

Understanding divergent academic outcomes: English learning students' success and struggles
after transitioning to all-English instruction

by

Alexandra Montes

B.S., Texas Wesleyan University, 2002
M.S., Concordia University, 2010

AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

Department of Curriculum and Instruction
College of Education
KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

2026

Abstract

This qualitative case study explored how bilingual and ESL teachers' beliefs, knowledge, and attitudes shape the implementation of bilingual programs and students' experiences as they transition from bilingual education to all-English instructional settings in Texas. Despite the cognitive and academic advantages associated with bilingualism, research shows that many ELs experience significant setbacks after this transition, even when previously identified as high-achieving or gifted and talented. Grounded in theories of second-language acquisition and language orientation, this study examined how bilingual and ESL teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes influence program implementation and shape students' transition experiences. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews and focus groups from an urban elementary school with a high concentration of ELs. Thematic analysis identified patterns related to instructional practice, teacher perceptions, and transitional supports. Findings contribute to the literature on bilingual education by highlighting how teacher beliefs and program implementation shape students' transition experiences and influence their engagement with academic language demands post-transition. These insights offer implications for educators and policymakers aiming to enhance outcomes for ELs in high-immigrant, high-poverty communities. The study holds particular significance considering growing EL enrollment in the targeted southern state, expanding accountability systems, and persistent achievement gaps linked to program fidelity and teacher expectations. Results will inform more equitable and context-responsive approaches to bilingual education and EL support.

Keywords: Bilingual education, bilingual teacher, English language learner (ELL), English limited (EL), dual language, ESL programs, value added

Understanding divergent academic outcomes: English learning students' success and struggles
after transitioning to all-English instruction

by

Alexandra Montes

B.S., Texas Wesleyan University, 2002
M.S., Concordia University, 2010

A DISSERTATION

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

Department of Curriculum and Instruction
College of Education
KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

2026

Approved by:
Major Professor
Shabina Kavimandan

Copyright

© Alexandra Montes 2026.

Abstract

This qualitative case study explored how bilingual and ESL teachers' beliefs, knowledge, and attitudes shape the implementation of bilingual programs and students' experiences as they transition from bilingual education to all-English instructional settings in Texas. Despite the cognitive and academic advantages associated with bilingualism, research shows that many ELs experience significant setbacks after this transition, even when previously identified as high-achieving or gifted and talented. Grounded in theories of second-language acquisition and language orientation, this study examined how bilingual and ESL teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes influence program implementation and shape students' transition experiences. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews and focus groups from an urban elementary school with a high concentration of ELs. Thematic analysis identified patterns related to instructional practice, teacher perceptions, and transitional supports. Findings contribute to the literature on bilingual education by highlighting how teacher beliefs and program implementation shape students' transition experiences and influence their engagement with academic language demands post-transition. These insights offer implications for educators and policymakers aiming to enhance outcomes for ELs in high-immigrant, high-poverty communities. The study holds particular significance considering growing EL enrollment in the targeted southern state, expanding accountability systems, and persistent achievement gaps linked to program fidelity and teacher expectations. Results will inform more equitable and context-responsive approaches to bilingual education and EL support.

Keywords: Bilingual education, bilingual teacher, English language learner (ELL), English limited (EL), dual language, ESL programs, value added.

Table of Contents

List of Figures	xi
List of Tables	xii
Dedication	xiii
Acknowledgments.....	xiv
Preface.....	xv
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Background	1
Testing ELs in Texas	7
Background Summary	8
Statement of the Problem.....	10
Significance of the Study	10
Purpose of the Study	11
Research Questions	12
Conceptual Framework.....	12
Methodology	14
Contexts and Conditions.....	15
Definition of Key Terminology	16
Limitations and Delimitations.....	18
Limitations	18
Delimitations.....	18
Chapter Summary	19
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	21
Literature Search Strategy.....	21
Language Diversity and Immigration: A Historical Perspective.....	22
Linguistic Assimilation and Educational Policies in the United States.....	24
The Nature of Bilingual Programs.....	27
Conceptual Framework.....	30
Bilingual Program Implementation.....	34
The Bilingual Teacher and Program	36

Navigating the Transition: Supporting EL Learners.....	41
Gaps in the Literature.....	43
Summary	45
Chapter 3: Methodology	47
Research Questions	47
Research Design.....	48
School Profile.....	49
Setting and Location of the Study.....	53
Data Collection	55
Teacher Interviews.....	56
Teachers Focus Groups.....	57
Selection of Participants	58
Trustworthiness.....	59
Instruments.....	59
Teacher Semi-Structured Interview	59
Focus Groups	60
Procedures.....	64
Sample Selection.....	64
Data Analysis	66
Semi-Structured Interview Data Analysis Procedures.....	67
Focus Group Data Analysis Procedures	68
Limitations	70
Delimitations.....	71
Positionality Statement	72
Personal Identity and its Influence on Research	72
Professional Identity and Research Stance	73
Social and Political Context.....	74
Reflecting on Potential Biases	74
Chapter Summary	76

Chapter 4: Results	77
Introduction	77
Semi-Structured Interviews	78
Research Question 1: Interview Results	79
Theme 1: Bilingual Education as a Foundation for English Language Mastery ..	81
Theme 2: Distinction Between Conversational English and Academic English Proficiency	83
Theme 3: Academic Vocabulary as a Central Barrier to English Language Mastery	84
Theme 4: Teacher Attitudes Toward Bilingualism Shape Student Confidence and Academic Engagement	85
Theme 5: Inconsistent Implementation of Bilingual Programs Contributes to Uneven English Language Outcomes	87
Differences in Perspectives by Grade Level and Instructional Role	88
Research Question 1: Summary	89
Research Question 2: Interview Results	90
Theme 1: Insufficient Academic English Readiness at the Point of Transition ...	91
Theme 2: Increased Academic Language Demands and Vocabulary Requirements Following Transition.....	92
Theme 3: Abrupt Transition and Misalignment of Instructional Supports.....	94
Differences in Perspectives by Grade Level and Instructional Role	95
Research Question 2 Summary	96
Interview Results Summary	96
Focus Group Interview Findings	97
Overview	97
Focus Group Participants	98
Focus Group Thematic Findings.....	101
Focus Group Theme 1: Role of the Bilingual Program in Students' English Language Development	104

Focus Group Theme 2: Readiness and Timing of Transition to All-English Instruction	105
Focus Group Theme 3: Alignment Between Bilingual Instruction and Post-Transition Expectations	107
Focus Group Theme 4: Instructional supports and systemic factors influencing EL outcomes	108
Focus Group Results Summary	110
Cross-Data Source Thematic Integration.....	110
Chapter 4 Summary	115
Chapter 5: Conclusions, Interpretations, and Implications	117
Summary of Key Findings	117
Interpretation of Findings by Research Question	120
Research Question 1	120
Research Question 2	123
Discussion of Findings in Relation to the Literature	126
Grounded Theories of Second-Language Acquisition and Language Orientation	126
Program Coherence and Implementation Fidelity	129
Academic Language Development and Readiness-Based Transition Practices	131
Implications for Practice	134
Implications for Leadership and Policy	135
Limitations of the Study.....	136
Recommendations for Future Research	137
Conclusion	137
References	139
Appendix A: Informed Consent.....	155
Appendix B: Focus Group Invitation.....	159
Appendix C: Interview Questions.....	161
Appendix D: Focus Group Interview Questions.....	163

Appendix E: Consent Form for Survey Participation	166
Appendix F: Demographic Questions.....	168
Appendix G: Survey-Focus Group	170
Appendix H: Survey Email-Beliefs About Language Acquisition and English Learners	173

List of Figures

Figure 2.1. Conceptual Framework.....	34
Figure 3.1. Continuum of Research Paradigms.....	48
Figure 4.1. Thematic Integration Model Illustrating Alignment of Interview and Focus Group Findings Across RQ 1 & 2.....	115

List of Tables

Table 2.1. Bilingual Education Program Description in Texas.....	29
Table 3.1. Racial/Ethnic Background and Total Enrollment by Percentage.....	34
Table 3.2. Teacher Characteristics at Site - 2023-2024.....	65
Table 3.3. Percentage of Experienced Teachers	65
Table 4.1. Interview Participant Characteristics.....	79
Table 4.2. Emergent Themes from Individual Interviews Related to RQ1	80
Table 4.3 Emergent Themes from Individual Interviews Related to RQ2,.....	90
Table 4.4 Focus Group Participants	99
Table 4.5 Focus Group Analysis Matrix	102
Table 4.6 Comprehensive Theme Alignment Matrix	112

Dedication

Agradezco, en primer lugar, a Dios por darme la fortaleza, la claridad y la perseverancia necesarias para completar este camino. Cada reto, cada desvelo y cada momento de duda fueron acompañados por Su gracia, que me sostuvo y me permitió avanzar incluso cuando parecía imposible y terminaba un ciclo de cambio de vida crucial.

A mi madre, cuya dedicación me sostuvo durante toda la duración de este programa de 3 años: gracias por cada hora que pasaste sin pedir nada a cambio al cuidar de mi angelito, desde que era un recién nacido hasta hoy; nunca me preguntaste por qué tomaba tanto tiempo en hacer tareas o qué estaba haciendo en la planta de arriba de la casa entre papeles y libros; simplemente estuviste allí, apoyándome con paciencia. Eres la razón por la que pude cumplir este sueño. No te niego que, hubo muchos momentos en los que tuve muchas razones y excusas para rendirme, pero tu entrega hacia mi hijo y tu apoyo constante a mi educación me dieron la fuerza para continuar a pesar de todo lo que estuviera pasando.

A mi hijo, mi inspiración, mi mundo entero. Mi Matthew, quien llegó a mi vida en noviembre de 2023 y redefinió mi propósito de inmediato, tu eres mi mayor bendición. Tu presencia le dio un significado más profundo a este trabajo. Espero que algún día este logro te muestre el poder de la resiliencia, la fe y de creer en tu propia voz. Me llena de orgullo que puedas ser testigo de este logro. Tu llegada fue un milagro perfectamente sincronizado en mi vida por Dios. Aunque hubo innumerables noches sin dormir en las que completaba tareas o escribía la disertación con tu respiración suave a mi lado, no cambiaría nada de ese escenario. Mi mayor deseo es inspirarte a ser lo que tú quieras ser. La educación es la puerta a la libertad y a las oportunidades, y ese es el mensaje que siempre te inculcaré. Tú eres mi razón, y mi corazón estará eternamente agradecido por la luz que trajiste a mi vida.

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my dissertation committee for their time, expertise, and thoughtful feedback throughout this process. Their guidance and support were invaluable in strengthening my research and shaping the final manuscript. I am especially thankful to Dr. Shabina Kavimandan for her consistent guidance, patience, and encouragement throughout my doctoral journey. Her support, insight, and commitment to my growth as a scholar were instrumental to the successful completion of this dissertation.

To my colleague and friend, C. Jacobo, your drive and constant inspiration pushed me through some of my darkest moments. Thank you for standing in my corner every step of this process and your valuable support.

To A. Highfill, your support during the final stretch of this journey was invaluable. Your words, “*you got this,*” were the encouragement I needed on days when our work felt overwhelming and heavy. I felt at ease knowing I could rely on you to continue moving the work. We truly are a great team, and I know I now have a lifelong connection with you and your babies.

Preface

As I complete this milestone, I want my educational legacy to reflect that I advocated fiercely for every student entrusted to me throughout my years in education. I was the advocate who, against all odds, stood beside students and believed in their potential and their right to equitable opportunities. Students have always come first and will continue to be at the center of everything I do. This work is for you!

With gratitude,
Alexandra Montes

Chapter 1: Introduction

Background

In the context of post-COVID-19 schooling, high-stakes testing, and increasing accountability pressures, the growing diversity of the student population has become a central consideration for educational systems. As individuals from various nations continue to immigrate to the United States, it remains a nation of immigrants. The nation is experiencing a demographic shift, with immigrant families increasing in number. There has been a noted rise in English Language Learners (ELs) in public schools with 10.4% of P-12 students belonging to this group, making it the fastest growing population of students in the United States (Genesee et al., 2024; Mavrogordato et al., 2024; NCES, 2020). In 2010, the total amount of ELs only encompassed 9.2% of the student population (NCES, 2020). Over the past few decades, the linguistic minority population in the United States has grown significantly. For instance, the number of individuals speaking a language other than English at home nearly tripled from 23.1 million in 1980 to 67.8 million in 2019, reflecting the expanding diversity within the country (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). Newer U.S. Census (2023) records place the number between 69 and 71 million, putting this concentration at about 22% of residents in the country.

In the United States, various states have implemented new English language proficiency assessments to replace older tests, aiming to better evaluate and monitor English proficiency among students (de Valenzuela et al., 2022). For example, many states have transitioned from tests like the California English Language Development Test (CELDT) to more updated assessments such as the English Language Proficiency Assessments for California (ELPAC) in 2018 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). Additionally, the use of English language proficiency (Alt-ELP) assessments is now active in 36 states and the District of Columbia (de

Valenzuela et al., 2022). These changes reflect a broader commitment to addressing the needs of diverse student populations across the country. In states like Colorado, Nevada, and Oregon, the population of ELs has shown notable growth. Nationwide, the percentage of ELs in public schools increased from 8.1% in 2000–01 to 9.6% in 2016–17, signaling consistent growth in this demographic (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019).

The U.S. Constitution, federal and state legislation, as well as court rulings, require schools to ensure equity and excellent education for emergent bilingual students (Piñón et al., 2022). The demographic landscape of this southern state, particularly in urban areas, is diverse and dynamic, reflecting significant population growth, a mix of ethnicities and cultures, and a substantial number of foreign-born residents. This population continues to evolve rapidly, with growth rates outpacing the national average (Anderson, 2025; U.S. Census Bureau, 2023). Recent data from the U.S. Census Bureau (2023) highlights that nearly 47% of individuals aged five or older in the Houston area speak a language other than English at home. This trend is mirrored in Texas' school systems, where a significant portion of the student population demonstrates LEP (Almaguer, 2021).

State education officials have acknowledged that the educational system faces significant challenges and obstacles while expressing confidence in ongoing progress among students (Anderson, 2025). The increasing immigrant population, particularly in urban centers, has resulted in high concentrations of non-English-speaking and economically disadvantaged communities. These demographic shifts underscore the importance of bilingual education programs, which research has shown to be effective in supporting ELs in both academic and linguistic development (Porter et al., 2023).

Recent studies highlight the cognitive benefits of bilingualism, such as enhanced problem-solving skills, greater cognitive flexibility, and improved metalinguistic awareness, all of which contribute to academic success in both native and second languages (Gunnerud et al., 2020; Han, 2012; Salomé et al., 2022). Using a students' full linguistic repertoire in teaching bilingual students is of the utmost importance for success (de Jong & Gao, 2023). Furthermore, research on bilingual education emphasizes the critical role of teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and knowledge about bilingualism in shaping the academic and linguistic outcomes of ELs. Teachers' understanding of bilingual learners and their expectations for success are pivotal in fostering a supportive and effective learning environment (Gunnerud et al., 2020; Han, 2012).

Despite extensive research on bilingual education, a significant gap remains in understanding the outcomes of students transitioning from bilingual programs to English-only instruction. While bilingual education models have demonstrated benefits in early academic years, many ELs face challenges in English-only classrooms (Rodriguez & Slate, 2024; Rojas et al., 2019). Recent studies suggest that this transition can create challenges for students, as they may not have fully developed linguistic competence in English to meet the academic demands of all-English instructional settings (Gándara & Contreras, 2022). However, few studies have specifically explored why some students, particularly those transitioning from bilingual to all-English classrooms, do not achieve at the same level as their peers. Moreover, there is limited research exploring how teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and the implementation of bilingual programs shape students' experiences and academic engagement after the transition to full English instruction. Hidalgo and Ortega-Sánchez (2023) concluded that studies on progress toward strong bilingual education are scarce with a particular need being longitudinal studies that address varying educational stages from a multidisciplinary perspective for ELs.

This gap in the literature is particularly relevant to the targeted urban area studied, where densely populated Hispanic communities face unique educational challenges (Rodriguez & Slate, 2024; Viloria et al., 2024). The limited research on bilingual education in inner-city Texas schools, specifically elementary schools in areas with high Hispanic populations, further highlights the need for this study. As Texas law requires the transition of students into all-English instructional programs after a certain period, understanding the factors that influence ELs' success post-transition is critical. This study contributes to the literature by examining how teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and instructional decisions shape students' experiences as they transition from bilingual to English-only instruction, addressing a significant gap in the existing body of work on bilingual education and providing insights for improving instructional practices for bilingual learners. By examining the role of teachers' knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs, this research aimed to fill a significant gap in the existing body of work on bilingual education and provide valuable insights for improving instructional practices for bilingual learners.

The study's use of a qualitative approach, combining semi-structured interviews and focus groups, allowed for a more comprehensive understanding of these factors and how they shape students' experiences. Focusing on elementary school students is essential, as this is the stage where bilingual education programs are most prevalent (Rojas et al., 2019), and where students are most likely to experience the transition to all-English instruction. The findings of this study provide practical implications for improving instructional practices and supporting ELs' experiences in inner-city schools, particularly those in high-immigrant, high-poverty areas.

EL Students in Texas

As of recent data, approximately 1.2 million students in Texas are reported as Limited English Proficiency (LEP) or English Language Learners (EL). According to the Texas

Education Agency (TEA) this accounts for around 20% of the student population in the state (TEA, 2023). Texas has one of the largest populations of EL students in the United States, largely due to its diverse demographics and significant number of immigrant families (Anderson, 2025; Sikes & Villanueva, 2021; TEA, 2023). These students often participate in bilingual or ESL education programs (TEA, 2023). Most students labeled as EL or LEP students in Texas are of Latino origin, also referred to as Hispanic. This demographic trend aligns with the broader patterns of population growth observed across the United States (Genesee et al., 2024).

Overall, the Latino or Hispanic population represents the fastest-growing group in the nation, driven by both immigration and higher birth rates (Hiebert & Rojas, 2021; U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). Projections indicate that Hispanics will become the largest ethnic group in the United States by 2030, contributing significantly to the nation's cultural and linguistic diversity (Batalova, 2025; U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). The Hispanic population in the United States comprises the largest percentage (67%) over the age of five who speak a language other than English in their homes (Hiebert & Rojas, 2021).

It is also important to note that a considerable portion of the Hispanic population in the U.S. is comprised of immigrants. Of the approximately 65.1 million Hispanics living in the U.S., about 21.5 million (33%) were born outside the nation (Batalova, 2025). This underscores the role of immigration in shaping the demographic and educational landscape of the country. These factors present significant implications for educational systems, particularly in states like Texas, which has a high concentration of ELs requiring bilingual or English as a Second Language (ESL) programs (TEA, 2023). Thus, the subject of immigration and those families immigrating into our communities and public schools are a daily reality. Despite ongoing challenges surrounding immigration in the last year, the growing presence and needs of emergent bilingual

students continue to demand attention and intentional educational support. Schools must grapple with the task of balancing and implementing effective instructional programs while making instructional decisions about how to better serve specific student populations that are struggling (Ho, 2022). These demographic and instructional realities further underscore the importance of understanding how teachers' beliefs, knowledge, and attitudes shape instructional decision-making and the implementation of bilingual programs within these contexts.

Bilingual Education in Texas

Recent studies continue to explore the impact of bilingual education on ELs. For instance, Petróñ et al. (2022) conducted semi-structured interviews with Latino bilingual educators in Texas and found that those teachers were overwhelmingly faced with limited resources, marginalization, and educational practices that set them up for failure while navigating the power relations in their respective schools. Additionally, Chin et al. (2013) used regression discontinuity evidence from Texas to analyze bilingual education programs. They found that while these programs were not associated with differences in standardized test scores for Spanish-speaking ELs, they provided other benefits, such as cultural inclusion and language development (Chin et al., 2013).

Sikes and Villanueva (2021) further identified funding issues related to ELs in Texas by noting that the additional funding for them above base level per-student has not changed since 1984. The Intercultural Development Research Association (2020) emphasized the importance of EL-implemented bilingual education programs in fostering academic success for ELs. The goal of any bilingual education program is for a student to learn a second language while developing his native tongue. Bilingual education is not only implemented in the United States but also in

almost every country around the world in some shape or form (Sánchez-Pérez & Manzano-Agugliaro, 2021).

Bilingual education programs have existed in Texas since Superintendent Harold Brantley supported and launched the first bilingual program in Laredo in 1964. Brantley's ideas spread throughout the state and were signed into law in 1973. The Texas Education Code (TEC) (2007) states that "it is a policy of the State of Texas that every student identified as EL be provided with the opportunity to participate in a bilingual or ESL education program as a requirement to each school district" (Chapter 89, Subchapter BB). Furthermore, recent studies highlight similar trends regarding ELs in Texas and their performance within the accountability system.

Research by Saldivar (2021) emphasized that ELs often face challenges in meeting College, Career, and Military Readiness standards when placed in all-English instructional settings. These students tend to perform below their native English-speaking peers, underscoring the need for appropriate linguistic accommodations to support their academic success. Despite the legal support the state of Texas offers, no clear agreement exists as to the effective, consistent implementation of bilingual programs or their effects on student learning (Almaguer, 2021; Petróñ et al., 2022; Sikes & Villanueva, 2021). These findings further highlight the importance of examining how teachers' beliefs, knowledge, and instructional decisions shape the implementation of bilingual programs within these policy and resource constraints.

Testing ELs in Texas

All tests are administered in the language of instruction and are used to rate the school within the Accountability Rating System for Texas Public Schools and Districts. The results of these tests may bring serious consequences, including school interventions or closure, as defined

within federal and state accountability systems. Teachers face challenges under high-stakes accountability systems. For example, a study by Darling-Hammond et al. (2022) explored how high-stakes testing impacts instructional practices and teacher decision-making. Statistics from the TEA (2025) show that only 33% of ELs met the STAAR reading interim proficiency goals (2018-2022), which is well below the overall student average of 44% (Anderson, 2025).

Testing, however, is linked to instruction quality. According to Lindholm-Leary (2020), bilingual programs often allocate significant instructional time in early elementary years to students' native languages, with the goal of developing bilingualism and academic success. Research explores how schools and teachers navigate reforms and policies. Datnow (2020) highlights that teachers play a central role in educational change by adapting and reshaping policies to align with their unique contexts and needs. Teachers must navigate and balance pressures, reconcile conflicting messages from various sources, and interpret their classroom realities to support their own roles, their schools, and their students in achieving academic progress (Stearns et al., 2023). These accountability conditions further underscore the importance of examining how teachers' beliefs, knowledge, and professional judgment shape instructional decision-making within high-stakes testing environments.

Background Summary

Extensive research and government reports have consistently shown that culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students lag behind their native English-speaking White peers in academic performance (Chaparro et al., 2021). Prior research has highlighted the tension between covering extensive curricula for standardized tests and addressing students' broader educational needs. Schools often adopt practices that prioritize meeting accountability mandates that carry significant consequences. This emphasis may shift instructional priorities away from

sustained language development. In addition, teachers must focus their instruction on the language of the assessment, which is decided by the type of program the school and district accept.

The decisions regarding language of instruction and assessment are critical in shaping ELs' academic experiences in subsequent grade levels (Olds et al., 2021). Overall, research suggests that continued attention is needed to better understand and support ELs' academic and learning experiences (Chaparro et al., 2021). The focus of this case study was to explore the consequences of transitioning students into an all-English instructional environment when they are not proficient in the target language that the bilingual program was initially supposed to develop. In many cases, these students have met the minimum test standards.

Furthermore, this study explored why certain ELs, despite being previously identified as high-performing or gifted and talented, experience significant setbacks within a year, struggling to communicate effectively, while others continue to thrive academically even when faced with the challenges of a new language of instruction. Overall, bilingual students learn foreign languages differently from their monolingual peers (Hopewell et al., 2022). Being bilingual is greater than the sum of two languages, as bilingual development is associated with beliefs as well as cognitive and socio-emotional differences from single-language peers (Tribushinina & Mackaaij, 2023). As a result, curriculum and classroom practices need to reflect this variation in learning (Olds et al., 2021). These considerations further highlight the importance of examining how teachers' beliefs, knowledge, and instructional decisions shape students' experiences within bilingual programs and during the transition to all-English instruction.

Statement of the Problem

The steady influx of ELs into today's public-school system has introduced a range of challenges related to how bilingual programs are implemented and how students experience instruction. Increasingly diverse student populations require that schools in Texas build communities that bridge the divide that exists between home and school (Almaguer, 2021). While ELs represent an important and growing student population, many bilingual students experience schooling conditions shaped by racial and linguistic segregation, low academic tracking, and subtractive educational practices (Anderson, 2025; Mavrogordato et al., 2024; Saldivar, 2021). Specifically, Texas continues to experience substantial growth in its bilingual and EL student population (Anderson, 2025), even in regions where such services were previously absent from school district operations.

This demographic shift has been accompanied by persistent disparities in educational experiences and access to appropriate bilingual or ESL support (Almaguer, 2021; Chaparro et al., 2021). Recent research by Johnson and Garcia (2023) underscored the critical need for equitable access to bilingual education programs to address these challenges and better support ELs' educational experiences. Barriers that shape EL students' educational experiences must be addressed through more effective instructional approaches (Almaguer, 2021). These concerns highlight the need to examine how teachers' beliefs, knowledge, and instructional decisions shape students' experiences during the transition from bilingual programs to all-English instruction in upper elementary settings.

