as a result of previously unsuccessful monitoring practices.

The bilingual special education teacher and bilingual Title I resource teacher both stated the school used a one-way bilingual education model. During my interactions at the school, I observed solely Spanish reading instruction provided to home language Spanish speakers in the first grade classrooms; this aligned with what the director of instruction: world languages, bilingual education, and ESL stated the language allocations and bilingual program model would be in first grade.

**School special education model.** The special education model at Prescott Elementary School, as described by Joan, the assistant superintendent of student services, is a continuum of services. She said the special education teachers were currently “revamping and working towards doing more push in and more co-teaching, true co-teaching. But with that said they also have pull out and they also at Prescott, they also have the medically fragile population” (personal communication, May 12, 2014). Joan described that Prescott Elementary School is home to the district’s only elementary school program for students who are considered medically fragile. She said this meant they have staff members who are specially trained to meet those students’ needs. Joan said there was no self-contained classroom at Prescott Elementary School and that student placements were based on student needs. Jean, the school’s bilingual special education teacher echoed Joan’s statement that the school provided a continuum of special education services and placements, “We pull out students with SLD that need specialized instruction, but use inclusion as much as possible especially for students on the Autism spectrum and with cognitive disabilities” (personal communication, May 12, 2014). Based on conversations with the bilingual special education teacher, I believe she determined a student’s placement based on their needs, not their disability label.

I witnessed students with disabilities receiving instruction from the special education teacher in a corner of the general education setting, receiving instruction from the special education teacher in the special education setting, but did not witness co-teaching. My description of the reader's workshop, dual language program, and special education philosophies concludes my portrayal of the context of my study; I now move onto the study participants.

### **Participants**

Throughout the study, I conducted interviews with eight participants, took observational notes, and collected documents. Two kindergarten/first grade bilingual classroom teachers, two resource interventionists, two support staff, one principal, one assistant superintendent of student services, and one director of instruction: bilingual education and world languages took part in the study. During reading instruction, the bilingual special education teacher worked with four bilingual first graders with disabilities in two bilingual kindergarten/first grade (K/1) multiage classrooms and one bilingual third grader with a disability. I sought to conduct the study at hand inside the K/1 multiage classrooms and the teachers who were associated with the classrooms because out of the potential participants in the state of Wisconsin, this group of classroom teachers and interventionists met the most study criteria. In addition, they presented an excellent case to study because I was able to study one bilingual special education teacher and two sets of classroom teachers (sharing the same group of students) within one school, thus strengthening my study findings. I determined I would learn more about instructional practices and relationships in the K/1 multiage classroom teachers and the

associated interventionists instead of solely one bilingual special education teacher as she provided reading instruction to one third grader with a disability

Table 2 is a quick reference list of study participants.

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Data Collected from Participant</b>	<b>Aspect of the Bioecological Theory Addressed</b>
<b>Christina Smith</b>	K/1 Multiage Bilingual Classroom Teacher	4 Interviews, 1 Questionnaire, Observation Notes, Document Collection	Process, Person, Contexts, Time
<b>Elaine Brown</b>	K/1 Multiage Bilingual Classroom Teacher	Observation Notes	Process, Contexts, Time
<b>Jean Jones</b>	K-2 Bilingual Special Education Teacher	4 Interviews, 1 Questionnaire, Observation Notes, Document Collection	Process, Person, Contexts, Time
<b>Francis Williams</b>	Bilingual Title I Resource Teacher	4 Interviews, 1 Questionnaire, Observation Notes, Document Collection	Process, Person, Contexts, Time
<b>Holly Garcia</b>	Educator Effectiveness Coach	1 Interview, Document Collection	Person, Contexts, Time
<b>Mariah Miller</b>	Bilingual Title I Reading Resource Teacher	1 Interview, Document Collection	Person, Contexts, Time
<b>Ana Thomas</b>	Director of Instruction: World Languages, Bilingual Education, and ESL	1 Interview, Document Collection	Person, Contexts, Time
<b>Joan Martinez</b>	Assistant Superintendent of Student Services	1 Interview, Document Collection	Person, Contexts, Time
<b>Linda Anderson</b>	School Principal	1 Interview, Document Collection	Person, Contexts, Time

Table 3: Study Participants

Figure 1 is an organizational chart to show the relationship among individuals referenced in the study.

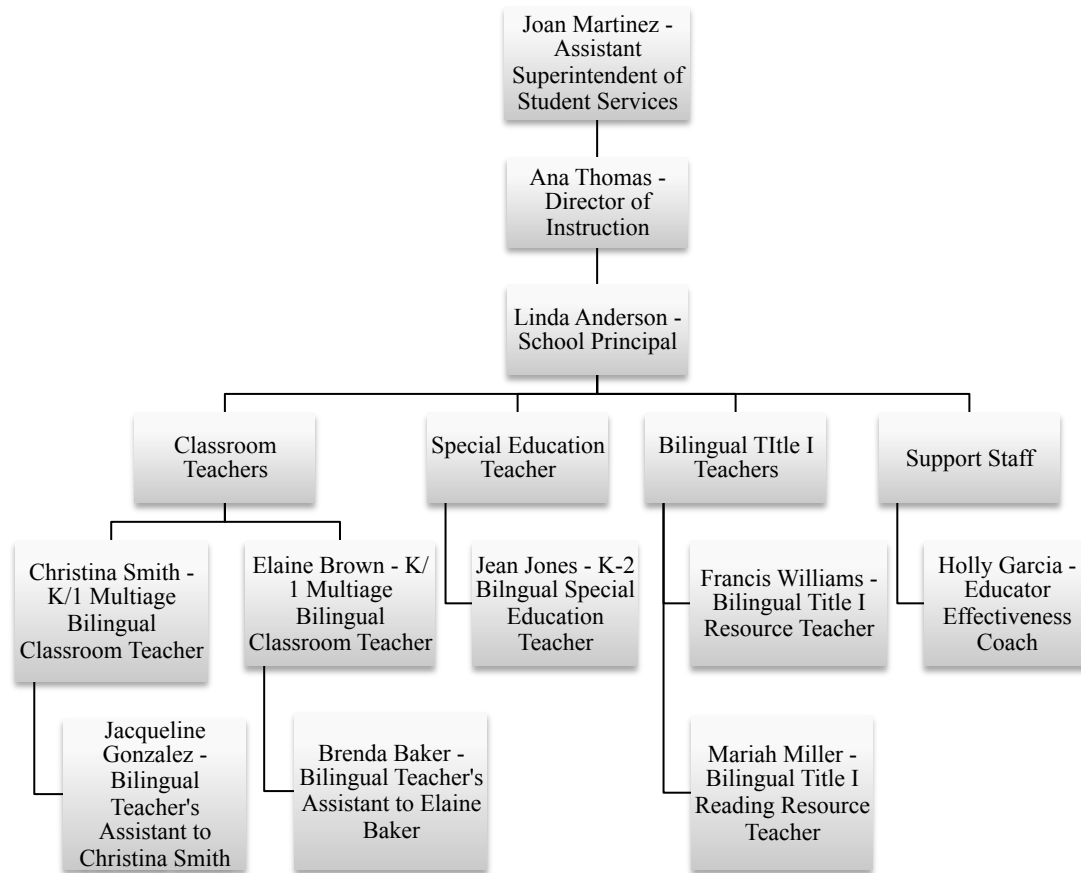


Figure 3: Organizational Chart of Study Participants

Now that I have presented a narrative of the study setting (school district and elementary school) and general information about the study participants, I follow with a detailed portrayal of each study participant.

### Classroom Teachers

**Christina Smith.** Christina, a kindergarten/first grade multiage bilingual classroom teacher, welcomed me into her classroom each day. She often spoke of how she loved teaching and loved the students. She said, “I go through withdrawal if I’m around adults all the time. I enjoy the huge progress younger students make, their interest and excitement and energy. I also enjoy the organizational side of the job, except



where politics and bureaucracy overrun education” (personal communication, May 14, 2014).

Typically, I would walk into her classroom and she would usually be wearing some color of khakis and a typical dress-casual shirt; t-shirt, blouse, sweater. Sometimes Christina would arrive at work in jeans and a school t-shirt. Her demeanor presented a woman confident in her teaching skills. As she taught lessons she spoke with a strong voice, not stumbling over her words in Spanish or asking students or her teacher’s assistant for help. She came up with ideas she stated were unplanned, but she had used before to teach a lesson. She did this if the way she was teaching the lesson was not working, or could be improved upon. Christina seemed very comfortable in her abilities and in the classroom setting.

Christina had been a teacher for 13 years; all of her time in teaching had been spent as a bilingual teacher, however eight of these years were as a teacher in a Spanish as a Second language program. She was currently a K/1 dual language teacher; this was her first year in this position. It was clear that the change had presented challenges for Christina, as she has had to learn a new grade’s content and a new district’s curricula,

Interpreting vague expectations from the district and administration, the assumption that if we are not in meetings or with kids we are not working, the way this district devalues teachers' time and efforts in general, creating and scrounging materials since so few are provided here and many of those are in English. (personal communication, May 14, 2014)

Previously, Christina taught one year of four-year old kindergarten and 11 years of first grade. She had her Master’s Degree in Curriculum and Instruction and a

Bachelor's Degree in Spanish with minors in Business Administration and Latin American Studies from the University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire. She told me that she did not initially go to college with the intent to teach, but after several years in the business world, she decided teaching was right for her. She was a graduate of an alternate teacher certification program in Milwaukee, from which she earned her teaching license in K-8 bilingual and social studies. Christina stated that she took three years of Spanish classes in high school, continued to take courses in college, and completed a summer and a semester studying abroad in Mexico. She also worked as a bilingual human resources assistant after college. I often observed the bilingual school staff at Prescott Elementary School speaking in Spanish to each other before or after school. Her teaching experiences over the past 12 years, coupled with her educational background and additional experiences with the Spanish language, affected the relationships she held with students and colleagues and played a role in her level of comfort with making educational decisions. Although she may have been learning what the reader's workshop was, she was confident in her skills as a reading teacher, as a Spanish-speaker, and a professional. These relationships and the decisions she made were impacted in philosophical ways. As shown by interviews, Christina was aware of the philosophy she held about students with disabilities. She was aware of inter-individual differences between students, but liked to consult with knowledgeable colleagues about students with disabilities (something for which she feels there was not enough time). In doing so, Christina became aware of what the students were working on with other teachers, however these discussions did not seem to influence her large group instruction or the ways in which she made accommodations for students with disabilities.

Christina noted she had non-readers up to students with low second grade reading levels in her K/1 classroom. She also had some students who had recently arrived in the United States and others who were born here; some students had an ACCESS level of zero, while others were a level six. This means some students do not speak any English and other speak with the fluency of a native English speaker. The 23 students in her class ranged in age from five to seven and were all Hispanic, mostly Mexican and Puerto Rican. There were nine students with disabilities in Christina's class; their disability labels include other health impairments, specific learning disabilities, speech and language disabilities, and autism. Christina led a classroom of diverse learners: ages, grades, cultural backgrounds, disability status, gender, language level, etc. She tried to treat all students the same and attempted to meet the needs they had as a class as opposed to the needs they had individually in the context of her classroom. In the instance of disability status, Christina was negating to address the students' individual needs based on their disabilities in the context of her classroom. Context is one of critical disability theory's central ideas. This central idea notes individuals with disabilities may need different accommodations based on their needs; these are dependent on the context. A student with a learning disability in the area of reading may need a social studies test read aloud to him, this however may not be necessary on a timed multiplication test. When failing to take into consideration how the disability affects the student in each context, and instead seeing all students as equals, Christina was ignoring disability. While it is important to recognize that a student has a disability, it is essential that teachers do not see having a disability as a disadvantage. Philosophically, it is clear that Christina was proud she saw all students as equals and having different needs, but did not address the

different needs based on their individualities. Christina was very welcoming and allowed me to take observational notes, conduct interviews with her, and provided documents for analysis. I received a different feeling from Elaine, however.

**Elaine Brown.** Elaine was very apprehensive about being a part of the study. After learning she also provided reading instruction to a bilingual student with a disability, I approached her and asked if she would be a part of the study. She said she had received my email and was not sure. She asked me several questions about the study. Some questions included why I chose to conduct the study so late in the school year; to which I replied that I had been in the process of getting the study approved by the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee and the Ottumwa School District through the course of the academic year. She said that most of what she was currently doing was giving reading assessments to her students and I would not see her instructional practices. I said the study was to note what was occurring during reading instruction for bilingual students with disabilities. I said that if the majority of my observations were during assessment times, my data collected would reflect the assessments. I assured her that I would not judge or evaluate her teaching. She also stated she already had a lot of responsibilities and did not feel she could dedicate the necessary time to interviews or questionnaires. In response to this concern, I let her know that she could choose to only let me observe in her classroom and not take part in interviews or document collection. Elaine agreed to participate in the study in this manner so I asked her to sign the consent form and she said she would read it over and sign it. After a couple of days, I emailed her asking if she had any questions about the consent form and she said no. During a site visit to observe a different study participant, I asked Elaine for the consent form and she

said she was unsure where she had placed it, but she would find it and read it over. I provided her with another and told her when my next observation was scheduled and that I would be back to collect it at that point. She agreed. At the time of my next observation, I timidly asked Elaine for the form and she pulled it out of a stack of papers, read it in front of me, and then signed it, as I thanked and assured her I would just take observational notes and not be of any undue bother to her. The following is information I gathered on my own, as I did not have an opportunity to interview or collect a general questionnaire from Elaine.

Elaine was a bilingual K/1 multiage classroom teacher. From public records, I learned that Elaine had teaching licenses in bilingual/bicultural education, grades prekindergarten through three and elementary/middle level education, grades prekindergarten through three. Before holding these licenses, she was licensed as a special education program aide. This was the only background information available about Elaine, as she permitted me to only conduct observations in her general education classroom.

Elaine's classroom was divided by bookshelves into six sections: a large carpet in front of a chalk board, a circle table behind the large carpet, a small square table with chairs behind the circle table at the back of the room, a rectangular table in the back of the room near the computers facing the wall, a rectangular table next to a kidney table where she and her teacher's aid worked with students, and a smaller oval rug in front of the interactive whiteboard at the front of the classroom. Her desk was in the corner near the oval rug. Elaine's classroom was very well-organized with books on bookshelves, student supplies in boxes, and papers in wire baskets.

Upon entering her classroom on scheduled observation dates, Elaine always smiled at me and said hi. She would sometimes ask how I was as I took a seat in an area where there were no students. Elaine often times came over to move papers in the area where I sat even though I assured her I had enough space and she did not have to worry about me. Elaine had a soft-spoken voice and spoke to students in a slow, caring pace. She used voice inflection, raising the tone of her voice when asking students questions about their interests or repeating parts of stories they told her. When I began observations in Elaine's classroom, she had the bilingual student with a disability go to the corner and work with the instructional aide as soon as he entered the classroom. After a couple of weeks, Elaine sent the student to the computer to engage in a Spanish literacy activity as soon as he entered the room. When he completed the computer activity, he joined the class. On several occasions, I had the feeling that Elaine was giving more instruction and support to the bilingual student with a disability in her classroom when I was there. She called on him to check for understanding and answer questions much more frequently than the other students. Elaine seemingly saw this bilingual student with a disability as disadvantaged. According to critical disability theory's politics of accountability, individuals should not ignore differences, nor create a "hierarchy of difference." Elaine's actions seemed to create a hierarchy of difference as she gave him more attention, as a student she presumably identified as needing considerable extra supports in order to succeed in the area of reading. Again, I could not investigate the driving force behind her instructional decisions, as she only allowed me to complete observations in her classroom. While Elaine met me with a smile and greeting each time I entered her room

to take observational notes, I felt a sense of familiarity with Jean; one of the interventionists I describe in the next section.

### **Interventionists**

**Jean Jones.** Jean appeared to be a confident, organized teacher. She immediately responded to my emails, informed me of school events, and arrived promptly for our scheduled interviews. Jean always dressed professionally with dress pants and blouses/sweaters, with the occasional jeans and school spirit t-shirt. Her interactions with students show she cared about their interests and was focused on their learning. She asked questions about her students' home lives and repeated what they said, making eye contact with them and asking additional questions. If the conversation was pushing into the students' instructional time, Jean ended the personal conversation and began reading instruction. It was clear Jean understood parts of the students' culture. She was a teacher born in the United States, but was married to a man from a Latin American country. She was able to talk with students about cultural events and knew many dialect-specific words. Through these discussions about students' personal interests and home life, I could see Jean did not buy into the powerless political aspect of critical disability theory. This aspect presents that society places a lack of value or inequity on persons with disabilities. Jean, however, treated the students as any other student at Prescott Elementary School, inquiring about their hobbies and life outside of school. More so, Jean did not stumble over the language and definitions she used to speak about her students during interviews. This told me she was comfortable and confident in who the students were and her philosophy of individuals with disabilities.

Jean was a kindergarten through second grade Spanish-speaking special education teacher. She had held this position title for two years, both at Prescott Elementary School. It was clear that what Jean saw as a rewarding part of her job aligned with the district's special education philosophy,

Seeing my students smiling and happy about being at school is rewarding. My students take baby steps and have small gains and progress that sometimes goes unnoticed, and then all of a sudden a student is able to do a task independently that they couldn't do before is a huge reward! (personal communication, June 6, 2014)

On an every day basis, Jean carried a basket around with her (changing it out for other baskets between student groups). In this basket, she had her instructional materials, student record sheets, supplies such as pencils, and sometimes an iPad. She reminded me of myself when I was teaching, as she was constantly hurrying from student group to student group, watching the time and trying to check in with the general education teachers. She worked with many other teachers and was in charge of providing instruction to students in math, reading, writing, and social skills.

Previous to working at Prescott Elementary School, Jean taught as an environmental science teacher in the Peace Corps for two years, as a Spanish long-term substitute teacher for grades 6-8, and as a long-term substitute teacher in a self-contained room for students with Emotional Behavioral Disabilities (EBD) in a high school. She held an early adolescence-adolescence cross-categorical special education teaching license and a license to teach early adolescent through adolescent students with cognitive disabilities (CD). Jean was a graduate of the University of Wisconsin – Whitewater with



a double major in Spanish and Cross-Categorical Special Education with an emphasis in CD. When asked how Jean learned Spanish, she responded that she took Spanish classes in high school and college. She also studied abroad for a semester in Ecuador and volunteered for two summers in Nicaragua. In addition, Jean served in the Peace Corps in Nicaragua for two years. I believe these experiences led to her increased cultural competence, ability to connect with her students, and the asset-focused view she had of students with disabilities.

Jean worked with students who had been identified as having a specific learning disability, cognitive disability, autism, and other health impairment with related services of speech and language, occupational therapy, physical therapy, hearing services, vision services, and specially designed physical education. The students' reading levels ranged from a kindergarten level to a first grade level and their ACCESS scores range from level one to level three. Jean stated that the students with whom she works are from Mexican and Puerto Rican backgrounds, and that most students were born in the United States, but one came to the United States last year. In addition to working with Christina and Elaine in the K/1 multiage classroom, Jean collaborated with six other classroom teachers. She states, "Scheduling and finding time to collaborate is the most challenging" (personal communication, June 6, 2014).

Jean gave permission for me to take observational notes and participated in interviews and document collection. Initially, she also put me into contact with bilingual teachers, such as Francis Williams.

**Francis Williams.** Francis was a friendly teacher who recently retired from the largest urban school district in Wisconsin. Although I say she was retired, she worked

full time as a bilingual Title I resource teacher. Francis shared personal information with me during my time at Prescott Elementary School. She was always willing to meet and never cited “so much on her plate” as a reason why her schedule was too busy. It seemed as if she accepted the overwhelming job of being a teacher. Francis always dressed professionally with dress shoes, a blouse, slacks, and coordinating jewelry. The students liked to touch her jewelry. Francis told me about her three adult children, her husband who was a school psychologist, and even invited me to stay overnight at her house during the study when she found out how far I drove on a daily basis. Her kindness and genuineness came across in her interactions with colleagues and students. These character traits also came across during an interview when I asked Francis about her job,

I find rewarding that in each child – just as in each of us – there is something wonderful to discover and build upon. I work hard every day to help children self-discover their strengths, talents, interests and passions. Although time and resources are often limited, we also strive to meet the ever-changing individual needs and challenges students experience throughout their developmental year.  
(personal communication, June 4, 2014)

Francis was a bilingual Title I teacher at Prescott Elementary School. She had been a teacher for 38 years; however, this was her first year as a bilingual Title I teacher and her first year at Prescott Elementary School. Francis spent her entire career in the elementary school setting. She previously was a Spanish teacher, bilingual classroom teacher, and literacy coach. Francis had teaching licenses in bilingual-bicultural education, grades 1-6 elementary/middle level education, and early adolescence through adolescence alternative education. She held a Bachelor’s Degree in Elementary

Education and in Spanish, and a Master's Degree in Curriculum and Instruction/Bilingual Education. Francis stated she was born and raised in El Salvador, where she learned Spanish; and learned English when she came to the United States. She worked as a teacher in El Salvador and as a paraprofessional until she received her teaching license in the United States.

Francis worked with students who were identified as students with speech and language disabilities, specific learning disabilities, and other health impairments. She said she only worked with two students with identified disabilities. When working with students in Christina and Elaine's classes, Francis sat at a table in the teachers' classrooms. She stated that this push-in model could be both a positive and negative experience. During interviews, Francis often brought up the students' disabilities as an excuse to why they can be distracted during this push-in group time, rather than bringing up the educational environment. Depending on an individual's philosophy, either the environment or the students' disabilities could be the cause of distraction. It is unclear if Francis believed the students with disabilities with whom she worked were the source of their learning troubles; or if the chaotic and distracting educational environment in which she taught was a cause of their learning troubles, as she made comments during interviews and observations noting this as well. In general, Francis worked with students from five to nine years old in kindergarten through third grade. She said all the students with whom she worked were Hispanic and had been in the United States from the time they were born up until as recently as a month ago. The students with whom Francis worked as a Title I resource teacher ranged in Spanish reading levels from kindergarten through third grade and had ACCESS levels from zero to two and a half.