Significance of the Study

As the number of ELs and bilingual students continues to rise in Texas, with projections indicating substantial growth over the next decade, this research is essential for understanding

how schools implement bilingual education programs within these contexts. The increasing diversity in Texas' public school system presents both challenges and opportunities, particularly with the expansion of accountability systems that now require all students, regardless of language ability, to meet accountability expectations. This study was especially relevant in light of the growing body of research that underscores the role of teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and instructional practices in shaping students' experiences during key transitions. By exploring teacher perspectives on students' experiences after transitioning from bilingual education programs to all-English classrooms, this research sought to fill a critical gap in the existing literature.

This study explored how teachers' attitudes toward bilingual education programs shape instructional practices and students' transition experiences. Additionally, it explored how teaching practices in bilingual programs shape how students experience and navigate mainstream English-only environments. The findings from this study contribute to the ongoing dialogue about best practices in bilingual education and offer actionable insights to inform instructional strategies that better support bilingual students during transitions to all-English classrooms.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore how teachers' beliefs, knowledge, and instructional decisions shape students' experiences as they transition from bilingual programs to all-English classrooms. This study also examined teachers' attitudes toward bilingual programs and how these beliefs shape program implementation in practice. This research sought to understand the instructional, linguistic, and contextual factors that shape students' experiences within high-immigrant, high-poverty urban schools. By exploring teacher beliefs and how

bilingual programs are implemented in practice, the study aimed to identify barriers and supports that shape students' experiences during and after the transition from bilingual education.

Research Questions

This study examined how bilingual teachers' attitudes toward bilingual program implementation and their instructional decisions shape students' experiences as they transition into all-English instructional settings. This research specifically explored the following lines of inquiry:

1. How do bilingual and ESL teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes towards bilingual programs, as well as their implementation of bilingual programs, influence students' mastery of the English language?
2. What instructional factors and classroom practices contribute to English Learners' decline in academic performance following their transition from a bilingual education program to an all-English instructional setting?

Conceptual Framework

This study was grounded in established theories of second-language acquisition, bilingual education, and academic development among ELs. It drew primarily on the work of Cummins (1979, 2000) and Genessee et al. (2006; 2024), whose collective frameworks highlight the interplay between first language (L1) proficiency, second language (L2) development, and the educational conditions that shape students' learning experiences. Cummins' (2000) Interdependence Hypothesis suggests that cognitive and academic skills acquired in a student's first language can transfer to the second language, provided both are supported through sustained, high-quality instruction. This study extends that theoretical lens by emphasizing how teaching practices within bilingual instructional settings—such as intentional language

scaffolding, explicit academic language instruction, and alignment across languages—play a critical role in facilitating or disrupting this transfer as students transition to all-English instruction. His theory emphasizes the distinction between basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP), the latter of which often requires six to eight years to fully develop. This perspective supports the necessity of long-term bilingual education programs to ensure ELs have sufficient time to build academic language before transitioning into English-only classrooms.

According to de la Fuente and Goldenberg (2022), language acquisition is most effective when learners are exposed to input slightly beyond their current level and when anxiety and low self-confidence are minimized. These ideas reinforce the importance of differentiated instruction and culturally responsive teaching in bilingual settings (Lo Bianco et al., 2019). Genesee et al. (2006) contribute an empirical foundation for the efficacy of bilingual programs. Their research shows that students develop metalinguistic awareness and academic skills in both L1 and L2, and that longer participation in bilingual programs correlates with improved academic outcomes. These findings are echoed by Lindholm-Leary (2020), who found that bilingual learners often outperform their monolingual peers in literacy, math, and GPA over time.

Additionally, Ruiz's (1984) framework of language orientations (language as a problem, a right, and a resource) provides a useful lens for interpreting how schools and educators position bilingualism in practice. This framework is particularly useful in analyzing how teacher beliefs and district policies may either restrict or promote bilingualism as an academic and societal asset (Kennedy, 2019). Together, these theoretical perspectives established a conceptual framework to guide the study's inquiry into how teachers' knowledge, attitudes, and program implementation shape students' experiences during the transition to all-English instruction.

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore teacher perspectives of student experiences after transitioning from bilingual education programs to all-English instructional settings. This study is situated within an interpretivist paradigm, emphasizing the exploration of participants' experiences, beliefs, and meaning-making processes. Qualitative designs are well-suited for exploring complex human experiences because they allow researchers to capture rich, detailed insights into participants' perspectives, contexts, and meanings (Creswell & Poth, 2023). Specifically, it investigated the beliefs, knowledge, and attitudes of bilingual and ESL teachers and how these factors shape instructional practices and students' transition experiences. An interpretative study was selected to provide a rich, contextualized understanding (Creswell & Creswell, 2022; Creswell & Poth, 2023) of a single urban elementary school with a longstanding bilingual program and a high concentration of ELs.

Data collection included semi-structured interviews and focus groups with certified bilingual and ESL teachers who have worked directly with students transitioning from bilingual to all-English classrooms. Focus groups and semi-structured interviews when used together, offer a robust approach in qualitative research because they facilitate in-depth, flexible exploration of participants' experiences, beliefs, and interactions in their own words and contexts (Busetto et al., 2020; DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019; Lambert & Loiselle, 2008). These methods allowed for in-depth explorations of teacher perceptions, instructional practices, and the experiences they observe in students undergoing this critical shift. Participants were purposefully selected based on certification and direct experience with bilingual students. Purposive sampling is effective because it allows researchers to deliberately select participants who have specific

knowledge or experience relevant to the research questions, enhancing the depth and relevance of the data collected (Campbell et al., 2020; Creswell & Creswell, 2022).

Qualitative data was analyzed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a qualitative data analysis method used to identify, analyze, and interpret patterns or themes within textual data, offering insights into participants' experiences and perspectives (Creswell & Creswell, 2022; Creswell & Poth, 2023). Audio-recorded interviews and focus groups were transcribed and coded for emerging patterns related to teacher practices, transition support, and factors shaping students' experiences during and after the transition. The goal was to capture authentic perspectives that shed light on the intersection of program implementation and students' experiences in linguistically diverse educational settings.

Contexts and Conditions

In this dissertation, the major contexts and conditions that were explored include:

- **Limited English Proficiency (LEP) and Bilingual Education Programs:** Understanding how bilingual education programs are implemented and how students experience the transition to all-English instruction.
- **Teacher Knowledge, Beliefs, and Attitudes:** How teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and knowledge about bilingualism shape instructional practices and students' experiences in mainstream classrooms.
- **Educational Resources and Support:** The role of educational resources, including access to advanced language instruction and support services, in shaping instructional practices and students' experiences.

- **Demographic and Socioeconomic Factors:** How demographic factors such as immigrant status, socioeconomic background, and language minority status shape EL students' educational experiences.

By critically engaging with the literature, this dissertation sought to bridge the gap between theory and practice, offering new insights into how bilingual education and teacher perceptions shape students' experiences in Texas, particularly in underserved, high-immigrant communities. This synthesis and analysis of the literature not only highlighted the gap in research but also strengthened the argument for the dissertation by showing how it contributes to understanding the experiences of bilingual students in Texas. The critical evaluation of existing research set the stage for exploring how students experience the transition from bilingual to all-English instructional models.

Definition of Key Terminology

Bilingual Education: Bilingual education references instructional programs whose goal is to develop literacy and academic skills in the students' native language with the expectation of helping the learner develop proficiency in his or her first or native language and English as his or her ability to become competent in the comprehension, speaking, reading, and composition of the English language. The emphasis of bilingual education programs is the mastery of English language skills, mathematics, science, and social studies, as building blocks of the academic expectations for all students to enable students with LEP to participate equitably in school (Texas Administrative Code, Chapter 89, Subchapter 89.1201, section (b), 2007).

Bilingual Teacher: This refers to a professional educator who has completed certification requirements established by the State Board of Education Certification (SBEC) to provide instruction to students whose native and home language are one other than English, with

the goal of supporting their students' academic development in the first language while also expanding their communication and academic skills in English (Scherzinger & Brahm, 2023).

English Language Learner (ELL): The term EL refers to a student who is in the process of acquiring English and has a first language other than English. It is also referred to in the literature as limited English proficient (LEP), English as a second language (ESL), language minority students, and culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) (Brisk, 1999).

English Limited (EL): A category used by governmental agencies to associate learners whose native language is not English and who are in the process of acquiring English as their second language. The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2002 refers to EL students as anyone aged three to twenty-one years of age who is enrolled in public K-12 schools and whose first home language is one other than English.

Dual Language: This is a type of bilingual education program also known as Early Exit or Transitional that serves students identified as EL in both English and Spanish and transfers students to English-only instruction (TEC, 2008).

ESL Programs: ESL programs are those that serve students identified as students of limited English proficiency (LEP) by providing part- or full-time instruction solely in English. ESL programs do not include the use of students' native language but focus primarily on teaching students English as well as EL as using it to develop academic knowledge in the content area subjects (Texas Education Code, 2008).

Value Added: Value added is a statistical measure used to calculate an approximate effect of educational inputs on student outcomes; more specifically, student achievement as

determined by standardized tests. In the local context, value added measures aim to calculate and quantify a teacher's experience and perspective in student achievement and learning (McCaffrey et al., 2004).

Limitations and Delimitations

The following section outlines the noted limitations and delimitations related to the research study. Implications were considered and strategies to minimize these elements proposed.

Limitations

This study was subject to several limitations that may affect the interpretation and generalizability of its findings. First, as a qualitative case study focused on a single urban elementary school with a unique demographic profile, the results may not be transferable to other schools with different student populations or institutional contexts. The school selected for this study serves a linguistically and economically diverse student population, which may limit the transferability of findings to schools with substantially different demographic or socioeconomic contexts. Additionally, qualitative data derived from focus groups and interviews may be influenced by participants' willingness to speak openly, particularly in group settings where social desirability bias could shape responses (Creswell & Creswell, 2022; Creswell & Poth, 2023). While member checking and transcription accuracy enhanced trustworthiness, the potential for researcher bias in interpreting subjective data must also be acknowledged, given the researcher's positionality as a bilingual educator.

Delimitations

Delimitations, by contrast, are the intentional boundaries set by the researcher to define the scope of the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2022; Creswell & Poth, 2023). This research

focused exclusively on bilingual and ESL-certified teachers within one elementary school who have experience teaching students who transitioned from bilingual programs to English-only instruction. Teachers without such experience were excluded to ensure a focused inquiry into implementation and instructional perspectives. This study was also delimited to examining only bilingual education and ESL settings. Other models of language instruction (e.g., dual immersion or newcomer programs) fall outside the scope of this inquiry. These delimitations help ensure a manageable study while maintaining alignment with the research questions and purpose.

Chapter Summary

This study explored teacher perspectives on students' experiences during the transition from bilingual programs to all-English classrooms. Bilingual students, the fastest-growing demographic in U.S. public schools, often experience schooling conditions shaped by racial and linguistic segregation, low academic tracking, and subtractive educational practices. The research examined how teachers' practices, attitudes, knowledge, and beliefs shape students' experiences during this transition. The demographic landscape of the targeted southern state, particularly in urban areas, highlights the urgent need for effective bilingual education programs to support the academic and linguistic development of ELs.

This research was important for understanding how schools implement bilingual education programs amidst increasing diversity and stringent accountability systems. By exploring how teacher beliefs and instructional practices shape students' experiences, this study aimed to offer insights for enhancing instructional practices in bilingual education. Ultimately, this research aspired to contribute to a deeper understanding of how bilingual education is implemented and experienced within diverse educational contexts.

The remaining organization of this research study will be presented as follows. Chapter 2 will explore a robust sampling of current research specific to the study and relevant to the posited research questions. Chapter 3 will fully outline and justify the selected methods, and Chapter 4 will present the results and findings. This will be followed by Chapter 5, which will discuss the findings, draw conclusions related to the findings, and provide recommendations for future research. This study will conclude with a summary of key insights and implications for educational practice, particularly regarding bilingual program implementation and support for ELs.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

As outlined in Chapter 1, this research aimed to uncover the underlying reasons why some bilingual students excel academically within bilingual programs but encounter significant academic and linguistic challenges once they transition to all-English classrooms at the next grade level. In addition, it is essential to explore teachers' attitudes toward bilingual programs and the actual degree of implementation of such programs as a building block of students' future success in a second language classroom. For this study, the review of the literature was developed through structured criteria. Since this study focuses primarily on the reasons why bilingual students exiting bilingual programs tend to have lower academic achievement after they are transitioned into English-only classrooms, the literature review encompassed only research studies that identify the population as bilingual, EL, children with LEP from ethnic minorities that speak primarily Spanish as a first language, and those who may or may not be immigrants or children of immigrants.

Literature Search Strategy

The literature reviewed for this study was drawn from empirical, peer-reviewed research focusing specifically on bilingual education, ELs, and academic outcomes following transitions to English-only instruction. The review included qualitative studies (e.g., case studies, interview-based research, and focus group analyses) and quantitative studies (e.g., longitudinal analyses, regression-based studies, and large-scale dataset investigations) that examined instructional practices, program implementation, and student achievement outcomes in K–12 educational settings.

Inclusion criteria required that studies (a) focus on EL or bilingual student populations, (b) examine bilingual or ESL program structures and/or transitions to English-only instruction, and (c) report data derived from U.S.-based school contexts to ensure policy and instructional relevance. Studies that did not include empirical data were conducted outside of K–12 settings or did not address academic or linguistic outcomes were excluded from the review.

The primary data sources for this literature review consisted of peer-reviewed journal articles, supplemented by dissertations and foundational texts where appropriate. Databases used for the search included Academic Search Premier, Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), and PsycINFO. These sources were selected to ensure comprehensive coverage of both educational research and interdisciplinary perspectives related to language acquisition and instructional practice.

Language Diversity and Immigration: A Historical Perspective

Long before the United States became a nation, linguistic diversity was a defining characteristic of its cultural landscape. The interaction of multiple languages has shaped American history, beginning with the rich linguistic heritage of Native American languages and later incorporating the languages of various immigrant groups. These populations brought their unique languages and cultures, contributing to the more than 350 languages spoken in the United States today, including Spanish, Chinese, Tagalog, Vietnamese, Arabic, and French (U.S. Census Bureau, 2023). Bilingual education has often been associated with immigration, as immigration remains a dynamic force shaping contemporary society.

Recent data highlights that immigrants account for a significant portion of the U.S. population growth, with Latin American immigrants now representing the largest minority group. Projections indicate that Latinos will comprise 25% of the U.S. population by 2050 (Pew

Research Center, 2023). Assimilation, a key aspect of this demographic shift, typically follows a three-generation linguistic integration pattern. While the first generation often retains their native language, the second generation becomes bilingual, and the third generation predominantly speaks English. However, this process is not without challenges. Historically, languages associated with Native Americans, African Americans, and immigrants from Latin America have been marginalized, while European languages were often afforded higher social status (Akintayo, 2024; Brown, 2024; García & Kleifgen, 2022). These disparities underscore the complex dynamics of language, culture, and identity in the United States.

Two critical issues must be addressed regarding assimilation. First, immigrant students often experience frustration when required to abandon their native language, which can isolate them from their families who may have limited access to mainstream culture due to language barriers. This process may also foster ambivalence toward the value of their cultural identity (García & Kleifgen, 2022; Makarova & Kassis, 2022). Second, the persistent neglect and silencing of immigrant students' linguistic and cultural realities significantly impact their academic success. This suppression of their experiences has been directly linked to patterns of lower academic achievement and increased dropout rates (Brown, 2024; García & Kleifgen, 2022; Makarova & Kassis, 2022).

Additionally, historical policies in the U.S. played a key role in diminishing linguistic diversity. Native American children were subjected to boarding schools where English was enforced, nearly eradicating Indigenous languages and fostering shame in cultural expression (Brown, 2024). Furthermore, the Naturalization Act of 1906 mandated English proficiency for immigrants seeking citizenship, reinforcing English dominance in schools and marginalizing other languages (Abramitzky & Boustán, 2024).

Linguistic Assimilation and Educational Policies in the United States

Schmidt (2001) asserted that the justification for designating English as the predominant language was predicated on the grounds that it would help to define a national identity. In addition, those vying for such a designation held the belief that bilingualism and low intelligence were essentially the same. President Theodore Roosevelt added to the anti-bilingual sentiment by declaring that there would only be room for the English language in the United States. Building on this, in 1917, Congress passed the Burnett Act, which required all immigrants to pass a literacy test and limited immigration from Asian countries.

Crawford (1998) insisted that the zeitgeist of the early 20th century was guided by two primary intentions: (a) to deprive minorities of demanding their rights, and (b) to brand the U.S. as a white, Anglo-Saxon community. This situation remained unchanged until the 1960s. In the 1920s, in *Meyer v. Nebraska*, The Supreme Court ruled that the prohibition to teach in a foreign language violated the Fourteenth Amendment. By the same token, in *Farrington v. Tokushige*, the Supreme Court invalidated a law prohibiting foreign language instruction without a permit in Hawaii, this time under the Fifth Amendment. Various other cases reaffirming the right to teach and be taught in a language other than English were judged in different parts of the country.

In 1954, as a direct result of *Brown v. Board of Education*, the Court opened the doors to desegregation and more equal educational opportunities. The Civil Rights Act of 1964, particularly through its Title VII provision, marked a pivotal moment in the fight for desegregation and equality. This legislation became a cornerstone for community organizations advocating for the recognition of linguistic and cultural diversity. Title VII, which later evolved into the Bilingual Education Act of 1968, provided a legal framework to support bilingual education and address the educational inequities faced by linguistic minority students. Recent

studies emphasize that these efforts not only aimed to bridge the gap between minority and white communities but also sought to celebrate and preserve the cultural identities of diverse populations (Porter et al., 2023).

Subsequently, a growing number of linguistic minorities that could not access meaningful opportunities prompted Congress to authorize the Bilingual Education Act of 1968. This legislation did not force school districts to implement bilingual education programs, but it did encourage them to utilize pedagogical methods aimed at helping low-income and non-English speaking children (Zabala, 2023). The Bilingual Education Act (BEA) (1968) was initially designed to provide federal funding to school districts for the development of programs that supported instruction in students' native languages, facilitating their transition into English-dominant classrooms. This approach aimed to address the educational needs of English learners (ELs) while preserving their linguistic and cultural identities (Zabala, 2023).

In 1974, the BEA underwent significant amendments to refine its scope and impact. These changes included the establishment of specific programmatic goals and requirements, the expansion of eligibility criteria to include a broader range of students, and the removal of the low-income requirement from the original version. These amendments marked a shift toward a more inclusive and structured approach to bilingual education, emphasizing the importance of equitable access for all ELs (Wright, 2005). In the same year, the *Lau v. Nichols* ruling mandated that school districts and boards must fund the programs and accommodations needed by children who did not speak English. According to Nieto (2009), Del Valle (2003), and Crawford (2001), although *Lau v. Nichols* promoted transitional bilingual education, it provided few pragmatic solutions. Almost ten years later, in *Castaneda v. Pickard*, three requirements were defined by

the Fifth Circuit in order to implement programs aimed at helping language-minority children overcome the language barrier.

According to the established requirements, these programs must be (a) based on reliable educational theory; (b) they must have sufficient staffing and resources; and (c) they must show evidence that students are in fact learning English. During the 1980s, the "back to basics" movement characterized bilingual education and made it more prone to political attacks as it was often referenced as a danger to national unity (Flores & Garcia, 2019). Then-President Ronald Reagan characterized bilingual education as "...absolutely wrong, and against American concepts to have a bilingual education program" (as cited in Polanco & Luft de Baker, 2018, p. 425). Among political divides, this facilitated significant criticism of bilingual education, with reports questioning its effectiveness. However, these critiques were later discredited for failing to account for key variables that highlighted the advantages of bilingual education programs (Flores & García, 2019; Polanco & Luft de Baker, 2018; Zabala, 2023). Despite this backlash, the 1994 reauthorization of the Bilingual Education Act marked a pivotal moment in federal education policy. This reauthorization emphasized the importance of fostering multicultural understanding and developing bilingual skills, positioning bilingual education as a vital tool for enhancing the nation's future potential (Wiese & García, 1998; Zabala, 2023).

A direct consequence of this reauthorization was the creation of developmental bilingual programs including the Two-Way Bilingual program. This particular program aimed at serving mainstream and language minority students by providing them with a chance to learn a second language while in school. In 1994, California voters also approved Proposition 187, making it illegal for children of undocumented immigrants to be served by public schools. Fortunately, this proposition was later declared unconstitutional, but it helped to re-ignite the debate in regard to

the need for bilingual education. Also in 1994, the Federal government shifted funding for dual language programs through a grant program within the reauthorization of the ESEA (Polanco & Luft de Baker, 2018). Next, in 1996, a proposed law declaring English the official language of U.S. government agencies was approved in the House but failed to be passed in the Senate.

In 1997, California voters passed Proposition 227, a measure that effectively eliminated bilingual education programs in public schools by mandating English-only instruction. This initiative, part of the "English for the Children" campaign, required English learners to be placed in sheltered English immersion programs for a temporary period, typically not exceeding one year. Similar measures were enacted in Arizona in 2000 and Colorado in 2002, reflecting a broader national shift toward English-only policies (Wright, 2010). The fatal blow to bilingual Education came with the ironic title *No Child Left Behind Act*, also known as NCLB, which was authorized by Congress and signed into law in 2002. NCLB was a reauthorization of the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).

Even though the NCLB did not explicitly prohibit bilingual education, it effectively marginalized such programs by omitting any direct references to them. Instead, NCLB emphasized a system of standardized testing that prioritized English-only instruction, creating significant challenges for bilingual education advocates. This shift redirected federal funding and focus on English language acquisition programs, often at the expense of bilingual approaches, which were sidelined in favor of meeting stringent accountability measures (Wright, 2010; Zabala, 2023).

The Nature of Bilingual Programs

The National Association for Bilingual Education (NABE) (2005) defined bilingual education as “approaches in the classroom that use the native languages of English Language

Learners for instruction.” The main goals of bilingual instruction include teaching English, nurturing academic achievement, helping immigrants acculturate to a new society, preserving the minority groups’ cultural and linguistic heritage, enabling English speakers to learn a second language, and any combination of these goals (Flores & Garcia, 2017). Through addressing the academic needs of these students, stakeholders seek to support social efficiency and social mobility through ensuring that a workforce exists that is equipped to integrate in the economic machine (Polanco & Luft de Baker, 2018).

The nature of bilingual education has been a source of controversy since its inception, with its goals rooted in varying interpretations. Recent studies echo Crawford's (2001) assertion that the objectives of bilingual education in the U.S. have often lacked clarity. Scholars continue to debate whether these programs are designed to equip minority students with the language skills necessary for success in U.S. schools or to foster bilingual proficiency that benefits American society as a whole (Crawford, 2001; Flores & García, 2017; Zabala, 2023). In practice, most bilingual education programs in the U.S. prioritize transitioning students into English-only instruction and integrating them into mainstream American culture, rather than developing true bilingualism (Wright, 2010).

Ruiz's (1984) framework remains relevant in understanding the conceptualizations of bilingual education: language as a problem, language as a right, and language as a resource. When viewed as a problem, bilingual education is treated as a remedial measure to achieve English proficiency. When seen as a right, it is framed within the context of ensuring equality of educational opportunity. Finally, when approached as a resource, bilingual education is recognized for its potential to enhance human capital and contribute to the nation's economic and cultural wealth (McNelly, 2015). According to the federal government (2010) updates on EL,

providing equal educational opportunity to students who might not be proficient in English has become a serious challenge within our educational system. Learners whose home language is one other than English, or who communicate in English with significant difficulty, require special services. Regardless of the controversial nature of the topic, the law defines bilingual education as a relevant pathway to address the challenges associated with educating ELs.

Bilingual education programs in Texas serve not only immigrant children but also those born in the U.S. to immigrant parents. The TEA (2020) defines bilingual education programs as described in the following chart:

Table 2.1

Bilingual Education Program Description in Texas

Program	Means and Goals	Time
Dual Language/Early Exit/ Transitional (Transitional Bilingual/ Early Exit definition in TEC §29.066.	Population: Serves students identified as limited English speakers. Setting: Instruction is provided in subjects (art, music, and physical and academic content areas.	The transition will occur not earlier than two or later than five years after the student enrolls in school
Dual language/Late Exit/Developmental (<i>Transitional Bilingual/Late Exit</i> definition in TEC §29.066.)	Population: Serves students identified as limited English speakers. The goal is to promote high students of limited English through accelerated levels of proficiency in both English and cognitively challenging achievement and full Spanish and transfer academic work in the	

academic language
 student to English-only
 students' first language
 along with proficiency
 in the student's
 instruction. with
 meaningful academic
 first language and
 English. The content is
 taught through the
 student's second
 language, English.

Two-Way Immersion <i>(Dual Language Immersion/Two-Way</i> <i>definition in TEC §29.066.)</i>	A biliteracy program that integrates students' proficient instruction in both academic subjects in English and students' native language.	The transition will occur not earlier than six or later than seven years after the student enrolls in school
Dual Language <i>(Dual Language Immersion/One-Way</i> <i>definition in TEC §29.066.)</i>	A biliteracy program that serves only students identified as students of limited English proficiency in both English and Spanish. Students then transfer to English-only instruction.	The transition will occur not earlier than six or later than seven years after the student enrolls in school

Conceptual Framework

This study was anchored in well-established theoretical constructs surrounding bilingual education, second-language acquisition, and academic achievement among English Language Learners (ELs). The conceptual framework drew from the works of Cummins (1979, 2000) and Genesee et al. (2006, 2024), whose combined contributions articulate the

interconnected roles of first-language proficiency, second-language development, and programmatic implementation in shaping student outcomes.

In Texas, students and teachers in grade three and higher are faced with an annual state-mandated assessment in a variety of subject areas. For instance, at the elementary level, third-grade students must take reading and math; fourth-grade students are administered reading, writing, and math; and fifth-grade students must take reading, math, and science (TEA, 2020). These assessments, part of the Texas Student Assessment Program, are designed to measure student proficiency in core academic subjects, ensuring alignment with state curriculum standards.