Francis and Christina taught together previously at a different school district. Francis allowed me to take observational notes, interview her, and provided me with documents. In addition to working with classroom teachers and interventionists, I also interacted with support staff to understand instructional practices used to teach reading to bilingual students with disabilities.

### **Support Staff**

**Holly Garcia.** I was introduced to Holly as Francis and I were walking down the hallway to Francis' classroom one day. It was during this conversation that I found out Holly was accepted to UWM's Urban Education Doctoral Program, the same program in which I was enrolled. I stated that I would get her contact information from Francis and we parted ways. Eventually, I learned of Holly's role in reading instruction and emailed her to schedule an interview and talk about the doctoral program.

I found out that Holly was an educator effectiveness coach. She said that in other places she might be called an instructional coach. This is the term with which I am most familiar. She had worked in this position for two years and worked as an instructional coach in another district for two years. Her job duties were to provide the building with instructional leadership. She analyzed data and did instructional coaching. Holly came off as confident in herself and her role in the school. She was quick to answer questions and provide documents that supported her answers.

The instructional coaching part of her job included collaborating with teachers to talk about instructional practices and engaging in coaching cycles that involved reflecting and asking questions about their practices. During interviews, Holly described her lack of understanding about students with disabilities. She said she was not very knowledgeable

about bilingual students with disabilities, but that she had elevated knowledge about coaching based on data analysis. Instructional coaches must understand how to address students' needs. She may have been able to coach teachers based on students' specific reading needs without taking into account their disability status. This may be positive or negative. Sometimes having an understanding of how a learning disability affects language processing, for example, can provide insight when planning instruction; at other times, simply looking at the skills a student possesses and the ones he needs to attain are sufficient in order to plan effective reading instruction. Her job was not content specific; rather it was simply anything she needed to do to improve student achievement through looking at data with teachers and determining plans of action. She described her coaching role as,

that reflective piece, you know, listening to the teacher if they feel like they're struggling with something or if they notice certain data or results, then giving feedback and trying to help them work through it. Not just giving solutions, although I love to have an answer and know that it's not always possible. It's more of that support role. (H. Garcia, personal communication, June 5, 2014)

Another part of Holly's job was to provide professional development. At times, she collaborated with other professionals to facilitate content-specific offerings to district teachers. Holly received training from Ottumwa School District and was responsible for bringing information back to the staff at Prescott Elementary School, a task that she described as challenging. Holly received her Master's Degree in Bilingual Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee and was licensed to teach grades prekindergarten through twelve Spanish Foreign Language and grades

prekindergarten through twelve English as a Second Language. Holly was accepted into the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee's Urban Education Doctoral Program and began coursework in Fall 2014. I conducted one joint interview with Holly and Mariah.

**Mariah Miller.** Upon sitting down with Holly at our agreed upon time, I learned that she invited Mariah to be a part of the interview. As I pulled out the study consent forms, Mariah read through them carefully and asked clarifying questions. I had heard about Mariah and was referred to talk with her, however, she was on maternity leave during the majority of the study. I learned that Mariah's job title was a Title I reading teacher, but she was also referred to as an interventionist. Her job duties included "providing interventions, pushing in and helping support tier one reading instruction, kind of supporting other people in my building in the role of doing interventions" (M. Miller, personal communication, June 5, 2014). She said she was the only Title I resource teacher who did just reading interventions. Her lack of educational background in special education was evident as she spoke mostly about bilingual literacy practices, as opposed to providing interventions to struggling readers. She spoke about being responsive to individual student needs in general, but did not point out that each student has his own unique set of needs (disability-related, language-related, literacy-related, and so on).

Mariah was confident in her ability to perform her job. She spoke of the reader's workshop model in detail and expanded on information Holly gave. Mariah had her bilingual-bicultural education, grades pre-kindergarten-8 English; middle childhood-early adolescence English as a Second language, grades k-6 elementary/middle level education; and early childhood-adolescence reading teacher license and held a Master's

Degree from the University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee. I believe her educational background, as well as her passion for the job and job experiences, contributed to her confidence. Not only were classroom teachers, interventionists, and support staff an integral part of my data collection process, district and school administrators were as well.

### **District and School Administrators**

**Ana Thomas.** Ana was scheduled as my first interview. I was nervous about beginning interviews and felt intimidated by interviewing the director of curriculum and instruction for bilingual, ESL, and world languages. Upon arriving at her office, Ana emerged from a room and asked me to wait because she was finishing up a summer school meeting. Although Ana presented a professional, yet friendly demeanor, I continued to be intimidated throughout the interview, as she was very knowledgeable about dual language education and education in general. She used content-specific vocabulary words and expressed strong opinions on dual language programs and policies. She was well-aware of societal and district politics of bilingual education, but did not speak of any related to special education or bilingual special education. Ana believed that society places an inequity, or lack of value, on bilingual individuals, thus making them powerless. Just as society places a level of misfortune on bilingual learners, they also do on learners with disabilities. She did not speak of bilingual students with disabilities with this viewpoint, though, only bilingual learners and society and the district's reactions.

Ana had worked in this position for Ottumwa School District for two years. Ana worked as a teacher before assuming her current position, and also worked at the largest

urban school district in the state of Wisconsin. Her job responsibilities as director of curriculum and instruction for bilingual, ESL, and world languages were facilitating the Title III funding, overseeing the K-12 curricula, ensuring professional development for administrators, teachers, and coaches, communicating with the school board, advocacy, dual services and enrollment, placement management, testing, data analysis. Ana stated,

I think the main function of this department is really ensuring that there is a coherent curriculum and very coherent instructional practices especially in our dual language classrooms. (personal communication, May 7, 2014)

In addition, she felt that she had been able to make an impact on K-12 ESL instruction. We found a common bond in that we both knew a former principal at a different school district. At one point, even, she asked me to stop the audio recording and asked me details about a situation that occurred with that principal. I appreciated the ability to interview Ana because she provided a great interview and documents for the study. I conducted one interview with Ana; likewise, I conducted one with Joan Martinez.

**Joan Martinez.** Again, I was nervous to interview Joan because of her powerful role as the assistant superintendent of student services for the Ottumwa School District. This interview came with a few challenges. Several weeks before the interview, I emailed to confirm at what address the office was located. I received a response, but then received a call from Joan's secretary the day before our scheduled interview to ask what phone number to use for the interview. I said I was not aware this would be a phone interview, but gladly gave my phone number and confirmed the date and time of our interview. I also reminded the secretary that I needed the consent form signed by Joan before we could hold the interview. The day of the interview, I received a phone call in



the morning asking for interview questions. I was observing at Prescott School and had no access to internet. I used my cellular telephone and emailed the questions and asked for the consent form, which I had not yet received. I called at 1:15, the time of the scheduled interview and Joan was not in the office. The secretary said she would call me when she got there. At 1:32 secretary called to cancel. Ultimately we reschedule the phone interview during which we engaged in a great discussion about special education.

Joan had held the position of assistant superintendent of student services for the Ottumwa School District for three years. Joan oversaw the entire special education program. Joan took on the duties of a director of special education. She oversaw the special education coordinators, the special education vision, direction, budgeting, professional development, and issuing emergency teaching licenses for special education teachers. Even though scheduling and completing the interview was a challenging process, it was important to gain Joan's perspective on special education. She saw the district's special education program as a continuum of services. I noted she was very student-focused in her description of the continuum of services; talking about medically-fragile students and criteria of students with learning disabilities, as opposed to the school environment in relationship to students' needs. Joan described to me the idea that the district needed to look at the core belief system (of teachers, parents, community members) and determine if district behaviors aligned with and promoted the belief system. She noted a belief system where all kids can learn and "it is possible to accelerate outcomes to close the gap" ( J. Martinez, personal communication, May 12, 2014). Joan's philosophy of disability impacted how she operated within her current position as the assistant superintendent of student services. As important as it was to

interview Joan in order to gain her perspective, it was also important to gain Linda's perspective.

**Linda Anderson.** Linda was the principal of Prescott Elementary School. She was a woman with short reddish colored hair. Her interactions with students seemed to be pleasant and respectful, even as she was discussing behavior challenges. While awaiting our interview, I sat in the office and witnessed Linda approach a student and in a caring, soft tone, ask about his morning and if he had breakfast. She told him she would make sure he ate and then proceeded to give the secretary directives as to what to do with the students. Another student waited in the office for Linda. She approached this student and mentioned his behavior on the playground with another student. It was clear she wanted to be direct and specific, but not discuss the matter in public. She said she had an appointment, but the teacher next to her would have a discussion with him about school expectations.

Linda then turned to me with a big smile and welcomed me to walk to her office with her. She asked if we could keep the interview short, as there were a lot of things she needed to attend to that morning. I learned that Linda had been the principal at Prescott Elementary School for two years and previously was principal at a different school in Ottumwa School District for seven years. Prior to that, she worked at the district's central office in curriculum and instruction for four years and worked in a different school district as an elementary principal, high school assistant principal, teacher, and reading specialist. As a principal, she oversaw staff members and students, organized professional development, analyzed data, and communicated with parents, among other job responsibilities. Linda did not speak Spanish, but told me her son was a student in a

dual language two-way program in the district. I believe this speaks to her support of dual language programs. During her interview, she also mentioned she believes teachers in her school have high expectations (the students can and will learn) of students with disabilities in their classes. She gave an example of one student who was given a special education label, but she decided not to take away Title I reading services because he worked well with that interventionist. This shows her dedication to considering the student's needs and adjusting (or in this case, not adjusting) the student's environment in a supportive way, based on the student's need in each specific context.

### **Other Individuals Referenced in the Study**

In order to appropriately describe the school context, I must write about several individuals referenced in my findings, but not involved as participants in the study. Four main students were often present during observations of study participants and brought up by study participants during interviews. In order to detail the school context in-depth, I will describe the students as a group. The four students were all in first grade and began with reading levels at a zero (pre-kindergarten) at the beginning of the school year and ended the school year with levels four (ending kindergarten level) through seven (middle first grade level). All students received bilingual special education reading services, some for different areas of reading (reading fluency, basic reading, and reading comprehension) from Jean and three out of four of them received bilingual Title I services from Francis. One of the students attended Elaine's reading block, but belonged to a different homeroom, while the other three students attended Christina's reading block (one of whom belonged to a different homeroom). Between the four students, they

had labels of specific learning disability, speech and language impairment, and/or other health impairment (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder).

### **Conclusion**

Within chapter four I provided narratives of the Ottumwa School District and Prescott Elementary School. Throughout my descriptions of the district and school settings, I wrote about the district reader's workshop philosophy and curriculum model, dual language program philosophy and program model, and special education philosophy and program model. I also detailed who the study participants were. These individuals were a group of dedicated classroom teachers, interventionists, support staff, district and school administrators. In order to provide a complete setting context, I also gave a summary of the students as a groups. In the next chapter, Chapter 5, I present my findings.

## CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS

Bilingual students with disabilities are representative of a small, but ever-growing group of students in education. The task of properly educating these students falls on the shoulders of special education and/or bilingual teachers. The purpose of this study is to identify the current instructional practices being employed to provide reading instruction to bilingual students with disabilities. I did this through using a single case study approach. This methodology provided me with a means to look at how a group of teachers at one urban elementary school in the Wisconsin structures reading instruction for bilingual students with disabilities.

Ottumwa School District, an urban school district in Wisconsin, allowed me to interview staff members, collect documents, and observe reading instruction provided to bilingual students with disabilities at Prescott Elementary School. Study participants included the assistant superintendent of student services, director of instruction: world languages, bilingual education, and ESL of Bilingual Education and World Languages, Prescott Elementary School principal, bilingual special education teacher, educator effectiveness coach, two general education teachers, and two bilingual Title 1 teachers. I interviewed all of the mentioned staff members and observed the staff members who provided reading instruction to bilingual students with disabilities. As a third data source, I collected documents from study participants. With the data collected, I engaged in descriptive first cycle coding and pattern second cycle coding to aid in the recognition of themes.

Chapter five presents themes that emerged through the data analysis stage and reviews the themes in relationship with the study research question. Six main themes

emerged from the data. The themes are disability blindfolding; disjointed delivery; improper instruction due to assessment and progress monitoring; spatial implications; definitions impact instruction; and personal characteristics influence reading instruction. Next, I present a description of each theme identified in response to the research question, *How do teachers structure reading instruction for bilingual students with disabilities in urban elementary settings?*

### **Theme 1: Disability Blindfolding**

Individuals often reference the topic of racial colorblindness when discussing racism. Racial colorblindness, as defined by Neville and Awad (2014), is “a set of ideas and practices that help to create or perpetuate racial inequity” (p. 313). Some believe racial colorblindness, overlooking an individual’s race (intentionally or unintentionally), is a way to treat everyone fairly. Others believe identifying and understanding individuals and their diverse backgrounds is essential and does not promote racism. Racial colorblindness has also been described as overlooking race, while making decisions (Richeson & Nussbaum, 2003). In addition to racial colorblindness, scholars have written about “queer blindfolding,” or difference blindness. Drawing from the same school of thought, queer blindfolding is ignoring queer identifies (by heterosexual individuals) or minimizing/denying queer identities and past oppression (by lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals) (Smith & Shin, 2014). These authors choose to situate queer blindfolding under the umbrella of difference blindness, but to use the term blindfolding. They say using the word blindness, in this context, is a term oppressive to individuals who experience blindness. I use racial colorblindness and queer blindfolding to introduce this theme, disability blindfolding, because it parallels a significant portion

of my findings. As I write of disability blindfolding, as I call it, I return to Devlin and Pothier (2006), "...critical theory demands that difference be confronted. The challenge is to pay attention to difference without creating a hierarchy of difference – either between disability and non-disability or within disability" (p. 12). Disability blindfolding, in relationship to this study, is when individuals do not recognize students' differences as they relate to their disabilities. Some educators completely disregard and do not take into consideration students' specific needs, and therefore do not make appropriate adaptations or adequately meet those disability-related needs. Educators may think this is the best way to treat students fairly and to be unbiased in their classroom. Scruggs (2009) sees difference blindfolding differently, "Failure to see and acknowledge racial differences makes it difficult to recognize the unconscious biases everyone has. Those biases can taint a teacher's expectations of a student's ability and negatively influence a student's performance" (p. 46). Although Scruggs focuses on racial colorblindness, the same can be said for disability blindfolding. These biases, or even how an educator provides reading instruction, influences how individuals interact.

Bronfenbrenner (1998) states interactions affect development in different ways. Naturally these interactions, in this case between teachers and students, are present in how teachers talk to students, instructional materials they prepare based on their determination of student needs, and assessments they give, among others. The main factor that impacts these decisions and beliefs is the person, the second component of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory. A person's dispositions (tendencies, attitudes, and beliefs) shape how they view disability, which again, relate to how they provide instruction to students with disabilities.

Participants in the study at hand recognized the students' disabilities on different levels. When asked how she planned lessons to meet students' disability-related needs, Francis noted she realizes the students in her small group struggle with reading, so if she anticipated the book would present challenges for the students, she used a pre-teaching activity before asking the students to read the book (personal communication, F. Williams, May 13, 2014). In this situation, it is clear that part of Francis' process was to reflect on her prior interactions with the students in order to identify which texts would be difficult for the students. As the bioecological theory states, interactions affect development in different ways. Clearly, Francis noted students reading challenges as a result of their disabilities, and did not disregard them (or put on disability blinders), but took them into account when planning and teaching reading lessons. Her practice of doing this circles back to what she believed and the attitudes she had about students with disabilities (her person characteristics: dispositions and resources). In fact, Francis and I engaged in a discussion where I shared that many teachers set limits for students based on their disability or language statuses; to which she responded,

No, we have to set goals that are high for them, you know, taking into consideration what their disability is but it can't be oh, pobrecito [poor baby].

That shouldn't be used as an excuse; they're going to learn and they're going to learn something even if it's slower than the other kids, but they have to learn.

Whatever their ability is we have to use that. (personal communication, F.

Williams, May 23, 2014)

Based on the instruction and support she provided to students with disabilities and the beliefs she shared with me, Francis acknowledged disability and instead of creating a



hierarchy based on such, she simply worked to meet their needs. Christina offered a different perspective in her work with and conversations about students with disabilities.

I asked Christina the same question as Francis (how do you plan lessons to meet students disability-related needs); her answer differed drastically,

See I don't necessarily think about the fact that they have a disability because it doesn't matter what's on paper and what they're labeled as it isn't going to help me teach necessarily. It's just the fact that they did the test. What I like is when they test for IEPs sometimes you get some really good information from the test.

(personal communication, C. Smith, May 7 2014)

Francis gave a clear answer about pre-teaching activities where as, Christina stated she does not take students labels into consideration. She did, however, believe there was valuable information from the special education evaluation. In the same interview, she went on to state that if the whole group is filling out a graphic organizer that she sits down with "the low group" and complete a page with them. I noted practices such as this one during observations as well. Seemingly, Christina takes into account student needs on a general level: teachers naturally check in with students during activities and provide support to those who need it. Christina's person characteristics, specifically her dispositions, show that she believed that by ignoring disability, she put students on an equal playing field when providing instruction. This practice negates a component of critical disability theory; that individuals (teachers in this case) should pay attention to disability and work to meet specific needs without pity, judgment, or a one size fits all approach. As a result, her interactions (including reading instruction) with students with disabilities were not as impactful as they could be.

The interactions with students and beliefs held by Christina and Francis affected students personally and academically. If racial colorblindness could be the new racism (Scruggs, 2009), could disability blindfolding be a form of discrimination against students with disabilities? Similarly, could not considering a student's language-related needs be a form of discrimination against bilingual learners? Although this was not a prevalent theme, perhaps because all students in the class are bilingual learners, but not all students in the class have disabilities, it is a consideration educators must make. Providing the best reading instruction will occur only if educators identify and understand multiple aspects of their students and respond accordingly.

### **Theme 2: Disjointed Delivery**

As a former bilingual special education teacher, I am well aware of the level of difficulty in writing an IEP. Special education teachers must take into account setting (general education or special education) and the number of minutes to plan for reading instruction at an elementary school level, in addition to developing appropriate instructional goals. The students at the study site received push-in Title I reading instruction, pull-out or push-in special education reading instruction, and additional reading instruction from the general education teacher all in a matter of approximately one hour and forty five minutes.

Bronfenbrenner writes of time as one of the four main components of the bioecological theory. Microtime, as described by Bronfenbrenner (2005), means significant interactions take place regularly for an extended period of time. It is nearly impossible to talk about time without mentioning the setting in which it was noted. For this reason, I am combining time with environment in this theme that I have named

disjointed delivery. The bioecological theory also poses that the setting and how it interacts with the child and how the child interacts with it has a profound effect on how the child grows. Ideally, the setting for educating students with disabilities would be the same setting where students without disabilities are educated. Disjointed delivery includes elements such as the length of activities, time students spent in different settings during the reading block, and the exclusion of bilingual students with disabilities under the premise of time. In order to paint a clearer picture of the disjointed delivery of reading instruction, I will outline one student's daily schedule.

The reading block began in the general education classroom at 8:45am and all students (including those with disabilities) engaged in self-selected independent literacy activities. These activities included using a literacy game on the computer or iPad, playing games with letters, writing on erasable whiteboards, and others. At 9am, the student with a disability was pulled to a table in the general education classroom for a reading group with other struggling readers taught by the bilingual Title I teacher. When the bilingual special education teacher picked him up at 9:30am, the student went to the supply closet down the hallway for a second reading group with other students with disabilities. The bilingual special education teacher brought the student back to the general education classroom at 10:00 am and the student was scheduled to receive small group reading instruction with the general education teacher. This did not occur during my observations, however. The general education teacher was typically testing students' reading proficiencies with end of the year reading assessments during the majority of the nearly 2 hour reading block. If the bilingual student with a disability did engage in the reading group with the general education teacher that the district reading program

requires, the small group instruction would end at approximately 10:20 am. Ultimately, he would have ten minutes of independent reading time and fifteen minutes of whole group reading instruction which would focus on sharing and bringing closure to the day's lesson. Because of all of the specialized support with which he was provided over the hour and forty-five minutes, he missed the whole group mini-lesson, independent time to practice the skill outlined in the lesson, individual conferences, and station activities.

When separating the student's morning and looking at each small group instruction, this student's reading instruction occurred regularly (with the Title I and special education teachers) and for an extended period of time. Within each small group, he should have received skill and comprehension instruction, progress monitoring, and practice reading; much of the same instruction he would have received from only the general education teacher, but in a way that worked to meet his individual needs in a small group setting. When looking at the larger picture, however, the student was excluded from learning opportunities with peers without disabilities. This situation happened with all bilingual students with disabilities on a daily basis during reading instruction and other academic times throughout the day.

The exclusion of this student, even though he was only physically pulled out of the general education setting for one half hour during the reading block is a philosophical challenge society must address. One might say he was even being marginalized by not being exposed to the same instruction and same educational opportunities as his typically developing peers. As previously stated, disability is socially constructed, meaning that society imposes limits on individuals identified with disabilities and creates a normal and abnormal ways of meeting their needs. Whether the student goes through the normal or

abnormal route depends on his disability and the context. A student with a disability in the area of reading, for example, would not usually be excluded from his peers during math instruction because the context is math and the teacher would make adaptations so that reading would not affect his math skills. That same student, however, would be excluded from his peers for the majority of the reading block. Devlin and Pothier (2006) ascertain, “disability is not just an individual impairment but a systematically enforced pattern of exclusion” (p. 14). This pattern of exclusion looks different in other school districts in terms of special education time allotted, setting, and collaboration. The reading instruction provided to the bilingual student with a disability was most likely not as strong or cohesive as the instruction provided to students not undergoing this disjointed delivery. Each teacher that provided small group instruction, for example, taught using her own set of reading objectives and expectations. This adds to the disjointed delivery. If the teachers aligned their objectives and built off of each other, the student may have received stronger, more effective reading instruction than his general education peers. Each teacher, however, taught separate skills and strategies during each 20-30 minute reading group.

There exist several other ways to exemplify the disjointed delivery that occurred throughout the data collection phase. Additional instances contributing to disjointed delivery I noted include a lack of time for collaboration, a lack of qualified bilingual special education teachers, a lack of qualified bilingual teachers, differing attitudes and beliefs about bilingual students with disabilities, a lack of resources, and a lack of research and interventions for this specialized group of individuals. In one way or another, the example I provided of the schedule of a bilingual student with a disability

included many of these aspects. It specifically spoke to how the student's reading block was broken up by time and how he was excluded from most instruction occurring in the general education setting; a practice put in place by the way society says instruction for students with disabilities should be delivered, but nonetheless, disjointed.

### **Theme 3: Improper Instruction Due to Assessment and Progress Monitoring**

Upon reviewing my observations, interviews, and the documents I collected, assessment and progress monitoring were a daily occurrence and a common topic. It was evident through the disgruntled tone of voices teachers used when talking about reading assessments, the amount of times they mentioned there were too many assessments, and the exasperated looks on their faces when they called student after student to their table to give reading assessments that assessment and progress monitoring was a large part of the teachers reading instruction, perhaps too large of a part. I remember being a teacher and experiencing an overall change in my colleagues' demeanors and a decreased sense of excitement about teaching around the times assessments were coming due. A conglomeration of assessment and progress monitoring requirements, rather than one specific assessment or moment, is usually what pushes teachers to feel like they are overloaded. Within this theme, I will describe different ways teachers assess and monitor progress and support my findings with data I collected.

There are many ways to assess student skills and monitor progress. In general, assessments can be formally given to evaluate a skill or done through informal measures over time during progress monitoring. First, I will talk about formal assessments I noted during observations, interviews, and document analysis, and then describe progress

monitoring and finish this theme with a discussion of the impact of formal assessments and progress monitoring.

### **Formal Assessments**

Christina gave students formal assessments on the majority of days I was present in her classroom (from April 2014 to June 2014). Other study participants such as Elaine and Jean engaged in the practice as well. The following is the first question of my very first interview with Christina,

Logan: So describe how you prepare for teaching reading to bilingual students with disabilities.

Christina: I do reading groups, well when I'm not testing which takes up an incredible amount of time in this district.

Logan: I can understand that.

Christina: It's worse in this district than any place else I've ever taught. (personal communication, May 7, 2014)

Her openness indicates her level of comfort with me as a researcher and also her disdain with the amount of time district-required assessments take. In fact, her answer only loosely related to the question I asked, but it seems the question of preparing for teaching reading to students with disabilities related to assessment and progress monitoring. At some times during my observations, students were required to read for long periods of time while Christina conducted formal district assessments with one student at a time. During these observations, most students were on-task at the beginning of the independent reading time but as time went on, more students became distracted, broke

classroom rules such as keeping their hands to themselves, and disturbed the teacher in an increasing fashion as she was giving the reading tests.

Some tests were arduous and time-consuming for the teachers, leaving them with less time to provide instruction to their students, however other tests (such as a computer-based independent one), did not seem as bothersome. I noticed how the teachers cheerfully called students to the computers with a sense of relief that they did not have to play an active role in this assessment method. While engaging in formal assessments, teachers and students also used progress monitoring practices.

### **Progress Monitoring**

Progress monitoring is usually an informal assessment that teachers do to track student progress. They use the results to inform their instruction, helping them determine what to teach next or to reteach, for example.

Students with disabilities who struggle with reading are the subjects of more frequent progress monitoring. Teachers are required to keep data-based copious notes about this group of students' reading progress. I made the following observational note when students were reading aloud, "Andrew stops when he finishes the page, and Jones tells Eduardo to start. Eduardo reads the page while Andrew listens and Jones takes running record" (J. Jones, Observation, May 2, 2014). The previous except shows Jean asked the students to take turns reading while she completed an informal running record (marking down the number of reading errors while a student reads a book). At one point, she realized the book was too hard for the students so she asked them to stop and they practiced reading letter blends. She used what she found during her informal reading assessment to immediately change her lesson plan for the day in order to better meet



student needs. The lesson plans Jean followed on a daily basis have procedures for Day 1 and Day 2. Both Days included directions for how to monitor progress during reading instruction. Jean's progress monitoring technique helped her provide responsive instruction to the small group of students with disabilities with whom she worked.

Although not specifically instructed by the district as to how to do so, teachers provided immediate feedback to students on some occasions. Providing immediate feedback may not be considered a formal type of summative or formative assessment, but it is a way for teachers to assess students' work on the spot and provide them with feedback to improve their reading practices. As students were writing or after they were done writing during the reading group, the teacher read through the student's writing or asked the student to read his own writing and provided immediate feedback. The teacher made suggestions, wrote down changes, or asked the student questions to lead him to correct mistakes he had made when writing during the reading lesson. Sometimes the corrections were simple, and well-received, "She reads Andrew's and says "que dice aqui" [what does it say here] and they work together to write a word" (J. Jones, Observation, April 11, 2014) and other times the student became frustrated,

Williams reads Eduardo's sentence and asks him where there is water. He gets frustrated and she asks if his sentence makes sense. En la casa agua. [In the house water.] Eduardo shakes his head yes 4 times and then says En casa hay. [In house there is.] She tells him almost and tells him to think more. He is frustrated. She tells him if a word gives him problems he can change it. Eduardo says "this one I don't know" as he erases the words he had written. (F. Williams, Observation, May 23, 2014).

Providing immediate feedback also occurred during conferring.

In an interview, Mariah says teachers check for student understanding during the reader's workshop. They might also set a goal with the child during this time (M. Miller, personal communication, June 5, 2014). As outlined and described in the documents I collected and interviews I held, ongoing assessment and progress monitoring is one component of the reader's workshop. Providing students with immediate feedback requires neither additional planning nor a significant amount of time.

### **The Impact of Formal Assessments and Progress Monitoring**

**Students with disabilities receive less reading instruction.** Students with disabilities take more assessments than their peers without disabilities. The time needed for the assessments of both groups of students takes away from reading instructional time. In the case of Christina, her lowest groups of students were the ones she cut out from her small group reading instruction because they already received small group reading instruction with an interventionist (Title 1 or special education teacher). During an interview, Christina revealed, "I don't feel what I'm doing is as rigorous as I would like [...] part of it is the testing because I'm not getting to like my two lowest readers right now" (personal communication, May 14, 2014). The two lowest readers are students with disabilities that should be getting a double dose of reading instruction from both the special education teacher and the classroom teacher. Instead of providing one dose of literacy instruction to the students with disabilities in her classroom, Christina focused on assessments and did not hold small group reading instruction with these struggling learners.

Although teachers participating in the study did not discuss assessments given in preparation for annual IEP meetings, I seek to briefly present a summary of a student with a disability. Some teachers will give a student with a disability additional assessments prior to his annual IEP meeting. When reporting on the students present level of academic performance in the area of reading, a teacher may give the student additional tests or monitor his progress an additional time so the teacher can have a recent picture of the student to present on the IEP and at the IEP meeting. This again, imposes additional progress monitoring requirements on the teacher and the student with a disability.

A characteristic essential in individuals working with students with disabilities is asserting voice. Individuals with disabilities must be advocates for themselves, although within this context (elementary students and district-required assessments) self-advocacy is not appropriate. As such, the teachers and parents of students with disabilities must be advocates. The teachers should work to identify the numerous assessments students with disabilities undergo and make a case for the missed instructional time due to these assessments. Educators and families of students with disabilities are able to sign a waiver stating they believe the student with a disability still has a disability at the three-year reevaluation mark. While students with disabilities undergo the other assessments with greater frequency than students without disabilities do not allow educators to use their professional discretion when determining the necessity, the three-year evaluation procedures do. This gives educators and families a voice as a professional in the field of education and as an advocate for the student with a disability. Again, being an advocate for individuals with disabilities is one way to challenge how schools (and society) treat

students with disabilities and to challenge how they use disability status as a justification for subjecting students (and educators) to additional testing procedures.

**Impedes teachers' ability to establish relationships.** The main idea in this theme remains that teachers feel there are too many assessment and progress monitoring requirements. These requirements impede teachers' ability to be advocates for and establish relationships with their students.

The relationships between decision-making district personnel and teachers affect students' education. According to Bronfenbrenner (1994, 2005), interactions affect development in different ways. Interactions that do not change what is currently an overabundance of assessment and progress monitoring procedures create stress for educators and students. Likewise, students are affected when educators are not involved (or their voice is not heard) in decision-making processes such as assessment procedures. Strong administrator-educator interactions are crucial when determining reading practices for all students and for students with disabilities. This is especially true when the reading practices (including assessment procedures) affect teachers' and students' attitudes and the work/school environment.

Mariah addressed the prevalence of reading assessments and how the district was planning to respond to their teachers' voices,

The district is actually hiring a district assessment coordinator. Actually, it's not called DAC it's called something else something similar basically to refine and update because this is the assessment calendar for the entire year and when you look, our boss Bob is like hey, I think that's too much assessment, you're participating in a lot of assessment. There are very few weeks that aren't called

for in some way by assessment. They had to extend our MAP window this year so we were up to 6 weeks for our MAP window. Teachers feel like they're spending way too much time assessing. So that's one of the things that person in that role and for sure with feedback from the buildings to is going to work on. Narrowing down so like we can have some more quick check kind of assessments instead of feeling like we have to stop instruction. There's still some teachers that feel like oh, I have to stop instruction for a month. (personal communication, June 5, 2014)

It is clear the district realized their teachers spent too much time formally assessing and were beginning to take steps to change the practice. Nonetheless, I saw an abundance of instances where teachers gave formal and informal reading assessments and did student progress monitoring in lieu of providing reading instruction.

The teachers who had a more balanced way of assessing students (Jean and Francis) stated they have strong relationships with the students. When I inquired what the ideal relationship would be with her students and if she has that relationship, Jean said, "They're excited to come work with me and all the kids are saying are you picking me, are you picking me? I think that shows that there is rapport there" (personal communication, May 16, 2014). On the other hand, in response to a question I asked Christina about barriers to having a good relationship with the students, Christina stated, "I don't really feel like I get to know the kids as well. I know their personality, their skills, their abilities, but I don't know them in a lot of ways because we're always focused on getting something done" (personal communication, May 22, 2014). The balance between instruction and assessment that Jean has managed to create positively

affects the interactions she has with her students. Conversely, Christina is dissatisfied with the relationships she had with her students, partially because of the assessments (always being focused on getting something done).

Within Bronfenbrenner's (2005) microsystem, in this case the school, relationships have an effect on how children grow. The effect differs based on the individuals involved and other circumstances. The bioecological theory also states that how the child reacts to these relationships will have an affect on how people in this system treat the child. The abundance of formal assessments and progress monitoring can impede teachers' ability to establish relationships with students and other district staff; in turn, the relationships ultimately affect students (with a loss of instructional time and in unknown ways).

Teachers implemented most of the assessments and progress monitoring procedures because they were imposed by the school district. Other assessments, such as the word and syllable lists, were self-imposed because teachers thought of them as solid instructional technique. The over abundance of assessment and progress monitoring during reading instruction was not only felt by the teachers, but also by the students. While the district heard the teachers' voices (there are too many assessment and progress monitoring requirements), the teachers still must follow district guidelines until changes are made. It is an issue prevalent at a district, state, and national level; an issue that impacts student-teacher relationships; relationships between decision-makers and educators; and ultimately reading instruction for students with disabilities.

#### **Theme 4: Spatial Implications**

The classroom environment can have a great impact on an individual's focus and attention, especially if the individual already has special learning needs. The classroom environment is comprised of the teacher's expectations about voice volume, individual/partner/whole group work, activity choice, and so on. The teachers' and students' attitudes, personal characteristics, collaboration preferences, relationships, and learning styles play a role in how teachers set up the classroom environment and how students react to the classroom environment. First, I will talk about Christina's classroom and how Francis, Elaine, Jean, and their students are affected; and then I will turn to a description of Jean's instruction in the storage closet.

##### **The Bilingual General Education Classroom**

Upon entering Christina's classroom, I could tell the classroom environment was not an ideal setting for every student; the learning was problematic due to the environment. The classroom setting has an impact on the instructions teachers are able to provide and the quality of work students produce. Some students are able to focus and complete learning activities in noisy and chaotic settings, while others need very structured and quiet environments. I found Christina's room to be the most challenging learning environment, mostly due to her routines. Christina's classroom looked like a typical kindergarten/first grade classroom. Upon walking into the classroom, Christina had a large rug placed over the carpet in an open area in front of the interactive whiteboard. There were chalkboards, posters, and student work lining the walls and a grouping of tables with chairs on the other side of bookshelf behind the large rug. The room had numerous bookshelves filled with games, student supply boxes, books, and

teacher supplies. A large table, several computers, and a play area complete with a theatre screen and kitchen set were placed against the back wall of the classroom. The room was bustling with student movement and noise throughout my observations. The students frequently spoke with louds voices and often times were not focused on their work, while she provided little, if any, consequences. Francis felt the same way that I did.

When asked during an interview, Francis pointed out that distractions influence reading instruction, “[...] it’s the environment that influences a lot too because the disruptions that happen constantly you know it’s hard to focus for somebody without a disability and kids who have disabilities” (personal communication, May 23, 2014). Francis brought up the challenging classroom setting again when asked what the ideal relationship with the bilingual general education teachers would be like,

[...] we keep on reading unless if people are running around us and speaking around the environment isn’t very friendly with working with the kids with disabilities that they have. They, like Aaron is very hyperactive and you have kids running around him and screaming and being very loud, it’s like we’re reading in the middle of a park and everyone’s having fun doing whatever they want and even like that they’re focused on what they’re doing. I think if I was in a better setting like Elaine’s room those kids would be more focused. (personal communication, May 23, 2014)

It is clear Francis saw the current environment she was in as less than optimal for working with students with disabilities.

Personal characteristics influence the interactions between people and between people and the environment. Christina’s personal characteristics (being comfortable with



a less structured classroom) differ from the way Francis feels the classroom setting should be set up for working with students with disabilities. Several of my observational notes support this statement. Some notes show that other students in the general education classroom setting where Francis provides instruction to her small group, distract the students with whom Francis is trying to work, “The girl comes back to the table and Williams says she has to leave, she says she wants to give the pencil sharpener back to Aaron. Williams lets her do this” (F. Williams, observation, May 23, 2014). In this situation, other students are not only creating distractions around Francis’ reading group with students with disabilities, but they are approaching and talking to the group. Groups of individuals in this classroom interact with the environment in different ways because of the expectations (or lack of expectations) Christina has set. Christina and the teacher’s aide with whom she worked conducted business as normal in their classroom. They interacted with students and activities and did not mention the unstructured environment to each other, to the students, or to me. Teachers who held groups in Christina’s classroom (Jean and Francis) interacted with the environment in a different way. They dealt with the environment by setting up and enforcing expectations for their small groups of students and sometimes redirecting the students who interfered with their small group instruction. I also observed Jean and Francis mentioning how difficult it was to work in the classroom to each other and made note of their disdain during several interviews. They did not have control over the environment, however, the comfort level they had with Christina did not allow them to confront her about her classroom procedures. The last group of individuals who interacted with the environment was the students. Some students did not react negatively to the environment (covering their ears,

watching other activities instead of completing their work, etc.) and some did (crawling on the floor, hitting other students, hiding behind bookshelves, not working on teacher-given activities). Sometimes Christina's students who were not a part of Francis or Jean's groups attempted to interact with Francis, Jean, or the students in their groups during instructional time.

Other times students from the general classroom impeded on Francis' space, but neither Francis nor the students said anything, "A girl sits down at their table and starts doing a worksheet" (F. Williams, observation, June 5, 2014). Upon seeing that Francis allowed the girl to sit at the table where she was instructing her small group, I wondered if the student was being more disruptive by sitting with Francis' group or if the girl needed a quiet, focused place to work. Sometimes the instruction Christina provided to the students who were not in Francis' group distracted Francis small group of students, "They continue to read their word cards. Smith puts a page up on the whiteboard that says what kid learned which color list of spelling words this year. It distracts him" (F. Williams, observation, May 23, 2014). This is the difficult part of providing push-in instruction.

A major initiative from many districts is to provide extra support (in the form of Title I services and special education services) in the general classroom setting, as opposed to pulling the students out and taking them to the support/intervention teacher's classroom. This can be beneficial if the general education classroom teacher has a very structured setting and the support/intervention teacher is providing her small group instruction at the correct time in the reading block. The ideal time is during when the students are engaging in independent work time and the teacher is providing small group

reading instruction, otherwise, the general education classroom teacher is trying to provide a whole group lesson while the support/intervention teacher is trying to provide her small group lesson. It can be difficult for the teachers and students to concentrate when this happens. Difficulties like I described in observational notes and Francis talked about during interviews occur when the general education classroom teacher does not have a structured classroom setting. It was hard for her and the students to pay attention to their tasks, thus making it more ideal for the teacher to pull the students out of the room and instruct them in a more optimal setting. It is in these situations that the schools need to examine what is best for the students with disabilities instead of going along with the current educational trend, in this case, push-in services. In scrutinizing the way in which services are provided to students with disabilities, schools will be forced to look at the needs of individual students (as opposed to looking at who they are by their disability label) and will discover other students not identified with disabilities would benefit from changes in the classroom environment as well.

From interviews with Francis, observations of Francis' reactions when chaos was occurring in the classroom setting, and what I documented her saying to other teachers when the classroom environment was difficult for teaching and learning, it was clear Christina's classroom setting negatively impacts Francis' ability to provide quality instruction using a push-in method for the bilingual students with disabilities she serves. Interactions affect development in different ways and having a strong collaborative relationship with Christina would behoove Francis and the students. This relationship affected their alignment of instruction for the students, what materials they used, how they collaborated, and their decision-making processes. Francis and Christina have a

very amiable relationship, but Francis had yet to approach Christina and tell her of the concerns she had with her classroom environment. While Francis continued to hold reading groups in Christina's classroom, Elaine chose to separate herself and her students by switching classrooms.

At the beginning of the school year, Christina and Elaine shared a classroom during science time. During an interview, Christina talked about Elaine separating herself from the setting they were supposed to share,

Well we were all working in that room during science and then at some point Brown decided she was doing something, maybe using the smart board, she just slowly started coming in here. Partly because its quiet, I think, and she was doing writing or using the smart board. But yea its been kind of interesting because the three of us are still in there and she wanders into here. (C. Smith, personal communication, May 14, 2014)

Christina realized Elaine preferred to be in a quieter setting, but had not articulated that she managed a classroom that was louder than what Elaine preferred. Elaine avoided confrontation in another instance, "I don't get to meet with her just because Andrew technically is Laura's student [...] he came in so late that I didn't want to bother Brown, like 'find some time for me'" (J. Jones, personal communication, May 16, 2014). Because of weak collegial relationship, Andrew was affected by a lack of collaboration.

While I was able to observe the spatial implications in Christina's classroom, many teachers observed and interviewed commented on Christina's classroom setting as being less than ideal. One major source of distraction was a video that Christina frequently played,

Christina plays a video and Francis tries to get the kids to keep reading, but they are watching Humpty Dumpty. Jean's group stopped and Gonzalez' group stopped too. Francis says it's possible to fight the noise around them but not the video. Christina asks if they want to see it one more time, and the kids on the carpet say yes and Francis says no. Francis tries to get the boys to keep reading, they only look at the video screen. The video ends. (F. Williams, observation, May 19, 2014)

Francis' negative reaction to Christina playing the video (to reinforce rhyming skills) showed her disdain with the distractions Christina created. The same thing happened during a different observation,

[Francis] gives a word to Aaron and tells him she is going to give it to Eduardo if he doesn't read it because he is watching the Humpty Dumpty video that Christina is playing (Francis turns to Jones who is also trying to hold a group and says that she also lost the kids attention)- Aaron pushes his cards at Eduardo. When the video ends, Jean' group begins working again and Francis' group begins again- Eduardo is reading words and Aaron refuses. (F. Williams, observation, May 16, 2014)

The video disturbed the progress and momentum of Francis' and Jean's groups again.

Christina's high tolerance of noise and unstructured activities may have been a reflection of how she is able to learn. Personally, I need a very quiet setting in order to be able to focus and produce work. This is how I structured my classroom as well. As previously stated in the first theme, disability blindfolding, Christina wore a disability blindfold. She saw all students as the same and provided one type of instruction to

everyone in her classroom. Perhaps this was why she also created one type of learning environment. She did not notice students who needed a more structured environment with a lower level of noise and specifically explained learning tasks. Some students with disabilities need this while other students with disabilities do not. Again, the individual student needs must be considered when planning instruction and setting up classroom expectations. A teacher's personal preferences are important, but it should be the students' needs that ultimately drive the decisions.

### **The Bilingual Special Education Environment**

Within this theme, I spoke of how Francis, Elaine, Jean, and their students were affected by Christina's challenging classroom setting. I now turn to a setting outside of Christina's classroom; the school storage closet, where Jean provided reading instruction to a group of students with disabilities. Upon entering the room, I was surprised that any instruction occurred there. The room was a storage room with a table and a couple chairs. It did not seem like an appropriate learning environment for the students. The room was visually busy with all of the boxes, papers, and supplies on the brown wooden shelves that lined the perimeter of the room. There were heating and water pipes in addition to other mechanical supplies throughout the room. Jean and her students had to navigate around the rolling carts near the entrance of the room in order to get to their table. Jean also left the door to the hallway open. While I was frequently distracted by the students in the hallway preparing to go outside to recess in the middle of Jean's small group instruction, her students were not always. School staff entering the storage closet during instruction to gather or prepare teaching materials also typically distracted Jean, her students, and myself. Nonetheless, Jean chose the storage closet as the location of her

small reading group instruction for bilingual students with disabilities over Christina's, Elaine's, or even her own classroom.

Not the instructional setting itself, but the simple act of changing instructional settings proved to be a challenge, as a student tried to close the door on Jean as they entered the room, the principal came in to talk with Jean about covering for the music teacher, and Jean had to retrieve a student's homework outside of the storage room- all within one half an hour (J. Jones, observation, May 16, 2014). There were many distractions that occurred during this observation, partially because of Jean having to move with her group of students to a different instructional setting, as is also shown in this excerpt, "Jones picks up Andrew from Brown room. They walk to Ms. Smith's room and she has some trouble getting them out of the room. Eduardo and Aaron are playing and tickling each other. They enter the storage room" (J. Jones, observation, May 14, 2014).