Beyond evaluating individual student performance, tests play a crucial role in school accountability, influencing campus ratings and informing instructional decisions (Gregg & Lavertu, 2023). Educators utilize assessment data to identify learning gaps, tailor interventions, and refine teaching strategies to support student success (Summers, 2023). Additionally, high-stakes testing impacts educational policy, teacher evaluations, and district funding, making standardized assessments a significant aspect of the academic landscape (Gregg & Lavertu, 2023). Cummins' (1979) Second Language Acquisition Theory provides important insight into how students, especially those in bilingual education programs, develop literacy and comprehension skills. Cummins (1979, 2000) posits that skills and knowledge developed in a student's first language (L1) can transfer to additional languages, provided the student receives quality education in L1. This framework is pivotal for understanding how literacy, comprehension, and other cognitive skills in a first language facilitate second-language acquisition. de la Fuente and Goldenberg (2022) support this assertion by illustrating how knowledge in one's primary language aids in developing literacy and comprehension in

English. This synergy highlights the critical role of bilingual programs in maintaining L1 literacy while introducing English as a second language ([L2], Castro et al., 2025).

Cummins (2000) further underscored the foundational role of a student's first language in second-language learning. He argues for prolonged participation in bilingual programs, as academic language proficiency often takes significantly longer to develop than basic communicative abilities. While communicative competence may take just a few years to achieve, academic language development can require six to eight years, depending on exposure to English through interaction with peers, media, and academic experiences. This extended timeline underscores the necessity of bilingual education programs that allow ELs sufficient time to develop the academic language required for long-term success (Hopkins et al., 2023). This distinction is critical for teachers, as it helps them recognize that students who appear fluent in everyday conversation may still lack the academic language necessary to engage with grade-level content, leading to more intentional instructional planning, sustained language supports, and more accurate judgments about student readiness for transition to all-English instruction.

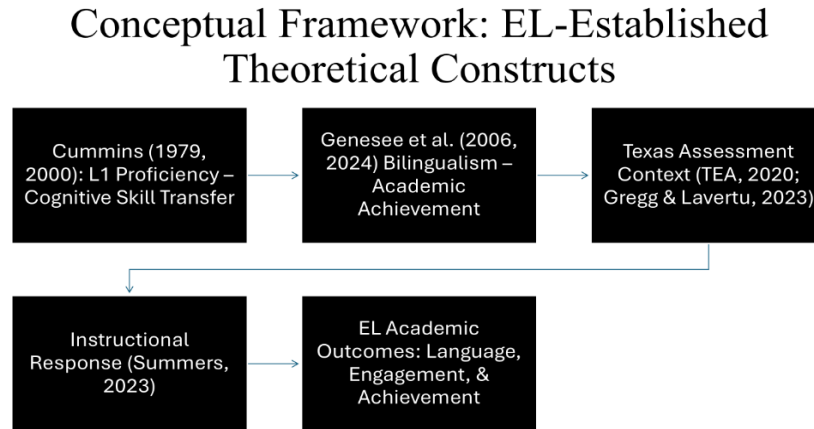
Recent studies further substantiate the effectiveness of bilingual programs. Genesee et al. (2006, 2024) concluded that bilingual education not only supports language acquisition but also correlates positively with academic achievement. Their research identified parallels between L1 and L2 development, noting that learners utilize shared linguistic, metacognitive, and experiential resources in acquiring both languages. Additionally, their review highlights that prolonged participation in bilingual programs yields higher academic outcomes, particularly in upper elementary, middle, and high school assessments (Lindholm-Leary, 2020).

Cazabon et al. (1993) along with Ramirez et al. (1991), observed that early assessments (grades K–3) often underestimate bilingual students' potential. This trend has continued as reinforced by newer studies like Williams & Danahy (2023). However, students assessed in later grades, especially those in two-way or late-exit bilingual programs, achieve comparably to or exceed the performance of their monolingual peers. Furthermore, bilingual Hispanic students demonstrate higher GPAs, better academic outcomes, and greater adherence to rigorous learning expectations compared to monolingual Hispanic students (Chin, 2023).

Bilingual students demonstrate positive correlations across linguistic and academic domains. Genesee et al. (2006, 2024) identified strong relationships between Spanish reading and English reading, English reading and English math, and Spanish reading and Spanish math. These findings suggest an intricate, mutually reinforcing relationship between bilingual literacy and overall academic success. The nature of bilingual education can be analyzed using Ruiz's framework, which conceptualizes language as a problem, a right, and a resource. In many U.S. contexts, bilingual education has been treated as a remedial solution to achieve English proficiency (language as a problem). Alternatively, it has been framed as a means to ensure equality of opportunity for linguistic minorities (language as a right). Finally, it has been positioned as a strategic resource for enhancing individual and societal prosperity through biliteracy and bilingualism (Kennedy, 2019). Figure 2.1 highlights the conceptual framework established for this study:

Figure 2.1

Conceptual Framework



This conceptual framework provides a foundation for addressing the reasons behind ELs’ low performance after transitioning from bilingual to all-English instructional programs, and for analyzing how the knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes of bilingual and ESL teachers toward bilingual programs influence students’ mastery of the English language. Integrating linguistic, cognitive, and affective dimensions of bilingual education with empirical evidence, this study seeks to contribute meaningful insights into bilingual program implementation, teacher practices, and student success.

Bilingual Program Implementation

The Texas Administrative Code (TAC), Chapter 89 (TEA, 2023), mandates that every student in the state with a home language other than English and identified as an EB must be provided a full opportunity to participate in a bilingual education or ESL program. The statute specifies that school districts enrolling 20 or more EB students in the same grade level must offer a bilingual education program for grades PK-5 or PK-6, as appropriate. Additionally, the statute

requires that certified and properly trained teachers be available to instruct students in bilingual programs. The primary goal of these programs is to enable students to achieve proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing in English while leveraging their primary language as a resource. The programs are also expected to emphasize academic achievement in core content areas such as mathematics, science, and social studies (TEA, 2023).

Despite these legal provisions, districts and schools often face challenges in ensuring that teachers are mindful of their language use and in maintaining focus on the primary goals of bilingual programs. Drawing on classroom-based observational research, Dubetz (2012) found that teachers' language choices in bilingual classrooms significantly influence instructional balance and language dominance. Using qualitative analysis of classroom language practices, Sclafani (2017) emphasized that teachers' language practices, such as reverting to English during Spanish instruction, can undermine the perceived value of the students' primary language. Williams and Danahy (2023), in their examination of equity and cultural dynamics in EL education, argued that awareness of racism, privilege, and cultural humility is central for instructional efficacy in White-dominated fields.

Earlier studies, such as those by Phillips (1975) and Schultz (1975), observed patterns of teacher language use that reinforced the dominance of English. Based on classroom observational research, Phillips (1975) noted that during Spanish instruction for native English speakers, teachers frequently switched to English, while the reverse was rarely observed for Spanish-speaking students. Using observational data from bilingual classrooms, Schultz (1975) found that English was used approximately 70% of the time, even during Spanish language arts, further reinforcing its status as the dominant language. These findings suggest that teachers' language choices convey implicit messages about the goals of bilingual programs and the

relative importance of each language. These subtle microaggressions can quietly impact meaning-making and student success (Williams & Danahy, 2023).

The design and implementation of bilingual programs vary widely, but a common focus is the development of students' oral proficiency and literacy. Lindholm-Leary (2020), drawing on longitudinal research on bilingual program outcomes, and Ríos and Castellón (2018), through empirical analysis of language development, confirmed that oral proficiency in English typically requires three to five years to develop, with advanced proficiency taking even longer. These studies also highlight the importance of meaningful language interactions, both within and outside the classroom, in fostering language proficiency. Contextual interactions, such as those involving phonological awareness and emergent literacy, play a critical role in helping students master both their native and second languages. While existing research highlights the importance of teacher knowledge, language use, and program design in supporting EL outcomes, less is known about how these factors are implemented in practice and how they influence students' readiness to transition to all-English instruction. This gap directly informs Research Question 1, which examines how teacher beliefs and program implementation shape English language mastery.

The Bilingual Teacher and Program

Over the last ten years, U.S. public school systems have experienced a rapid rise in the number of students not adequately proficient in English (Anderson, 2025; Batalova, 2025; de Valenzuela et al., 2022). Ballantyne et al. (2008), in their analysis of EL academic outcomes, found that these students are not granted equal opportunities to fully access and succeed with academic content across courses. There is also a tendency for ELs to come from poorer backgrounds and less educated families, to perform below average in standardized assessments,

and to drop out of high school at higher rates than the rest of the population (Ballantyne et al., 2008). de Valenzuela et al. (2022), drawing on research examining instructional challenges for EL populations, noted that teachers across the country face significant challenges in effectively serving these students.

According to the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition (NCELA, 2007), the number of ELs in U.S. schools has grown by a staggering 57% during the last decade. In addition, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (2024) reported that over half of EL students qualify for free or reduced lunch. For EL children in elementary school, approximately half had parents who had not completed high school and nearly a quarter of their parents had not been educated beyond grade nine (NCES, 2024). In Texas alone, almost eight hundred thousand children are in ESL or bilingual programs. In Harris County, Texas there are approximately one hundred and eighty thousand children being served in ESL or a bilingual program (approximately 22% of the State population) (TEA, 2024). In Texas, ELs receive instruction in a variety of settings including mainstream classrooms, English as a second language classes, English immersion, and bilingual education programs. de Valenzuela et al. (2022) further emphasized that instructing ELs requires teachers to possess skills in multiple curricular and instructional strategies. Texas is one of the few states that provide bilingual education programs, and it requires specific courses and separate certifications for teachers who want to serve in bilingual education programs (TEA, 2020).

According to the Texas Administrative Code ([TAC], TEA, 2020), school districts are obligated to take the proper steps to appropriately assign certified bilingual teachers in order to staff the required program, or request emergency or special permits as allowed by the statute. TEA (2020) also provides special salary awards for teachers assigned to bilingual education

programs, and the agency encourages districts to compensate teachers for their participation in continuing education programs that seek to enhance teachers' skills or qualifications in bilingual education. Bilingual education programs are clearly defined with respect to the amount of instructional time devoted to each language and how long the program should be presented (Lindholm-Leary, 2020; Castro et al., 2025).

Lindholm-Leary (2020), drawing on research on bilingual program effectiveness, and Ríos and Castellón (2018), through empirical analysis of language development, indicate that bilingual teachers in programs that advance the academic success of ELs require a clear understanding of second language acquisition constructs, as well as the purposes and underlying principles of the instructional models they are tasked with implementing. Lindholm-Leary (2020) further emphasizes that teachers in bilingual programs need to understand the differential role of literacy and oral language in supporting ELs' academic achievement. This understanding becomes increasingly relevant as these students transition from one grade level to the next, particularly as academic content becomes more language-dependent (Genesee et al., 2024; Lindholm-Leary, 2020). When it comes to the bilingual program, the Texas legislation provides for each school district that has such a program to provide ELs the opportunity to be enrolled in the mandatory program at her or their grade level (TEA, 2020).

The legislation also called for teaching, pacing, and resources to be modified so ELs in bilingual programs were provided the opportunity to master all fundamental knowledge and skills. In addition, bilingual education programs in Texas must be full-time programs of instruction in which students' home language, as well as English, is used in instructional and learning processes according to students' individual levels of proficiency. The law also mandates that the State's adopted curriculum and materials should be utilized in all programs using

Spanish and English instruction. Finally, the law defines the need for all bilingual education programs to address the affective, linguistic, and cognitive aspects of all ELs' education (TAC, 2007).

Beyond these frameworks exists the development of the teachers who will fill or are filling instructional roles. Skilled bilingual teachers necessitate proper preparation and support. Fallas-Escobar and Deroo (2023), in their analysis of bilingual teacher preparation, and Alfaro (2018), through examination of teacher education models, emphasize the need for programs that cultivate ideological clarity and sociopolitical consciousness among teacher candidates. Fallas-Escobar and Deroo (2023) further argue that rather than treating language as a neutral skill, teacher preparation must address how raciolinguistic ideologies and power relations shape both classroom practices and broader educational policy. This includes helping candidates recognize how their own beliefs may unknowingly reinforce systemic inequities, especially in a sociopolitical climate marked by anti-immigrant sentiment in English-only mandates.

Alfaro (2018), drawing on research on bilingual teacher education, underscores how collective, community-based engagement within bilingual teacher education can serve as both a site of resistance and transformation. Building on this, Hernández et al. (2022), in their analysis of bilingual education policy and legal frameworks, position bilingual teacher educators as policy actors who navigate and potentially subvert federal and state language policies that marginalize emergent bilinguals. Their analysis of the *Castañeda v. Pickard* case illustrates how historical legal decisions continue to shape access, expectations, and accountability structures for bilingual programs today. Together, these studies reveal that preparing bilingual educators requires more than academic training; it demands a politically conscious, critically reflexive

stance grounded in advocacy, policy literacy, and a commitment to equity (Alfaro, 2018; Fallas-Escobar & Deroo, 2023; Hernández et al., 2022).

Improper preparation for EL teachers not only directly hinders their quality of instruction and student success; it also is a contributor to the problem of burnout and teacher shortages. Agyapong et al. (2022), in their examination of teacher mental health, identified stress and burnout as a global problem for educators, often leading to depression and anxiety. Statistics related to the phenomenon of teacher burnout place the prevalence from anywhere between 25.12% to 74%, both of which are statistically significant (Agyapong et al., 2022). Peterson (2021), drawing on national teacher attrition data, highlighted that between 40% and 50% of teachers leave the field within their first five years due to burnout. Garcia et al. (2022), using national workforce data, reported that 45 states are expecting teacher shortages for ESL classrooms and that an additional 27 states are already reporting shortages of staff and support. Underprepared teachers decrease student achievement and are more than two times as likely to leave the profession with teacher turnover harming student achievement (Garcia et al., 2022; Nguyen et al., 2020). Teacher turnover in general has been linked to both educational quality and equity (Nguyen et al., 2020). Teachers require support and professional learning to manage burnout (Coldwell, 2017; Peterson, 2021). Although prior research establishes the importance of teacher preparation, beliefs, and instructional capacity, limited attention has been given to how these factors influence student outcomes following the transition to English-only classrooms. This gap directly informs Research Question 1 and Research Question 2 by connecting teacher-level factors to post-transition academic and linguistic performance.

Navigating the Transition: Supporting EL Learners

According to recent updates on ELs' demographics, Hispanic students remain the largest and fastest-growing minority group in U.S. schools. Approximately 7.8 million Hispanic elementary and secondary students speak a language other than English at home, with Mexican, Dominican, and Salvadoran students representing the largest subgroups. Conversely, Puerto Rican and other Hispanic or Latino students have the lowest percentages of those speaking a language other than English at home. Furthermore, ELs from Mexico, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, and Central America exhibit higher rates of difficulty speaking English compared to South American and Puerto Rican ELs (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020).

The transition from bilingual education programs to mainstream all-English instruction often poses significant challenges for ELs and their teachers. Research indicates that such transitions frequently result in a decline in academic performance, particularly when students have not yet developed sufficient English proficiency or when the transition is abrupt (Lindholm-Leary, 2020). These transitions, typically occurring in grades three through five, are often dictated by local or state policies. Many schools end bilingual programs by grade four, leaving students vulnerable to reduced participation in instruction, lower academic performance, and diminished cultural belonging. Students frequently struggle to comprehend teacher instructions and express their thoughts adequately in English, leading to frustration and disengagement (Hanus, 2020).

Despite these challenges, studies demonstrate that ELs can achieve academic success when provided with appropriate support systems. For instance, schools that foster a culture of achievement, maintain high expectations, and engage families in the educational process have shown positive outcomes for Latino students (Lindholm-Leary, 2020). Key traits of successful

schools include nurturing climates, empathetic views of families, and alignment between school culture, mission, and instructional practices (Lindholm-Leary, 2020; Mavrogordato et al., 2024).

At the classroom level, addressing EL needs requires creating environments of high expectations and implementing instructional variations, such as clear articulation, pacing adjustments, and opportunities for oral language interaction (Allen et al., 2025; Olds et al., 2021). ELs benefit from small group settings, structured choices, and consistent feedback on their progress. These strategies not only enhance language acquisition but also empower students to take ownership of their learning and bridge cultural gaps between their home and school environments (Allen et al., 2025; Sikes & Villanueva, 2021). Kim (2021), through empirical analysis of teacher beliefs, found that teachers' attitudes are important predictors of instructional practices and classroom behavior. While research has established the benefits of bilingual programs and supportive instructional environments for EL success (Lindholm-Leary, 2020; Mavrogordato et al., 2024), and has partially examined the challenges associated with transitioning to all-English instruction (Hanus, 2020; Lindholm-Leary, 2020), less is known about how teacher beliefs and program implementation interact to shape post-transition academic and linguistic outcomes.

In their qualitative study, Owens and Wells (2021) found that elementary content teachers generally perceived cooperative learning and varied instructional strategies as effective for supporting ELL academic success. Teachers reported that grouping students with peers of differing English proficiencies and using flexible pacing fostered confidence, peer modeling, and inclusive participation, aligning with culturally relevant pedagogy's emphasis on student-centered learning. This reflects small group instructional modalities. This study ultimately underscores that while teachers value and attempt to implement supportive strategies,

institutional barriers and uneven preparation hinder the effectiveness of ELL instruction (Owens & Wells, 2021).

Not all teachers have positive views on EL education. Kim (2021), through empirical investigation of teacher attitudes, found that teachers often hold negative beliefs toward EL education; however, targeted interventions can shift these perspectives. These negative beliefs include viewing them as culturally deficient, less capable, and burdensome. Kim (2021) stated that this is more pronounced when these students come from cultures perceived as less aligned with dominant norms. Efficacious structured interventions for changing these patterns include service-learning projects, multicultural coursework, and language endorsement training (Kim, 2021). This references back to the bilingual teacher preparation modalities established in the previous section by Alfaro (2018), Fallas-Escobar and Deroo (2023), and Hernandez et al. (2022). Despite existing research on bilingual instruction and language development, there remains a limited understanding of why some ELs experience academic decline after transitioning to all-English instruction while others succeed. This gap directly informs Research Question 2, which examines the factors contributing to post-transition performance outcomes.

Gaps in the Literature

The literature reviewed in this chapter establishes a strong foundation regarding the historical, policy, and programmatic dimensions of bilingual education in the United States. However, several critical gaps remain. While research has documented the general academic and linguistic challenges ELs encounter after moving from bilingual programs to all-English instruction, few studies have examined the *mechanisms* driving these outcomes at the classroom level. Most existing work focuses on aggregate achievement data or broad policy analyses rather than exploring the specific instructional decisions teachers make during and after the transition

period (Gándara & Contreras, 2022; Lindholm-Leary, 2020). Additionally, although Cummins (1979, 2000) and Genesee et al. (2006, 2024) provide theoretical grounding for understanding language transfer and bilingual program outcomes, little empirical research has traced how these theoretical principles are actually enacted—or neglected—in daily classroom practice within high-poverty urban schools. This leaves a significant gap between what research recommends and what is understood about real-world implementation.

A second gap concerns the role of teacher beliefs and attitudes in shaping bilingual program fidelity and student outcomes. Prior studies, including those by Kim (2021) and Owens and Wells (2021), have acknowledged that teachers' beliefs predict instructional behavior, and that negative views toward ELs are common. However, the literature stops short of examining how these beliefs directly shape the quality of bilingual program implementation and, in turn, how that implementation influences ELs' readiness to succeed in all-English settings. Studies examining teacher language practices, such as those by Dubetz (2012) and Sclafani (2017), focus primarily on language use patterns rather than connecting those patterns to measurable student outcomes post-transition. Furthermore, preparation-focused literature by Alfaro (2018) and Fallas-Escobar and Deroo (2023) addresses ideological readiness in teacher candidates but does not directly explore how underprepared or negatively oriented in-service teachers affect program outcomes in specific local contexts.

These gaps are particularly pronounced in high-immigrant, high-poverty urban schools in southern states, where EL enrollment is growing rapidly and where state-mandated transitions to all-English instruction create acute pressures on both students and teachers (Rodriguez & Slate, 2024; TEA, 2023). Longitudinal and context-specific research on bilingual education programs in this region remains scarce, a concern echoed by Hidalgo and Ortega-Sánchez (2023), who

called for more multidisciplinary studies that span different educational stages. This study directly addresses these gaps by investigating how bilingual and ESL teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes toward bilingual programs influence students' English language mastery (RQ1), and by identifying the specific instructional and contextual factors that contribute to ELs' academic decline after the transition to all-English instruction (RQ2). By focusing on a single urban elementary school with a high concentration of ELs, this qualitative study offers the local, contextualized insight that the broader literature lacks.

Summary

Hispanic students continue to be the largest and fastest-growing minority group within U.S. schools, with over 7.8 million students speaking a language other than English at home (NCES, 2020). While bilingual programs aim to support these students, the transition to all-English instruction often poses significant academic and emotional challenges. Research highlights that this transition frequently results in reduced participation, lower academic achievement, and feelings of cultural disconnection, particularly when implemented abruptly or before students achieve sufficient English proficiency (Hanus, 2020; Lindholm-Leary, 2020).

Despite these challenges, schools that create nurturing environments, establish high expectations, and actively engage Latino families demonstrate positive academic outcomes for English learners. These schools focus on fostering a culture of achievement, viewing family involvement as integral, and aligning their mission, vision, and practices to support linguistic and academic development (Reyes et al., 2023). At the classroom level, effective practices such as clear articulation, flexible pacing, small group instruction, and opportunities for oral language interactions help students develop English proficiency and gain confidence in their academic abilities (Allen et al., 2025). These findings underscore the importance of structured bilingual

programs and culturally responsive teaching in bridging the gap for English learners during this critical phase of their education.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this study was to investigate why some ELs excel academically in bilingual programs but struggle academically and linguistically after transitioning to all-English classrooms the following year. Additionally, this study explored the reasons other ELs continue to demonstrate academic success after this transition. To accomplish this, it was fundamental to explore teachers' attitudes and beliefs towards bilingual programs, and the actual degree of implementation of such programs as a building block of students' future success in a second language classroom. More explicitly, this study addresses two general issues: (a) what are the reasons behind ELs' low performance after they transition from a bilingual to an all-English instructional program, and (b) how are the bilingual and ESL teachers' attitudes and beliefs toward bilingual programs, and their required implementation, related to students' mastery of the English language?

Research Questions

To accomplish the identified purpose of the research study, the following guiding research questions were established:

1. How do bilingual and ESL teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes towards bilingual programs, as well as their implementation of bilingual programs, influence students' mastery of the English language?
2. What instructional factors and classroom practices contribute to English Learners' decline in academic performance following their transition from a bilingual education program to an all-English instructional setting?

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore the academic trajectories of bilingual students following their transition from bilingual education programs to all-English instructional environments. Figure 3.1 highlights the study's position along a continuum of research paradigms, illustrating its alignment with a qualitative, interpretivist approach.

Figure 3.1

Continuum of Research Paradigms



Note. The figure illustrates the study's alignment with a qualitative, interpretivist research approach.

As shown in Figure 3.1, the study is positioned toward the interpretivist end of the continuum, reflecting its focus on understanding participants' experiences, perceptions, and meanings within a specific educational context.

The qualitative approach allowed for the examination of personal experiences, perceptions, and the complex interplay of attitudes and beliefs (Creswell & Poth, 2023) from teachers involved in bilingual and ESL programs. Through in-depth interviews and focus groups, the research explored teachers' perceptions of the reasons behind students' academic performance, as these methods generate rich, narrative data that contextualize participants' experiences and perspectives (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019; Lambert & Loiselle, 2008).

Within the qualitative framework, an interpretivist approach was chosen to provide a rich, contextualized understanding (Creswell & Creswell, 2022; Creswell & Poth, 2023) of a single elementary school that serves a linguistically diverse student population. Specifically, this study focused on data collected from bilingual and ESL teachers who have either taught or are currently teaching students who have undergone this transition. The selected qualitative approach ensured a sense of equilibrium in regard to the views illustrated and data presented. Qualitative research seeks to interpret and comprehend narrative (i.e., non-numerical) data to gain understanding of specific issues of interest (Creswell & Creswell, 2022; Gay et al., 2006). The purpose of using a qualitative method was to maximize the potential of answering several questions from multiple perspectives (Gay et al., 2006). A qualitative approach assisted the researcher in gaining better insight into how participants perceived the effectiveness of the respective programs in educating ELs.

School Profile

The Maplewood Elementary School (a pseudonym) was established in 1961 and was initially built as a relief Title I school to accommodate the growing population of the inner-city area. The student population has grown from the initial group of families to a diverse mix of immigrant and economically disadvantaged families, many of whom come from Latin American countries. The demographic shift in the 1980s, as the area became a predominantly immigrant community, required the district to implement bilingual programs to support the educational needs of these students (Urban School District, 2025).

The school has a rich history of serving bilingual students, with bilingual programs being in place since the school's opening. Initially, a large proportion of the school population (approximately 80%) was enrolled in bilingual education programs. Over time, however, many

students have been transitioned into all-English or transitional programs. The school serves just over 500 students, with the majority enrolled in bilingual education or ESL programs. This high concentration of EL students makes the school a relevant setting for examining perceptions of bilingual education and the transition to all-English instruction (Urban School District, 2025).

The community surrounding The Maplewood Elementary School is characterized by high levels of poverty, with over 30% of the population living below the poverty line. The area is predominantly renter-occupied, with families often living in multigenerational households. Many families face economic hardship, and access to educational resources and healthcare is limited (Urban School District, 2025). These socio-economic factors can significantly impact the academic performance of students, especially those in bilingual programs (Finch & Hernández Finch, 2022).