A setting, like a storage room, presents physical space issues that created distractions as well, "She tells him not to go near Eduardo. She realizes that he went into the hallway with Eduardo and she tells Andrew to come back in a pick a place in the room." Jean was not aware that Eduardo, one of the students in the hallway was going in and out of a set of hallway doors and talking to passer-byers until several minutes into his off-task behaviors when she stood up and walked into the hallway to tell him to keep reading (J. Jones, observation, April 11, 2014). Jean says, though, that she did not want the students to walk to her special education classroom because there were many distractions in that room and it was half way across the school and it would take up too much of their instructional time to walk there and then go pick up the next group of

students after. The time Jean has to teach students was impacted by her decision to hold reading groups in the school's supply closet.

It is clear that the relationships the teachers held with each other affect their reading instructional delivery. Each teacher made a decision not to address the issue of a chaotic, unstructured classroom setting they shared with another teacher. Although it is a precarious situation to point out issues with another teacher's instruction, doing so would benefit all students, but specifically students with disabilities who were affected by the special implications of the classroom setting. Everyone, teachers and students, interacted with the environment and each other in a different way, both positive and negative.

The plethora of observational notes making note of distractions, noise level, additional student interactions, invasion of personal space, too many people in one classroom, different instructional activities, changing settings, and physical space issues, among others, are all evidence of spatial implications in the instructional settings which impacted instruction as a result of personal characteristics, how disability is interpreted, and teacher interactions.

### **Theme 5: Definitions Impact Instruction**

The way in which the educational system is set up is that it identifies students' needs and then tries to remediate them. If a student without a disability struggles in reading, the school provides additional interventions, sometimes in the form of a Title I reading teacher. If a student with a disability struggles in reading, the student receives services in the area of reading from the special education teacher. The disability label changes the service provider in this case from the classroom teacher and a Title I teacher to the classroom teacher and the special education teacher, and in some cases even all



three teachers. How are these teachers designing reading instruction differently to meet student needs? Are there different strategies or materials teachers should use with a student labeled with a disability versus a struggling reading not labeled with a disability? This theme identifies that being identified with a disability impacts instruction, but questions if it should. I also bring up factors unique to bilingual literacy instruction, such as curricular materials.

### **Different Curricular Materials (and Their Unavailability) Due to Disability Status**

As a former teacher, I know that the curriculum materials teachers use are those provided to them by the district. A lack of intervention materials and research can put teachers at a disadvantage. There are circumstances where a teacher can become a part of a curriculum adoption committee (if the district is looking to adopt a new curriculum) and influence the decision of which curriculum to adopt. One chief complaint from bilingual teachers is that they do not have enough, or even an equal amount of resources, that English-only teachers have. For example, many math curricula are aligned to online games or Smart Board activities. Not all textbook companies have Spanish counterparts to these English language activities. I asked Christina about a time when she felt challenged teaching reading to bilingual students with disabilities. She told me she was not challenged by her students; her challenge was “finding materials in this building because there’s really not a lot” (C. Smith, personal communication, May 22, 2014). In this instance, it seems as if Christina’s challenge was based on resources, not resources for students with disabilities versus those without disabilities. This parallels her disability blindfold because she worked to provide instruction without taking individual differences into consideration.

A lack of materials also came up in my interview with Jean. She spoke of resources specifically for bilingual students with disabilities, “I’ve heard of interventions, but I haven’t really had a chance to look through them and see what is best for them. I just kind of use whatever I could use because I don’t have anything in this room that’s Spanish” (J. Jones, personal communication, May 16, 2014). Is this how we want to educate our students? Just using what we can because nothing else we have is in Spanish. I do not fault Jean for her decision to use what the school district provided her. The school and the district knew she taught in a bilingual special education program and should have set her up with materials to support the program. Jean stated that she would be looking through possible interventions over the summer and then would talk to district personnel in an attempt to get her own materials. Jean will need to justify why she needs the district to buy her new materials when the time comes, however, and that is not an easy feat. Although the school district uses a reader’s workshop approach in general education and special education settings, both teachers did not feel they were provided with adequate resources.

Jean and Christina cited a lack of resources within the building, but the school principal cited a lack of interventions in terms of research as one circumstance beyond their control. When I asked Linda what challenges she experiences with promoting reading achievement for bilingual students with disabilities, she replied that one challenge was “having evidence-based interventions to close the gap” (L. Anderson, personal communication, June 3, 2014). She also shared an experience about when the school tried to access bilingual Reading Recovery training and implement the program with fidelity, but the training fell through and then the school was not able to access the

bilingual Reading Recovery training. Reading Recovery is a program provided to struggling readers in first grade. Often times, if a student qualifies for special education services, they will receive additional interventions from a special education teacher and the reading recovery teacher will move on to work with a different student not identified with a disability. Linda described in more depth the missed opportunity of the bilingual Reading Recovery program, “we were told we had to do the monolingual version first and then next year we’d be able to do the bilingual one, even though that’s our area of greater need from our data” (L. Anderson, personal communication, June 3, 2014). The school participated in the monolingual version of Reading Recovery training, but Linda said, “now we heard that the one person in the state that was certified to train isn’t going to be doing that any longer and I also heard a rumor that we might not necessarily had to do one before the other” (personal communication, June 3, 2014). The school missed a significant opportunity to provide research-based interventions to bilingual low-achieving students. Missed opportunities such as this one significantly impact struggling bilingual learners.

Again, why does disability status impact the intervention materials/program a teacher uses as opposed to using research-based methods for working with students who struggle with reading comprehension? Linda realizes the missed opportunity, “if a student has, in theory, gone through the interventions we have available and it still isn’t working we don’t have a whole lot in terms of tier 3 or special ed” (L. Anderson, personal communication, June 3, 2014). Students should not be educated based on their disability status, however. Whether a student has a disability label or not, educators must identify their strengths and needs and develop instruction around them. Maybe schools should

look towards research for how to teach students with poor decoding skills instead of looking for research identifying how to teach students with disabilities who have poor decoding skills. Maybe schools are not lacking curricular materials, perhaps they are using the ones they have inappropriately; determining they need different ones each for ELLs, bilingual students, monolingual and bilingual students with disabilities, and struggling bilingual and monolingual readers.

### **Difficulties with Coordinating Service**

Because of the unique needs bilingual students with disabilities experience, professionals in the field of bilingual special education have difficulties with coordinating services. The service coordinator must be familiar with best educational practices for students who are bilingual, ELLs, and those who have disabilities and be able to make decisions when met with conflicting research. Difficulties with coordinating services can stem from a lack of communication about student needs and a lack of understanding of the intersection between disability, language, culture, and literacy.

A result of a lack of communication about student needs has impacted instructional decisions in the Ottumwa School District. There is a gap in communication and even in understanding between staff members with a background in bilingual education and those without one. Ana, the director of instruction: world languages, bilingual education, and ESL, discussed this topic, “I think there is a real risk when the teacher levels are here and the principal levels are here to disregard what the teacher is doing” (personal communication, May 7, 2014). Ana said this is happening in Ottumwa School District. It is difficult to coordinate services and make educational decisions for bilingual students with disabilities when team members have different levels of

understanding, which impede their ability to communicate effectively about services and programming.

Jean was affected by this lack of communication and understanding about the students with whom she works as well. When asked how she planned her lessons to meet the students' language proficiency needs, she talked about the lack of communication and alignment between the district office and the school.

Next year I need to have a big talk with our [special education] coordinator and the bilingual because the bilingual director doesn't really know much about special ed and our special ed coordinator doesn't really know anything about bilingual. So that's what I've been talking with Williams, the title teacher, about is when they are doing more English next year do we keep working until they are proficient in Spanish or do we switch over to English because that's what they need. So those are big questions that are coming up because I haven't taught up to 2nd grade with [students with specific learning disabilities]. (J. Jones, personal communication, April 25, 2014)

Jean, in addition to the school district, is struggling with which label to abide by when planning future programming. If the student did not have a disability label, there would be no question, the student would move on to the same language allotment during reading instruction as his peers would have. For example, all the students in a bilingual first grade classroom would move onto second grade where they would receive 20% of their reading instruction in English. The bilingual students with disabilities may or may not (depending on what the IEP team decides) receive 20% of their reading instruction in English; they might only receive 10% in English. This is a result of their reading

disability in combination with their level of language proficiency. They do not have a strong enough base in Spanish literacy because of their reading disability so some IEP team members do not feel they should move into a higher time allotment of English reading. This does not occur with bilingual students without disabilities. Even when bilingual students without disabilities are at a low reading level (sometimes even lower than bilingual students with disabilities), the teacher moves the student on to the same literacy language allotment as the rest of the class. This has a significant impact on the students' Spanish and English reading abilities.

I experienced this same situation every year in my previous teaching setting. In actuality, this is where my idea for research began. One person, the director of bilingual education for example, told me one way to teach but did not know about students with disabilities; one person, the director of special education, for example, told me other instructional strategies to use, but did not know about bilingual students. A lack of understanding of the intersection between disability, language, culture, and literacy impacted my instruction and the services I provided to the bilingual students with disabilities with whom I worked. This is a lack of understanding about how to coordinate services for students based on disability status, English language level, or simply as a reader and is impacted by whether or not teachers have the capacity, tools, and/or resources to attend to all aspects of a child's identify. Educators experience difficulties such as these at a school-level and a district-level when working with diverse groups of students. .

I encountered another instance of the lack of understanding and staff members given conflicting strategies. In a conversation about what influences teachers' reading

practices, I confessed that there were people telling me to apply conflicting strategies to the students I previously taught. Ana responded,

That's what's happening here too. So now what I've been told is to stop telling people to do separate things just do what's good for monolingual English kids, so the kibosh is about to be put on the type of leadership and professional development that we've been engaged in for the last couple of years. (personal communication, May 7, 2014)

It sounds like the district's answer is to have their expert, Ana, the director of instruction: world languages, bilingual education, and ESL, to tell the bilingual teachers to "just do what's good for monolingual English kids," which is not always the research-based best-practice for bilingual students. While Ana did not specifically speak about bilingual students with disabilities, she showed the district had a lack of understanding about how to coordinate services for bilingual students (with and without disabilities). Anytime a research-based strategy for one group of students (monolingual English students) is blindly applied to a different group of students for whom the strategy has not been researched (bilingual students), the educators run the risk of not appropriately meeting all students' needs. The risk stems from a lack of communication and understanding about diverse student needs.

At a different point in the interview Jean also talked about the issues of a lack of communication and understanding at the district level. She said the district philosophy was that students with Other Health Impairments (OHI) were not to receive academic services, but she received different messages from different special education coordinators. Jean said, "we've been getting huge mixed message from the district, but I

think they're finally seeing eye to eye and we're getting the same message from the two coordinators" (J. Jones, personal communication, May 16, 2014). Jean had to address another situation regarding a student with an Emotional Behavioral Disorder (EBD) and who would provide academic services, "I got both the coordinators on the speaker phone and we debated it for over an hour and they realized oh, we're giving them mixed messages" (J. Jones, personal communication, May 16, 2014). She says the situation was remedied after the three-person phone conference. Unfortunately the student lost a year of reading instruction while the district staff struggled to get on the same page. This is significant. The debate about how services should be coordinated revolved around the fact that the students had a disability label of OHI or EBD. The district's philosophy was that if a student has OHI, for example, the special education teacher should not be responsible for providing him with reading instruction. There exist criteria established by the state to determine if a student qualifies for OHI (if the student has a health problem that is chronic or acute; if the health problem results in limited health, vitality, or alertness; and if the health problem adversely affects disability affects the student's academic performance). The district's philosophy needed to be challenged, as the OHI criteria includes academic performance. Jean challenged the district's philosophy about how to respond to the student's disability and ultimately was able to convince them that the disability label of OHI does impact the student's reading abilities and that he should receive additional support in the form of special education services in that academic area.

Throughout this theme, I discussed how philosophies and language about disability status have impacted the ways Prescott Elementary School and Ottumwa School District provided reading instruction in terms of a lack of curricular materials



(both which teacher instructs which student, and which resources teachers use being based on disability label) and difficulties coordinating services [programming decisions (Jean and providing reading instruction next year in Spanish or English); receiving conflicting advice about educating diverse students (Ana and bilingual versus monolingual reading strategies; Jean and educating or not educating students in the area of reading based on an OHI or EBD label)]. Sometimes a lack of communication and understanding comes with the territory of having a large urban school district. It can also come with have diverse groups of students with diverse sets of needs and educators ask themselves which need takes precedence over the other ones. The answer lies in looking at the student as a whole; not ignoring disability-, culture-, literacy-, or language-related needs or applying a blanket approach such as do what is good for monolingual English students. When looking at the student as a whole the district will be able to find adequate curricular materials and be able to provide coordinated services.

### **Theme 6: Person Characteristics Influence Reading Instruction**

Bronfenbrenner (2005) states there are three main characteristics that influence a person's process: dispositions, resources, and demand. This theme was formed around personal resources (specifically knowledge and experiences). As I was analyzing the data, it became clear to me that a major theme was that teachers' person characteristics do influence reading instruction (their process). Although I refer to this section as person characteristics and talk about personal experiences as a subtheme, I place professional experiences in the same category as personal experiences because I believe professional experiences mold who teachers are as individuals. Just as school and district philosophies about reading or disability status, for instance, impact how teachers provide

reading instruction, an individual's personal knowledge and personal experiences do as well.

### **Personal Knowledge**

The first subtheme is personal knowledge; teachers' knowledge (a part of their personal resources) about reading impacts their instruction. This idea seems fairly obvious, but it is one that makes an incredible difference in the instruction provided to students. Elaine provided different reading instruction than Christina because each of their knowledge bases about reading instruction was different. No two people will ever teach in the same way. Teachers understanding of reading curriculum and assessment are two factors that influence a their knowledge about reading instruction.

Throughout different themes, I cited Christina's newness to the reading curriculum and her confession that she is unsure how to hold a reader's workshop. She has a different level of understanding of the reading curriculum than other teachers. When asked if she feels the instructional practices she uses are beneficial or appropriate for the students, Christina answered that she did not think they were rigorous enough for the students. She said, "A lot of that connects to the time that goes into getting everything ready and really not being clear on what the district wants. I truthfully am not clear on what reader's workshop is" (C. Smith, personal communication, May 14, 2014). This is a gap of knowledge she had about the reading curriculum. As a classroom teacher of reading, Christina used the reader's workshop with her students every day, however she said she was unclear what the model was. I was astounded that Christina had been teaching reader's workshop for almost a full academic year and she was still not sure how to teach it. She divulged that, "the in-service they gave us was lecture. It was one of the

most boring in-services I sat through last summer. I did go to observe a classroom I didn't like what I saw, it wasn't differentiated" (C. Smith, personal communication, May 14, 2014). Without a doubt, this is a factor that impacts her instruction. At one point during my observations, she called the entire class to the carpet and chose one student to read the book she practiced during independent time in front of the class, then another student to read the book she practiced during independent time in front of the class (C. Smith, observation, May 7, 2014). (During my observations, I did not see Christina call any of the students with disabilities to the front of the class to read their books.)

Documents about reader's workshop I gathered from the district describe a share time where the teacher calls on students to share the ways in which they used the strategy the teacher taught at the beginning of the workshop, not a share time where students read an entire book in front of the class. Research has shown students should not listen to poor readers, as doing so can increase the gap between fluent and disfluent readers and providing other students poor models of fluent readers (Ash, Kuhn, & Wadpole, 2008). Christina's personal experiences in past schools may have also affected her comfort level with teaching reading or asking for help. Prescott Elementary School has an educator effectiveness coach or bilingual Title I teacher who did coaching cycles to help teachers learn about the structure of the reader's workshop and meeting students' needs. This was one way the school provided support to the teachers; another way was through district professional development offerings.

The district attempted to address differing levels of knowledge about reading instruction through professional development. Joan talked about how she worked to create professional development offerings so that staff members had the same knowledge

base about reading instruction and assessment. She realized that “everyone’s program they graduate with and their experiences are different and I need people to know and understand. So when you think about what influences [reading instruction for students with disabilities], knowledge and application of a teacher and their skills around [reading instruction] are huge” (J. Martinez, personal communication, May 12, 2014). Joan went on to talk about the district’s professional development offerings and the types of questions the district sought to answer to help all teachers get on the same page for reading instruction and assessment. Questions such as, *Do we have the tools in place for our teachers to know where kids are? What is our formative assessment? What are our benchmark assessments? How do we use the MAPS test to understand growth? Are we using progress monitoring tools?* She realized knowledge impacts instruction and student performance, which is why the district was working to put supports, such as the one she described, in place for its staff. Joan made mention several times about assessments, as did Mariah.

Mariah spoke about teachers’ knowledge about assessments and how to use them. She said that teachers should use running records to determine what areas they need to work on with their students: decoding, meaning, comprehension, etc. (M. Miller, personal communication, June 5, 2014). Teachers sometimes only complete running records to turn into the school as a summative assessment as opposed to a formative one that they can use to guide their instruction. A teacher’s personal knowledge, in this case her knowledge about assessments and how to use assessments to guide instruction, impacts her reading instruction and how effective it can be for her students. As Mariah stated, valuable information about a student’s reading strengths and needs can be gained from

the reading assessments. Only completing the assessments to fulfill district policies leaves students at a disadvantage, as the teacher can use information from assessments to differentiate instruction and plan small group lessons meeting student needs. In addition to teachers' personal resources influencing their decisions about reading instruction, personal experiences also affect decisions teachers make about reading instruction.

### **Personal Experiences**

Similar to the first factor that knowledge impacts teachers' knowledge about reading is a second factor that personal experiences affect teachers' knowledge about reading. Personal experiences even affect students' knowledge and ability to understand concepts (Fisher, Frey, & Lapp, 2012; Neuman, Kaefer, & Pinkham, 2014). For example, often times teachers ask students questions about the topic to help them to begin to think and come up with familiar experiences and vocabulary before reading the book. This reminds them of a connection to the book and the content and then the student can better relate to it and make sense of it.

In an interview, Ana spoke of the role personal experiences play in educating students. Ana reiterated this point in a general sense when talking about students' personal experiences; she said some students immigrate here with their families and some are born here. Because of the personal experiences teachers and students have, each brings with them a different set of skills and a different knowledge base. Ana talked at length about the different backgrounds of teachers in the Ottumwa School District. She said some are from countries other than the United States, some grow up in the United States and learn Spanish in a foreign language program, and others grow up in the United States as bilingual individuals because of the background of their parents. Teachers who

did not grow up in the United States, for example, put a lot of emphasis on “the alphabaic or letter word stage, lots of decoding, saying it right, rereading it fast, reading with expression that goes on and not so much representative of say US educational values of constructive learning, responsive learning” (A. Thomas, personal communication, May 7, 2014). The teachers who grew up bilingual in the United States, may not have had any formal training in Spanish literacy and would teach differently, perhaps using constructivist principles because that is how they were educated. Ana also shared,

The thing about that type of teacher is that she really has a very significant background to share with children because she is the mirror image or the adult image of what many of them are experiencing. So [she] really can value culture, can value like that third space, like you’re not that, you’re not this, but you’re this. (A. Thomas, personal communication, May 7, 2014)

She seemed to have an understanding of how different teacher personal experiences affected teachers’ reading instruction. Personal experiences such as these are rich; schools and teachers should draw on them when planning reading instruction.

Francis described the rationale behind one of her instructional decisions, pre-teaching, “if we are reading a text that I think has too many words that are difficult I pre-do a pre-activity prior to reading the book so that way when they get to reading the book they feel successful” (F. Williams, personal communication, May 13, 2014). Her personal experiences with the students told her that if they were frustrated, they were less likely to feel successful and achieve academic success. She also stated that one of the students once became defiant and she was forced to deal with unpleasant behaviors Francis wanted every student to feel successful. In order to help students feel successful,

she decided to work on one goal for several days, if need be. She also stated that she collaborated with other teachers to get ideas for teaching and if she needed to pre-teach concepts (F. Williams, personal communication, May 13, 2014). Francis covered a number of topics. She talked about pre-teaching before reading a book, her planning process, collaborating with other teachers, student reading frustrations, and influences on student behaviors. These are factors relating to her personal experiences, which all influence her instructional decisions.

The Prescott Elementary School principal talked about how they address personal experiences at the school level and the role they play in influencing reading instruction, “[Reading instruction] often is influence by teachers’ own experiences, their own educational experiences and as educators we each do bring our own background and our perspectives to that” (L. Anderson, personal communication, June 3, 2014). Linda said the school had a book club and a recent topic was about “different strengths and perspectives we bring and how those are part of our community and how those filters can influence our interaction with kids and families and teaching” (L. Anderson, personal communication, June 3, 2014). Identifying filters (different ways of viewing something, perspectives) as Linda put it, and understanding how they affect instruction is a great strategy to use to improve instruction. I have already established that different filters, such as how society views disability, influence interactions with students with disabilities; Linda was working with school employees to identify their different perspectives.

Not only teachers,’ but students’ personal experiences as well, influence reading instruction. Jean talked about how one of her student’s personal experiences (being from

and having family from Puerto Rico) influenced his learning and her teaching, “all of a sudden he’ll write *pala* because that’s how they say it. It’s like I know you say it like that honey but it’s actually *para* you know because they have the *l*’s” (J. Jones, personal communication, May 16, 2014). This student’s personal experiences impacted his speaking and writing, but Jean’s knowledge about Spanish dialects allowed her to adapt her instruction and evaluation of his writing skills. Both individuals’ personal experiences created a meaningful and responsive learning situation. In addition to teachers’ knowledge and personal experiences influencing reading instruction, district and school factors do as well.

Educators’ teacher preparation program is another factor that impacts their instruction. Linda confirmed, “We are also influenced by our teacher preparation program and professional development” (L. Anderson, personal communication, June 3, 2014). Holly says she thinks teacher preparation is the main factor impacting teachers’ instruction. In addition, she commented that teachers are always seeking more information, which could be because they do not have adequate training and instruction in teaching students with disabilities. She said that she felt “like there’s definitely like a need or an opportunity probably to support teachers more in that area [...] I think its still mystical. In a way, we have to demystify what needs to happen with all kids” (H. Garcia, personal communication, June 5, 2014). Mariah also supported Holly’s point, but brought the conversation back to teacher knowledge,

Well teacher preparation and teacher knowledge. Right, because you can prepare as much as you want but if you’re not knowledgeable about how to hone in on your students’ needs, you can create the greatest lessons but if they don’t really



support your students, where they're at right now, it's not really going to make a difference. (M. Miller, personal communication, June 5, 3014)

A teacher's ability to identify and be responsive to his student's needs may be something taught and learned in a teacher education program, during a district professional development program, or a skill that comes with personal experience.