As illustrated below in Table 3.1, the school’s ethnicity percentages do not appear to reflect the district percentages.

Table 3.1

Racial/Ethnic Background and Total Enrollment by Percentage

Case Study Site (Approximately 500 students)			District (Approximately 73,000 students)
Teacher Category			
African American 47%	Hispanic 40%	White 6%	Asian/Pacific Islander 1%

Note. Adapted from Elementary Schools, 2025. Percentages are approximated to preserve district anonymity.

Of the school’s total population, 97.1% (n=558) come from economically disadvantaged homes. According to the TEA (2020), “some common characteristics of

economically disadvantaged children include low levels of parental education; inadequate housing with very few, if any resources; homes with extended or multiple families; parental unemployment or underemployment; poor access to health care; and insufficient support systems” (p.101). Of the population, 82.2% are classified as EL (n=558), which differs from the district’s rate of 30.5%. In addition, 75.9% of the total students (n=558) are considered at-risk as compared to district levels (76.5%). Also, the attendance rate for the previous school year was 88.9%, which was 2 points below the district average (Urban School District, 2025).

As of the 2022-2023 school year, the school population was distributed within the grade levels as follows: pre-K (5.2%), Kindergarten (15.7%), first grade (18.2%), second grade (24.8%), third grade (24.5%), fourth grade (25.4%), and fifth grade (25.4%). During the year 2022-2023, 36% of students in grade 3 passed the reading test and 42% passed the math test in the approaches level. 47% of students in grade 4 passed the reading test and 35% passed the math test in the approaches level. Fifty-one percent of students in grades 5 passed the reading test and 57% passed the math test in the approaches level. The bilingual programs in the same grades performed at or above the minimum standard (Urban School District, 2025). Also, almost 13% of the students in grades 3 to 5 reached commended performance in all tests as reported by TEA (2010).

The school is located in an area that experienced a great deal of development throughout the 1960s and 1970s. This development led to new apartment complexes built for individuals arriving from the Northeast and Midwest U.S. to work in the oil and aviation industry (Urban School District, 2025). In the 1980s, as the aviation and oil industry and the economy began to decline, thousands of tenants left and these units were marketed to newly arriving immigrants and, subsequently, the area became a predominantly immigrant

community. The sudden change in demographics forced the school district to respond by building more schools to educate newly arriving students. According to recent data, the Hispanic or Latino population in the United States has grown significantly, accounting for approximately 19% of the total U.S. population in 2021, or 62.5 million individuals (Pew Research Center, 2023). This demographic shift is reflected in local communities, where housing and socioeconomic patterns highlight disparities. For example, renter-occupied housing units continue to outnumber owner-occupied units in many urban areas, with average household sizes often exceeding three members (Census Bureau, 2024).

Again, the level of English language proficiency in the area where the school is located is extremely high in comparison to state and the district averages. However, only approximately 27% of the district, and about 13% of the state population, is designated as EL. Yet, the level of proficiency for the area in which this school is located is a staggering 70%. A significant EL population has been commonplace since the school opened, especially regarding those with a Hispanic or Latino background. In the year the school opened, TEA (2010, 2020) reported an 84.1% of Limited English Proficient students, and ten years later this average is 82.2%. It is also important to note that the school has implemented a bilingual program since its first year. Initially, approximately 80% of the school population was enrolled in a bilingual program but, eventually, more and more students were transitioned or enrolled into all-English ESL, regular, or transitional programs. Despite all of its programs, the school utilizes the district curriculum and instructional resources, which are aligned with the state mandated curriculum. Finally, for the 2018-2019 school year, enrollment at grade five was one hundred and fourteen students, or 12.2% of the total school enrollment (Urban School District, 2025).

Setting and Location of the Study

This study was conducted at an elementary school located in an urban area, which serves a student population that is predominantly economically disadvantaged and composed of a significant percentage of ELs. The school is part of a district with a notable demographic shift, primarily serving Hispanic and Latino families who are recent immigrants to the area. Specifically, the focus of the study was on students who have transitioned from bilingual education programs into all-English classrooms, examining their academic and linguistic development. The school, which has been serving the local community since its inception, has a long history of offering bilingual education, and this historical context makes it an ideal site for the study.

The district and school serve a large population of students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, with 97.1% of the student body categorized as economically disadvantaged (Urban School District, 2025). This high rate of economic disadvantage is important because it correlates with potential academic challenges and is recognized by the TEA (2023) as a factor affecting student performance. The community surrounding the school has undergone significant demographic changes over the past several decades, with the area initially seeing a wave of migration related to the oil and aviation industries in the 1960s and 1970s. However, as those industries declined, the neighborhood increasingly became home to immigrant families, particularly from Latin American countries, seeking better opportunities. By the 1990s, the area's population shifted substantially, and the school district responded by expanding its capacity to meet the needs of the growing immigrant population (Urban School District, 2025).

The school's student population reflects this broader demographic shift, with approximately 80% of students classified as EL, a rate substantially higher than the district average of roughly 30%. Percentages are reported in approximate form to preserve district anonymity. Given the school's long-standing commitment to bilingual education, the high percentage of ELs, and the challenges faced by these students, it presented a rich environment for examining perceptions of the effectiveness of bilingual programs and student experiences after they transition into all-English classrooms (Urban School District, 2025).

This setting was particularly suitable for the study due to the large proportion of ELs, the implementation of bilingual education programs for these students, and the need to examine perceptions of such programs in the context of academic success. The school's history with bilingual education provided an opportunity to investigate how such programs have evolved over time and how participants perceive their influence on students' academic and linguistic development, particularly as they transition to all-English classrooms. The high percentage of ELs at this school, combined with its unique historical background and ongoing efforts to support these students, allowed for a deeper understanding of the challenges ELs experience in navigating both language acquisition and academic achievement. Furthermore, the fact that the school follows the district's curriculum, which aligns with state-mandated standards, ensured that the findings from this study could be applicable to similar schools in the district and state.

The school's economic context also made it an important setting for examining the broader socio-economic factors that may affect students' success. The student population faces additional challenges related to low socioeconomic status, including limited access to educational resources, support systems, and parental involvement, which participants described as influencing variability in students' academic performance. This context was critical when

analyzing how bilingual programs help mitigate some of these challenges and prepare students for success in an all-English instructional environment.

Data Collection

This study employed a multi-method data collection approach, using two qualitative techniques to explore the factors perceived to influence ELs' academic performance and success after transitioning from bilingual education programs to all-English instructional settings. The primary data collection methods included interviews with bilingual and ESL teachers and focus groups. These methods provided insights into the experiences, beliefs, and perceptions of teachers, as well as patterns in academic achievement. This aligns with qualitative research approaches, which are designed to capture participants' perspectives and interpret patterns within their experiences to better understand complex educational phenomena (Creswell & Poth, 2023). It is important to note that the interview and focus group participants were distinct groups of educators. The semi-structured interviews were conducted with individual teachers to elicit personal perspectives on bilingual program implementation and transition experiences. This approach is appropriate because semi-structured interviews allow for in-depth exploration of participants' perspectives while maintaining flexibility to probe relevant experiences and meanings (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). The focus groups, by contrast, were intentionally structured to capture collective dialogue and shared professional insights across a broader range of instructional roles. This approach is supported in qualitative research, as focus groups facilitate interactive discussion that can reveal shared understandings, diverse perspectives, and collective meanings among participants (Busetto et al., 2020). The use of distinct participant groups enhanced the methodological rigor of the study by allowing for triangulation between

individual and group data sources, strengthening the credibility and depth of the findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2022; Creswell & Poth, 2023).

Teacher Interviews

In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with seven teachers who have worked with EL students in both bilingual and all-English instructional settings. The purpose of these interviews was to gather qualitative data on teachers' attitudes and beliefs regarding bilingual education programs and their perceived influence on students' academic and linguistic success. Interviews focused on understanding how teachers perceive the challenges faced by bilingual students in all-English classrooms and the instructional strategies they believe influence students' success or struggle. Interview responses were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed for recurring themes and patterns related to teacher beliefs and the effectiveness of bilingual programs. This process is consistent with qualitative research practices, where transcription and thematic analysis are used to systematically identify patterns and interpret meaning within participants' responses (Creswell & Creswell, 2022; Creswell & Poth, 2023). The teacher participants were selected from the faculty at the research site, which is a school with a student population that includes nearly 82% EL (Urban School District, 2025). These teachers were chosen based on their involvement in bilingual education programs and their direct interaction with EL students. This selection approach is consistent with purposive sampling, which involves intentionally selecting participants with relevant experience to provide rich, information-focused insights aligned with the research questions (Campbell et al., 2020; Creswell & Creswell, 2022). The study focused on including all certified bilingual and ESL teachers who have implemented or are currently teaching bilingual education programs in the school. Participation in the study was voluntary, and teachers were invited to participate in both interviews and focus groups.

The sample of teaching participants were diverse in terms of experience and background. According to the school's demographic data for the 2023-2024 school year, the teacher population consisted of 11.4% bilingual/ESL-certified teachers, and 85.5% of teachers held certifications in regular education with ESL endorsement. Teachers came from various ethnic backgrounds, with 22.1% identifying as Hispanic, 26.8% as African American, and 51% as White. Teachers' years of experience varied, with 12.5% in the beginning stages of their careers (1-5 years), 32.1% with 6-10 years of experience, 33.2% with 11-20 years, and 29.4% with over 20 years of experience. This variation in experience allowed for a rich understanding of how teacher perceptions and practices differ based on years of experience, and other factors, in bilingual education settings. This is consistent with qualitative research, which values variation in participant characteristics to capture diverse perspectives and deepen understanding of the phenomenon under study (Creswell & Poth, 2023).

The inclusion criteria for teachers were based on their role in implementing bilingual or ESL programs at the school. Teachers who had not been involved in bilingual education or who did not directly teach EL students were excluded from the study. This approach is consistent with purposive sampling, which involves selecting participants based on specific characteristics relevant to the research focus to ensure meaningful and information-rich data (Campbell et al., 2020; Creswell & Creswell, 2022).

Teachers Focus Groups

Focus groups were conducted with teachers who currently teach students who have transitioned to all-English classrooms. The focus group participants were distinct from the educators who participated in the individual interview component of the study. This separation supports methodological rigor by enabling triangulation across different participant groups and

data sources, thereby strengthening the credibility of the findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2022; Creswell & Poth, 2023). These sessions provided a collaborative environment for teachers to share their insights and experiences regarding the readiness of EL students to succeed academically in an all-English instructional setting. Focus groups allowed the researcher to delve deeper into the collective views of teachers about the adequacy of bilingual programs in preparing students for English-only classrooms. The focus groups were audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis. Focus groups and semi-structured interviews, when used in tandem, offer a robust approach in qualitative research because they facilitate in-depth, flexible exploration of participants' experiences, beliefs, and interactions in their own words and contexts (Busetto et al., 2020; DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019; Lambert & Loiselle, 2008). These methods allowed for in-depth explorations of teacher perceptions, instructional practices, and the challenges and successes they observe in students undergoing this critical shift.

Selection of Participants

The selection of these specific cohorts was purposeful, as it aimed to understand teachers' perceptions of the long-term influence of bilingual education on student success. Purposive sampling is effective because it allows researchers to deliberately select participants who have specific knowledge or experience relevant to the research questions, enhancing the depth and relevance of the data collected (Campbell et al., 2020; Creswell & Creswell, 2022). For the teacher participants, the inclusion criteria necessitated that teachers must hold current bilingual or ESL certification, and they must have direct experience teaching EL students in the bilingual program. Teachers who had not been involved with bilingual programs or who were teaching in non-bilingual classrooms were excluded.

Trustworthiness

To ensure trustworthiness, this study applied Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria of credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. Credibility was supported through prolonged engagement with participants, triangulation of semi-structured interviews and focus groups, and member checking to verify interpretations (Creswell & Poth, 2023). Dependability was enhanced by maintaining an audit trail, which documents research decisions, coding processes, and methodological changes allowing others to follow the study's process (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). Confirmability was addressed through reflexive journaling conducted by the researcher and through peer debriefing to reduce researcher bias and ensure that findings were grounded in participants' accounts rather than personal perspectives (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Transferability was strengthened by providing thick, contextual descriptions of the school setting, participant background, and bilingual program implementation, enabling readers to access applicability to other contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2023). Together, these strategies ensured that the study's findings reflected the authentic experiences of bilingual and ESL teachers while meeting rigorous qualitative research standards.

Instruments

Teacher Semi-Structured Interview

The semi-structured interviews were guided by 10 well-crafted questions. Each main question was open-ended and designed to encourage storytelling, and probes were used by the interviewer to clarify or expand responses (Creswell & Poth, 2023). For semi-structured interviews, fewer than 8 primary questions can risk missing important areas of inquiry while more than 15 can make the interview too long and lead to participation fatigue (Kallio et al., 2016). The expectation of the interview was that it would last between 45 to 60 minutes. The

items included were specifically chosen for their relevance to the constructs measured in this study, namely teachers' beliefs and attitudes toward bilingual education, second language acquisition, and EL student success.

This selected structure allowed for consistency across interviews while preserving the flexibility needed to explore unanticipated but relevant topics that may arise during conversation. By balancing predetermined questions with adaptive follow-up prompts, the interviewer ensured that all participants address the core areas of inquiry while also capturing the unique nuances of their individual experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2022; Creswell & Poth, 2023). This adaptability is a key strength of the semi-structured format, as it accommodates diverse communication styles and encourages richer, more authentic accounts than rigidly standardized instruments. In the context of this study, the format was particularly well-suited to examining complex constructs such as teacher beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions, which are best understood through participants' own narratives and contextual explanations rather than fixed-response formats (Creswell & Creswell, 2022; Creswell & Poth, 2023).

Focus Groups

A focus group can be defined as group interviews where all interaction and discussion centers on a topic provided by the researcher. Focus groups are characterized by Krueger and Casey (2000) as “carefully planned series of discussions designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment” (p. 5). The interactions of the groups are expected to generate insights that would otherwise be hard to obtain through individual interviews (Lauri, 2019; Umana-Taylor & Bamaca, 2004). These groups offer avenues for gathering in-depth information from members representing a target audience in an environment that encourages dialogue. Focus groups generate information on participants'

views, values, and attitudes that can then be utilized to identify solutions for both known and novel problems (Lauri, 2019; Morgan, 1998). Focus groups can also help to better understand the ways in which people experience programs from the perspective of their own worldview (Morgan, 1998).

Focus groups depend on the existence of an open, trusting environment that seeks neither to persuade nor compel people's opinions (Grudens-Schuck et al., 2004). Both Larson and Hegland (2003) and Mitra (1994) agree that focus groups lend insights into the language used by survey respondents, which, in turn, enhances the reliability and validity of survey responses. Hebbeler and Gerlach-Downie (2002) state that many of the questions regarding why some participants respond to survey questions in the manner they do can be clarified and answered by utilizing focus groups. This process becomes particularly salient because researchers can add elements to the information gathered using a quantitative survey.

Fern (2001) contends that focus groups provide reliable data that can be used to determine some important inferences in regard to human behavior inherent in specified environments. For the purpose of this study, the specific environment was a single inner-city elementary school. This particular researcher used three focus groups. First, the researcher invited all bilingual and ESL teachers serving in the bilingual education program, those serving students who have been transitioned from the bilingual program into an all-English instructional classroom.

A focus group invitation was an electronic invitation delivered to each potential participant (see Appendix B). This invitation outlined the purpose of the study, the approximate timeframe for the focus group, and other relevant information. Once participants were identified, they received a confirmation letter. Then, a focus group confirmation letter was sent to highlight

the major components of the focus group process and meeting dates and times (see Appendix C). General demographic information was collected; however, no specific identifiers were included in the transcript in order to ensure anonymity in all areas other than teachers' area of certification and assignment level (i.e., Early childhood bilingual teacher A, B, etc.).

Focus Group Interview Questions

Morgan (1996) defends the idea that focus groups are “a research method devoted to data collection” (p. 130). The main purpose of the focus group interviews was to collect detailed information in a systematic fashion to facilitate the analysis of participants' responses. The goal was to further explore teachers' views whether instructional practices in the bilingual program at this campus are preparing students to transition into all-English instructional programs effectively. The focus group interview questions were developed by the researcher to explore staff perceptions about the possible reasons as to why some students continue to have higher academic achievement after they transition from the bilingual program into an all-English instructional setting.

The researcher piloted the questions with the assistance of a group of experts from the following content areas to assess the questions' relevance: two campus administrators who have expertise in bilingual and transitional programs, the literacy coach and LPAC chairperson, one ESL/transitional teacher and one bilingual teacher. All panel members were provided with informed consent forms (see Appendix A). The panel composed of approximately 90 years of combined experience in the realm of bilingual and transitional programs, serving English language learners. As a result, interview questions were modified as needed to align their content with the survey's results. This formative approach of piloting the focus group questions enabled the researcher to assess the need to modify any questions and clarify the study's conceptual

construct (Yin, 2003). The interview questions consisted of three types: engagement, exploratory, and exit questions. Engagement questions served to introduce participants to the discussion and increase their comfort level. The researcher also served as moderator for the focus groups, and the meetings were conducted in one of the teachers' lounges at the campus.

The focus group interviews lasted approximately 60 to 90 minutes each, and light refreshments, including snacks and beverages, were provided to participants. To promote eye contact and social interaction among the group members, seating was arranged around a table. Each participant was asked to identify him or herself using their certification area and their teaching level. In an attempt to include verbal and nonverbal responses, each focus group session was audio-taped with the purpose of transcribing responses later during the data analysis phase of the study. The ultimate goal here was to reach the most holistic, rich qualitative data collection process by including all modes of communication used by the participants.

Focus Group Protocol

The focus group discussions followed a semi-structured protocol, guiding the conversation to ensure that all relevant topics are addressed. The questions were open-ended and designed to elicit rich, qualitative data on teachers' perceptions of bilingual education programs, the transition process for EL students, and the effectiveness of strategies used in all-English classrooms. The focus group protocol included questions that paralleled those used in the individual interviews in order to explore the same topics within a collaborative group discussion format. Sample questions included:

1. What challenges do you perceive in helping EL students succeed in an all-English classroom?
2. In your experience, what teaching strategies have been most effective in supporting

- bilingual students who transition to English-only classrooms?
3. How do you believe bilingual programs prepare students for success in all-English classrooms?

The focus group discussions were audio-recorded with participants' consent and transcribed for thematic analysis. To ensure trustworthiness, the researcher used member checking to verify the accuracy of transcriptions and interpretations.

Procedures

The data collection took place over a period of one month, during December 2025. Individual semi-structured interviews were conducted throughout the month, while focus groups were conducted during the final two weeks of December 2025. Semi-structured interviews took place in a two-week period based on coordination of times with participant schedules. After the semi-structured interviews were completed, focus groups were scheduled with teachers who have taught students after they have transitioned to all-English classrooms. Focus group sessions were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed.

Sample Selection

All certified bilingual teachers who implemented a bilingual program in the past, or who are now teaching in a bilingual program in the school, were invited to participate. This criterion applied across all three focus groups, with participants self-selecting into the available sessions based on their schedules and availability. Their participation took place on a volunteer basis. Table 3.2 below describes the characteristics of the teachers at the school research site as of 2023-2024, and Table 3.3 shows the percentage of experienced teachers.

Table 3.2*Teacher Characteristics at Site - 2023-2024*

Teachers by Certification Area and Ethnicity	Teacher Category % of School Staff Total
Bilingual/ESL	11.4%
Regular/ESL	85.5%
Hispanic	22.1%
Hispanic	26.8%
White	51%

Table 3.3*Percentage of Experienced Teachers*

Teachers by Years of Experience	Teacher Category % of School Staff Total
Beginning	12.5%
1-5 Years	32.1%
6-10	33.2%
11-20 Years	29.4%
20 Years of More	9.5%

For the purposes of this case study, the researcher analyzed the data gathered from participating teachers. With respect to gathering data in response to research question 2 (i.e., What specific factors contribute to ELs' decline in academic performance after

transitioning from a bilingual education program to an all-English instructional setting?) all teachers serving students who have already been transitioned into an all-English instruction were invited to participate in a focus group. These sessions assisted the researcher in gaining greater understanding of the teachers' perceptions about whether the students they receive are indeed prepared to be successful in all-English classroom. While 14 certified bilingual teachers were initially invited to participate, a total of seven individual interviews were ultimately completed. Reduced participation was attributed to contextual factors including heavy instructional workloads, extensive planning and documentation requirements, and additional responsibilities related to supporting ELs and their families. Additionally, some potential participants expressed concern that their perspectives could be misunderstood, despite assurances of confidentiality. The final sample of seven participants remains consistent with qualitative research guidance for semi-structured interview studies (Creswell & Creswell, 2022).

While the number of interview participants was limited, qualitative research prioritizes depth and richness of data over sample size. Data saturation was considered achieved when no new themes or insights emerged across interviews and focus groups, and responses demonstrated consistency in perspectives related to the research questions. This aligns with qualitative research standards, where smaller, purposive samples can yield sufficient depth to reach saturation when participants share relevant experience and provide detailed, information-rich responses (Creswell & Creswell, 2022; Creswell & Poth, 2023).

Data Analysis

Qualitative data was analyzed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a qualitative data analysis method used to identify, analyze, and interpret patterns or themes with

textual data, offering insights into participants' experiences and perspectives (Creswell & Creswell, 2022; Creswell & Poth, 2023). The researcher coded the data based on recurring themes related to teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions about bilingual programs and EL student success in both the interviews and focus groups. This process involved systematically organizing codes into broader categories and themes to support interpretation and ensure alignment with the research questions (Creswell & Creswell, 2022; Creswell & Poth, 2023). A software program was utilized to assist with organizing and coding the qualitative data.

The data analysis was conducted within a case study framework, focusing on an in-depth examination of a single school context. The identified codes, categories, and themes were interpreted in relation to the specific setting and participants to address the research questions and explain patterns observed in the data. This approach is consistent with case study methodology, which emphasizes the examination of a bounded system within its real-life context (Creswell & Poth, 2023). The purpose of this analysis was to explore and interpret participants' perceptions and experiences rather than to establish causal relationships or statistical associations between variables.

Semi-Structured Interview Data Analysis Procedures

Data from the semi-structured interviews was collected through audio recordings, with participants' consent, to ensure accuracy and completeness of responses. All recordings were transcribed verbatim, and transcripts were reviewed alongside the audio files to verify accuracy. The data was then imported into qualitative analysis software called NVivo, which facilitated systematic coding, organization, and retrieval of text segments. Thematic analysis was employed to identify, analyze, and interpret patterns emerging from data, following an interactive process of coding, category development, and theme refinement (Creswell &

Creswell, 2022; Creswell & Poth, 2023). Initial open coding was followed by axial coding to establish relationships among categories, allowing for a nuanced understanding of teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and experiences related to bilingual education and EL student success. Throughout this process, analytic memos were maintained to document coding decisions and reflections, ensuring transparency and dependability in the analysis.

Raw interview and focus group data were first reviewed in full to allow for familiarization with the dataset. Initial open coding was conducted to identify meaningful segments of text related to teacher beliefs, instructional practices, and student outcomes. These initial codes were then grouped into broader categories based on similarity and frequency across participants. Through an iterative process, categories were refined and organized into overarching themes that captured recurring patterns in the data. This progression from raw data to codes, categories, and final themes aligns with established thematic analysis procedures used to systematically interpret qualitative data (Creswell & Creswell, 2022; Creswell & Poth, 2023).

Focus Group Data Analysis Procedures

Focus groups provide rich qualitative data through participant interaction, allowing for the emergence of shared meanings, diverse perspectives, and nuanced insights that may not surface in individual interviews (Busetto et al., 2020; Lambert & Loiselle, 2008). Focus groups derive data not only from discussion but also from various subjective phenomena, such as emotions, ironies, contradictions, and tensions. Conversations among focus group participants result in data characterized as interactive discourse, which can be analyzed to identify patterns and themes reflecting participants' collective and individual perspectives (Creswell & Creswell, 2022; Creswell & Poth, 2023).

The audio recording of each focus group was replayed in its entirety a minimum of three times. Then, the researcher typed an abridged transcript in order to create a hard-copy version of the teachers' and administrators' responses in a Microsoft Word document. The researcher utilized transcript-based analysis to organize and evaluate the focus group data. This approach is consistent with qualitative research practices, where transcripts are used as the primary data source to systematically examine participant discourse and meaning (Creswell & Creswell, 2022; Creswell & Poth, 2023). The researcher used abridged focus group transcripts to initiate the analysis process. By utilizing this process, the researcher identified emerging themes that reflected bilingual, ESL, and administrators' responses or sources. This process aligns with thematic analysis, which involves identifying patterns across qualitative data to develop themes that represent participants' perspectives and experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2022; Creswell & Poth, 2023). The emergent themes assisted the researcher in explaining the different reasons provided by ESL and bilingual teachers, as well as administrators, regarding the reasons why some students continue to be academically successful after they transition from bilingual programs into all-English instructional settings while other students do not. To obtain accurate and complete information from the participants in the focus groups, the researcher replayed each focus group audiotape for the results section. This process supports credibility in qualitative research by ensuring accuracy and completeness of the data through careful verification of transcripts and recorded responses (Creswell & Creswell, 2022; Creswell & Poth, 2023). Therefore, the statements included in the results section were expanded from the abridged transcripts.