### **Conclusion**

I described six themes that emerged from data analysis. These six themes (disability blindfolding; disjointed delivery; improper instruction due to assessment and progress monitoring; spatial implications; definitions impact instruction; and personal characteristics influence reading instruction) influence how teachers structure reading instruction for bilingual students with disabilities. Next, in Chapter Six, I will discuss the themes and end with several conclusions about the study.

## CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS

### Overview of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify what reading instructional methods teachers are currently using to educate bilingual students with disabilities in urban elementary school settings. Through this explanatory case study, I sought to answer the research question, *How do teachers structure reading instruction for bilingual students with disabilities in urban elementary settings?* I took observational notes, collected documents, and conducted interviews with study participants during the months of April, 2014 – June, 2014. The study took place in an urban city in Wisconsin, utilizing 1 bilingual special education teacher, 2 bilingual classroom teachers, 2 bilingual Title I teachers, 1 bilingual educator effectiveness coach, 1 school principal, 1 Director of Education, and 1 Assistant Superintendent. I conducted interviews regarding school and district practices with study participants and observed the teaching practices of study participants who teach bilingual students with disabilities. Ultimately I determined that district and personal philosophies about reading practices, bilingual education, and students with disabilities impact instruction in several ways. Within this chapter, I discuss each theme in relationship to current research; propose theoretical and practical implications; review the significance of this research; identify limitations of this study; and make suggestions for future research.

### Discussion of the Findings Relative to Existing Literature

#### Theme 1: Disability Blindfolding

Within this theme, disability blindfolding is strongly tied to critical disability theory. Devlin and Pothier (2006) assert throughout critical disability theory that

disability should be acknowledged, rather than ignored. Confirming critical disability theory principles, the study participants had varying degrees of disability blindfolding. Each viewed students' disabilities on a different level, which affected the students' educational performance. Disability blindfolding played a role in the location of instruction as well as the implementation of reading instructional strategies (an overemphasis and minimal differentiation).

**Location of instruction.** The bilingual Title I teacher, Francis, acknowledged that the students with whom she worked had disabilities and explained that she took their needs into consideration when she planned instruction. Research states this is essential when differentiating instruction to meet the needs of a diverse classroom of learners; and most educators would confirm they do this as well. Francis recognized students have disabilities and may have needs as a result of those disabilities, but she also stated that students' labels are not the only cause of their needs. This philosophical perspective supports how critical disability theory says individuals should think. When providing reading instruction to students, educators should take into consideration the whole student. The whole student includes his disabilities in addition to other parts of the individual; likewise, the whole student means not just one part, such as the disability. For example, Francis identified students' needs might be a result of socioeconomic, attendance, or environmental factors, aside from or in addition to disability-related needs. Critical disability theory supports examining personal philosophies, contexts, and language while identifying the complexity of an individual and working to meet her needs.

One of the disability-related needs Francis should have acknowledged for the benefit of her students is the location of reading instruction. Disability research shows students in fully inclusive settings show greater academic success (Zigmond, 2003). Oftentimes authors present their results, but fail to point out the basis of an individualized education plan: the responsiveness to individual student needs and flexibility to adapt to different situations. While scholars should research and present findings relating to the academic achievement of students with disabilities in different educational settings, they should also acknowledge that their research should not be blindly applied to every student with a disability. Francis provided instruction in the general education classroom (a directive of the district, based on research of inclusive settings), but on many occasions the students were highly distracted by the other students and activities occurring in the general education classroom. Instruction provided in a quieter, less chaotic environment would have allowed the students to better concentrate on Francis' instruction. Ultimately, educators should take the research, in addition to individual students' learning needs, into consideration to develop the most appropriate reading instruction in the most suitable, yet least restrictive setting.

**Implementation of reading instructional strategies.** I found the instruction Christina and Elaine provided to students with disabilities was drastically different. One placed an overemphasis on providing reading instruction to the student with a disability in her class and the other did not differentiate her reading instructional strategies for the students with disabilities in her class, leaving room for her to be more responsive to their needs.

***Overemphasis.*** Elaine had one student with a disability (Andrew) in her class. During most observations, I found her engaging in discussions with Andrew more often than the other students in her class. One benefit of using the reader's workshop model is that the teacher can provide instruction to students at their individual academic levels, instead of only providing one level of academic instruction. Elaine frequently held individual conferences with Andrew and asked him questions during whole group instruction, but did not do so to the same extent with the other students.

Research has shown the opposite effects of what I observed to be true in classrooms that include students with disabilities. Peltier (1997) found teachers' amount of time and level of engagement to be unaffected when their classrooms included students with and without disabilities and Kalambouka, Farrell, Dyson, and Kaplan (2007) found including students with disabilities in the general education classroom did not adversely affect students without disabilities. Staub (1999) found the same to be true of inclusive classrooms and added students without disabilities benefit in the areas of social skills, self-esteem, patience, and acceptance from including students with disabilities in the general education classroom.

Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory states the interactions that occur within the microsystem (in this case, the school/classroom) affect individuals. Two main concepts within the microsystem are relationships and setting. Relationships affect how the child grows. The relationships students without disabilities, and those with disabilities, have with Elaine affect their academic and socio-emotional status. The research states including students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms does not negatively affect students without disabilities. The second main concept of Bronfenbrenner's

bioecological theory is setting. Children's growth is affected by the setting and interactions within the setting. If the interactions are not substantial enough, the child's growth may not be as great as possible. Elaine may have given Andrew more attention in an attempt to give him what he needs to be successful (more instruction and attention).

***Minimal differentiation.*** Christina taught three students with disabilities in her inclusive kindergarten/first grade multi-age classroom. During interviews, she described that she knew all of the students in her classroom were different. I did not observe any purposeful differentiation occurring in Christina's classroom. Christina used center activities as one component of her reader's workshop, but did not create higher and lower-leveled center activities. She separated students into reading groups, but asked the same comprehension questions to each group and did not always provide different leveled texts to the different reading groups. In these examples, Christina is providing equal instruction to all students even though the students require different supports based on individual needs.

As identified in Chapter 2, differentiated instruction is a research-based reading practice recommended for meeting the needs of students at various skill levels. It is especially important when teaching students with disabilities, or with reading difficulties (Chall & Curtis, 1992; Denton, Vaughn, & Fletcher, 2003). Differentiating instruction is a challenging practice. Teachers must be able to identify what students' strengths and weaknesses are and develop groups and lessons based on such data and information. They must be able to provide appropriate enrichment or challenges through extension activities, exercises, skill and strategy development, all while choosing appropriately leveled/focused books (Atkinson, Wilhite, Frey, & Williams, 2002; Iaquina, 2006). In

an increasing fashion, general education teachers must be able to differentiate instruction, as students with disabilities are more included in their classrooms than in past practices (Elbaum, Vaughn, Hughes, & Moody, 2000)

Too often, students with disabilities are physically included in classes, but instructionally excluded as a result of their diverse needs. This presents a philosophical challenge. Research in the field of students with disabilities and reading instruction, however, suggests that students with learning disabilities do not receive the differentiated instruction they need (Vaughn, Levy, Coleman, & Bos, 2002). This is unfortunate, knowing that struggling readers need explicit instruction to improve the reading skills they do not control (Denton, Vaughn, & Fletcher, 2003). Differentiated instruction addresses the problem of instructional exclusion for students with disabilities. It also gives teachers the opportunity to meet their specific needs, which sometimes are different from those of their peers.

### **Theme 2: Disjointed Delivery**

Planning comprehensive reading instruction is difficult for teachers of students without disabilities, and even more so for teachers of students with disabilities (regardless of the language in which instruction occurs). Often times, the classroom teacher will schedule reading instruction at the time the school designates, or around specials (physical education, art, music, etc.). Once the teacher has the block of time set aside, she will break down the reading time into the components of the Reader's Workshop. To review, these include a whole group lesson, independent reading/activities to practice the skill introduced/reviewed in the whole group lesson while the teacher holds reading groups and individual student conferences which are followed by a whole group lesson to

bring closure to the reading block and review how students practice the reading skill.

Planning instruction for a wide variety of students for each of these various components of the Reader's Workshop is difficult and time-consuming. Taking into consideration the schedules of students with disabilities makes planning even more challenging.

As in the case of the sample schedule I wrote about in Chapter 5, the student with a disability spent time with the Title I teacher in the general education classroom, with the special education teacher in the supply room, with the general education teacher in the general education classroom receiving small group reading instruction, then in the general education classroom during whole group share time. There are ways to provide this student with a seamless educational experience regardless of the teacher with whom he is working and regardless of the setting in which he is receiving instruction; this was not done at Prescott Elementary School. In Chapter 5 I also posed additional factors contributing to disjointed delivery: a lack of time for collaboration, a lack of qualified bilingual special education teachers, a lack of qualified bilingual teachers, differing attitudes and beliefs about bilingual students with disabilities, a lack of resources, and a lack of research and interventions for this specialized group of individuals. I will focus this discussion on a lack of time for collaboration and philosophies about educating students with disabilities.

Two significant considerations are relevant to this discussion: time and philosophy. First, time plays a substantial role in providing seamless reading instruction to students with disabilities. Within the study's theoretical framework microtime is one of the four main components of the bioecological model. Microtime means significant interactions take place regularly for an extended period of time (Bronfenbrenner, 2004).



Teachers need time to plan together. Doing so allows teachers the ability to discuss what the student can do, what he needs to master next, and what the next feasible goal for the student is. The teachers can also plan instruction to build off of each other. Instead of the Title I teacher providing instruction in using initial sound to decode an unknown word, the special education teacher providing instruction in using known word parts to decode an unknown word, and the general education teacher providing instruction in using pictures to decode an unknown word, teachers can work together to choose one reading strategy for the student to master and all provide instruction teaching the one reading strategy. This would help provide seamless instruction to the student. It would also ensure that teachers have similar attitudes about educating students with disabilities, that they have the resources they need and share a similar knowledge about how to provide the agreed upon instruction.

Disjointed service delivery is an issue affecting the student on many levels. As I already pointed out, the student is the victim of a system that separates the reading block into time periods to work with different teachers. This gives students a difficult schedule to follow, several disconnected learning objectives, and different literacy expectations. Pull-out special education services create a disjointed education for students with disabilities (Heubert, 1994). A second issue, compartmentalizing instruction, means the special education teacher has to be an expert in every subject she teaches rather than using her knowledge about students with disabilities and working with a content expert to plan instruction or even to co-teach (Dieker & Murawski, 2003). When general education and special education teachers collaborate they can create a well-balanced plan for addressing the literacy needs of the student with a disability (Dieker, 2001). Reschly

and Ysseldyke (1995) write of disjointed incrementalism, a third issue with disjointed delivery. The authors raise concern with the number of separate systems used to educate students (general education and special education settings). The separate systems come with funding and eligibility issues, both of which could be lessened with a merge, or at least collaboration of the two systems. Although these issues do not directly affect students with disabilities, they do indirectly, “the consequences of the current organization of services is inefficient use of funds, uncoordinated programs, curricular discontinuity, and limited generalization of effects across settings” (Reschly & Ysseldyke, 1995, p. 8). Disjointed service delivery carries with it a myriad of issues affecting the quality of the education of students with disabilities.

The second significant consideration relevant to this discussion is philosophies about individuals with disabilities. According to critical disability theory, disability is socially constructed and therefore students with disabilities may experience an education dependent on teachers’ views on students with disabilities (educational setting, reading goals, necessary adaptations, etc). Personal and district philosophies affect service delivery. When service delivery is disjointed, educators with varying attitudes affect students differently. Positive philosophies and expectations about students with disabilities positively affect their academic achievement (Klehm, 2013). For this reason, educators should have a shared philosophy about the inclusion (or marginalization) of students with disabilities. Co-teaching and full inclusion are ways to create cohesive service delivery. On the other hand, educators can use collaboration and co-planning to create cohesive service delivery that allows for pull-out special education services. Educators must look at the schedule of students with disabilities on a case-by-case basis

to identify what the delivery looks like at a smaller level (short periods of time during the reading block) and a larger level (the entire reading block) to determine if the instruction provided is seamless. Doing so would mimic the individualized education plan teachers write and provide for students with disabilities.

### **Theme 3: Improper Instruction Due to Assessment and Progress Monitoring**

Over the course of the academic year, teachers use assessments to document the skill level of a student at one time and ongoing reading progress monitoring to document reading progress over time. They do this in order to be able to determine students' strengths and weaknesses, create flexible instructional groups (Iaquinta, 2006), collaborate with colleagues about future instructional directions, plan their instruction based on student ability (Duke & Pearson, 2002; Gersten et al., 2008; Pinnell & Fountas, 2009; Scanlon, 2011), and show parents student progress at conferences. The lack of time to conduct reading assessments due the large number of reading assessments required by the district and the frequency that the district required the assessments to be completed was a major cause of concern at Prescott Elementary School, as well as throughout the entire Ottumwa School District.

The district's procedures align with research stating frequent and purposeful assessment and progress monitoring are essential to an effective reading program (Pinnell & Fountas, 2009). As I mentioned in Chapter 5, struggling readers (especially those with disabilities) undergo more assessment than proficient readers without disabilities. Proficient readers in tier 1 of the RtI model should undergo progress monitoring three times per school year (Illinois Aspire, 2010); struggling readers in tier 2 should undergo progress monitoring once (Gersten et al., 2008) to twice (Illinois Aspire, 2010) per

month, and tier 3 students should undergo progress monitoring once per week (Illinois Aspire, 2010). Current research regarding instruction and data collection supports the reader's workshop model. Within the reader's workshop model, teachers should progress monitor or give assessments during guided reading groups or individual student conferences.

Proper instructional techniques are not always used in settings with bilingual students with disabilities, however. On the majority of days I conducted observations in Christina's classroom, she used the entire reading block to conduct reading assessments, forgoing any type of teacher-led reading instruction for the students. An interview with the Title I bilingual reading teacher and educator effectiveness coach indicated that formative and summative reading assessments are to be done during individual conferences and sometimes during small group instruction over the course of a couple days, while the teacher still provides reading instruction. Mariah admitted that is what should happen in theory (according to the reading program), however, it is not what happens logistically. She told me there are students who improve several reading levels and the teacher may have to give them numerous reading assessments; and that there are some grade levels where students take reading tests in English and Spanish, which also increases the time needed to give the assessments, thus decreasing the time available to provide teacher-led reading instruction. At my previous places of employment, I witnessed teachers forgoing reading formal reading instruction in order to fit in all of the reading assessments before the assessment window closed. School districts usually decide when teachers should use formative assessments to collect student reading data and provide assessment calendars to teachers to follow.

Low progress readers typically make limited gains without intensive and systematic support; a key component in effective reading instruction (Al Otaiba & Fuchs, 2006; National Reading Panel, 2000; Vaughn et al., 2002; Vaughn et al., 2003; Wharton-McDonald, 2011). This means the bilingual students with disabilities in Christina's classroom only received intensive and systematic support from the Title I and bilingual special education teachers; limiting their growth potential during the three months I observed because they received only minimal teacher-led reading instruction from their general education teacher due to time constraints as a result of reading assessments. While Christina gained data from the assessments and progress monitoring instruments, she did not utilize the data to plan future meaningful instruction. In addition to reporting reading levels to the school principal and parents, assessment and progress monitoring allows teachers to determine their next steps in reading instruction (Duke & Pearson, 2002; Gersten et al., 2007; Pinnel & Fountas, 2009; Scanlon, 2011) through the use of data, thus effectively planning instruction to meet the needs of bilingual students with disabilities.

One of four main tenets of critical disability theory is *language, definitions, and voice*. Educators at Prescott Elementary School were dissatisfied with the number of assessments and frequency that they were required. Teachers, parents, and students should all have a voice in the amount of assessment and progress monitoring done at schools. Teachers in the Ottumwa School District were trying to assert their voice about the amount of and frequency of assessments required by the district. The district assessment coordinator knew of the dissatisfaction and was attempting to improve the process. Reading assessment finds its roots in the late 1800s (Johnston, 1984) and its

importance is undisputed; it continues to be a hallmark of good reading instruction in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, but the way in which it affects reading instruction and the way the data collected is used must be examined and improved. Assessment and progress monitoring should be frequent and purposeful, but also needs to be balanced with evidence-based reading instruction.

#### **Theme 4: Spatial Implications**

In Chapter 5, I discussed Christina's classroom and the supply closet in which Jean teaches a reading group for bilingual students with disabilities as having spatial implications on the reading instruction.

Francis and Jean held reading groups in Christina's classroom. Both teachers commented to each other and me during their instruction in Christina's room and during interviews that the environment made it difficult to teach their students. Christina had a high threshold for noises in her classroom; however, the environment to which she was exposing students challenged their ability to learn. Research confirms what Francis and Jean articulated. Reduced memory, motivation, and student performance (reading ability among other areas) have been found in students exposed to loud background noise (Shield & Dockrell, 2008). There was no available research investigating the physical environment in relationship to bilingual students with disabilities, therefore I examined this niche group of students by their identities separately. Similar factors (lower motivation, memory and academic performance) were also present in minority students and those of low socioeconomic status (Earthman, 2002) and since lower academic achievement is already characteristic of students with disabilities, exposure to loud acoustics could exacerbate already existing difficulties. Schneider (2002) discovered loud

acoustics not only negatively impact students' performance, but teachers' performance as well. When teachers are distracted, they may not be able to provide as quality of an education as if there were minimal noises. It was not within the scope of this study to measure the impact of the environment on student levels of motivation, memory, or performance, however loud acoustics impacted the way the teachers provided reading instruction, as evidenced by observational notes and Jean and Francis' comments regarding their difficulties concentrating on teaching.

A lasting mental image I took away from my observations at Prescott Elementary School was the supply closet being used as a classroom. The supply closet had boxes, tables, crates, and butcher paper among other supplies, however no educational posters or blackboard. Jean and the students sat at a table with four chairs in the middle of the room while other educators entered and exited and students prepared for lunch and recess outside the doorway. During an interview, Jean explained that she taught her bilingual special education reading group in a supply closet because her special education classroom was so far away that she would waste too much time picking up all the students and walking to the room. She also stated that the students needed a distraction-free setting for reading instruction and both her classroom and the general education classrooms presented distractions for the students. A classroom environment such as one without frequently used materials has been shown to have negative effects on student learning (Suleman, Aslam, & Hussein, 2014). Print-rich environments positively contribute to students' literacy development (Strickland & Shanahan, 2004), however, low socioeconomic settings are not as rich in print as high socioeconomic settings (Duke, 2000). The supply closet Jean utilized, as noted in the study, confirms the research that

schools in low socioeconomic settings have less environmental print. These findings have major implications for student outcomes and for how teachers of bilingual students with disabilities in urban settings plan reading instruction.

Jean and Francis, both reading interventionists, teach in challenging classroom environments. Jean teaches the reading group for bilingual students with disabilities in the school's supply closet and Francis uses a table in a noisy classroom that lacks structure. These imbalances between the students in the general education environment and the special education environment negatively impact student achievement. According to Bronfenbrenner (1994), interactions between individuals and their environments (proximal processes) affect development in different ways. Within the microsystem, what the setting is and how it interacts with students and how students interact with it have a great effect on how students grow. Bronfenbrenner (1994) writes. Research I reviewed about the impact of learning environments and classroom observations and participant interviews I conducted showed a negative influence of the environment (in a chaotic environment and in a nontraditional classroom setting) on student performance which support these two claims within Bronfenbrenner's theory.

### **Theme 5: Definitions Impact Reading Instruction**

Teachers use different materials to instruct students based on their labels. The study showed how separating materials based on labels, rather than student level of proficiency, is not ideal, as it leads to a shortage of materials. The research supports the claim that resources are sparse for the instruction of bilingual students with disabilities, however, there are research-based materials and strategies educators can use with all students. The study also showed how reading instruction was not provided to a bilingual



student with a disability due to his disability label. This learner did not receive the proper academic supports because of how his disability was defined. Within this theme, I will discuss two ways definitions impact instruction. The label a student receives can influence what materials teachers use to instruct him in reading and what reading intervention services he receives.

**Different Labels Mean Different Materials.** In an interview, Jean said she uses Title I reading materials to teach her bilingual students with disabilities because she does not have enough materials to use. It seems there should be materials dedicated for use with struggling bilingual learners instead of the current system which has materials for bilingual students with disabilities, bilingual struggling learners without disabilities, and bilingual learners, especially since every participant I interviewed at Prescott Elementary School stated there was a lack of resources for struggling bilingual learners (those with and without disabilities). As far back as the 1980s, scholars in the field of bilingual special education have noted a lack of availability of resources (Baca & Cervantes, 1998). Baca and Cervantes wrote that commercial material for bilingual students is available, but it must be adapted for bilingual students with disabilities. Participant interviews show this is still the case. At Prescott Elementary School, leveled reading books and reading intervention programs are separated for use with students based on their label. If there are materials available for bilingual reading instruction, then teachers should be able to use lower leveled materials for bilingual students with disabilities or those without disabilities who are struggling with reading. They do not have to create new materials or wait for the availability of commercially available materials targeted for bilingual students with disabilities. Directors of Curriculum and Instruction in

collaboration with a curriculum adoption committee often adopt reading curricula. In addition to materials, some strategies can be used without great expense and to meet the needs of all learners, not just specific groups of students based on their labels. For example, a common practice in bilingual classrooms is total physical response (TPR). Researchers identify TPR as successful instructional strategy for students who struggle to learn content (Liasidou, 2013). In total physical response, students and teachers make up physical actions to go with words or concepts. Combining language, content, and actions aid students in the acquisition of new knowledge; this can be done without commercially available reading materials created for specific groups of students.

**Different Labels Mean Different Special Education Services.** No matter if the student has a disability, is bilingual, or is a bilingual student with a disability, one concept remains true throughout this discussion; that educators must take the individual student, regardless of the label, into consideration when planning instruction and determining special education services.

In the case of the students and teachers at Prescott Elementary School a gap in communication and understanding of bilingual students with disabilities led to a disservice being provided for two bilingual students with disabilities. The district's philosophy that services were to be provided based on students' disability labels was challenged in the cases of a student with an Other Health Impairment and a student with an Emotional Behavioral Disability. Eventually it was decided that because the students' disabilities impacted their educational performance they could receive reading support from a special education teacher. In these two examples the district used the definition of the disability, rather than each student's individual needs, to influence what kind of

instruction the bilingual special education teacher delivered.

Language, definitions, and voice is one of three central tenets of critical disability theory. At a broad level, the theory poses that one disability may be considered as such in one setting (or society), but not in another. As applied to this particular situation, different individuals (and how they defined the disability) impacted the students' special education services. Philosophies about how the school district defined disability must be examined in order to create an equitable learning experience for all individuals. As reviewed in Chapter 5, one reason educators lack understanding of bilingual students with disabilities is the limited availability of adequate training programs and teachers (DeLeon & Gonzales, 1991; Holtzman, 1987; Liasidoum 2013; Garcia & Ortiz, 2006). Results of the study indicate that decision-makers who do not have an educational or experiential background in educating bilingual students with disabilities are ill equipped to make decisions about service delivery. Interviews with study participants confirmed the presence of minimal educational courses and trainings and opportunities to work with bilingual students with disabilities. The study shows bilingual students with disabilities missed out on an equal educational opportunity and an appropriate education because stakeholders did not have a shared philosophy about how definitions should impact special education services. The population of bilingual students with disabilities is on the rise, however; there are few qualified teachers to educate this special group of students (Harris, 1995), and even fewer with whom to collaboratively make decisions regarding special education services.

**Theme 6: Person Characteristics Influence Reading Instruction**

The difference between how Christina and Elaine structured their classrooms influenced their students and their reading instruction. In this study, the teachers' person characteristics (their preferences about the structure of classroom settings) and their philosophies about students with disabilities and bilingual students influenced reading instruction. Research in the field of social cognitive theory supports the finding that differences in teachers impact students and instructional delivery (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2007). One of the four main components of the bioecological theory is person characteristics. Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) explain that dispositions and resources are two of three types of person characteristics.

Dispositions are an individual's attitudes or tendencies, which play a part in interactions between individuals (teachers and students, for example). Throughout this study, I have shared many examples of personal preferences such as unstructured classroom settings, teaching in a supply closet, and differentiating instruction, among others. As already discussed and supported by research in Chapter 2 and within this chapter, these instructional decisions impact student achievement.

Personal resources are the second factor of the bioecological theory's personal characteristics. Ability, experience, knowledge, and skills are included in Bronfenbrenner's concept of personal resources, which contribute to an individual's success throughout their lifetime. These types of person characteristics impact the interactions individuals have with each other and the environment. These characteristics in teachers influence their reading instruction and students' emotional status and academic success. Factors of student success are dependent on positive bilingual schools

with high quality teaching practices (Rodriguez, 2009). The high quality teaching practices hinge on teachers' abilities, experiences, knowledge, and skills (their personal resources). Adequate teacher training, again, plays a role in the educational experiences of students, "it is estimated that only 20% of the 56% of public school teachers who have at least one [English language learner] student in their classrooms are qualified to teach [English language learners]" (Liasidou, 2013, p. 14). Teachers using highly effective practices consider the students' cultural and linguistic background (Duran & Weffer, 1992), experiences, and interests to create meaningful interactive instruction (Liasidou, 2013). Although I cannot speak of the successes and shortcomings of the teachers in the study, as tracking student progress was beyond the scope of this study, I did observe the teacher participants in this study considering the students' backgrounds, experiences, and interests.

### **How do teachers structure reading instruction for bilingual students with disabilities in urban elementary settings?**

At the onset of shaping this study, I attempted to hone in on what exactly I wanted to learn. Initially, I wanted to note exactly what techniques teachers use to teach bilingual students with disabilities; meaning, do they use guided reading groups, basal readers, cloze passages, vocabulary instruction, and so on. I thought I wanted to learn about the specific instructional strategies used to provide reading instruction to bilingual students with disabilities. Upon reflecting on what the existing literature is lacking and what would be most beneficial for teachers and bilingual students with disabilities, I realized the study, as previously conceptualized, lacked depth. I need not list the instructional techniques, as surely they were very similar to those used to teacher

struggling bilingual readers. I knew this from being a bilingual special education teacher and from the small amount of research that is available in the area of reading instruction for bilingual students with disabilities. Rather, I needed to uncover what reading instruction was like for bilingual students with disabilities. In order to do this, I established my research question, *How do teachers structure reading instruction for bilingual students with disabilities in urban elementary settings?* What I came to learn was that philosophical assumptions about disability heavily influence the structure of reading instruction for bilingual students with disabilities in urban elementary settings. As such, there is no clear-cut answer to the research question; I will not outline the daily schedule of a teacher of a bilingual student with a disability and point out how reading instruction is structured (for example: whole group instruction, independent reading, guided reading, vocabulary instruction, and so on). Instead, I will indicate factors (definitions of disability, teacher beliefs about disability, and personal characteristics) that I found to influence how reading instruction was structured for bilingual students with disabilities.

The way teachers define disability and their beliefs about disability impact how they structure reading instruction. Teachers' attitudes about whether students with disabilities are disadvantaged, teachers' views on what disability is, and how students' disability impacts learning influence the structure of reading instruction. The same is true about their beliefs about second language acquisition. Seeing bilingualism as an asset, being a supporter of a one way dual language program, and using students first language as a foundation off of which to build a second language all positively influence how educators provide reading instruction. Bilingual students with disabilities are vulnerable

to teachers who hold negative attitudes about disabilities and second language acquisition. Teachers attitudes toward second language acquisition and disability were seen in how the teachers differentiated instruction or provided accommodations, how students were grouped, or the center activities in which they took part, for example. Ultimately, teachers structured reading instruction for bilingual students with disabilities differently (or identically to students without disabilities) based on these influences and on personal characteristics.

As a result of her personal characteristics each teacher implemented the district-mandated reading curriculum differently. Some teachers attempted to overcompensate for students' disability by engaging in discussions with the student more so than with other students while other teachers focused on remedying the classroom environment based on student need. In addition to meeting students' academic needs, these teachers were cognizant of students' environmental needs. When these teachers planned for providing reading instruction to bilingual students with disabilities, they considered whether the general education setting was the best learning environment and may have chosen to provide reading instruction in a different area of the school. The location in which teachers provided reading instruction is a part of the structure. It impacts the amount of time the teacher has with her students and how the students react to the environment.

There was no one way teachers structured reading instruction for bilingual students with disabilities. All teachers used the district-mandated reading curriculum, but the activities they implemented, schedule they followed, support they gave students with disabilities, and location in which they taught students with disabilities all differed based

on teachers' definitions of disability, beliefs about disability, and personal characteristics, played a major role in how they structured reading instruction for bilingual students with disabilities.

### **Theoretical Implications**

#### **Critical Disability Theory**

This educational study has many implications for theory. Examining bilingual students with disabilities in an academic environment through the lens of critical disability theory provides an additional dimension to the theory as well as for the field of bilingual special education. I described critical disability theory with three central tenets: language, definitions, and voice (how society speaks about individuals with disabilities impacts how they are viewed); contextual politics and the politics of responsibility (it is important to see disability, but not view the individual with pity); and philosophical challenges (challenging how society views and addresses disability).

Critical disability theory lacks a component drawing attention to self-examination and disability blindfolding. In the school setting educators must truly examine how they are meeting the needs of diverse students. This means looking at how they think about and speak about students with disabilities. Asking themselves if they see disability, in what context and how, and in what ways they are addressing all their students' needs. In addition to providing a balance in instructional delivery for both students with disabilities and those without, they must recognize their own philosophies about students with disabilities and how those philosophies impact student outcomes.

Critical disability theory urges society to critically look at how individuals with disabilities are being treated in society as a whole and within different contexts. The



implications I review in this paragraph draw from critical disability theory's central components and expand upon them in the school setting. When applying critical disability theory to the study and to schools in general, society must continue to consider educators' and students' voices specifically when creating classroom environments and assessment procedures. Critical disability theory states the way a person's disability affects himself and society's presumptions depend on the situation in which he partakes. In relationship to this study, in each classroom environment students with disabilities should be looked at in each context and as individuals based on their unique personal needs. In terms of assessments, it is important to weigh the instructional time missed with the benefits of additional assessments given only to students with disabilities, and take into consideration educator and student voices when requiring assessments. Using this study as one means to advance critical disability theory in the school setting has potentially positive implications for students with disabilities.

### **Bioecological Theory**

The bioecological theory proposes four main factors on an individual's development: process, person, context, and time. As one of the propositions of process, the bioecological theory poses that interactions affect development in different ways. The study at hand and research referenced throughout the discussion support this claim. The themes, disability blindfolding and definitions impact instruction, and research related to the themes showed the philosophies individuals have about persons with disabilities impact how they treat individuals and the emotional and academic achievement of the individuals. The environment and instructional delivery are impacted when interactions do not happen naturally and educators do not address components of

instruction that need to be changed in one another. This must occur within the school system in order for students to achieve to the maximum extent possible. Structures for doing so should be in place so these interactions will occur. Although not detailed in the bioecological theory, I would also add that the comfort level individuals have with each other affect process. This may either increase or decrease the rate and quality of interactions.

Bronfenbrenner's second of four main factors, person, states person characteristics influence process. The attitudes and tendencies of teachers were visible during assessment and progress monitoring and as they set up classroom expectations and consequences. These characteristics also impact the activities the teacher plans for each student. Teacher resources influence the instructional delivery of reading as well. The teacher's abilities and knowledge about literacy, language, or disability impact how she designs instruction. It is the teacher's dispositions about disability (or the reading curriculum, or bilingual education, etc.) that impacts the instruction she designs and how she treats (either knowingly or unknowingly) students with disabilities. The bioecological theory does not address how person characteristics may be consciously or subconsciously affecting development.

The third main factor, context, includes the microsystem. The main theme that exemplifies this factor is theme four: spatial implications. It is within the classroom setting that I observed patterns of activities, social roles, and relationships. Missing in this factor of the theory, but relevant to the context is cultural norms and societal philosophies. Cultural norms impact relationships because the majority of the study participants were teachers and in the western culture teachers have less power and should

heed the instructions of administrators. Although not investigated in the study at hand, cultural differences between parents and school systems impact interactions at the school. In other cultures, the teachers are seen as experts in the child's education; where as in the US, teachers are educated that the parent is equally, if not more knowledgeable about the child's education. Societal philosophies, also absent from the context factor of the bioecological theory, impact cultural norms. As philosophies change, cultural norms do as well. District philosophies impacted the setting (inclusion, storage closet, etc.) within this study. Including cultural norms and societal philosophies would improve the bioecological theory.

The last of the four main factors on an individual's development is time, particularly in relationship to the study, microtime. From a time standpoint, the amount of time the student spends in each setting (special education or regular education), how much time the teacher dedicates to fulfilling students' needs or giving them assessments, and the services they receive (or do not receive) based on their disability label affects the individual's development. An additional factor, not mentioned by Bronfenbrenner, is expected rate. Schools today are concerned with the rate at which learning occurs. Each child develops differently; some slower than others. According to cultural norms, this means they are performing at a minimal or basic level. Expected rate (a measure of time in and of itself) determines the amount of time students receive for reading instruction (both in the special education and general education setting). In this study, rate of time is an essential aspect of microtime.

### **Practical Implications**

I assert several implications for practice as a result of the themes that emerged from the data. I will address practical implications for educators, families of children with disabilities, and for policy-makers.

#### **For Educators**

First, educators must be united in order to provide the best instruction possible to bilingual students with disabilities. From the evidence I referenced, it is clear that educators participating in my study were on separate pages in terms of the optimal instructional environment, what curriculum to use and how to implement it, how to meet diverse student needs, and philosophies around individuals with disabilities. In general, educators need not provide reading instruction exactly the same way to all bilingual students with disabilities, however each team within a school should have a shared vision. With additional research (including teacher action research), scholars can determine what gaps are present and to what effect they impact the education of bilingual students with disabilities. Only then will educators be able to work towards a shared understanding of reading instruction for bilingual students with disabilities. In order to do this, however, educators must understand disability, but not use it as a mechanism to define a child or a basis on which to make educational decisions.

Next, educators cannot assume that what is best for bilingual students or what is best for students with disabilities is what is best for bilingual students with disabilities. Once again, it will take research to determine a broader range of what instructional practice are currently being used, how effective they are, and what the best research-based practices for this subset of students. In addition to being well versed on the

research, it must be a shared understanding that educators must look at each student as an individual when making educational decisions. Again, there must be a common philosophy on disability challenging the current deficit mindset.

Professional development trainings for educators would improve the quality of instruction for bilingual learners with disabilities. Here, I reiterate the same recommendations Baca and Cervantes outlined in 1998: providing in-service training for professional staff and revising teacher training programs to incorporate experiences for bilingual special education teachers; and I add creating a bilingual special education teaching license.

Finally, it is through this study and knowledge of current research and practice that I recommend that schools develop IEPs in dual languages; establish students' primary need (disability or language); design and implement comprehensive services for each student; and offer accessible bilingual programs to students with disabilities.

### **For Teacher Education**

I have an insider perspective of K-12 school systems and of teacher education programs as a former bilingual special education teacher and currently as an instructor at a university. It is as a result of this study and my educational and professional background that I propose several implications for teacher education: examining personal philosophies and their effects; having meaningful philosophical discussions; and teachers advocating for students by advocating for themselves.

Teacher education programs currently educate students about the topics of diversity, students with disabilities, reflecting on personal biases, and reflecting on teaching practices after lesson delivery, among others. Teacher education must adjust

instruction to help prospective teachers not only identify what their philosophies are, but examine how their philosophies about students with disabilities (students from varying socioeconomic statuses, linguistic backgrounds, family structures, etc.) affect how they provide reading instruction, how they develop relationships with students and colleagues, and how they advocate for students with disabilities. Teacher education also must provide prospective teachers with the tools to do this on a continual basis after graduating. These recommendations extend what is typically done in teacher education programs to be more philosophical and reflective about deeper societal issues.

Current programs also instruct future teachers on techniques for collaborating and solving problems with colleagues. This topic can also be extended. Educating future teachers on how to engage in meaningful philosophical discussions (on the best location for educating students with disabilities and why, for example) will push their own thinking and the thinking of colleagues. Meaningful discussions will change and evolve teachers' beliefs. They also have the potential to change the instruction provided to students and improve students' academic achievement.

Most educators see themselves as advocates for their students; giving them a voice they might not have. Again, extending what teacher education programs already do, the next generation of teachers must advocate for their students through advocating for themselves. Instead of accepting teaching in a supply closet as the best option out of those available, teacher education programs must educate future teachers on why and how to challenge a system that allows for the use of supply closets as classrooms. Many graduates leave teacher education programs in their early twenties. They are often ill-equipped to advocate for themselves, which often times indirectly advocates for their

students, by challenging the educational system which is often represented by individuals who are older, have greater seniority, and hold more power.

### **Significance of the Research**

The study sought to set identified how educators provide reading instruction to bilingual students with disabilities. The research done in this study is significant for educators, scholars, parents, individuals with disabilities, and those who are bilingual. This study brings attention to and highlights ways in which the philosophical underpinnings of how society, educators specifically, respond to the educational needs of individuals with disabilities. Again, I bring up the two identities of the students receiving the literacy instruction highlighted in the study: bilingual students who have disabilities. This study adds to the small research base focusing on bilingual students with disabilities in the area of reading. In being able to identify practices, educators can work to provide adequate instruction for this group of students and their counterparts without disabilities. As the research base is so small in this field, this study can be used as a springboard off of which to develop additional studies to examine in further depth the findings from this study.

### **Limitations of the Study**

As with all research, this study has several limitations. First, this study only examined a part of the microsystem, the school setting. The microsystem also consists of the home and community systems. This study did not have the capacity to investigate these settings, even though both play a major part in the reading achievement for bilingual students with disabilities.

The case study approach calls for an emphasis in “designing the study to optimize understanding of the case rather than to generalize beyond it” (Stake, 2005, p. 443).

Although I was only able to study a small number of teachers within one school, this gave a limited, but rich picture of the reading instructional practices teachers use to educate bilingual students with disabilities. In addition to only working with a small number of teachers, I only looked at the reading instructional practices of teachers of bilingual first graders with disabilities. This can also be considered a limitation, as data on multiple grade levels would have created a richer description of the school’s full program. Also, observations occurred during the last trimester of the school year. This is a limitation because I was not able to document components of the bilingual special education program over the course of the full academic year. Participant responses and observations may have been different at the beginning and middle of the year.

In addition, I was unable to consider intersectionality in this study. In the context of education, students are an extremely diverse population. The students referenced in this study differed in terms of ethnicity, socioeconomic status, disability status, language proficiency level, and so on. Each one of these independently and jointly influences the education they are provided. Additional factors that intersect with the education of bilingual students with disabilities include policy, finance, and home influences, among others. The complexity of considering the intersectionality of these factors in this study poses a limitation.

A final limitation I will highlight is a personal one. It is the more positivist stance with which I began the study. Throughout the data collection and writing stages, I worked to move away from this more positivist stance. The positivist stance, which has



informed my socialization as special educator, created a tension as I sought to properly analyze data and draw conclusions, and as my question required a critical qualitative stance and approach.

### **Suggestions for Further Research**

Arreaga-Mayer, Utley, Perdomo-Rivera, and Greenwood (2003) declare that the need for further research still exists in the field of bilingual special education.

This study sought to add to the research base of reading instruction practices for bilingual students with disabilities. I suggest that future research determine if the current practices are effective practices for reading instruction for bilingual students with disabilities, ideally such research should be done longitudinally, as there is minimal longitudinal research on bilingual special education (Baca & Cervantes, 1998).

Future research should also look at the impact that the environment; challenges such as finances, policy, and personal philosophies; and instructional decisions made when providing reading instruction to bilingual students with disabilities and if necessary, how these practices can be changed. Esquivel, Lopez, and Nahari (2007) cite that “there is still no agreement as to which programs provide the best type of services, bearing in mind the heterogeneity of the population, the exit and entry criteria, and the equal protection of the law” (p. 533).

Because additional research examining the “social organization of language and learning” in the bilingual special education classroom is needed to determine effective instructional strategies (Ruiz, 1995), I recommend looking into the allotment of Spanish versus English reading instructional time in each grade and at what grade level transitioning students to English should be recommended. Although this is a program

decision that should consider students at an individual level, bilingual special education teachers have been put in a position where there is no research upon which to base these types of logistical decisions, and very few, if any colleagues with knowledge about bilingual students with disabilities with whom to collaborate.

I suggest researching the intersectionality of any number of the complex individual characteristics of this group of students; for example, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, disability status, urban school setting, and so on. Teachers of bilingual students with disabilities need specialized research, as the population of students they serve is unique.

### **Final Thoughts**

I try to be an efficient, quick and to the point person; this is my innate nature. I see most matters in black and white and tend to believe there are right and wrong answers. There is little room for this type of thinking in qualitative research. I approached the design of my study, data collection, and data analysis with this mindset. I thought I would be able to continue through this research with a black, white, and gray perspective; gray being an additional color I could use to paint a rich picture. I have already identified my more positivist stance as a limitation to this study. What I have not discussed, however, is my transformation at the very end of this process. I realized including student and parent voices would have added a richness to the study that would not have been achievable through a positivist approach. This richness can only be portrayed through painting the case study picture with bright colors.

I lost my passion for the topic as I analyzed my findings through a positivist, black, white, and gray approach. The biggest turning point in this process was a

discussion about what my responsibility is as the researcher of this completed study. It was during this discussion that I regained my passion. I care deeply about bilingual students with disabilities and see much of what they experience in schools as inadequate (settings, instruction, resources, attitudes, etc.). I want to report out on this injustice and change these practices and attitudes, even if doing so is intimidating. As a qualitative researcher, I now see that I have a responsibility to enter into studies with the participants as my partners because we both have much to gain from the results. I now see that I should design studies by taking into account my philosophies and utilizing what I bring to the table academically, professionally, and personally because doing so brings passion and color to my research. Before engaging in this eye-opening discussion, I thought I could do these things through a black and white report and without inserting my philosophies. I was wrong. I look forward to future research where I can examine the educational system and the community and home systems as influences on reading instruction for bilingual students with disabilities, because not doing so within this study was a design flaw. I have the responsibility to improve the educational experiences of bilingual students with disabilities and believe that just as my personal philosophies on bilingual education and special education are ever evolving, so are my research skills.

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## **APPENDIX A: SELECTION CRITERIA**

### **Site Selection Criteria**

#### **Nonnegotiable Conditions**

Nonnegotiable Condition 1: The bilingual students with disabilities must receive instruction from a bilingual general education teacher in the general education setting and a bilingual special education teacher in either the special education setting or general education setting.

Nonnegotiable Condition 2: The school must be located in the state of Wisconsin.

Nonnegotiable Condition 3: The bilingual students with disabilities must be assigned to a bilingual education general education classroom.

Nonnegotiable Condition 4: The school district must be in an urban area.

Nonnegotiable Condition 5: The two languages in the bilingual education settings must be English and Spanish.

Nonnegotiable Condition 6: School district must approve study/researcher involvement at school.

Nonnegotiable Condition 7: School must approve study/researcher involvement at school.

Nonnegotiable Condition 8: Teachers must agree to participate in the study.

Nonnegotiable Condition 9: There must be a minimum of two bilingual students with disabilities in the same elementary school grade level.

Nonnegotiable Condition 10: The bilingual special education teacher must have a teaching license in special education.

#### **Negotiable Conditions**

Condition 1: The bilingual special education teacher must have a minimum of 4 years experience teaching bilingual special education.

Condition 2: The school must have used the reading curriculum for a minimum of 4 years before the study begins.

Condition 3: The bilingual special education teacher must have a teaching license in bilingual/bicultural education. (They could be in a “Spanish-speaking” position instead of a “bilingual” position.)