Focus group data were analyzed following a similar progression as the interview data. After repeated review of the audio recordings and transcripts, initial codes were generated

from participants' responses and interactions. These codes were then grouped into categories based on shared meanings and patterns across the discussions. Through an iterative process, categories were refined into broader themes that captured collective perspectives and recurring ideas across participants. This systematic progression from raw data to codes, categories, and themes ensured consistency in analysis and alignment with established thematic analysis procedures (Creswell & Creswell, 2022; Creswell & Poth, 2023).

Limitations

The purpose of this study was to investigate why some ELs excel academically in bilingual programs but struggle academically and linguistically after transitioning to all-English classrooms the following year. In addition, this study provided an in-depth exploration of bilingual and ESL teachers' beliefs and attitudes toward EL, particularly in relation to students' later academic success in an all-English instructional setting. Firstly, it should be noted that the specific individual nature of the local community, the school, and educators working within the campus may limit the generalization of this study's findings, especially as one's scope widens. The study focused on a relatively new inner-city school with a majority student population represented by one demographic group. More large-scale studies will be needed to allow the generalization of this study's findings to other comparable schools with similar teaching staff and student demographics.

Secondly, this study's semi-structured interviews have some inherent limitations. Qualitative studies derived from interviews may be influenced by participants' willingness to speak openly where social desirability bias could shape responses (Creswell & Creswell, 2022; Creswell & Poth, 2023). While member checking and transcription accuracy enhanced trustworthiness, the potential for researcher bias in interpreting subjective data must also be

acknowledged, given the researcher's positionality as a bilingual educator. Third, the use of focus groups does not represent findings generalizable to major populations. Focus groups produce conversations that border on intimacy (Larson et al., 2004); therefore, the results do not produce data beyond the local context of the problem being studied.

Since focus groups are social in nature, they are not a reliable technique to determine an individual's authentic point of view (Creswell & Poth, 2023). Although the semi-public nature of focus groups shaped the data, it also rendered it relevant to the local context only. As defined by Fern (2001), focus groups can lead to trustworthy data about human behavior, but they cannot be generalized and reliably confirmed repetitively in the same manner as other research techniques that lead to the development of theories.

Delimitations

In this study, delimitations represented the intentional parameters established to maintain a clear and focused scope (Creswell & Creswell, 2022; Creswell & Poth, 2023). The participant pool was restricted to bilingual and ESL-certified teachers within a single elementary school who have direct experience teaching students transitioning from bilingual programs to English-only instruction. Teachers lacking this specific experience were not included to ensure that the data collected directly informs the research questions regarding program implementations and instructional practices. The inquiry was further confined to bilingual education and ESL settings; alternative instructional models, such as dual immersion or newcomer programs, were excluded. These boundaries were designed to keep the study manageable in scale while ensuring that the findings remain closely aligned with the study's purpose and objectives.

Positionality Statement

As a researcher, it is crucial to acknowledge how my identity and lived experiences may have influenced my perspective, interpretations, and interactions throughout this study. Positionality, in this context, refers to the stance I take in relation to the research community, the participants, and the social and political environments that shape this study. Creswell and Poth (2023) describe positionality as the researcher's acknowledgement of their own background, experiences, values, and biases, and how these shape the research process. They emphasize that positionality has direct implications for qualitative inquiry because it influences how researchers interpret data, interact with participants, and represent findings, making reflexivity essential for maintaining credibility. In this section, I aim to reflect on how my own background, experiences, and values impacted my engagement with the study on bilingual education, ELs, and academic success.

Personal Identity and its Influence on Research

My identity as an educator and researcher with a deep commitment to educational equity played a significant role in shaping my approach to this study. I am a Mexican American female born in Mexico City and raised in Fort Worth, Texas who has worked in diverse educational settings, including those that serve high populations of EL students. My professional experience and personal interest in bilingual education have undoubtedly influenced my decision to focus on the challenges faced by ELs in transitioning from bilingual programs to all-English classrooms. I recognize that my personal experiences with bilingual education shaped my research perspective, and I am aware of how these experiences potentially influenced my interpretations of the data.

Growing up in a multilingual environment, I have seen firsthand the struggles and triumphs of EL students, and these experiences inform both my empathy toward the challenges they face and my understanding of the complexity of bilingual education. My background allows me to appreciate the socio-linguistic challenges students encounter when transitioning to English-only educational environments. These experiences offer me a unique lens through which to approach the study, yet I am conscious of how my personal connection to the subject matter may also introduce biases in terms of how I interpret teacher attitudes, student outcomes, and the success of bilingual programs.

Professional Identity and Research Stance

As an educator, I have been exposed to a range of instructional approaches and frameworks for supporting EL students. I have worked with teachers and administrators who prioritize the importance of bilingual education, and I believe that bilingualism is an asset for both academic achievement and personal growth. These beliefs strongly informed the study's focus on the long-term effects of bilingual education programs. However, I recognize that my stance may lead me to view bilingual education programs as inherently valuable, which may affect my interpretation of outcomes and teacher attitudes. As a result, I strove to remain open to all perspectives and to actively engage in a critical reflection of the data to ensure my interpretations are grounded in the experiences and perspectives of the participants themselves, rather than being solely shaped by my beliefs.

I also acknowledge that my professional identity as a researcher within the field of education may lead me to adopt a particular focus on institutional structures and policies. I am trained to observe educational phenomena from a systematic, data-driven perspective, which could influence how I conceptualize and analyze issues such as the alignment of bilingual

programs with district standards or the effectiveness of instructional practices. While my professional background helps me approach the study with a certain level of expertise, it also positions me in a way that may cause me to overlook certain nuanced or lived experiences of participants, especially those of teachers and students who may have different or opposing views on bilingual education.

Social and Political Context

The social and political context in which this research takes place is also a crucial aspect of my positionality. The school in this study is situated in a predominantly immigrant community, with a significant percentage of students classified as EL. The political debates surrounding bilingual education, language acquisition, and immigration reform in the U.S. have a direct influence on the experiences of the students, teachers, and families within this community. These social and political factors shape how bilingual education programs are implemented and received, and they may also affect the attitudes and behaviors of the participants involved in this study.

As a researcher, I remained aware of the broader social and political implications of this study, particularly in terms of how educational policies and ideologies impact the success of bilingual education programs. Expectedly, the political climate surrounding issues of immigration and language acquisition led some participants to hold more favorable or unfavorable views of bilingual education, which influenced the data collected. It is important for me to consider how my personal stance on bilingual education and my awareness of current social issues might color my interpretation of the data.

Reflecting on Potential Biases

In conducting this study, I was mindful of how my positionality might introduce both

conscious and unconscious biases. These biases could potentially influence my interpretation of the data in various ways. For example, I may be more inclined to interpret positive teacher attitudes toward bilingual education as reflective of program success, rather than considering other factors that may contribute to student outcomes. Similarly, I may unconsciously emphasize themes that align with my own beliefs about bilingual education, while overlooking data that suggests alternative perspectives or interpretations.

To mitigate these biases, I was committed to engage in self-reflection throughout the research process. This included regularly questioning how my personal and professional beliefs shaped my interpretations of the data and ensuring that I remained open to the voices and experiences of the participants. Additionally, I sought feedback from colleagues and mentors who have different perspectives to help balance my own views and to ensure that my analysis is as objective and inclusive as possible.

My positionality as both an educator and researcher shaped the way I approached this study on bilingual education and the academic success of EL students. My background and experiences have led me to be particularly invested in issues of language acquisition and educational equity, but I recognize that these personal factors may influence how I understand and interpret the data. By acknowledging these potential biases and remaining committed to self-reflection throughout the research process, I aimed to produce a study that is rigorous, balanced, and attentive to the lived experiences of the participants. Through this process of critical self-awareness, I hoped to contribute to a broader understanding of the challenges and successes of bilingual education and its impact on the long-term academic and linguistic outcomes of EL students.

Chapter Summary

Chapter Three details the methodology for investigating why some ELs succeed in bilingual programs but struggle after transitioning to all-English classrooms, while others continue to thrive. Using a qualitative case study design, the research focused on The Maplewood Elementary School, a high-poverty urban school with a majority EL enrollment and a longstanding bilingual program. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews and focus groups with bilingual and ESL-certified teachers, purposefully selected for their direct experience teaching transitioning ELs. The chapter outlined factors that may influence perceptions of outcomes, including socioeconomic status, language proficiency, teacher experience and perspective, curriculum implementation, and community demographics. Trustworthiness was ensured through credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability measures. Thematic analysis was applied to identify patterns in teacher perceptions and practices that participants described as influencing EL success. Limitations included the study's localized scope and the potential for bias inherent in qualitative methods. Delimitations restricted participants to bilingual and ESL-certified teachers at the case site. The chapter closes with a positionality statement acknowledging the researcher's background and potential biases. The next chapter will present the findings, organized by emergent themes, illustrating how teacher attitudes, instructional practices, and contextual factors influence perceptions of ELs' academic and linguistic outcomes post-transition.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

This study explored teachers' perceptions of why some ELs excel academically in bilingual programs but struggle academically and linguistically after transitioning to all-English classrooms the following year. To do so, the study explored teachers' attitudes towards bilingual programs and the extent to which these programs are implemented. By exploring teacher beliefs and program fidelity, the study aimed to identify perceived barriers and types of support related to ELs' academic trajectories during and after the transition from bilingual education. To provide a framework for the study, the following research questions were established:

1. How do bilingual and ESL teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes towards bilingual programs, as well as their implementation of bilingual programs, influence students' mastery of the English language?
2. What specific factors contribute to ELs' decline in academic performance after transitioning from a bilingual education program to an all-English instructional setting?

This chapter presents the findings derived from qualitative thematic analysis, as outlined in Chapter 3. Results are drawn from two qualitative data sources: semi-structured individual interviews and focus group discussions with bilingual and ESL teachers. Interview findings are presented first and organized by research question to reflect how teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and instructional practices relate to ELs' language development and post-transition outcomes. Focus group findings are presented next and organized by thematic patterns that emerged across group discussions, highlighting shared perspectives on bilingual instruction, transition readiness, alignment of instructional practices, and systemic supports. Together, these analyses provide a

comprehensive qualitative account of teachers' perspectives related to the study's research questions.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured individual interviews were conducted to explore bilingual and ESL teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and instructional practices related to the transition of ELs from bilingual education programs to all-English instructional settings. The interview protocol consisted of ten open-ended questions designed to elicit participants' perspectives on bilingual program implementation, student readiness for transition, instructional strategies, and perceived factors influencing student success following transition. Chapter 3 identified a targeted interview sample of approximately 14 participants, including eight bilingual teachers and six ESL teachers, to support in-depth qualitative analysis. However, a total of seven individual interviews were ultimately completed and included in the findings. Reduced participation was attributed to contextual factors within the school setting, including heavy instructional workloads, extensive planning and documentation requirements, and additional responsibilities related to supporting ELs and their families. Several teachers also reported stress and fatigue associated with these demands, which limited their ability to participate in optional research interviews.

Beyond these time-constraint related factors, some potential participants expressed hesitation that their perspectives could be misunderstood or negatively affect their professional roles, despite assurances of confidentiality. Although the final interview sample was smaller than originally projected, this sample size remains consistent with qualitative research guidance, which indicates that in-depth interviews with a small, purposefully selected group can be sufficient to achieve data saturation when participants share common experiences and the research focus is narrow (Creswell & Creswell, 2022; Creswell & Poth, 2023). The seven

interviews yielded rich, recurring patterns across participants, supporting thematic saturation and adequately addressing the study's research questions.

To protect confidentiality and comply with approved ethical procedures, all participant names used in this study are pseudonyms. Identifying information beyond teaching role and grade level was not collected or reported. Interview data were transcribed verbatim and analyzed thematically, as described in Chapter 3. Table 4.1 highlights the interview participant characteristics below.

Table 4.1

Interview Participant Characteristics

Participants & Pseudonym	Teaching Role	Grade Level
Mrs. Alvarez	Bilingual Teacher	3 rd Grade
Ms. Castillo	Bilingual Teacher	Kindergarten
Ms. Rivera	Bilingual Teacher	4 th Grade
Mrs. Delgado	Bilingual Teacher	1 st Grade
Mr. Ramirez	ESL Teacher	5 th Grade
Mr. Gomez	ESL Teacher	2 nd Grade
Mr. Franklin	ESL Teacher	5 th Grade

Note. All names are pseudonyms. Participants were certified bilingual or ESL educators with experience supporting ELs in both bilingual and all-English instructional settings.

Research Question 1: Interview Results

Research Question One posited, *How do bilingual and ESL teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes towards bilingual programs, as well as their implementation of bilingual*

programs, influence students' mastery of the English language? To address this question, semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with bilingual and ESL teachers who had experience working with ELs in both bilingual and all-English instructional settings. Each participant responded to the same ten open-ended interview questions, allowing for consistency across interviews while providing opportunities for participants to elaborate on their beliefs, instructional practices, and experiences supporting students during and after transition. Analysis of the interview transcripts revealed several recurring patterns related to teacher beliefs about bilingual education, instructional practices, program implementation, and perceived factors influencing English language development. The themes presented below emerged directly from participants' responses and are supported by verbatim excerpts from the interview data. Table 4.2 highlights emergent themes from individual interviews related to Research Question One.

Table 4.2

Emergent Themes from Individual Interviews Related to Research Question One

Theme	Description	Exemplar Interview Evidence
Bilingual education as a foundation for English mastery	Teachers described bilingual education as essential for building conceptual understanding that supports later English language development	"I strongly believe bilingual education is the foundation for long-term academic success." (Mrs. Alvarez)
Distinction between conversational and academic English	Teachers emphasized that conversational fluency does not	"Students might have conversational English, but

	equate to academic English proficiency	they don't have academic English.” (Mrs. Alvarez)
Academic vocabulary as a central barrier	Participants identified academic vocabulary as the primary obstacle to English mastery	“Academic vocabulary is the first barrier.” (Mr. Ramirez)
Teacher attitudes shape student confidence and engagement	Teachers reported that beliefs about bilingualism directly influence student confidence and participation	“Students thrive when they feel their language is valued.” (Mrs. Delgado)
Inconsistent implementation of bilingual programs	Variability in program implementation was linked to uneven English language outcomes	“That inconsistency explains why some students thrive while others struggle.” (Ms. Castillo)

Note. All exemplar quotes are taken verbatim from individual interview transcripts. Participant names are pseudonyms.

Theme 1: Bilingual Education as a Foundation for English Language Mastery

Participants consistently described bilingual education as a critical foundation for students' long-term academic success and English language mastery. Across interviews, teachers emphasized that developing conceptual understanding and literacy in students' first language was essential for supporting later English development, rather than an obstacle to it. Mrs. Alvarez articulated this view directly, stating, “I strongly believe bilingual education is the foundation for long-term academic success. When students learn core concepts in their first language, they understand them deeply.” This belief was echoed by ESL teachers as well as

bilingual teachers, indicating shared understanding across instructional roles. Mr. Ramirez similarly emphasized the necessity of bilingual instruction, noting, “Bilingual education is not just helpful — it’s necessary. Students learn best when they understand the concepts in their native language first.” These perspectives reflect a shared belief that English mastery is built upon, rather than independent from, students’ first-language knowledge. Mrs. Delgado emphasized the broader impact of bilingual education, stating, “Bilingual education validates students’ identity and supports academic growth. It empowers families too.”

Teachers also framed bilingual education as a means of developing students’ cognitive and academic readiness before language demands increase. Ms. Castillo explained this concept succinctly: “I believe bilingual education gives students the opportunity to understand the world before they learn the language to describe it.” Her statement highlights the importance teachers place on concept development prior to full English immersion. In addition to these explicit statements, participants consistently described students who entered English-only settings with stronger academic foundations as more capable of navigating English language demands. Teachers noted that when students had developed literacy and content knowledge in their first language, they were better positioned to transfer those skills into English instruction. Ms. Rivera reinforced this connection, explaining, “It is the most equitable model for emergent bilinguals. Students need support in their primary language to succeed academically.” Conversely, participants implied that students who lacked strong bilingual foundations were more likely to struggle academically after transition, reinforcing the belief that bilingual education plays a foundational role in English language mastery.

Theme 2: Distinction Between Conversational English and Academic English Proficiency

A recurring pattern across interviews was teachers' clear distinction between students' conversational English proficiency and their ability to use academic English. Participants consistently described situations in which students appeared fluent in everyday interactions yet lacked the language skills necessary to engage with grade-level academic content after transitioning to all-English instruction. Mrs. Alvarez highlighted this distinction directly, stating, "Students might have conversational English, but they don't have academic English." She explained that while students could communicate socially, they struggled when faced with the language demands of academic subjects, particularly in content areas such as science and social studies. This perception was echoed by ESL teachers working with students immediately following transition. Mr. Ramirez similarly observed, "Many of them appear fluent in English because of social language, but they struggle with academic English," emphasizing that surface-level fluency often masked deeper language gaps. Mr. Gomez reinforced this distinction, stating, "We treat English fluency like a race, when it's actually a long-term process."

Teachers also described how this gap affected students' ability to express knowledge they already possessed. Ms. Castillo explained, "Students know concepts in Spanish but don't have the English words to express them." Her statement reflects a common belief among participants that students' academic difficulties were not rooted in a lack of understanding, but rather in insufficient academic language to demonstrate that understanding in English. Mr. Ramirez further clarified this point, explaining, "It's not lack of intelligence; it's lack of language." Beyond these direct statements, participants repeatedly described instructional situations in which students' oral participation, writing, and comprehension declined following transition, despite strong performance in bilingual settings. Teachers noted that academic English demands

increased sharply after transition and required skills such as explanation, analysis, and use of discipline-specific vocabulary. Mr. Franklin described this shift by noting, “Academic language demands explode in 5th grade—STAAR writing, science vocabulary, and complex texts.”

Several participants implied that reliance on conversational English proficiency as an indicator of readiness contributed to students being transitioned before they were linguistically prepared for academic success.

Theme 3: Academic Vocabulary as a Central Barrier to English Language Mastery

Across interviews, teachers consistently identified academic vocabulary as the most significant barrier affecting English Learners’ ability to succeed after transitioning to all-English instructional settings. Participants emphasized that while students often possessed conceptual understanding and basic English communication skills, limited academic vocabulary restricted their ability to comprehend content, participate in instruction, and demonstrate learning.

Mr. Gomez described the challenge in concrete terms, stating, “Content vocabulary is where they struggle the most. Words like analyze, identify, compare, represent—these are abstract and heavily academic.” His observation highlights the disconnect between everyday language use and the discipline-specific vocabulary required for academic tasks. Similarly, Mr. Franklin noted the escalation of language demands in upper grades, explaining, “Academic language demands explode in 5th grade—STAAR writing, science vocabulary, and complex texts.” These comments reflect the teachers’ shared concern that vocabulary expectations increase rapidly following transition, often without sufficient scaffolding. Mrs. Delgado highlighted early indicators of this issue, stating, “Students struggle with comprehension of English texts even if they can decode the words.”

Bilingual teachers echoed these concerns from earlier grade levels. Mrs. Alvarez explained, “Vocabulary is the biggest challenge. My students can handle everyday English, but academic vocabulary is a huge barrier.” She further described how students’ limited vocabulary affected their confidence and willingness to participate academically, particularly in English-only classrooms. In addition to these explicit statements, participants frequently described students’ academic struggles as language-based rather than cognitive. Teachers indicated that students often understood content but lacked the precise vocabulary needed to articulate their thinking in English, especially in writing and oral explanations. Ms. Rivera illustrated this challenge, explaining, “Writing is the hardest part. Students go from writing detailed responses in Spanish to producing simple English sentences.” Several teachers also implied that insufficient emphasis on academic vocabulary development prior to transition contributed to post-transition difficulties. Collectively, these responses suggest that academic vocabulary development is viewed as a critical, yet underdeveloped, component of bilingual program implementation influencing students’ English language mastery.

Theme 4: Teacher Attitudes Toward Bilingualism Shape Student Confidence and Academic Engagement

Participants consistently described teacher attitudes toward bilingualism as a powerful influence on students’ confidence, engagement, and willingness to participate academically in English. Teachers emphasized that how bilingualism and students’ home language were positioned in the classroom affected not only students’ language development but also their sense of belonging and academic risk-taking following transition. Mrs. Delgado highlighted the connection between teacher beliefs and student engagement, stating, “Students thrive when they feel their language is valued.” Her comment reflects a broader pattern in which teachers

associated positive classroom climates with increased student participation and confidence, particularly for students navigating English-only instruction for the first time. Similarly, Ms. Rivera emphasized the importance of classroom messaging, noting, “How a teacher talks about bilingualism in the classroom matters. Students internalize it.” This statement underscores teachers’ awareness that implicit and explicit attitudes toward language influence how students view their own abilities. Mr. Ramirez emphasized this influence, stating, “Students thrive when teachers value their native language and see bilingualism as a strength.”

Teachers also described the negative effects of dismissive or deficit-oriented attitudes toward students’ native language. Ms. Castillo explained, “If teachers do not value Spanish, students feel ashamed.” Participants suggested that such attitudes contributed to student withdrawal, reduced participation, and reluctance to use language academically in English-only settings. Mr. Gomez reinforced this pattern, explaining, “Negative attitudes cause students to withdraw.” Beyond these direct statements, teachers frequently implied that students’ academic struggles were exacerbated when educators viewed bilingualism as a problem to be remedied rather than an asset to be built upon. Participants noted that supportive attitudes toward bilingualism encouraged students to draw on prior knowledge and linguistic resources, while restrictive attitudes limited opportunities for meaningful language use. Collectively, these findings indicate that teacher beliefs and attitudes toward bilingualism play a central role in shaping classroom environments that either support or hinder English Learners’ academic success after transition.

Theme 5: Inconsistent Implementation of Bilingual Programs Contributes to Uneven English Language Outcomes

Participants across roles and grade levels consistently identified inconsistent implementation of bilingual programs as a factor influencing students' English language mastery following transition. Teachers described variability in how bilingual models were enacted across classrooms and grade levels, which they believed resulted in uneven student preparation for all-English instructional settings. Ms. Castillo directly addressed this concern, stating, "I follow the model, but some teachers treat it loosely. That inconsistency explains why some students thrive while others struggle." Her comment reflects a broader perception that differences in instructional fidelity created disparities in students' linguistic and academic readiness. Similarly, Ms. Rivera observed, "The bilingual program is not implemented uniformly," suggesting that inconsistent practices undermined the intended outcomes of the program. Mr. Gomez pointed to differences in early instruction, stating, "Some students come from bilingual classrooms where English was not introduced early enough. That makes my job harder."

ESL teachers working with students, post-transition, echoed these concerns. Mr. Franklin described the downstream effects of uneven implementation, noting, "Some students enter 5th grade with uneven bilingual foundations due to inconsistencies in earlier grades." His statement highlights how variation in earlier bilingual instruction influenced students' ability to meet increased English language demands in upper grades. Beyond these explicit statements, participants frequently described misalignment between bilingual instruction and expectations in all-English classrooms. Teachers indicated that some students transitioned with strong content knowledge and language foundations, while others lacked essential academic language skills, despite having participated in the same program. Mr. Franklin further described this

misalignment, explaining, “Bilingual teachers focus on Spanish tests; ESL teachers focus on English growth. Students get caught between both.” Several teachers implied that emphasis on compliance or testing outcomes, rather than consistent instructional practices, contributed to these disparities. Collectively, participants’ responses suggest that inconsistent implementation of bilingual programs weakens continuity of language development and contributes to uneven English language mastery among students following transition.

Differences in Perspectives by Grade Level and Instructional Role

Differences in emphasis emerged across interviews based on both grade level and instructional role. For instance, early elementary bilingual teachers consistently framed their work around foundational language development. Ms. Castillo, a kindergarten bilingual teacher, emphasized oral language development, early vocabulary exposure, and concept formation as critical priorities in the primary grades, noting that students must first “understand the world” before acquiring the language to describe it. Similarly, Mrs. Delgado, a first-grade bilingual teacher, described focusing on oral language production and early language routines to establish a foundation for later academic success.

In contrast, upper elementary and ESL teachers focused more heavily on academic language demands following transition. Mr. Franklin, a fifth-grade ESL teacher, described how academic language expectations increase sharply in upper grades, particularly in writing, science vocabulary, and complex texts. Likewise, Mr. Gomez, a second-grade ESL teacher, emphasized students’ difficulties with abstract, content-specific vocabulary, explaining that these language demands often exceeded students’ English proficiency after transition.

Differences were also evident by instructional role. For example, Ms. Rivera, a fourth-grade bilingual teacher, highlighted inconsistencies in bilingual program implementation across

classrooms, whereas Mr. Ramirez, a fifth-grade ESL teacher, emphasized the misalignment between bilingual preparation and expectations in all-English settings. Despite these differing perspectives, participants across roles attributed post-transition academic challenges to uneven language preparation and limited academic English development.

Research Question 1: Summary

Findings from the individual interviews indicate that bilingual and ESL teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes toward bilingual programs, as well as their implementation, are perceived to play a significant role in students' mastery of the English language. Across interviews, participants consistently described bilingual education as a foundational component of academic and linguistic development, emphasizing the importance of first-language concept building in supporting later English acquisition. Teachers distinguished clearly between conversational English and academic English, noting that surface-level fluency often masked gaps in academic language proficiency. Academic vocabulary emerged as a central barrier to English mastery, particularly following transition to all-English instruction. Participants also highlighted the influence of teacher attitudes toward bilingualism on student confidence and engagement, as well as the impact of inconsistent bilingual program implementation on students' preparedness for academic English demands. Although differences in emphasis were evident based on grade level and instructional role, participants across roles shared the belief that uneven language preparation and limited academic English development contributed to post-transition academic challenges. Collectively, these findings address Research Question One by illustrating how teacher perspectives and instructional practices shape English Learners' language outcomes.