Condition 5: The bilingual general education teachers must have teaching licenses in bilingual/bicultural education. (They could be in a “Spanish-speaking” position instead of a “bilingual” position.)

Condition 4: There must be a minimum of two bilingual students with disabilities receiving reading instruction from a bilingual special education and bilingual general education teacher at the school.

### **District Selection Criteria**

#### **Nonnegotiable Conditions**

Nonnegotiable Condition 1: The district must be located in the state of Wisconsin.

Nonnegotiable Condition 2: The district must be located in an urban area [an area with a population of over 70,000 and no less than 10% of city population below poverty level (Institute for Wisconsin’s Future, 2004)].

Nonnegotiable Condition 3: The district must employ a director of bilingual education.

Nonnegotiable Condition 4: The district must employ a director of special education.

Nonnegotiable Condition 5: The district must have one-way or two-way bilingual education programs in at least one of its schools.

Nonnegotiable Condition 6: School district must approve study/researcher involvement at school.

### **Participant Selection Criteria**

#### **Nonnegotiable Conditions**

Nonnegotiable Condition 1: A minimum of the bilingual special education teacher and a bilingual general education teacher must agree to participate in the study. (All professionals working with the bilingual special education teacher will be asked to participate.)

Nonnegotiable Condition 2: The bilingual special education teacher must have a teaching license in bilingual/bicultural education and in special education.

Nonnegotiable Condition 3: The bilingual general education teacher must have teaching licenses in bilingual/bicultural education and an area of general education.

Nonnegotiable Condition 4: The bilingual special education and bilingual general education teachers must both be responsible for delivering reading instruction to bilingual students with disabilities.

Nonnegotiable Condition 5: The bilingual special education and bilingual general education teachers must have passed the district Spanish proficiency test.

#### **Negotiable Conditions**

Negotiable Condition 1: The bilingual special education teacher must have a minimum of 4 years experience teaching bilingual special education.

## APPENDIX B: CONSENT FORMS

### UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN – MILWAUKEE CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

#### ADULT CONSENT

THIS CONSENT FORM HAS BEEN APPROVED BY THE IRB FOR A ONE YEAR PERIOD

#### 1. General Information

##### Study title:

Ways in Which Teachers Structure Reading Instruction for Bilingual Students with Disabilities: A Case Study Analysis

##### Person in Charge of Study (Principal Investigator):

My name is Nikki Logan and I am a doctoral student at the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee. I have my Master's Degree in Exceptional Education and my Bachelor's Degree in Elementary Education. I am also an instructor in the School of Education at the University of Wisconsin at Stevens Point.

#### 2. Study Description

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Your participation is completely voluntary. You do not have to participate if you do not want to.

##### Study description:

The purpose of this study is to identify what reading instructional practices educators are using to teach bilingual students with disabilities. With this foundation, scholars can continue to address the lack of research in the highly specialized field of bilingual special education. From the current reading instructional practices the study will uncover, future research can address the success of current reading instructional practices.

The proposed study seeks to set a foundation by identifying the current reading instructional practices that bilingual students with disabilities experience. The proposed study is significant because there currently exists a gap in the research and practice in the area of bilingual special education; at present time, most research and practice address the field of bilingual education and special education separately. The need exists to continue scholarship in the integrated field of bilingual special education.

One elementary school will participate in the study. In this study, there will be a total of one bilingual special education teacher and one general education teacher, in addition to any bilingual special education paraprofessionals that work with the teacher participants. I will not interact with students or adults while I am taking observation notes. The bilingual special education teacher, one general education teacher, and any bilingual special education paraprofessionals that work with the teacher participants will

complete a questionnaire, initial interviews, and follow-up interviews. In addition, I will ask to see lesson plans, curriculum pacing guides, and curriculum materials, among other school/district documents.

### 3. Study Procedures

#### What will I be asked to do if I participate in the study?

If you agree to participate you will be asked to

- Engage in an initial and 3 follow-up interviews approximately 1-1.5 hours in length about the topics of bilingual special education, your reading instructional practices, and instructional decision-making processes.
- Allow me to take observational notes about reading instruction in the school classrooms where you provide reading instruction. The observations will occur for approximately 12 days between the months of March-May 2014.
- Answer a general information questionnaire that has approximately 25 questions about your educational and career background and current class list.
- Allow me to collect and review lesson plans, curriculum pacing guides, and curriculum materials, among other school/district documents.

### 4. Risks and Minimizing Risks

#### What risks will I face by participating in this study?

The potential risks for participating in this study are minimal – no greater than what you would experience when talking to a colleague about your reading instructional practices.

**Psychological:** There is a small possibility that you may feel uncomfortable if colleagues read the observational notes and interview information I collect. However, I will use fake names for students and adults when writing up the data I have collected. In addition, there is no evaluation of instructional practices or decisions involved in this study. None of the information gathered from interviews, questionnaires, or observations will be shared with district staff.

### 5. Benefits

#### Will I receive any benefit from my participation in this study?

There are no benefits to you other than to further research.

### 6. Study Costs and Compensation

#### Will I be charged anything for participating in this study?

You will not be responsible for any of the costs from taking part in this research study.

**Are subjects paid or given anything for being in the study?**

You will not be compensated for taking part in this research study.

## 7. Confidentiality

**What happens to the information collected?**

All information collected about you during the course of this study will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law. We may decide to present what we find to others, or publish our results in scientific journals or at scientific conferences. Only the PI will have access to the information. However, the Institutional Review Board at UW-Milwaukee or appropriate federal agencies like the Office for Human Research Protections may review this study's records.

I will change your name before I analyze the data. I will also use pseudonyms when engaging in any sharing of the study results (doctoral dissertation defense, writing manuscripts, presenting at conferences). I will take notes on a password protected word document and password protected laptop. Audio recordings will be sent to a professional transcriptionist to be put into electronic written format. Upon receipt of the transcriptions, I will securely delete the audio files and will store the electronic written files on a password protected word document and password protected laptop. When the study is complete, the data will be saved in a password protected word file on a password protected laptop for 1 year after the study is complete after which the files will be securely deleted.

## 8. Alternatives

**Are there alternatives to participating in the study?**

There are no known alternatives available to you other than not taking part in this study.

## 9. Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal

**What happens if I decide not to be in this study?**

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may choose not to take part in this study. If you decide to take part, you can change your mind later and withdraw from the study. You are free to not answer any questions or withdraw at any time. Your decision will not change any present or future relationships with the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee.

If you withdraw from the study early, I will use the information collected to that point.

## 10. Questions

### Who do I contact for questions about this study?

For more information about the study or the study procedures or treatments, or to withdraw from the study, contact:

Nikki Logan  
University of Wisconsin at Stevens Point  
457 College of Professional Studies  
1901 Fourth Avenue  
Stevens Point, WI 54481  
715-346-2563

### Who do I contact for questions about my rights or complaints towards my treatment as a research subject?

The Institutional Review Board may ask your name, but all complaints are kept in confidence.

Institutional Review Board  
Human Research Protection Program  
Department of University Safety and Assurances  
University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee  
P.O. Box 413  
Milwaukee, WI 53201  
(414) 229-3173

## 11. Signatures

### Research Subject's Consent to Participate in Research:

*To voluntarily agree to take part in this study, you must sign on the line below. If you choose to take part in this study, you may withdraw at any time. You are not giving up any of your legal rights by signing this form. Your signature below indicates that you have read or had read to you this entire consent form, including the risks and benefits, and have had all of your questions answered, and that you are 18 years of age or older.*

Printed Name of Subject/ Legally Authorized Representative

Signature of Subject/Legally Authorized Representative

Date

### Research Subject's Consent to Audio/Video/Photo Recording:

I will audiotape out interviews and have a transcriptionist transcribe the interviews.

It is okay to audiotape me while I am in this study and use my audiotaped data in the research.

Please initial: \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ No

**Principal Investigator (or Designee)**

*I have given this research subject information on the study that is accurate and sufficient for the subject to fully understand the nature, risks and benefits of the study.*

Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent

Study Role

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

Date



# UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN – MILWAUKEE

## CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

### ADULT CONSENT

THIS CONSENT FORM HAS BEEN APPROVED BY THE IRB FOR A ONE YEAR PERIOD

#### 1. General Information

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Ways in Which Teachers Structure Reading Instruction for Bilingual Students with Disabilities: A Case Study Analysis

##### Person in Charge of Study (Principal Investigator):

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##### Study description:

The purpose of this study is to identify what reading instructional practices educators are using to teach bilingual students with disabilities. With this foundation, scholars can continue to address the lack of research in the highly specialized field of bilingual special education. From the current reading instructional practices the study will uncover, future research can address the success of current reading instructional practices.

The proposed study seeks to set a foundation by identifying the current reading instructional practices that bilingual students with disabilities experience. The proposed study is significant because there currently exists a gap in the research and practice in the area of bilingual special education; at present time, most research and practice address the field of bilingual education and special education separately. The need exists to continue scholarship in the integrated field of bilingual special education.

One elementary school will participate in the study. In this study, there will be a total of one bilingual special education teacher and one general education teacher, in addition to any bilingual special education paraprofessionals that work with the teacher participants. I will not interact with students or adults while I am taking observation notes. The bilingual special education teacher, one general education teacher, and any bilingual special education paraprofessionals that work with the teacher participants will complete a questionnaire, initial interviews, and follow-up interviews. In addition, I will

ask to see lesson plans, curriculum pacing guides, and curriculum materials, among other school/district documents.

### 3. Study Procedures

#### What will I be asked to do if I participate in the study?

If you agree to participate you will be asked to

- Engage in one interview approximately 1-1.5 hours in length about the topics of bilingual special education, bilingual education, and special education.
- Allow me to collect and review curriculum pacing guides, curriculum materials, and program descriptions among other school/district documents.

### 4. Risks and Minimizing Risks

#### What risks will I face by participating in this study?

The potential risks for participating in this study are minimal – no greater than what you would experience when talking to a colleague about your reading instructional practices.

**Psychological:** There is a small possibility that your may feel uncomfortable if colleagues read the interview information I collect. However, I will use fake names for adults when writing up the data I have collected

### 5. Benefits

#### Will I receive any benefit from my participation in this study?

There are no benefits to you other than to further research.

### 6. Study Costs and Compensation

#### Will I be charged anything for participating in this study?

You will not be responsible for any of the costs from taking part in this research study.

#### Are subjects paid or given anything for being in the study?

You will not be compensated for taking part in this research study.

### 7. Confidentiality

#### What happens to the information collected?

All information collected about you during the course of this study will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law. We may decide to present what we find to others, or publish our results in scientific journals or at scientific conferences. Only the PI will have access to the information. However, the Institutional Review Board at UW-Milwaukee or appropriate federal agencies like the Office for Human Research Protections may review this study's records.

I will change your name before I analyze the data. I will also use pseudonyms when engaging in any sharing of the study results (doctoral dissertation defense, writing manuscripts, presenting at conferences). I will take notes on a password protected word document and password protected laptop. Audio recordings will be sent to a professional transcriptionist to be put into electronic written format. Upon receipt of the transcriptions, I will securely delete the audio files and will store the electronic written files on a password protected word document and password protected laptop. When the study is complete, the data will be saved in a password protected word file on a password protected laptop for 1 year after the study is complete after which the files will be securely deleted.

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If you withdraw from the study early, I will use the information collected to that point.

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Nikki Logan  
University of Wisconsin at Stevens Point

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**Who do I contact for questions about my rights or complaints towards my treatment as a research subject?**

The Institutional Review Board may ask your name, but all complaints are kept in confidence.

Institutional Review Board  
 Human Research Protection Program  
 Department of University Safety and Assurances  
 University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee  
 P.O. Box 413  
 Milwaukee, WI 53201  
 (414) 229-3173

**11. Signatures**

**Research Subject's Consent to Participate in Research:**

*To voluntarily agree to take part in this study, you must sign on the line below. If you choose to take part in this study, you may withdraw at any time. You are not giving up any of your legal rights by signing this form. Your signature below indicates that you have read or had read to you this entire consent form, including the risks and benefits, and have had all of your questions answered, and that you are 18 years of age or older.*

Printed Name of Subject/ Legally Authorized Representative

Signature of Subject/Legally Authorized Representative

Date

**Research Subject's Consent to Audio/Video/Photo Recording:**

I will audiotape out interviews and have a transcriptionist transcribe the interviews.

It is okay to audiotape me while I am in this study and use my audiotaped data in the research.

Please initial: \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ No

**Principal Investigator (or Designee)**

*I have given this research subject information on the study that is accurate and sufficient for the subject to fully understand the nature, risks and benefits of the study.*

Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent

Study Role

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

Date

## APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

### **Interview Protocol - Interviews with the Bilingual General Education Teacher**

Project: Ways in Which Teachers Structure Reading Instruction for Bilingual Students with Disabilities

Time of Interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Position of Interviewee:

[Reminder: Turn on the audio recorder and test it.]

Interview 1:

Process:

1. Describe how you prepare for teaching reading to bilingual students with disabilities.
2. How do you go about choosing the lesson objectives?
3. What specific instructional techniques do you use to teach the lesson objectives?  
How do you choose these techniques?
4. In what ways do you plan your lesson to
  - a. meet the student's language proficiency needs?
  - b. meet the student's disability-related needs?
  - c. utilize your student's literacy strengths to meet their literacy needs?
5. How do you differentiate your lesson to meet each student's needs?

Interview 2:

Process (cont'd):

6. How do you assess students' progress towards meeting the lesson objectives?
7. How do you collaborate with the special education teacher and bilingual paraprofessionals.
8. How did you feel the lessons typically go?
9. Are you typically able to teach the lessons as you plan them? Why/why not?  
(Include any justifications for why you veer from the lesson plans.)
10. Are the lesson objectives usually appropriate for the students' needs?
11. How do you determine if the lesson objectives were appropriate for the students' needs?
12. Are the instructional practices you use appropriate for the student?
13. Do the students' make progress towards meeting the lesson objectives?
14. How do you assess students' progress towards meeting the lesson objectives?
15. How do you determine what homework to give?

Interview 3:

Context - Microsystem (Relationships):

1. What would be your idea of the ideal relationship with
  - a. the bilingual paraprofessionals? What would it look like? Do you have the ideal relationship with the bilingual paraprofessionals? If not, what barriers are impeding this relationship?

- b. your student? What would it look like? Do you have the ideal relationship with your student? If not, what barriers are impeding this relationship?
- c. with the bilingual special education teacher? What would it look like? Do you have the ideal relationship with the bilingual special education? If not, what barriers are impeding this relationship?

Person:

- 2. Tell me about a time when you felt successful when teaching reading to bilingual students with disabilities.
- 3. Tell me about a time when you felt challenged when teaching reading to bilingual students with disabilities.
- 4. Overall, how effective do you feel your reading instruction is with bilingual students with disabilities? Explain your answer.

Interview 4

Process:

- 1. What are the factors that influence reading instruction for bilingual students with disabilities?
- 2. How does collaboration influence what you teach your bilingual students with disabilities?
- 3. How does collaboration influence how you teach your bilingual students with disabilities?

Person

- 4. Tell me about your teacher preparation program.



5. How did your teacher preparation program help prepare you to teach bilingual students with disabilities?

Use the following questions to begin exploring educators' attitudes and perceptions of students with disabilities.

6. When I was a bilingual special education teacher, I know that I was excited about the progress some of my students were making, but concerned about the progress other students were making. How do you feel about the progress your bilingual students with disabilities are making?
7. How many years progress do the bilingual students with disabilities make in one academic year?
  - a. Do you feel that is sufficient?
  - b. Does the district think that is sufficient?
  - c. Are the parents satisfied with the progress?
8. How do your attitudes and perceptions of students with disabilities influence your reading instructional delivery?

## **Interview Protocol –Interviews with the Bilingual Special Education Teacher**

Project: Ways in Which Teachers Structure Reading Instruction for Bilingual Students with Disabilities

Time of Interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Position of Interviewee:

[Reminder: Turn on the audio recorder and test it.]

Interview 1:

Process:

1. Describe how you prepare for teaching reading to bilingual students with disabilities.
2. How do you go about choosing the lesson objectives?
3. What specific instructional techniques do you use to teach the lesson objectives?  
How do you choose these techniques?
4. In what ways do you plan your lesson to
  - a. meet the student's language proficiency needs?
  - b. meet the student's disability-related needs?
  - c. utilize your student's literacy strengths to meet their literacy needs?
5. How do you differentiate your lesson to meet each student's needs?

Interview 2:

Process (cont'd):

6. How do you assess students' progress towards meeting the lesson objectives?
7. How do you collaborate with the bilingual general education teachers and bilingual paraprofessionals?
8. How did you feel the lessons typically go?
9. Are you typically able to teach the lessons as you plan them? Why/why not?  
(Include any justifications for why you deviate from the lesson plans.)
10. Are the lesson objectives usually appropriate for the students' needs?
11. How do you determine if the lesson objectives were appropriate for the students' needs?
12. Are the instructional practices you use appropriate for the student?
13. Do the students' make progress towards meeting the lesson objectives?
14. How do you assess students' progress towards meeting the lesson objectives?
15. How do you determine what homework to give?
16. Any additional questions I have from the general settings observations or questionnaire.

Interview 3:

Context - Microsystem (Relationships):

1. What would be your idea of the ideal relationship
  - a. with the bilingual paraprofessionals? What would it look like? Do you have the ideal relationship with the bilingual paraprofessionals? If not, what barriers are impeding this relationship?

- b. with your students? What would it look like? Do you have the ideal relationship with your student? If not, what barriers are impeding this relationship?
- c. with the bilingual general education teacher? What would it look like? Do you have the ideal relationship with the bilingual general education? If not, what barriers are impeding this relationship? Is there a reason you do not collaborate with Martha?

Person:

- 2. Tell me about a time when you felt successful when teaching reading to bilingual students with disabilities.
- 3. Tell me about a time when you felt challenged when teaching reading to bilingual students with disabilities.
- 4. Overall, how effective do you feel your reading instruction is with bilingual students with disabilities? Explain your answer.

Interview 4:

Process:

- 1. What are the factors that influence reading instruction for bilingual students with disabilities?
- 2. How does collaboration influence what you teach your bilingual students with disabilities?
- 3. How does collaboration influence how you teach your bilingual students with disabilities?

Person:

4. Tell me about your teacher preparation program.
5. How did your teacher preparation program help prepare you to teach bilingual students with disabilities?

Use the following questions to begin exploring educators' attitudes and perceptions of students with disabilities.

6. When I was a bilingual special education teacher, I know that I was excited about the progress some of my students were making, but concerned about the progress other students were making. How do you feel about the progress your bilingual students with disabilities are making?
7. How many years progress do the bilingual students with disabilities make in one academic year?
  - a. Do you feel that is sufficient?
  - b. Does the district think that is sufficient?
  - c. Are the parents satisfied with the progress?
8. How do your attitudes and perceptions of students with disabilities influence your reading instructional delivery?

**Interview Protocol –Interview with the School Principal**

Project: Ways in Which Teachers Structure Reading Instruction for Bilingual Students with Disabilities

Time of Interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Position of Interviewee:

[Reminder: Turn on the audio recorder and test it.]

Questions:

1. How long have you been principal at Prescott Elementary School?
2. Were you a principal before coming to Prescott Elementary School?
3. In what capacity did you teach?
4. Tell me about your teacher and administrator preparation programs, did you receive any training/experience working with bilingual students with disabilities?
5. What is the expectation of teachers in terms of the structure of their readers' workshop?
6. From where do they obtain their resources?
7. What factors influence reading instruction? (Explore teachers' attitudes and perceptions of students with disabilities more in the interview and/or focus groups pre or post. Also, explore the nature of their preparation program, what did they get out of it that informed their bilingual instruction.)

8. How do you feel attitudes and perceptions of bilingual students with disabilities impact reading instruction?
9. How do you feel collaboration impacts reading instruction?
10. What challenges do you experience with promoting reading achievement in your bilingual students with disabilities?

**Interview Protocol –Interview with the Assistant Superintendent of Student Services**

Project: Ways in Which Teachers Structure Reading Instruction for Bilingual Students with Disabilities

Time of Interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Position of Interviewee:

[Reminder: Turn on the audio recorder and test it.]

Questions:

1. What is your position title? Start time:
2. How long have you worked in that position?
3. What are your job duties in relationship to special education?—Do you have a director of special education?
4. Please describe the special model (full-inclusion, co-teaching, pull-out, etc) at Prescott Elementary School.
  - a. Do you hold any specific training for special or general education teachers to learn about the model or their roles and responsibilities?
  - b. In general, are there special education professional development offerings? About what topics?
  - c. Does the district have a mandated special education reading curriculum?
5. What factors influence reading instruction for students with disabilities?



- a. Does the district have a certain expectation for the IEPs of students with disabilities? For example, making more than one year's progress?
  - b. Are teachers provided with training for instructing reading to bilingual students with disabilities?
- 6. How do you feel collaboration impacts reading instruction for bilingual students with disabilities?
  - a. Do you feel your collaborative model supports collaboration?
- 7. What challenges do you experience with promoting reading achievement in your bilingual students with disabilities?
  - a. How does your district work to overcome those challenges?
- 8. Professional development materials
  - a. Reading and students with disabilities
  - b. Bilingual models and students with disabilities
  - c. Professional development for spec ed teachers
  - d. Information for parents
  - e. Eim training

**Interview Protocol –Interview with the Educator Effectiveness Coach and Bilingual  
Title I Teacher**

Project: Ways in Which Teachers Structure Reading Instruction for Bilingual Students  
with Disabilities

Time of Interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Position of Interviewee:

[Reminder: Turn on the audio recorder and test it.]

1. What is your position title?
2. How long have you worked in that position?
3. What are your job duties?
4. Do you receive any professional development to support teachers of bilingual students with disabilities?
5. Tell me about your teacher and administrator preparation programs, did you receive any training/experience working with bilingual students with disabilities?
6. What factors influence reading instruction?
7. Describe the bilingual education model(s) at Prescott Elementary School.
8. What is the expectation of teachers in terms of the structure of their readers' workshop?
9. From where do they obtain their resources?