Research Question 2: Interview Results

Research question 2 asked, *What specific factors contribute to ELs' decline in academic performance after transitioning from a bilingual education program to an all-English instructional setting?* The themes presented below emerged directly from participants' responses and are supported by verbatim excerpts from the individual interview transcripts. Table 4.3 highlights emergent themes from the semi-structured interviews related to Research Question 2:

Table 4.3

Emergent Themes from Individual Interviews Related to Research Question Two

Theme	Description	Exemplar Interview Evidence
Insufficient academic English readiness at the point of transition	Teachers described students being transitioned based on surface-level indicators rather than true academic English proficiency	"Students might have conversational English, but they don't have academic English." (Mrs. Alvarez)
Lack of academic vocabulary and language demands post-transition	Participants emphasized that increased academic language demands, particularly vocabulary and writing, contributed to post-transition decline	"Academic language demands explode in 5th grade—STAAR writing, science vocabulary, and complex texts." (Mr. Franklin)
Abrupt transition and misalignment between	Teachers reported that the transition to all-English	"Students are moved before they're ready." (Ms. Rivera)

bilingual preparation	instruction was sudden and
and all-English	misaligned with students'
expectations	language development

Note. All exemplar quotes are taken verbatim from individual interview transcripts. Participant names are pseudonyms.

Theme 1: Insufficient Academic English Readiness at the Point of Transition

Participants consistently described students' academic difficulties following transition as stemming from insufficient academic English readiness at the time they entered all-English instructional settings. Teachers emphasized that transition decisions were often based on surface-level indicators of English proficiency, such as conversational fluency or assessment results, rather than students' ability to engage with grade-level academic language demands.

Mrs. Alvarez articulated this distinction clearly, stating, "Students might have conversational English, but they don't have academic English." She explained that while students could communicate socially, they frequently lacked the language necessary to comprehend instruction, participate in discussions, and demonstrate understanding through writing once transitioned. This concern was echoed by ESL teachers who worked with students immediately after transition. Mr. Ramirez similarly observed, "Many of them appear fluent in English because of social language, but they struggle with academic English," reinforcing the perception that conversational fluency was often mistaken for readiness. Mr. Gomez challenged this assumption, stating, "If a child cannot produce language orally or in writing at the classroom level, TELPAS is not enough."

Several participants also described students being transitioned before they were prepared to meet the academic expectations of English-only classrooms. Ms. Rivera noted this directly, stating, "Students are moved before they're ready." Teachers described students who had

performed well academically in bilingual settings but experienced immediate declines in confidence and performance after transition, suggesting that language demands, rather than content knowledge, were the primary obstacle. Mrs. Alvarez emphasized the limitations of assessment-based decisions, explaining, “I don’t rely only on TELPAS or one assessment.” In addition to these explicit statements, participants frequently implied that reliance on standardized assessments or limited criteria contributed to premature transitions. Teachers described using writing samples, oral explanations, and classroom performance as more accurate indicators of readiness, yet indicated that these measures were not consistently prioritized in transition decisions. Mr. Ramirez highlighted the importance of these measures, noting, “Writing samples tell me the most.” Collectively, these findings suggest that insufficient academic English readiness at the point of transition was perceived as a central factor contributing to English Learners’ post-transition academic decline.

Theme 2: Increased Academic Language Demands and Vocabulary Requirements

Following Transition

Participants consistently described a sharp increase in academic language demands following students’ transition to all-English instructional settings, which they perceived as a significant contributor to students’ academic decline. Teachers emphasized that post-transition expectations required students to engage with complex texts, abstract vocabulary, and extended writing tasks that exceeded their English language proficiency at the time of transition. Mr. Franklin described this shift most explicitly, stating, “Academic language demands explode in 5th grade—STAAR writing, science vocabulary, and complex texts.” He explained that students entering upper elementary grades were expected to analyze texts, justify responses, and master content-specific vocabulary with limited linguistic scaffolding. Similarly, Mr. Gomez

highlighted the abstract nature of post-transition language expectations, noting, “Content vocabulary is where they struggle the most. Words like analyze, identify, compare, represent—these are abstract and heavily academic.” His observation underscores the gap between everyday English and the specialized language required for academic success. Mr. Ramirez described the impact of this shift, stating, “The shift is overwhelming for some students, especially those who mastered Spanish reading at high levels.”

Bilingual teachers also described how language demands affected students’ ability to demonstrate knowledge. Ms. Rivera explained, “Writing is the hardest part. Students go from writing detailed responses in Spanish to producing simple English sentences.” Teachers described this shift as frustrating for students who understood content but lacked the academic English necessary to express their thinking effectively. Mrs. Alvarez illustrated this frustration, explaining, “I’ve had students tell me they’re discouraged because they go from reading chapter books in Spanish to reading what they call ‘baby books’ in English.” Beyond these explicit statements, participants repeatedly described post-transition classrooms as linguistically demanding environments in which students were expected to perform at grade level with minimal adjustment to language expectations. Teachers implied that insufficient exposure to academic English prior to transition left students unprepared for these demands. Mrs. Delgado emphasized the importance of early exposure, noting, “If students don’t receive enough oral English exposure early on, 3rd and 4th grade transitions are much harder.” Collectively, participants viewed the sudden increase in academic language requirements, particularly vocabulary and writing, as a key factor contributing to students’ post-transition academic difficulties.

Theme 3: Abrupt Transition and Misalignment of Instructional Supports

Interviewees consistently described the transition from bilingual education to all-English instruction as abrupt and misaligned with students' instructional and linguistic needs. Teachers emphasized that students often entered English-only classrooms without adequate transitional supports, resulting in immediate academic and emotional challenges. Ms. Castillo, a kindergarten bilingual teacher, described how transition decisions later in students' schooling were often disconnected from instructional readiness, stating that "the transition into all-English in upper grades often feels abrupt and tied to test scores." Her comment reflects a broader concern that transition criteria emphasized assessment outcomes rather than students' ability to function academically in English. Teachers suggested that such decisions overlooked the gradual nature of academic language development. Mr. Gomez reinforced this concern, stating, "If anything, students are transitioned too soon."

Upper-grade teachers described the effects of this abrupt transition from their vantage point in all-English classrooms. Mr. Ramirez, a fifth-grade ESL teacher, explained, "I see the shock on day one of 5th grade." He described students who entered his classroom confident in bilingual settings but quickly became overwhelmed by English-only expectations. This sudden shift, according to participants, contributed to declines in participation, confidence, and academic performance. Mrs. Alvarez emphasized the pace of the transition, explaining, "It feels too abrupt." Teachers also noted a lack of alignment between bilingual instruction and post-transition expectations. Mr. Franklin described this disconnect by stating, "The biggest issue is lack of alignment. Bilingual teachers focus on Spanish tests; ESL teachers focus on English growth. Students get caught between both." His statement highlights how differing instructional priorities across programs left students unprepared for the realities of all-English instruction.

In addition to these explicit statements, participants frequently described limited coordination and communication between bilingual and ESL teachers during transition years. Teachers implied that stronger alignment, shared expectations, and structured transition planning could reduce the academic disruption students experienced. Mr. Ramirez highlighted the need for coordination, noting, “I wish this was required — not optional.” Collectively, these findings indicate that abrupt transitions and misaligned instructional supports were perceived as significant contributors to English Learners’ post-transition academic decline.

Differences in Perspectives by Grade Level and Instructional Role

Differences in emphasis related to post-transition academic decline were evident based on participants’ grade levels and instructional roles. Early elementary bilingual teachers tended to describe transition challenges in anticipatory terms, emphasizing how limited exposure to academic English and abrupt shifts in instructional language later affect students’ confidence and performance. For example, Ms. Castillo discussed how transitions in upper grades were often sudden and disconnected from students’ developmental readiness, particularly when decisions were tied primarily to assessment outcomes rather than instructional needs.

In contrast, upper elementary and ESL teachers described the immediate academic consequences of transition once students entered all-English settings. Mr. Ramirez and Mr. Franklin both emphasized the initial shock students experienced upon entering English-only classrooms, particularly in relation to increased writing demands, complex texts, and discipline-specific vocabulary. These teachers were more likely to frame post-transition decline as a result of misalignment between prior bilingual preparation and current instructional expectations. Differences were also apparent by instructional role. Bilingual teachers frequently emphasized the transition process itself, and the criteria used to exit students from bilingual programs, while

ESL teachers focused more on the lack of instructional scaffolds and alignment once students arrived in all-English classrooms. Despite these differences, participants across grade levels and roles consistently attributed post-transition academic difficulties to insufficient academic English preparation and abrupt instructional shifts.

Research Question 2 Summary

Findings from the individual interviews indicate that English Learners' post-transition academic decline is perceived to result from a combination of insufficient academic English readiness, increased academic language demands, and abrupt transitions to all-English instructional settings. Participants consistently described students as being transitioned before they were prepared to meet the linguistic and academic expectations of English-only classrooms. Teachers emphasized that post-transition environments required advanced vocabulary, writing, and comprehension skills that exceeded students' English proficiency at the time of transition. Participants also highlighted misalignment between bilingual preparation and all-English instructional expectations, noting that limited transitional supports compounded students' academic challenges. Collectively, these findings address Research Question Two by identifying instructional and structural factors that contribute to English Learners' academic difficulties following transition.

Interview Results Summary

Analysis of the semi-structured individual interviews revealed consistent patterns in how bilingual and ESL teachers perceived bilingual education, transition processes, and perceived factors influencing English Learners' academic outcomes. Findings related to Research Question One indicated that teachers viewed bilingual education as a foundational support for English language mastery, emphasizing the importance of first-language concept development, academic

vocabulary, and instructional consistency. Participants also highlighted the role of teacher attitudes toward bilingualism in shaping student confidence and engagement. Findings related to Research Question Two identified insufficient academic English readiness, increased academic language demands, and abrupt transitions to all-English instruction as primary contributors to post-transition academic decline. Although differences in emphasis emerged based on grade level and instructional role, participants consistently attributed student difficulties to misalignment between bilingual preparation and post-transition expectations. Collectively, the interview findings provide a comprehensive account of teachers' perspectives on instructional practices and structural factors influencing English Learners' academic experiences before and after transition

Focus Group Interview Findings

Overview

As outlined in Chapter 3, focus groups were used as a qualitative data source to complement the individual interviews by capturing shared perspectives, collective experiences, and interactive dialogue among bilingual and ESL teachers. The focus groups were designed to explore teachers' beliefs, instructional practices, and perceptions related to bilingual education, English language development, and the transition of ELs from bilingual programs to all-English instructional settings. Through guided discussion questions, participants were encouraged to reflect on common challenges, supports, and instructional realities within their professional contexts.

In contrast to the individual interviews, which were analyzed through in-depth thematic examination of verbatim transcripts, the focus group findings are presented as thematic summaries derived from documented group discussions and response patterns. Verbatim focus

group transcripts were not available for analysis; therefore, findings are reported using cautious qualitative language that reflects collective viewpoints raised during group conversations rather than transcript-level coding. Three focus groups were conducted with bilingual and ESL teachers, as described in Chapter 3, and the thematic insights generated across all three groups were synthesized and presented collectively to highlight shared perspectives and recurring patterns in participants' discussions.

Focus Group Participants

The focus group participants were distinct from the seven educators who participated in the individual interviews. The interview component was designed to elicit in-depth, individual perspectives regarding bilingual program implementation and transition experiences, whereas the focus groups were intentionally structured to capture collective dialogue and shared professional insights across a broader range of instructional roles. Including a different group of educators in the focus groups allowed for expanded representation across grade levels, instructional contexts, and years of experience while reducing participant burden among those who had already contributed to the individual interviews. This approach supported methodological complementarity by pairing in-depth individual narratives with interactive group dialogue, a strategy consistent with qualitative design guidance that emphasizes the use of multiple data sources to enhance credibility and triangulation (Creswell & Poth, 2023).

The focus groups included a total of 18 certified bilingual and ESL educators who participated across three separate focus group sessions (Sessions A–C). Participants represented a range of instructional roles, including bilingual classroom teachers, ESL pull-out and co-teachers, newcomer ESL educators, interventionists, reading specialists, and a dual language instructional coach. Teaching assignments spanned kindergarten through middle school and

reflected both bilingual and all-English instructional contexts. To protect participant confidentiality, all educators are identified using anonymized labels (T1–T18), and no personally identifying information beyond instructional role and years of experience was collected or reported. Participants’ experience working with transitioning ELs ranged from 2 to 12 years, providing perspectives from both early-career and highly experienced practitioners. All role descriptions and experience levels were drawn directly from participants’ self-reported responses during the focus group sessions. Table 4.4 highlights the focus group participant composition by session, instructional background, and years of experience.

Table 4.4

Focus Group Participants

Focus Group Session	Participant ID	Instructional Role / Background (as stated)	Years of Experience with Transitioning Els
Session A	T1	1st grade bilingual teacher; Spanish and English literacy and math with sheltered instruction	6
Session A	T2	ESL pull-out teacher across grades 2–5; aligns language goals to TEKS and WIDA	5
Session A	T3	3rd grade bilingual teacher; biliteracy bridges and family transition meetings	8
Session A	T4	ESL co-teacher for grades 4–5; embeds	7

		language objectives in ELA and science	
Session A	T5	Kindergarten bilingual teacher; oral language, phonological awareness, visuals and manipulatives	2
Session A	T6	Newcomer ESL teacher; survival language, SEL routines, academic language scaffolds	10
Session B	T7	Grade 2 bilingual teacher; dual-language literature circles and writing routines	10
Session B	T8	Middle school ESL teacher; science and social studies content language	6
Session B	T9	Dual language teacher; coordinates Spanish/English pacing and assessments	4
Session B	T10	ESL interventionist: monitors exits and reclassification metrics	9
Session B	T11	Grade 5 bilingual teacher; exit readiness and STAAR accommodations	7

Session B	T12	ESL reading specialist; decoding and comprehension clinics	8
Session C	T13	ESL co-teacher; language objectives and short- cycle checks	3
Session C	T14	Grade 4 bilingual teacher; content literacy and explicit transfer	10
Session C	T15	Newcomer ESL teacher; routines, SEL, survival language	2
Session C	T16	Grade 1 bilingual teacher; oral language centers and early literacy	4
Session C	T17	ESL elementary teacher; small-group interventions and language-aware rubrics	9
Session C	T18	Dual language instructional coach; curriculum alignment and PD on bridging and sheltered instruction	12

Note. Participant identifiers (T1–T18) are used to protect confidentiality. All roles and years of experience are reported verbatim from focus group transcripts.

Focus Group Thematic Findings

Following an analysis of the focus group transcripts, recurring patterns were identified across participant responses and organized into thematic findings aligned with the study's

research questions. Table 4.5 highlights the identified focus group themes, the research question addressed, and the focus group question prompts employed to generate the data:

Table 4.5

Focus Group Analysis Matrix

Theme	Addressed	Focus Group Question Prompts Used to Generate Data
Role of the bilingual program in students' English language development	RQ 1	Describe the average linguistic ability of the students you receive at the beginning of the school year as it relates to your instruction. How does participation in the bilingual program support students' English language development? What strengths do students bring from bilingual instruction into English-based learning environments?
Readiness and timing of transition to all-English instruction	RQ 2	How do you determine when a student is ready to transition to an all-English instructional setting? What challenges do students experience immediately after transitioning? What indicators suggest students

Alignment between bilingual instruction and post-transition expectations	RQ 2	may not be fully prepared at the time of transition? How well do bilingual instructional practices align with expectations in all-English classrooms? What differences do you observe in instructional demands before and after transition? How do academic language and curriculum expectations change post-transition?
Instructional supports and systemic factors influencing EL outcomes	RQ 1 & 2	What instructional supports are available to students after transition? What challenges do teachers face when implementing bilingual or ESL supports? How do workload, time constraints, or district expectations influence instruction for English Learners?

Note. Focus group findings are presented as thematic syntheses derived from documented group discussions and response summaries rather than verbatim transcripts. Themes reflect shared perspectives across the three focus groups and are aligned with the qualitative design described in Chapter 3.

Focus Group Theme 1: Role of the Bilingual Program in Students' English Language Development

Across the three focus groups, participants consistently described the bilingual program as a critical foundation for students' English language development and long-term academic success. Teachers emphasized that instruction in students' native language supported the development of conceptual understanding, literacy skills, and academic behaviors that later transferred to all-English instructional settings. Participants collectively rejected the notion that early immersion into English alone was sufficient for English Learners' success. This perspective was reinforced across focus groups, where participants identified early literacy and oral language development in bilingual settings, including "oral language and early literacy" in kindergarten and "Spanish and English literacy and math" in early grades, as foundational components supporting later English academic success. Beyond this, focus group discussions highlighted the importance of pairing content instruction with explicit language objectives. One participant explained, "We pair content objectives with language objectives every day so bilingual students can access grade-level work." Teachers described this intentional focus on language as essential for supporting comprehension and participation, particularly for students developing academic English. Participants also noted that bilingual instruction allowed students to demonstrate knowledge and skills that might otherwise be masked by language barriers in all-English classrooms.

Teachers further emphasized that bilingual programs supported cross-linguistic transfer and literacy development. Participants also identified specific instructional approaches supporting this transfer, including "biliteracy bridging," "preview-review," and "explicit cross-linguistic transfer," indicating that these practices were intentionally embedded within bilingual

instruction to support language and content development. As one participant noted, “We are close on reading, but system-level attention to academic writing is still needed.” This comment reflected a shared concern that while foundational literacy skills were strong, continued instructional support was necessary to strengthen students’ academic English writing. Participants repeatedly referenced the importance of consistency and fidelity in bilingual instruction, noting that campuses implementing structured biliteracy and bridging practices more effectively prepared students for later academic demands.

Participants also emphasized that successful bilingual programming required sustained evidence of readiness rather than reliance on isolated assessments. As one teacher stated, “Transition should happen when evidence in both languages is sustained, not just momentary.” Collectively, focus group participants viewed the bilingual program as an essential mechanism for building the linguistic and academic foundations necessary for English Learners’ success beyond the bilingual setting.

Focus Group Theme 2: Readiness and Timing of Transition to All-English Instruction

Through the three focus group sessions, participants consistently emphasized that readiness for transition to all-English instruction should be determined by sustained evidence of academic language development rather than by isolated test scores or social fluency. Teachers described transition timing as a critical decision point that directly influenced students’ post-exit academic success or struggle. Participants repeatedly stressed that premature transitions often resulted in students entering all-English settings without the academic language stamina necessary to meet grade-level expectations. Across all focus groups, readiness concerns were consistently linked to gaps in writing, with participants noting that “writing stamina and

conventions lag” and identifying writing as the primary area of weakness at the point of transition.

Several participants highlighted the importance of multiple data sources when determining readiness. This emphasis on multiple measures was reflected in participant descriptions of transition criteria, including “portfolio evidence and family input” and “writing portfolios and family voice,” reinforcing the need for comprehensive and collaborative decision-making processes. One participant stated, “Transition should happen when evidence in both languages is sustained, not just momentary,” underscoring concerns about relying on single assessments to make high stakes exit decisions. Another educator explained that students should not be transitioned until they demonstrate consistent academic performance, noting that transition decisions should be based on “writing portfolios plus proficiency data and family input.” Teachers across sessions echoed that writing proficiency, in particular, served as a key indicator of readiness for all-English instruction.

Participants also identified grade-level timing as a factor influencing outcomes. Participants across focus groups demonstrated strong consistency in recommended timing, identifying transition at the “end of 3rd–4th grade” as appropriate when supported by growth data and family-centered decision-making. Many bilingual teachers advocated delaying transition until late elementary grades, with one participant stating that students should remain in bilingual programs “once biliteracy foundations and English writing are solid.” Others emphasized flexibility, particularly for newcomers, with one educator asserting that “newcomers need a minimum two-year window with targeted supports” before transition is considered. In addition to academic readiness, participants emphasized the importance of structured transition planning. Teachers recommended year-end transitions paired with bridge plans to support

continuity, noting that “evidence-driven exits with post-exit bridges protect learning continuity.” Collectively, focus group participants framed transition readiness as a process requiring sustained academic language development, careful timing, and intentional planning to support English Learners’ long-term success.

Focus Group Theme 3: Alignment Between Bilingual Instruction and Post-Transition Expectations

In the focus group sessions, participants consistently described challenges related to alignment between bilingual instruction and the expectations students encounter after transitioning to all-English classrooms. Teachers emphasized that when instructional practices, language routines, and curricular pacing were not aligned across bilingual and mainstream settings, students often struggled to transfer previously developed skills. Participants identified specific areas of misalignment contributing to this challenge, including “inconsistent sheltered instruction,” differences in pacing, and lack of coordinated instructional practices across classrooms. Several participants identified fidelity and consistency as central to alignment. One educator noted, “Success depends on DL schedule fidelity; staffing gaps disrupt,” indicating that uneven implementation affected student readiness. Another participant similarly stated, “Campuses that require bridging lessons meet targets; otherwise, outcomes are uneven,” highlighting the role of explicit alignment practices in supporting continuity of learning. Teachers repeatedly emphasized the importance of transfer routines to connect bilingual instruction with post-transition expectations. Participants described the need for structured tools to support alignment, including “transfer anchor charts,” “unit-level language objectives,” and “formal transfer routines,” indicating that alignment required intentional planning at both the classroom and campus levels. One participant recommended, “Align bilingual units to

mainstream content and embed explicit transfer routines,” underscoring the need for intentional coordination across instructional settings.

Participants also described misalignment in instructional expectations following transition. Teachers reported that students often exited bilingual programs accustomed to language objectives and scaffolds that were not consistently maintained in all-English classrooms. One educator explained that post-transition success depended on sustained instructional supports, stating, “Mainstream success hinges on language-aware teaching—not just content coverage.” Others pointed to “inconsistent sheltered instruction fidelity” as a factor that limited students’ ability to apply learned strategies after transition. Collectively, focus group participants framed alignment between bilingual instruction and post-transition expectations as essential for maintaining academic continuity. When alignment was intentional and sustained, students were better positioned to apply language and content knowledge; when it was inconsistent, students experienced greater difficulty adjusting to all-English instructional demands.

Focus Group Theme 4: Instructional supports and systemic factors influencing EL outcomes

Across all focus group sessions, participants consistently identified instructional supports and systemic factors as key influences on English Learners’ academic outcomes following transition to all-English instruction. Teachers emphasized that student success was closely tied to the presence of sustained instructional scaffolds, language-aware teaching practices, and coherent systems of support across classrooms. Participants identified specific instructional strategies supporting these outcomes, including “sentence frames,” “structured academic talk,” “reciprocal teaching,” and “oral rehearsal to writing,” highlighting the role of scaffolded

language practices in promoting access to academic content. Additionally, participants frequently referenced the importance of maintaining sheltered instructional practices after transition. One educator stated, “Mainstream success hinges on language-aware teaching—not just content coverage,” highlighting concerns that students struggled when instructional supports were removed too quickly. Another participant pointed to “inconsistent sheltered instruction fidelity” as a factor contributing to uneven post-transition outcomes, noting that not all classrooms maintained a focus on language objectives or scaffolds previously emphasized in bilingual settings.

Teachers also described pacing and instructional structures as systemic challenges. Across focus groups, pacing was consistently identified as a barrier, with participants noting “fast pacing” as a challenge that limited opportunities for language processing and meaningful participation. Participants emphasized the need for processing time and structured opportunities for language use, with one educator stating, “If classrooms honor processing time and structured talk, ELs participate and learn.” Others echoed that fast pacing and limited opportunities for academic discourse constrained students’ ability to demonstrate understanding in all-English classrooms.

Professional development and coordinated systems were also identified as influential. Participants recommended system-level supports to address these challenges, including “campus-wide portfolios,” “Bridge Weeks,” and a “Transition Toolkit with portfolios, PD, and monitoring,” emphasizing the importance of coordinated structures to sustain instructional consistency. Participants collectively recommended system-level supports, including “PD on sheltered strategies” and the implementation of a “structured Transition Plan” that included language goals, portfolio evidence, and follow-up monitoring. One group emphasized that

coherence across classrooms was essential, stating that a transition plan “creates coherence across classrooms.” Collectively, focus group participants framed instructional supports and systemic consistency as critical determinants of English Learners’ success after transition to all-English instruction.

Focus Group Results Summary

Analysis of the focus group data revealed consistent patterns in how bilingual and ESL teachers perceived the role of instructional programming, transition processes, and systemic supports in shaping English Learners’ post-transition outcomes. Across the three focus group sessions, participants emphasized the importance of bilingual instruction as a foundation for English language development, while also identifying readiness and timing of transition as critical decision points influencing student success. Teachers consistently reported that premature transitions, often based on limited indicators, left students unprepared for the academic language demands of all-English classrooms. Participants further highlighted misalignment between bilingual instruction and post-transition expectations, noting that inconsistent implementation and limited transfer routines disrupted continuity of learning. Instructional supports and systemic factors, including sheltered instruction fidelity, pacing, and coordinated transition planning, were also identified as key influences on student outcomes. Collectively, the focus group findings underscore the interconnected nature of instructional practices, transition criteria, and systemic supports in shaping English Learners’ academic experiences following transition to all-English instruction.

Cross-Data Source Thematic Integration

Thematic analysis across interviews and focus groups revealed strong convergence across both Research Question One and Research Question Two. For RQ1, participants consistently

described bilingual education as foundational to English mastery. Both data sources emphasized conceptual transfer, academic language development, and the importance of valuing students' home language as mechanisms supporting long-term proficiency. The distinction between conversational and academic English emerged in interviews and was further expanded in focus group discussions surrounding readiness and transition timing, indicating that surface-level fluency is frequently misinterpreted as academic readiness.

For RQ2, convergence was equally pronounced. Interview participants described insufficient academic English readiness at the point of transition, particularly in relation to academic vocabulary and writing demands. Focus group discussions reinforced this finding by identifying premature exit decisions, increased post-transition language demands, and misalignment between bilingual instructional preparation and all-English classroom expectations. Both datasets described the transition as abrupt and structurally misaligned with students' developmental language trajectories.

Across both research questions, implementation variability and systemic factors emerged as consistent influences. Interview participants discussed inconsistency in bilingual program execution and the role of teacher beliefs, while focus groups expanded this analysis by identifying workload pressures, institutional expectations, and instructional support limitations. These findings suggest that English Learner outcomes are shaped by interconnected programmatic and systemic conditions rather than isolated classroom-level variables.

The alignment between individual interviews and focus groups demonstrates triangulation and strengthens the credibility of the findings. Thematic convergence across methods indicates that bilingual program structure, transition timing, academic language demands, and systemic implementation factors operate as integrated determinants influencing

post-transition English Learner performance. Table 4.6 presents a comprehensive theme alignment based on the interviews and focus groups across RQ1 and RQ2.

Table 4.6

Comprehensive Theme Alignment Matrix

Interview Theme (RQ)	Focus Group Theme (RQ)	Type of Relationship	Cross-Data Convergence	Interpretive Meaning
Bilingual education as a foundation for English mastery (RQ1)	Role of the bilingual program in students' English language development (RQ1)	Direct congruence	Both data sources describe bilingual instruction as foundational for conceptual and linguistic transfer	Strong triangulation that bilingual programming supports long-term English development
Distinction between conversational and academic English (RQ1)	Readiness and timing of transition to all-English instruction (RQ2)	Complementary expansion	Interviews stress misinterpretation of conversational fluency; focus groups connect this to premature transition decisions	Suggests systemic misunderstanding of academic language readiness
Academic vocabulary as a central barrier (RQ1)	Alignment between bilingual instruction and	Direct congruence with expansion	Interviews identify vocabulary as primary	Vocabulary functions as structural transition barrier

	post-transition expectations (RQ2)		obstacle; focus groups describe heightened vocabulary and writing demands post-transition	
Teacher attitudes shape student confidence and engagement (RQ1)	Instructional supports and systemic factors influencing EL outcomes (RQ1 & RQ2)	Complementary expansion	Interviews focus on belief systems; focus groups emphasize institutional climate and available supports	Teacher disposition interacts with systemic conditions
Inconsistent implementation of bilingual programs (RQ1)	Instructional supports and systemic factors influencing EL outcomes (RQ1 & RQ2)	Direct congruence	Interviews describe variability; focus groups identify workload, district expectations, and alignment issues	Implementation inconsistency is systemic rather than isolated
Insufficient academic English readiness at transition (RQ2)	Readiness and timing of transition to all-English instruction (RQ2)	Direct congruence	Both data sources report students exiting based on surface indicators rather	Clear triangulation of premature transition concern

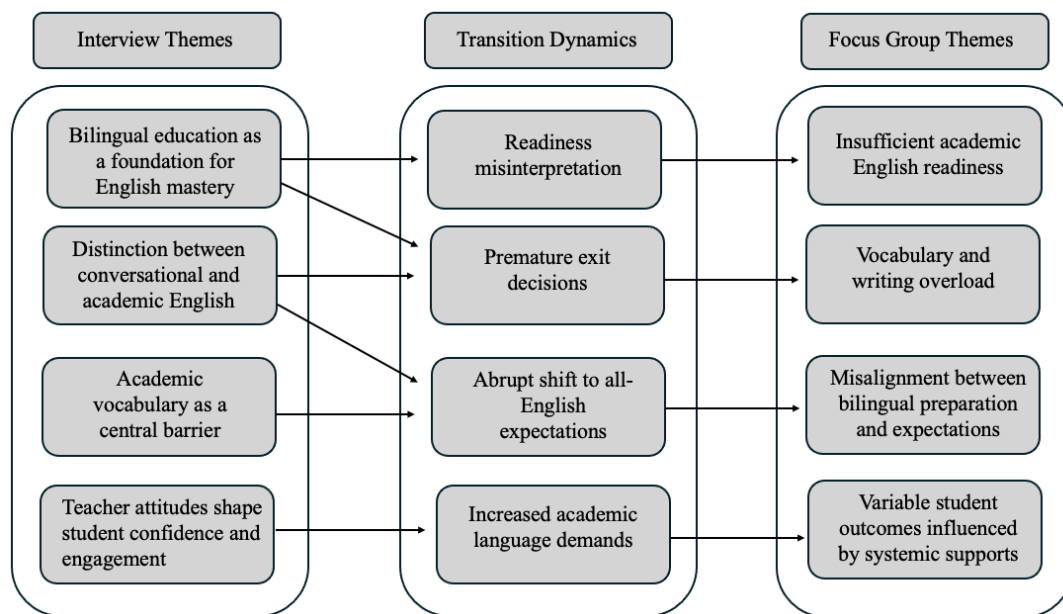
			than academic proficiency	
Lack of academic vocabulary and language demands post-transition (RQ2)	Alignment between bilingual instruction and post-transition expectations (RQ2)	Direct congruence	Interviews emphasize explosion of academic demands; focus groups describe misalignment between bilingual preparation and all-English expectations	Transition amplifies language gaps due to curricular misalignment
Abrupt transition and misalignment between bilingual preparation and all-English expectations (RQ2)	Alignment between bilingual instruction and post-transition expectations (RQ2)	Direct congruence	Both datasets describe sudden shift in expectations and insufficient scaffolding	Structural discontinuity in program design

Note. This matrix illustrates thematic alignment between interview and focus group findings across both research questions. Themes reflect analytically derived patterns from each data source. Relationship classifications indicate convergence type and support methodological triangulation and credibility.

To further illustrate the conceptual integration of findings across data sources, Figure 4.1 presents a visual model demonstrating how interview and focus group themes align and interact across Research Questions One and Two.

Figure 4.1

Thematic Integration Model Illustrating Alignment of Interview and Focus Group Findings Across Research Questions One and Two



As depicted in the model, foundational conditions identified in RQ1 intersect with transition dynamics to shape the post-transition outcomes described in RQ2, reinforcing the coherence and triangulated nature of the findings.

Chapter 4 Summary

This chapter presented the results of a qualitative thematic analysis derived from semi-structured individual interviews and focus group discussions with bilingual and ESL teachers. Interview findings were organized by research question and reflected teachers' perspectives on bilingual education, academic English development, transition processes, and instructional

practices related to English Learners' outcomes. Across interviews, recurring themes highlighted bilingual education as a foundational support for English language mastery, the distinction between conversational and academic English, academic vocabulary as a central barrier, the influence of teacher attitudes, and the impact of inconsistent program implementation.

Focus group findings were presented as thematic syntheses organized by emergent patterns across group discussions. Themes reflected shared perspectives regarding the role of bilingual programs in English language development, readiness and timing of transition to all-English instruction, alignment between bilingual instruction and post-transition expectations, and instructional supports and systemic factors related to English Learners' outcomes. Collectively, the interview and focus group findings address the study's research questions by documenting teachers' reported experiences, perceptions, and instructional realities related to bilingual education and post-transition academic performance.

Chapter 5 builds upon the findings presented in this chapter by interpreting and contextualizing the results within the existing literature, discussing implications for practice and policy, and examining how the findings contribute to understanding teachers' perceptions of English Learners' academic experiences during and after transition to all-English instructional settings.

Chapter 5: Conclusions, Interpretations, and Implications

This chapter interprets the findings presented in Chapter Four, which were generated through qualitative analysis of individual interviews and focus group discussions with bilingual and ESL teachers at the research site. The purpose of this study was to investigate why some ELs excel academically in bilingual programs but struggle academically and linguistically after transitioning to all-English instructional settings, with particular attention to teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and the fidelity with which bilingual programs are implemented. Together, the two data sources provide complementary perspectives on bilingual program implementation, student readiness for transition, and instructional alignment across grade levels.

In this chapter, the findings are interpreted in relation to the study's research questions, and they are situated within the literature on bilingual education, second language acquisition, and transitional programming. Rather than privileging one data source over the other, interpretations draw across both interviews and focus groups to examine shared patterns and points of tension in teachers' accounts. The chapter concludes by considering implications for instructional practice and leadership within similar urban elementary contexts, acknowledging the study's limitations, and identifying directions for future research that emerge directly from the qualitative findings.

Summary of Key Findings

The findings of this study, drawn from qualitative analysis of individual interviews and focus group discussions with bilingual and ESL teachers, point to a set of interrelated conditions that participants associated with students' academic outcomes following the transition from bilingual to all-English instructional settings. Across both data sources, teachers consistently rejected the notion that bilingual instruction itself was responsible for post-transition academic

difficulties. Instead, participants emphasized that student success or struggle was shaped by how bilingual programs were implemented, coordinated, and sustained across grade levels, as well as by the instructional expectations placed on students at the point of transition.

A prominent finding concerned the implementation of the bilingual program and the degree of coherence teachers experienced within it. Participants described variability in instructional practices both within and across grade levels, noting that this inconsistency affected students' opportunities to develop academic language alongside content knowledge. Teachers across interviews and focus groups explained that some students exited bilingual instruction with strong literacy skills in their first language but insufficient proficiency in academic English. As a result, these students often entered all-English classrooms without the linguistic resources necessary to fully access instruction, particularly in content areas that demand high levels of comprehension and language precision.

Closely related to program implementation was the issue of student readiness for transition. Participants consistently described readiness as extending beyond social or conversational English to include academic vocabulary, comprehension, and the ability to engage independently with grade-level texts and tasks in English. Teachers expressed concern that decisions about transition were sometimes driven by structural or policy expectations rather than by students' demonstrated language development. Across both interviews and focus groups, participants associated premature transition with declines in academic performance, emphasizing that students who had not yet developed sufficient academic English were at greater risk of disengagement and difficulty after entering all-English instructional settings.

In addition, the findings highlighted the importance of instructional alignment and deliberate language support within bilingual programs. Teachers identified a need for more

systematic attention to English language development prior to transition, particularly instruction focused on academic vocabulary, language structures, and comprehension strategies embedded within content instruction. Participants also described tensions between instructional priorities and external accountability pressures, suggesting that these competing demands influenced how language development was emphasized within the bilingual program and how transition decisions were made.

Although the same core themes emerged across both data sources, participants' perspectives were expressed differently in individual interviews and focus group discussions. In individual interviews, teachers tended to emphasize detailed, experience-based accounts of student readiness, instructional challenges, and day-to-day classroom realities, often framing their observations through specific examples of students who struggled or succeeded after transition. In contrast, focus group discussions more frequently surfaced shared concerns related to program coherence, implementation consistency, and systemic expectations, as participants built on one another's responses and articulated collective understandings of how bilingual programming functioned across grade levels. These differences did not reflect contradictions in the findings but rather highlighted how individual and collective contexts shaped the way participants made sense of bilingual instruction and student transition. Together, the two data sources provided a more nuanced understanding of the phenomenon by capturing both individualized instructional experiences and broader, program-level perspectives.

Taken together, the findings suggest that students' post-transition academic experiences are shaped less by bilingual education as an instructional approach and more by the consistency of program implementation, the alignment of instructional practices, and the conditions under which transitions to all-English instruction occur.

Interpretation of Findings by Research Question

Research Question 1

RQ1 asked, *How do bilingual and ESL teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes towards bilingual programs, as well as their implementation of bilingual programs, influence students' mastery of the English language?* Teachers across interviews and focus group discussions described a set of instructional and programmatic conditions that they believed directly influenced how students experienced the transition from bilingual to all-English instruction. Rather than focusing on a single instructional practice or policy decision, participants emphasized that transition outcomes were shaped by the interaction of program structure, instructional expectations, and the degree of coherence across grade levels. This framing reflects teachers' beliefs about bilingual education as a developmental process and illustrates how their knowledge, attitudes, and implementation decisions collectively influence students' opportunities to develop academic English. Teachers consistently framed transition as a process rather than a discrete event, noting that the conditions leading up to and following the transition were as influential as the point of transition itself. This finding directly addresses the gap identified in the literature regarding the limited understanding of how teachers' beliefs, program implementation, and post-transition outcomes interact in practice. While prior research has often examined these elements in isolation, the present study demonstrates that teachers perceive them as interdependent factors that jointly shape students' academic English development during and after transition.

One condition repeatedly identified by participants was the consistency, or lack thereof, in bilingual program implementation. Teachers described variations in how bilingual instruction was prioritized and enacted across classrooms and grade levels, which they believed resulted in

uneven preparation among students. Teachers linked these implementation differences directly to students' mastery of academic English, noting that inconsistent program expectations limited students' sustained exposure to language structures and vocabulary needed for success in all-English settings. Across both data sources, participants expressed concern that inconsistent instructional expectations created gaps in students' development of academic English, even when content instruction in the first language was strong. Teachers suggested that when program expectations were not clearly articulated or uniformly applied, students' readiness for all-English instruction depended largely on individual classroom practices rather than a coherent program model.

Participants also highlighted instructional emphasis on language development as a critical condition shaping transition. Teachers described a need for more deliberate and systematic attention to academic English within bilingual instruction, particularly instruction that supported vocabulary development, comprehension, and language structures embedded within content learning. These perspectives reflect teachers' beliefs that intentional language instruction within bilingual programs is essential to students' eventual mastery of English, rather than an outcome that occurs automatically through exposure. Across interviews and focus groups, teachers indicated that when English language development was treated as implicit or secondary, students were more likely to struggle after transition. In contrast, participants described smoother transitions when language instruction was intentionally integrated alongside content instruction prior to entering all-English classrooms.

Accountability pressures and policy expectations emerged as additional conditions influencing transition practices. Teachers across both data sources described external accountability demands as shaping instructional priorities and transition decisions, sometimes in

ways that conflicted with their professional judgment about student readiness. Participants emphasized that these pressures influenced how they implemented bilingual programs and made instructional decisions related to language development, even when those decisions conflicted with their beliefs about what best supported students' English mastery. Participants noted that expectations related to assessment performance and program timelines could contribute to transitions occurring before students were fully prepared to meet the linguistic and academic demands of all-English instruction. These pressures were described as influencing not only when students transitioned, but also how language development was emphasized within bilingual programs.

Finally, teachers described the importance of instructional alignment between bilingual and all-English settings in shaping students' transition experiences. Participants emphasized that abrupt shifts in instructional expectations, language demands, and support structures often compounded students' challenges after transition. Teachers attributed these challenges to misalignment between instructional approaches across settings, reinforcing their belief that coherent implementation across bilingual and all-English classrooms is critical to supporting students' continued English language development. When alignment was present, teachers perceived that students were better able to apply existing knowledge and skills in new instructional contexts. When alignment was absent, transition was described as disruptive, even for students who had previously demonstrated academic success.

Collectively, teachers' descriptions across interviews and focus groups indicate that transition outcomes are shaped by a constellation of instructional and programmatic conditions rather than by individual student characteristics alone. These conditions include the coherence of bilingual program implementation, the intentionality of language-focused instruction, the

influence of accountability expectations, and the degree of alignment across instructional settings. Importantly, these findings extend beyond identifying individual instructional factors by illustrating the dynamic interaction between teachers' beliefs, program implementation, and post-transition outcomes. This interaction represents a central contribution of the study, as it provides a more integrated understanding of how instructional decisions and program conditions collectively influence student success following transition.

Taken together, these findings address Research Question One by demonstrating how bilingual and ESL teachers' knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, and implementation of bilingual programs shape students' opportunities to develop and master academic English. Teachers' perspectives suggest that attention to these conditions is central to supporting students as they move from bilingual to all-English instruction. These findings are aligned with the study's qualitative case study design and research questions, which were intentionally structured to capture teachers' perspectives on both instructional practices and program implementation, allowing for examination of how these factors interact to influence student outcomes.

Research Question 2

RQ 2 asked, *What specific factors contribute to ELs' decline in academic performance after transitioning from a bilingual education program to an all-English instructional setting?*

The findings suggest that differences in students' academic trajectories following transition are not attributable to bilingual instruction itself, but rather to the instructional and programmatic conditions under which that instruction is implemented and the circumstances surrounding transition into all-English settings. Across interviews and focus groups, teachers consistently described post-transition academic decline as emerging when students entered all-English classrooms without sufficient development of academic English, despite often demonstrating

strong literacy and conceptual understanding in their first language. Teachers identified this lack of academic English development at the point of transition as a primary factor contributing to students' academic decline after entering all-English instructional settings. This distinction was central to how participants made sense of uneven student outcomes. This interpretation further addresses the identified gap in the literature by clarifying how post-transition outcomes are shaped not by bilingual education alone, but by the interaction between teachers' instructional decisions, program implementation, and the conditions under which students are transitioned. Rather than isolating individual variables, the findings demonstrate how these factors operate together to influence academic trajectories following transition.

Participants across both data sources emphasized that program implementation played a critical role in shaping students' preparedness for transition. Teachers described variability in how bilingual instructional models were enacted across grade levels, noting that inconsistent emphasis on academic English development limited students' ability to transfer existing knowledge into all-English contexts. Participants interpreted these implementation differences as contributing to post-transition academic decline when students lost access to consistent language supports. In cases where bilingual instruction systematically supported both content learning and language development, teachers reported that students were more likely to maintain academic progress after transition. Conversely, when bilingual instruction prioritized content mastery in the first language without parallel attention to academic English, students were perceived as vulnerable to academic decline once instructional supports were removed.

Student readiness for transition emerged as another key interpretive factor. Teachers described readiness not as a fixed benchmark or a matter of time spent in a program, but as a complex combination of academic vocabulary, comprehension, and the ability to engage

independently with grade-level content in English. Across interviews and focus groups, participants expressed concern that some students were transitioned based on structural expectations rather than demonstrated readiness, which often resulted in students encountering instructional demands they were linguistically unprepared to meet. Teachers consistently associated this mismatch between readiness and instructional demands with subsequent declines in academic performance following transition.

Instructional alignment across bilingual and all-English settings further shaped student outcomes. Participants noted that when instructional expectations, language demands, and curricular pacing shifted abruptly at the point of transition, students struggled to adapt, even when they had previously demonstrated academic success. Teachers described these abrupt shifts as a contributing factor to post-transition academic decline, particularly when language scaffolds were removed. Additionally, they described the absence of continuity in language support as a contributing factor to post-transition difficulties, particularly in content areas that require advanced comprehension and language precision. In contrast, students who transitioned into classrooms where instructional expectations were aligned and language support remained explicit were perceived as more likely to sustain academic success.

Taken together, these interpretations suggest that variation in post-transition academic outcomes reflects differences in program coherence, instructional consistency, and readiness-based decision-making rather than inherent limitations of bilingual education. These findings reinforce the study's central contribution by illustrating how the interaction between teacher beliefs, program implementation, and transition practices shapes student outcomes after exiting bilingual programs. Additionally, the findings address Research Question 2 by identifying specific instructional, programmatic, and transition-related factors that contribute to English

Learners' academic decline after transitioning into all-English instructional settings. Teachers' accounts across interviews and focus groups indicate that when bilingual programs are implemented with deliberate attention to academic language development and transition conditions are aligned with students' demonstrated readiness, students are more likely to continue succeeding after entering all-English instructional settings. These findings are consistent with the study's qualitative design and research questions, which were intended to capture how instructional practices, program conditions, and transition decisions intersect to influence post-transition academic outcomes.

Discussion of Findings in Relation to the Literature

Grounded Theories of Second-Language Acquisition and Language Orientation

The findings of this study are best understood when situated within theoretical perspectives that distinguish between surface-level language proficiency and the deeper academic language development required for sustained educational success. Across interviews and focus groups, teachers consistently described students who appeared linguistically competent within bilingual settings yet struggled academically following transition to all-English instruction. This pattern aligns with Cummins' longstanding distinction between conversational language proficiency and cognitively demanding academic language, as well as his argument that academic skills developed in one language transfer only when instruction intentionally supports higher-order literacy development across languages (Cummins, 1979, 2000). Teachers' emphasis on vocabulary, comprehension, and independent engagement with academic content suggests that post-transition difficulty reflects gaps in academic language development rather than deficiencies in students' cognitive ability or bilingual capacity. This finding aligns with prior research emphasizing the distinction between conversational and academic language

proficiency (Cummins, 1979, 2000; Genesee et al., 2006; Lindholm-Leary, 2020), but extends this understanding by demonstrating how teachers interpret and respond to this distinction within specific instructional and transition contexts. In particular, the findings illustrate how teachers' beliefs about academic language development shape the extent to which bilingual instruction explicitly prepares students for the linguistic demands of all-English classrooms.

Participants' concerns regarding the timing and conditions of transition further reinforce theoretical arguments about the risks of prematurely withdrawing instructional support. Cummins' (1979, 2000) interdependence hypothesis and Thomas and Collier's (1997) longitudinal findings converge on the idea that sustained; well-implemented bilingual instruction is necessary for students to develop the academic language proficiency needed to succeed in all-English environments. Teachers in this study described transitions that occurred based on structural expectations rather than demonstrated readiness, echoing research suggesting that policy-driven timelines may undermine long-term academic outcomes by interrupting ongoing literacy development. This interpretation is also consistent with research highlighting the risks associated with premature transition and policy-driven instructional decisions (Gándara & Contreras, 2022; Rodriguez & Slate, 2024). However, the present study contributes to the literature by providing context-specific evidence from an urban Texas elementary setting, illustrating how these theoretical risks are enacted in practice through locally driven transition decisions. Teachers' accounts reveal how policy expectations, program implementation, and professional judgment intersect to influence whether students are transitioned in alignment with their academic language readiness. From this perspective, the uneven post-transition trajectories described by participants reflect variation in instructional continuity rather than the effectiveness of bilingual education as an instructional model.

The way teachers framed students' first language also reflects a clear language-as-resource orientation. Rather than viewing native language use as an obstacle to English acquisition, participants consistently described first-language literacy as foundational to content understanding and academic growth. This orientation is also consistent with Ruiz's (1984) language orientation framework, which suggests that educational outcomes are influenced by whether language is viewed as a problem to be remediated or as a resource to be leveraged within instruction. Teachers' accounts suggest that when bilingual programs fail to intentionally integrate students' first language into academic learning while simultaneously developing English, opportunities for meaningful transfer of skills are diminished. This finding is consistent with research emphasizing the role of teacher beliefs and expectations in shaping bilingual student outcomes (Gunnerud et al., 2020; Han, 2012). Importantly, the present study extends this work by demonstrating how teachers' language orientations are not merely philosophical positions but actively shape instructional decisions and program implementation. This provides new insight into how language-as-resource perspectives are operationalized within bilingual programs and how those decisions influence post-transition outcomes.

Teachers' descriptions of instructional challenges following transition also resonate with principles of comprehensible input. As articulated by Krashen and reflected in Shin and Krashen's work, language acquisition is facilitated when instructional input remains accessible, meaningful, and connected to students' existing knowledge (Shin & Krashen, 1996). Participants' concerns about abrupt increases in linguistic demand following transition suggest that students were often expected to engage with content that exceeded their current level of academic English proficiency. This mismatch between instructional input and language readiness helps explain why students who previously demonstrated academic success experienced

disengagement or decline after entering all-English classrooms. These findings also align with research emphasizing the importance of instructional alignment and responsiveness to student needs in supporting academic success (Datnow, 2020; Steare et al., 2023). The present study extends this work by illustrating how breakdowns in instructional alignment occur at the point of transition, particularly when shifts in language demand are not accompanied by corresponding instructional supports.

Together, these theoretical perspectives provide a coherent framework for interpreting the study's findings. Teachers' accounts do not challenge established theories of second-language acquisition; rather, they illustrate the consequences of instructional and programmatic practices that depart from them. When bilingual programs lack coherence, transitions are not grounded in academic language readiness, and instructional input is misaligned with students' linguistic development, students are more likely to experience academic difficulty after transition. In this way, the findings extend existing theory by demonstrating how deviations from core second-language acquisition principles manifest in everyday instructional contexts and by clarifying the interaction between teacher beliefs, program implementation, and transition conditions as a central mechanism shaping post-transition outcomes. While prior research has examined these elements independently (Gándara & Contreras, 2022; Genesee et al., 2006; Ruiz, 1984), this study provides an integrated understanding of how they operate collectively, particularly within urban Texas contexts where accountability pressures and program variability influence instructional decision-making.

Program Coherence and Implementation Fidelity

The findings of this study underscore the central role of program coherence and implementation fidelity in shaping students' academic outcomes following transition from

bilingual to all-English instruction. Across interviews and focus groups, teachers consistently described uneven implementation of bilingual program models across grade levels, suggesting that variability in instructional practices, rather than the program design itself, contributed to inconsistent student readiness. This aligns with more recent scholarship emphasizing that bilingual program effectiveness is contingent not merely on program type, but on the consistency with which instructional expectations, language allocation, and curricular goals are enacted across classrooms (Castro et al., 2025; Fallas-Escobar & Deroo, 2023; Lindholm-Leary, 2020). While prior research has established the importance of implementation fidelity, the present study extends this work by demonstrating how teachers experience and interpret program inconsistency as a direct contributor to uneven transition outcomes. In particular, the findings highlight how variability in implementation shapes students' readiness for all-English instruction, providing a more explicit connection between program coherence and post-transition academic performance.

Participants' concerns also reflect research highlighting how policy-defined program structures can fracture at the point of classroom implementation. Although Texas bilingual programs are governed by clearly articulated statutory requirements regarding instructional language use and duration, studies indicate that fidelity often erodes due to staffing challenges, uneven teacher preparation, and competing instructional pressures (Castro et al., 2025; TEA, 2020). Teachers in this study described precisely these tensions, noting that the absence of shared implementation standards led to reliance on individual teacher judgment rather than program-wide coherence. This study contributes to the literature by illustrating how these implementation gaps are not abstract structural issues but are experienced by teachers as everyday instructional tensions that directly influence transition decisions and student preparedness. The findings

provide context-specific insight into how policy expectations and classroom realities diverge within urban Texas bilingual programs.