10. How do you feel attitudes and perceptions of bilingual students with disabilities impact reading instruction?
11. How do you feel collaboration impacts reading instruction?
12. What challenges do you experience with promoting reading achievement in your bilingual students with disabilities?
  - a. How does your school work to overcome those challenges? What events do you do at school to promote reading achievement?

**Interview Protocol –Interview with the Director of Instruction: World Languages,  
Bilingual Education, and ESL**

Project: Ways in Which Teachers Structure Reading Instruction for Bilingual Students  
with Disabilities

Time of Interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Position of Interviewee:

[Reminder: Turn on the audio recorder and test it.]

Questions:

1. What is your position title? Start time:
2. How long have you worked in that position?
3. What are your job duties in relationship to bilingual education?
4. What factors influence reading instruction?
  - a. Are teachers provided with training for instructing reading to bilingual students with disabilities?
5. Describe the bilingual education model(s) at Prescott Elementary School.
  - a. Do you hold any specific training for bilingual special or bilingual general education teachers to learn about the model or their roles and responsibilities?

- b. In general, are there bilingual professional development offerings? About what topics?
  - c. Does the district have a mandated bilingual reading curriculum?
- 6. How do you feel collaboration impacts reading instruction?
  - a. Do you feel your collaborative model supports collaboration?
- 7. What challenges do you experience with promoting reading achievement in your bilingual students with disabilities?
  - a. How does your district work to overcome those challenges?
- 8. Ask for bilingual education professional development materials or notices to parents (director of bilingual education, the bilingual general education teacher and bilingual special education teacher)
  - a. What type of bilingual program is the school implementing (additive, subtractive, early exit, one-way, etc.)?
  - b. What instructions were the teachers given during bilingual education professional development?
  - c. Are the teachers following instructions they were given during bilingual education professional development (has it impacted their instruction)?
  - d. What is the audience of the Bilingual education professional development?
  - e. Does the bilingual education professional development address teachers of bilingual students with disabilities?
  - f. How many times does this document mention reading instruction for bilingual students with disabilities?



## **Appendix D: Electronic Questionnaire**

### **General Information from the Bilingual Special Education Teacher**

1. What is your name?
2. How long have you been a teacher?
3. What is your current teaching position?
4. How long have you been a bilingual special education teacher?
5. How long have you taught in your current position?
6. What previous teaching positions have you held?
7. What is your educational background?
8. What teaching license(s) do you have?
9. What about your job do you find rewarding?
10. What about your job do you find challenging?
11. What is your school's reading curriculum?
12. How long has your school been using this curriculum?
13. Describe the reading curriculum.
14. Describe your bilingual education service delivery model (one-way, two-way, early-exit, late-exit, etc.).
15. Describe your special education service delivery model (resource, full-inclusion, team-teaching, etc.).
16. How did you learn Spanish (formal and informal ways)?
17. What are the ranges of reading levels of the students with whom you work?
18. What are the ranges of ACCESS levels of the students with whom you work?
19. What are the disability labels of the students with whom you work?

20. What are the ages of the students with whom you work?
21. What are the grades of the students with whom you work?
22. What are the ethnic backgrounds of the students with whom you work?
23. What are the ranges of years the students with whom you currently work have been in the United States?
24. List all of the general education teachers with whom you currently share students.
25. What are the related services of the students with whom you work?



**General Information from the Bilingual General Education Teacher**

1. How long have you been a teacher?
2. What is your current teaching position?
3. How long have you taught in your current position?
4. What previous teaching positions have you held?
5. What is your educational background?
6. What teaching license(s) do you have?
7. How did you learn Spanish? (formal and informal ways)
8. What about your job do you find rewarding?
9. What about your job do you find challenging?
10. How many students are in your classroom?
11. How many students in your classrooms have an identified disability?
12. What is your school's reading curriculum?
13. How long has your school been using this curriculum?
14. Describe the reading curriculum.
15. Describe your bilingual education service delivery model (one-way, two-way, early-exit, late-exit, etc.).
16. What are the ranges of reading levels of the students with whom you work?
17. What are the ranges of ACCESS levels of the students with whom you work?
18. What are the disability labels of the students with whom you work?
19. What are the ages of the students with whom you work?
20. What are the grades of the students with whom you work?
21. What are the ethnic backgrounds of the students with whom you work?

22. What are the ranges of years the students with whom you currently work have been in the United States?
23. How many students in your classroom have an identified disability?
24. How many students are in your classroom?

**General Information from the Bilingual Title I Teacher**

1. How long have you been a teacher?
2. What is your current teaching position?
3. How long have you taught in your current position?
4. What previous teaching positions have you held?
5. What is your educational background?
6. What teaching license(s) do you have?
7. How did you learn Spanish? (formal and informal ways)
8. What about your job do you find rewarding?
9. What about your job do you find challenging?
10. What is your school's reading curriculum?
11. How long has your school been using this curriculum?
12. Describe the reading curriculum.
13. Describe your bilingual education service delivery model (one-way, two-way, early-exit, late-exit, etc.).
14. What are the ranges of reading levels of the students with whom you work?
15. What are the ranges of ACCESS levels of the students with whom you work?
16. What are the disability labels of the students with whom you work?
17. What are the ages of the students with whom you work?
18. What are the grades of the students with whom you work?
19. What are the ethnic backgrounds of the students with whom you work?
20. What are the ranges of years the students with whom you currently work have?
21. How many students in your classroom have an identified disability?

22. How many students are in your classroom?

## APPENDIX E: DOCUMENTS TO GATHER FOR ANALYSIS

Document	Reason—sub questions	Source of the Document
1. Title I Plan (if the school has one)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To detail the school's reading plan.</li> <li>To give insight to teacher instructional decisions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School Principal</li> </ul>
2. Reading Curriculum including curriculum materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To provide information about the reading program</li> <li>To give insight to teacher instructional decisions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School Principal</li> </ul>
3. Mandated special education reading curriculum (to what extent it addresses bilingual students with special needs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To provide information about the special education program mandates</li> <li>To give insight to teacher instructional decisions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Director of Special Education</li> </ul>
4. Reading Lesson Plans from the bilingual general and bilingual special education teacher on the day I observe (is there a difference between gen ed and spec ed)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To provide detailed information about the structure of reading instruction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The teacher</li> </ul>
5. Reading homework assignments from the teacher given on the day I observe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To provide detailed information about the reading instruction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The teacher</li> </ul>
6. Reading assessments given to students during the study timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To document instructional practices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The teacher</li> </ul>
7. Reading progress monitoring given to students during the study timeframe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To document instructional practices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The teacher</li> </ul>
8. Copies of in-class activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To document instructional practices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The teacher</li> </ul>
9. Reading professional development materials (ie: curriculum mapping)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To provide information about the reading program</li> <li>To give insight to teacher instructional decisions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The teachers</li> <li>The principal</li> </ul>
10. Special education professional development materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To provide information about the special education program</li> <li>To give insight to teacher instructional decisions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Director of special education</li> </ul>
11. Bilingual education professional development materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To provide information about the bilingual education program</li> <li>To give insight to teacher instructional decisions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Director of bilingual education</li> <li>The teachers</li> </ul>
12. Documents describing school/district special education service delivery models	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To provide information about the special education program</li> <li>To give insight to teacher instructional decisions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Director of bilingual education</li> <li>The principal</li> </ul>

Analysis Methods: I used descriptive coding in the first cycle and pattern coding in the second cycle coding.

**APPENDIX F: DOCUMENT ANALYSIS GUIDE**

1. Title I Plan-if the school has one (School Principal)
  - a. To what extent does the Title I Plan mention reading and bilingual students with disabilities?
  - b. How many times does this document mention reading instruction for bilingual students with disabilities?
2. Reading Curriculum including curriculum materials (School Principal/Literacy Coach)
  - a. To what extent does the reading curriculum give instruction to teachers for providing instruction to bilingual students with disabilities?
  - b. Is the reading curriculum in English or Spanish? Prepackaged/published? School-created? Teacher adapted?
  - c. How many times does this document mention reading instruction for bilingual students with disabilities?
3. Mandated special education reading curriculum (Director of Special Education)
  - a. To what extent does the mandated special education reading curriculum address bilingual students with disabilities?
  - b. How many times does this document mention reading instruction for bilingual students with disabilities?
4. Reading Lesson Plans from the bilingual general and bilingual special education teacher on the day I observe (the bilingual general education teacher and bilingual special education teacher)

- a. Is there a difference between the bilingual general education and bilingual special education teachers' lesson plans? What are the differences?
  - b. What are the similarities?
  - c. Is the literacy instruction comprehensive?
  - d. Does the teacher differentiate instruction for bilingual students with disabilities?
  - e. Are there prompts for explicit strategy instruction?
  - f. Does the teacher use various types of student groupings?
5. Reading homework assignments from the teacher given on the day I observe (the bilingual general education teacher and bilingual special education teacher)
- a. Does the reading homework align with recent classroom instruction for the bilingual students with disabilities?
  - b. Does the teacher differentiate homework for bilingual students with disabilities?
6. Reading assessments given to students during the study timeframe (the bilingual general education teacher and bilingual special education teacher)
- a. Does the assessment align with recent classroom instruction for the bilingual students with disabilities?
  - b. Are the reading assessments formative or summative?
  - c. Are the reading assessments purposeful?
  - d. How frequent are the reading assessments?
  - e. Do the assessments align with the district instructions (dates given, assessments given)?

7. Reading progress monitoring given to students during the study timeframe (the bilingual general education teacher and bilingual special education teacher)
  - a. What reading progress monitoring tools are the teachers using to assess progress?
  - b. Are the reading progress monitoring purposeful?
  - c. How frequent are the reading progress monitoring?
8. Copies of in-class activities (the bilingual general education teacher and bilingual special education teacher)
  - a. What reading in-class activities are the teachers using to instruct reading?
  - b. Are the reading in-class activities purposeful?
  - c. How frequent are the reading in-class activities?
9. Reading professional development materials (ie: curriculum mapping)(the bilingual general education teacher and bilingual special education; school principal)
  - a. What instructions were the teachers given during reading professional development?
  - b. Are the teachers following instructions they were given during reading professional development (has it impacted their instruction)?
  - c. What is the audience of the reading professional development?
  - d. Does the reading professional development address teachers of bilingual students with disabilities?
  - d. How many times does this document mention reading instruction for bilingual students with disabilities?



10. Special education professional development materials (director of special education, bilingual special education teacher)

- a. What instructions were the teachers given during special education professional development?
- b. Are the teachers following instructions they were given during special education professional development (has it impacted their instruction)?
- c. What is the audience of the special education professional development?
- d. Does the special education professional development address teachers of bilingual students with disabilities?
- e. How many times does this document mention reading instruction for bilingual students with disabilities?
- f. How many times does this document mention bilingual students with disabilities?

11. Bilingual education professional development materials (director of bilingual education, the bilingual general education teacher and bilingual special education teacher)

- a. What type of bilingual program is the school implementing (additive, subtractive, early exit, one-way, etc.)?
- b. What instructions were the teachers given during bilingual education professional development?
- c. Are the teachers following instructions they were given during bilingual education professional development (has it impacted their instruction)?

- d. What is the audience of the Bilingual education professional development?
- e. Does the bilingual education professional development address teachers of bilingual students with disabilities?
- g. How many times does this document mention reading instruction for bilingual students with disabilities?

12. Documents describing school/district special education service delivery models  
(Director of special education)

- a. What type of special education service delivery does the school/district use? (partial inclusion, pull-out, self-contained, full inclusion, etc.)?
- b. How many times does this document mention reading instruction for bilingual students with disabilities?
- c. How many times does this document mention bilingual students with disabilities?

Analysis: To look for key words and themes in my document analysis notes, I will use descriptive coding in the first cycle and pattern coding in the second cycle coding.

## **APPENDIX G: CLASSROOM SETTING OBSERVATION GUIDE**

Project: Ways in Which Teachers Structure Reading Instruction for Bilingual Students with Disabilities

Start Time of Observation:

End Time of Observation:

Date:

Place:

Observer:

Person Observed:

Research Question: How do teachers structure reading instruction for bilingual students with disabilities in urban elementary settings?

Document the following:

Day 1: Focus on Setting (document other observations that stand out as well)

1. Setting (Table arrangements, notes on white/chalk boards, anchor charts, etc)
  - a. Physical arrangement of learning environment, etc
  - b. Where is the lesson being given?
  - c. How is the physical environment set up to facilitate learning activities?

Day 2: Focus on People and Relationships (document other observations that stand out as well)

2. People and Relationships (Adults and students in the physical setting)
  - a. Name (if known) of adults and their actions in the setting, How and how many people enter, leave, and spend time at the observation site, Where people enter

and exit, how long they stay, who they are (ethnicity, age, gender), whether they are alone or accompanied

- b. People who stand out, Identification of people who receive a lot of attention from others, These people's characteristics, what differentiates them from others, whether people consult them or they approach other people, whether they seem to be strangers or well-known by others present. Note that these individuals could be good people to approach for an information interview or to serve as key informants.
- c. Who is the teacher?
- d. Who is present in the classroom?
- e. How people use their bodies and voices to communicate different emotions, what people's behaviors indicate about their feelings toward one another, their social rank, or their profession

Day 3: Focus on Verbal Behavior and Interactions (document other observations that stand out as well)

### 3. Verbal behavior and interactions

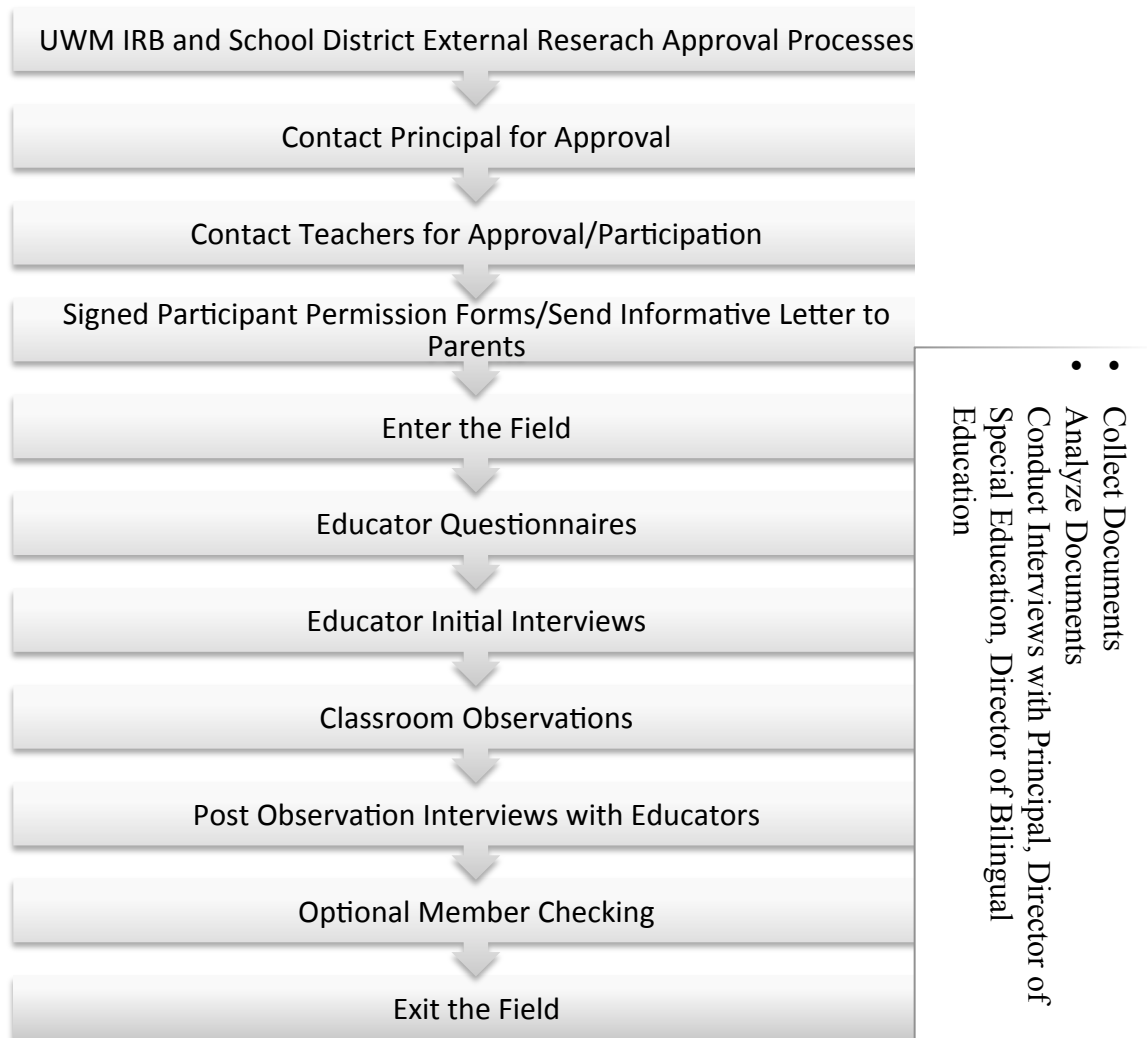
- a. Who speaks to whom and for how long, who initiates interaction, languages or dialects spoke, tone of voice, gender, age, ethnicity, subject
- b. Are students conversing with each other? About the reading activity or off-task?
- c. In what language do the teachers talk to the students?
- d. In what language does the teacher provide instruction?
- e. In what language are the students interacting with each other?

- f. In what language do the students talk to the teachers?

Day 4-12: Focus on Events (document other observations that stand out as well)

#### 4. Events

- a. Teaching practices, learning activities, independent activities, materials used, etc
- b. What are the students doing when the teacher is giving reading instruction?
- c. What is the teacher doing? Redirecting, teaching, observing, taking notes?
- d. How many students are receiving reading instruction from the teacher?
- e. Are the lesson objectives communicated to the students (orally or written)?  
What are they?
- f. What instructional practices are used to teach the lesson objectives?
- g. What instructional materials are used to teach the lesson objectives?
- h. What questions do the students ask the teacher?
- i. Are the students engaged? (answering questions, making eye contact with the teacher, interacting with the materials in an appropriate way)
- j. What do the student participants do when the teacher is working with other students?
- k. In what language are the independent student activities?
- l. Does the student always respond in the language in which the teacher asks the question?

**APPENDIX H: PHASES OF THE DATA COLLECTION PROCESS**

## CURRICULUM VITAE

### Nikki Logan

#### EDUCATION

University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee	ABD	2015
University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee	M.S., Exceptional Education	2008
Thesis – “A Curriculum Analysis of Writing Programs: Implications for Students with Learning Disabilities”		
University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee	B.S., Elementary Education (Science, Social Studies)	2006

#### TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Instructor	University of Wisconsin at Stevens Point	2013-present
Educating Students with Special Needs and/or Other Needs in the General Education Environment; Career, Vocational, and Community Education for Youth with Disabilities; Parent, Home and Agency Involvement in Educating Children and Youth with Disabilities		
Instructor	Northeast Wisconsin Technical College, WI	2011-2013
K-5 Bilingual Special Education Teacher	Eisenhower School, Green Bay, WI	2008-2013
K-2 Special Education Teacher	Congress School, Milwaukee, WI	2007-2008

#### PRESENTATIONS

##### Invited:

- Fernando, N., Gryffin, P., Hubbard, J., Logan, N., & Schuller, A. (2014, January). *Whistling Vivaldi* panel presentation. *18th Annual UWSP Teaching Conference*, Heads. Hearts. Hands. Valuing Our Learning Community, University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point, Stevens Point, WI.
- Logan, N., Schrage, O., & Olson, K. (2014, January). English as a Second Language Students in Your Classroom: Strategies for educators. Wisconsin Education Association Council (WEAC) Winter Leadership Academy, Wisconsin Dells, WI. (In Collaboration with UWSP Students)

##### Peer-Reviewed:

- Logan, N. (2013, October). Analysis of the literature: Reading practices in bilingual special education programs. 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Fall Conference, Institute for Learning Partnership, University of Wisconsin – Green Bay, Green Bay, WI.
- Logan, N., Dreas, A., & Morici, K. (2014, April). Using Pottery to Improve Academic Achievement and Relationships. "Mindful Teaching: Inquiry, Connection, Sustainability and Creativity," Office of Professional and Instructional Development (OPID), Green Lake, WI. (In Collaboration with UWSP Students)

- Logan, N. (2015, February). Ways in Which Teachers Structure Reading Instruction for Bilingual Students with Disabilities: A Case Study Analysis. 12th Annual TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages)/ Applied Linguistics Graduate Students Conference. East Carolina University – Greenville, NC.
- Logan, N. (2015, March). Creating and Using Online Flyers to Connect Educators with the Community. National Technology and Social Science Conference, National Social Science Association. Las Vegas, NV.
- Logan, N. (2015, April). Structuring Reading Instruction for Bilingual Students with Disabilities. “Bilingual Education: Building Bridges through Languages and Cultures,” Wisconsin Association for Bilingual Education. Wisconsin Dells, WI.

**Accepted Proposals:**

- Logan, N (2014, October). Personalizing learning: Co-creating course syllabi. Fall Professional Development Conference, National Social Science Association. San Francisco, CA.

**Professional Collaborations:**

- UWSP Neale Fellowship Faculty Research and Development Collaborator with Kristine Doering, Pittsville School District Pittsville Public Schools Pottery Throw Project (\$10,000) 2013-2014

**GRANTS AND HONORS**

- Center for Collaborative and Interactive Technologies Tech Select Grant, University of Wisconsin at Stevens Point (\$1000-awarded) 2014
- School of Education Professional Development Grant, University of Wisconsin at Stevens Point (\$584.61-awarded) 2014
- Graduate Student Research Support, University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee School of Education (\$500, awarded) 2013
- New Faculty/Staff Grant, University Personnel Development Committee, University of Wisconsin at Stevens Point (\$5000-denied) 2013

**TEACHING LICENSES**

- Middle Childhood/Early Adolescence: Bilingual-Bicultural Education 2009-2017
- Middle Childhood/Early Adolescence: English as a Second Language 2009-2017
- Middle Childhood/Early Adolescence: Regular Education with emphases in Social Studies and Science 2007-2017
- Middle Childhood/Early Adolescence: Cross-Categorical Special Education 2007-2017