Recent work further suggests that implementation fidelity is inseparable from educators' ideological clarity and professional preparation. Research on bilingual teacher development emphasizes that without a shared understanding of program purpose and language orientation, instructional practices may unintentionally privilege English dominance and undermine the goals of bilingual education (Fallas-Escobar & Deroo, 2023; Williams & Danahy, 2023). Viewed through this lens, the findings indicate that post-transition academic difficulties are less a function of bilingual instruction itself and more a consequence of fragmented implementation that weakens continuity, coherence, and instructional alignment across students' educational trajectories. Importantly, this study advances existing scholarship by clarifying how teacher beliefs, program implementation, and instructional alignment operate together as an interconnected system, rather than as independent factors, in shaping post-transition outcomes.

Academic Language Development and Readiness-Based Transition Practices

The findings of this study reinforce recent scholarship emphasizing that successful transition from bilingual to all-English instruction depends on students' development of academic language, rather than on time in program or surface-level English proficiency. Across all interviews and focus groups, teachers described students who demonstrated social fluency yet struggled with the academic language demands of content-area instruction after transition. This pattern aligns with contemporary research highlighting the distinction between conversational competence and the disciplinary language required for sustained academic engagement (Lindholm-Leary, 2020; Hanus, 2020). While prior research has established the importance of academic language development, the present study extends this work by demonstrating how

teachers interpret gaps in academic language as a primary driver of post-transition academic decline. In particular, the findings illustrate how teacher beliefs about language readiness influence whether bilingual instruction explicitly prepares students for the linguistic demands of all-English classrooms, providing a more direct link between academic language development and transition outcomes.

This study contributes to the literature by providing context-specific evidence from an urban Texas setting, illustrating how these policy-driven transitions are enacted in practice and how teachers navigate tensions between accountability expectations and students' demonstrated readiness. Recent studies caution that transitions occurring before students can independently access grade-level content in English often result in disengagement and declining achievement (Williams & Danahy, 2023). Teachers in this study similarly described transitions that were misaligned with students' linguistic readiness, particularly in literacy-intensive subjects. Viewed collectively, the findings suggest that readiness-based transition practices grounded in academic language development are essential for maintaining student success, supporting calls in the recent literature for more nuanced, developmentally informed transition criteria (Allen et al., 2025; Lindholm-Leary, 2020). Importantly, this study advances existing scholarship by clarifying how academic language development, teacher beliefs, and transition decision-making operate together as an interconnected process, rather than as isolated factors, in shaping post-transition academic outcomes.

Accountability Pressures and Instructional Decision Making

The findings indicate that instructional decision making related to bilingual program implementation and student transition is shaped not only by pedagogical considerations, but also by accountability pressures operating at the campus and state levels. Teachers across interviews

and focus groups described how assessment requirements and performance expectations influenced instructional priorities, sometimes constraining professional judgment about students' readiness to transition. This aligns with recent scholarship noting that high-stakes accountability systems often narrow instructional focus and incentivize compliance with timelines rather than responsiveness to students' linguistic development (Gregg & Lavertu, 2023; Summers, 2023). While prior research has documented the influence of accountability systems on instructional practice, the present study extends this work by demonstrating how teachers experience these pressures specifically within the context of bilingual program implementation and transition decision-making. In particular, the findings illustrate how accountability expectations shape teachers' judgments about readiness, often creating tension between policy compliance and instructional practices that support students' linguistic development.

Participants' concerns reflect broader critiques that accountability policies can unintentionally undermine bilingual education by privileging English-dominant assessment outcomes over sustained language development (Lindholm-Leary, 2020). This study contributes to the literature by providing context-specific evidence from an urban Texas setting, illustrating how these policy pressures are enacted in practice and how teachers navigate competing demands between accountability requirements and students' developmental needs. In Texas, where bilingual programs operate within clearly defined statutory frameworks, research suggests that accountability demands may still pressure educators to accelerate transition decisions in ways misaligned with student readiness (TEA, 2020). Consistent with this literature, the findings suggest that instructional choices are often negotiated within competing expectations, highlighting the need for accountability structures that better align with bilingual program goals and developmental timelines. Importantly, this study advances existing scholarship by clarifying

how accountability pressures, teacher beliefs, and program implementation interact as an interconnected system, rather than as separate influences, in shaping transition decisions and post-transition outcomes.

Implications for Practice

The findings of this study suggest several practice-based implications for schools implementing bilingual programs and managing students' transition to all-English instructional settings. First, program coherence must be treated as a collective responsibility rather than an individual classroom practice. Variability in implementation across grade levels, as described by participants, indicates a need for shared instructional expectations, clearer articulation of program goals, and ongoing monitoring of fidelity to the adopted bilingual model. Without this coherence, students' readiness for transition remains uneven and dependent on individual teacher judgment.

Second, transition decisions should be grounded in demonstrated academic language proficiency rather than program timelines or structural expectations. Teachers in this study consistently emphasized that students' social fluency masked gaps in academic language that later hindered success in all-English classrooms. Schools should therefore incorporate readiness indicators that reflect students' ability to independently engage with grade-level academic content in English.

Finally, instructional decision making must account for the influence of accountability pressures on transition practices. While compliance with state requirements remains essential, school leaders play a critical role in ensuring that accountability structures do not inadvertently accelerate transitions in ways misaligned with student readiness (TEA, 2020). Together, these

implications highlight the importance of leadership-driven clarity, alignment, and sustained language support to promote equitable post-transition outcomes.

Implications for Leadership and Policy

The findings of this study highlight the critical role of school leadership and policy alignment in shaping the effectiveness of bilingual programs and transition practices. Leaders influence not only how bilingual models are interpreted, but also how consistently they are implemented across grade levels. Participants' descriptions of uneven program execution suggest that leadership clarity regarding instructional priorities, language use, and transition criteria is essential for ensuring coherence and equity within bilingual programming, a concern reflected in the literature emphasizing inconsistent implementation and variability across bilingual settings (Almaguer, 2021; Petrón et al., 2022; Sikes & Villanueva, 2021).

At the policy level, the findings raise concerns about the unintended consequences of accountability structures that emphasize standardized assessment outcomes without adequate consideration of academic language development. When policy timelines or performance pressures drive transition decisions, instructional practices may become misaligned with students' linguistic readiness, particularly given the extended time required for academic language development and the importance of sustained bilingual instruction (Cummins, 2000; Lindholm-Leary, 2020). Additionally, research on accountability systems suggests that high-stakes testing environments can shape instructional priorities in ways that may limit sustained language development (Darling-Hammond et al., 2022; Datnow, 2020). School and district leaders therefore may play an important role in interpreting policy in ways that can support instructional integrity and student learning.

These implications underscore the need for leadership practices and policy frameworks that support sustained bilingual instruction, readiness-based transition decisions, and alignment between program goals and accountability expectations. This aligns with broader research emphasizing the importance of coherent program implementation and the positioning of bilingualism as a resource rather than a constraint within educational systems (Ruiz, 1984; Zabala, 2023), reinforcing the need for leadership approaches that move beyond compliance-driven models and instead prioritize long-term student outcomes.

Limitations of the Study

The interpretation of these findings is bounded by the context in which the study was conducted. The research reflects the experiences and perspectives of educators within a single school site, shaped by its specific bilingual program model, leadership structures, and accountability environment. While the themes identified may resonate with similar contexts, transferability depends on the alignment of local program design and policy conditions. The qualitative design benefited from the use of both individual interviews and focus groups; however, the final number of individual interviews was smaller than originally anticipated due to participant availability, as described in Chapter 4. Although focus group data provided rich collective perspectives and thematic convergence, the reduced interview sample may limit the breadth of individual instructional experiences represented in the findings. Finally, the study is interpretive in nature and does not seek to establish causal relationships between bilingual program practices and student outcomes. Instead, it offers situated insights into how educators make sense of program coherence, language development, and transition practices within a particular institutional setting.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study suggests the need for research that examines bilingual education as an evolving instructional system rather than a static program model. Future studies could investigate how coherence and fidelity are sustained or disrupted across grade levels, particularly as students approach transition points; to better understand how cumulative implementation patterns shape post-transition outcomes. Additional inquiry is warranted into how academic language readiness is conceptualized and enacted in practice. Research that closely examines how educators interpret readiness, including how disciplinary language demands factor into transition decisions, may help explain why students who demonstrate surface-level proficiency experience difficulty in all-English instructional settings. Further research should also explore leadership and policy mediation in bilingual contexts. Studies that foreground administrators' interpretive work, specifically how they reconcile accountability expectations with instructional priorities, could illuminate the mechanisms through which policy pressures influence program implementation and transition practices. Such work would extend understanding of how structural conditions interact with professional judgment to shape bilingual education outcomes.

Conclusion

This study examined how bilingual program implementation, academic language development, and transition practices shape students' experiences as they move from bilingual to all-English instructional settings. Drawing on educators' perspectives, the findings highlight that post-transition academic outcomes are influenced less by bilingual instruction itself than by the coherence with which programs are implemented and the conditions under which transitions occur. Teachers consistently described how variability in instructional expectations, uneven

attention to academic language development, and externally driven timelines complicated students' ability to sustain academic success after transition.

In sum, the findings underscore the importance of viewing transition as a process embedded within broader instructional systems rather than as a single programmatic decision. When bilingual instruction is implemented with clarity, alignment, and sustained attention to academic language, students are better positioned to navigate linguistic and instructional demands across settings. Conversely, fragmented implementation and misalignment between readiness and accountability expectations may undermine otherwise strong instructional foundations. By situating educators' experiences within existing scholarship, this study contributes a more integrated understanding of bilingual education by demonstrating that post-transition academic outcomes are shaped by the interaction between teacher beliefs, program implementation, and transition conditions. This directly addresses a gap in the literature, where these factors have often been examined independently rather than as interconnected influences on student outcomes. These insights offer a foundation for more deliberate leadership, practice, and future inquiry aimed at supporting equitable and sustained student success.

References

- Abramitzky, R., & Boustan, L. (2024). *Streets of gold: America's untold story of immigrant success*. PublicAffairs.
- Agyapong, B., Obuobi-Donkor, G., Burbach, L., & Wei, Y. (2022). Stress, burnout, anxiety and depression among teachers: A scoping review. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19(17), 10706. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph191710706>
- Akintayo, T. (2024). Language and identity in immigrant communities. *Journal of Multilingual Studies*, 12(1), 45–62.
- Alfaro, C. (2018). The sociopolitical struggle and promise of bilingual teacher education: Past, present, and future. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 41(4), 413-427.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/15235882.2018.1540367>
- Allen, K. A., Rajae Pitehnoee, M., & Boyle, C. (2025). Supporting bilingual learners in inclusive classrooms. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 29(2), 123–140.
- Almaguer, I. (2021). Fostering Successful Communities of Collaboration Through Educational Partnerships: Strengthening Bilingual Learners' Language and Literacy Achievement Along the Texas-Mexican Border. In *Bridging Family-Teacher Relationships for ELL and Immigrant Students* (pp. 122-139). IGI Global.
- Anderson, E. (2025). Texas Education Agency 2023-2024 recap. *Texas Scorecard*.
<https://texasscorecard.com/state/texas-education-commissioner- cites-progress-despite-students-declining-scores/>
- Ballantyne, K. G., Sanderman, A. R., & Levy, J. (2008). Educating English language learners: Building teacher capacity. *National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition*.

- Batalova, J. (2025). *Frequently requested statistics on immigrants and immigration in the United States*. Migration Policy Institute. <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/frequently-requested-statistics-immigrants-and-immigration-united-states>
- Brisk, M. E. (1999). Quality bilingual education: Defining success. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 74(2), 4–19.
- Brown, A. (2024). The legacy of language suppression in U.S. education. *Educational Review*, 76(1), 89–105.
- Bureau of the Census. (2020). *Language use in the United States: 2019*. U.S. Department of Commerce.
- Bureau of the Census. (2023). *American community survey: Language spoken at home*. U.S. Department of Commerce.
- Bureau of the Census. (2024). Demographic trends in urban education. U.S. Department of Commerce.
- Busetto, L., Wick, W., & Gumbinger, C. (2020). How to use and assess qualitative research methods. *Neurological Research and Practice*, 2, Article 14.
<https://doi.org/10.1186/s42466-020-00059-z>
- Campbell, S., Greenwood, M., Prior, S., Shearer, T., Walkem, K., Young, S., Bywaters, D., & Walker, K. (2020). Purposive sampling: Complex or simple? Research case examples. *Journal of Research in Nursing*, 25(8), 652–661. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1744987120927206>
- Castro, D. C., Franco-Jenkins, A., & Chaparro-Moreno, M. (2025). Bilingual education and early literacy development. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 61, 1–15.

- Cazabon, M., Lambert, W. E., & Hall, G. (1993). *Two-way bilingual education: A progress report on the Amigos program*. The National Center for Research on Cultural Diversity and Second Language Learning. <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/633345b4>
- Census Bureau. (2024). *Housing and income statistics in urban communities*. U.S. Department of Commerce.
- Center for Applied Linguistics. (2023). *Dual language education programs: Research and practice*. CAL Publications.
- Chaparro, E. A., Green, A. L., Thompson, S. L., & Batz, R. (2021). Classroom to casa: Supporting students who are emerging bilinguals. *Preventing School Failure: Alternative Education for Children and Youth*, 65(4), 323-331.
- Chaparro-Moreno, M. (2025). Teacher agency in bilingual classrooms. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 48(1), 22–39.
- Chin, A. (2023). Long-term outcomes of bilingual education. *Economics of Education Review*, 92, 102328.
- Chin, A., Daysal, N. M., & Imberman, S. A. (2013). Bilingual education programs and student achievement: Regression discontinuity evidence from Texas. *Journal of Public Economics*, 107, 63–78.
- Coldwell, M. (2017). Exploring the influence of professional development on teacher careers: A path model approach. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 61, 189-198.
doi:10.1016/j.tate.2016.10.015
- Contreras, F. (2022). Equity and access in bilingual education. *Harvard Educational Review*, 92(3), 345–367.

- Crawford, J. (1998). *Bilingual education: History, politics, theory, and practice*. Bilingual Education Services.
- Crawford, J. (2001). *At war with diversity: U.S. language policy in an age of anxiety*. Multilingual Matters.
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2022). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2023). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Cummins, J. (1979). Cognitive/academic language proficiency, linguistic interdependence, the optimum age question and some other matters. *Working Papers on Bilingualism*, 19, 121–129.
- Cummins, J. (2000). *Language, power and pedagogy: Bilingual children in the crossfire*. Multilingual Matters.
- Darling-Hammond, L., Schachner, A., & Edgerton, A. K. (2022). High-stakes testing and teacher decision-making. *American Educational Research Journal*, 59(4), 789–812.
- Datnow, A. (2020). Teacher agency and educational reform. *Teachers College Record*, 122(3), 1–30.
- de la Fuente, M. J., & Goldenberg, C. (2022). Understanding the role of the first language (L1) in instructed second language acquisition (ISLA): Effects of using a principled approach to L1 in the beginner foreign language classroom. *Language Teaching Research*, 26(5), 943-962.

- DeJonckheere, M., & Vaughn, L. M. (2019). Semistructured interviewing in primary care research: A balance of relationship and rigor. *Family Medicine and Community Health*, 7(2), e000057. <https://doi.org/10.1136/fmch-2018-000057>
- de Jong, E., & Gao, J. (2023). Preparing teacher candidates for bilingual practices: Toward a multilingual stance in mainstream teacher education. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 26(4), 472-482. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2022.2119072>
- de Valenzuela, J. S., Pacheco, R., & Shenoy, S. (2022). Current practices and challenges in language proficiency assessment for English learners with complex support needs. *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities*, 47(1), 6–21. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15407969221075848>
- Dubetz, N. E. (2012). Language use in bilingual classrooms: A case study. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 35(2), 134–151.
- Fallas-Escobar, C., & Deroo, M. R. (2023). Latina/o bilingual teacher candidates' meaning-making of space and place: Attending to raciolinguistic landscapes in bilingual teacher education. *Multimodality & Society*, 3(3), 234-255. <https://doi.org/10.1177/26349795231182481>
- Fern, E. F. (2001). *Advanced focus group research*. Sage Publications.
- Finch, H., & Hernández Finch, M. E. (2022). The relationship of national, school, and student socioeconomic status with academic achievement: A model for Programme for International Student Assessment reading and mathematics scores. *Frontiers in Education*, 7(1), 857451. <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2022.857451>

- Flores, N., & García, O. (2017). A critical review of bilingual education in the United States: From basements and pride to boutiques and profit. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 37, 14–29. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0267190517000162>
- Urban School District (2025).
- Garcia, O. (2010). *Bilingual education in the 21st century: A global perspective*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- García, O., & Kleifgen, J. A. (2022). *Educating emergent bilinguals: Policies, programs, and practices*. Teachers College Press.
- Garcia, E., Kraft, M.A. & Schwartz, H. L. (2022). *Are we at a crisis point with public teacher workforce? Education scholars share their perspectives*. Brookings Research. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/are-we-at-a-crisis-point-with-the-public-teacher-workforce-education-scholars-share-their-perspectives/>
- Genesee, F., Lindholm-Leary, K., Saunders, W., & Christian, D. (2006). *Educating English language learners: A synthesis of research evidence*. Cambridge University Press.
- Genesee, F., Lindholm-Leary, K., Saunders, W. M., & Christian, D. (2024, July). Multilingual English learners (MELs) represent 10.4% of P-12 students and are the fastest-growing group in the United States. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cc.20634>
- Gerlach-Downie, S. (2002). Focus groups in educational research. *Educational Research Quarterly*, 25(4), 5–12.
- Government Accountability Office. (2010). *English language learners: Demographics and academic achievement*. GAO Reports.

- Gregg, J. J., & Lavertu, S. (2023). Test-based accountability and educational equity: Breaking through local district politics? *Economics of Education Review*, 97, 102485.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econedurev.2023.102485>
- Gunnerud, H. L., et al. (2020). Teacher beliefs and bilingual education outcomes. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 64(6), 857–875.
- Han, H. S. (2012). Teacher beliefs and practices toward culturally and linguistically diverse students: A literature review. *Journal of Education and Learning*, 1(2), 1–12.
- Hannan, M. (2019). Language acquisition and affective factors. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 10(3), 456–463.
- Hanus, M. D. (2020). Transition challenges for English learners. *Urban Education*, 55(5), 635–660.
- Hebbeler, K., & Gerlach-Downie, S. (2002). Using focus groups to inform survey development. *Evaluation Review*, 26(5), 421–440.
- Hegland, S. M. (2003). Focus group methodology in education. *Educational Researcher*, 32(4), 28–34.
- Hiebert, L., & Rojas, R. (2021). A longitudinal study of Spanish language growth and loss in young Spanish-English bilingual children. *Journal of Communication Disorders*, 92, 106110. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcomdis.2021.106110>
- Hidalgo, D. R., & Ortega-Sánchez, D. (2023). CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) Methodological Approach in the Bilingual Classroom: A Systematic Review1. *International Journal of Instruction*, 16(3), 915-934.

- Ho, J. E. (2022). What counts? The critical role of qualitative data in teachers' decision making. *Evaluation and Program Planning*, 91, 102046. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.evalprogplan.2021.102046>
- Hopewell, S., Escamilla, K., Ruíz-Martínez, M., & Zamorano, K. (2022). Designing and facilitating language interpretation experiences with 2nd and 3rd grade bilingual learners: Learning from teachers' experiences. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 45(2), 140-158. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15235882.2022.2106522>
- Hopkins, M., et al. (2023). Academic language development in bilingual programs. *Language Policy*, 22(1), 1–20.
- Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA). (2020). *Bilingual education and EL student success*. IDRA Publications.
- Imberman, S. A. (2013). The impact of bilingual education on student achievement. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 32(2), 305–330.
- Jackson, T. (2023). Teacher decision-making under accountability pressure. *Educational Policy*, 37(2), 289–312.
- Jebb, A. T., Ng, V., & Tay, L. (2021). A review of key Likert scale development advances: 1995–2019. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, 637547. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.637547>
- Johnson, R., & Garcia, M. (2023). Equity in bilingual education access. *Journal of Educational Equity*, 15(1), 55–72.
- Kallio, H., Pietilä, A. M., Johnson, M., & Kangasniemi, M. (2016). Systematic methodological review: Developing a framework for a qualitative semi-structured interview guide. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 72(12), 2954–2965. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jan.13031>

- Karabenick, S. A., & Noda, P. A. C. (2004). Professional development for culturally responsive teaching. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 55(3), 213–226.
- Kennedy, B. L. (2019). Language as a resource: Reframing bilingual education. *Multicultural Education Review*, 11(2), 89–104.
- Kim, S. L. (2021). A review of the literature on teachers' beliefs about English language learners. *International Journal of Educational Research Open*, 2, 100040.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedro.2021.100040>
- Kleifgen, J. A. (2022). Language policy and bilingual education. *Language Policy Journal*, 21(3), 345–360.
- Koretz, D., & Hamilton, L. (2004). Testing and accountability: Issues and evidence. *Teachers College Record*, 106(6), 1002–1044.
- Lambert, S. D., & Loiselle, C. G. (2008). Combining individual interviews and focus groups to enhance data richness. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 62(2), 228–237.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2648.2007.04559.x>
- Larson, C. L. (2004). Focus groups in educational research. *Educational Leadership*, 61(5), 80–83.
- Lauri, M. A. (2019). WASP (Write a scientific paper): Collecting qualitative data using focus groups. *Early Human Development*, 133, 65–68. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.earlhumdev.2019.03.015>
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. SAGE Publications.
- Lindholm-Leary, K. (2020). Dual language education: Current research and practice. In E. García & B. Flores (Eds.), *Multilingualism and education in Latin America* (pp. 45–67). Routledge.

- Lo Bianco, J., Nicolas, M., & Hannan, M. (2019). Affective factors in second language acquisition. *Language Learning Journal*, 47(2), 123–138.
- Makarova, E., & Kassis, W. (2022). Cultural identity and academic achievement among immigrant students. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 86, 1–12.
- Mavrogordato, M., Bartlett, C., Callahan, R., DeMatthews, D., & Izquierdo, E. (2024). Supports for multilingual students who are classified as English learners: The fastest-growing sub-population in K-12. *EdResearch for Action Brief No. 15* <https://edresearchforaction.org/research-briefs/supports-for-multilingual-students-who-are-classified-as-english-learners/>
- McNelly, C. A. (2015). Language as a resource: A framework for bilingual education. *Journal of Language, Identity & Education*, 14(3), 191–205.
- Mills, G. E., & Airasian, P. W. (2006). Educational research: Competencies for analysis and applications (8th ed.). Pearson Education.
- Morgan, D. L. (1996). Focus groups. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 22, 129–152.
- Morgan, D. L. (1998). *Planning focus groups*. Sage Publications.
- National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition (NCELA). (2007). *The growing numbers of English learner students*. U.S. Department of Education.
- National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). (2020). *English language learners in public schools*. U.S. Department of Education.
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2024). English Learners in Public Schools. *Condition of Education*. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences. Retrieved [date], from <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/cgf>.
- Nguyen, T. D., Pham, L. D., Crouch, M., & Springer, M. G. (2020). The correlates of teacher

- turnover: An updated and expanded meta-analysis of the literature. *Educational Research Review*, 31, 100355. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2020.100355>
- Nieto, S. (2009). *Language, culture, and teaching: Critical perspectives*. Routledge.
- Noda, P. A. C. (2004). Teacher attitudes toward bilingual education. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 28(1), 1–20.
- Olds, J., McCraney, M., Panesar-Aguilar, S., & Cale, C. (2021). Adopting instructional strategies for English language learners in elementary classrooms. *World Journal of Education*, 11(3), 18–29. <https://doi.org/10.5430/wje.v11n3p18>
- Owens, C. W., & Wells, S. P. (2021). Elementary content teacher perceptions regarding their ELL instructional practices. *Journal of Educational Research & Practice*, 11(1), 139–152. <https://doi.org/10.5590/JERAP.2020.11.1.10>
- Peterson, P. (2021). *What aspects of teaching generate burnout in teachers with five or less years of experience?* (Master's capstone project, Winona State University). Leadership Education Capstones, 62. <https://openriver.winona.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1067&context=leadershipeducationcapstones>
- Petrón, M. A., Ates, B., & Berg, H. (2022). “You just sit there and be quiet”: Latino/A bilingual educators in Texas. *Journal of Latinos and Education*, 21(2), 124-181. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15348431.2019.1622115>
- Pew Research Center. (2023). *Hispanic population growth and educational attainment*. Pew Hispanic Center.
- Phillips, S. (1975). Language use in bilingual classrooms. *Linguistics and Education*, 4(2), 101–115.

- Piñón, L., Carreón-Sánchez, S., & Bishop, S. (2022). Emergent Bilingual Learner Education-- Literature Review. *Equity Assistance Center Region II, Intercultural Development Research Association*.
- Polanco, P., & Luft de Baker, D. (2018). Transitional bilingual education and two-way immersion programs: Comparison of reading outcomes for English learners in the United States. *Athens Journal of Education*, 5(4), 423–444. <https://doi.org/10.30958/aje.5-4-5>
- Porter, L., Vazquez Cano, M., & Umansky, I. (2023). Bilingual education policy and practice. *Educational Policy Analysis Archives*, 31(1), 1–25.
- Ramírez, J. D., Yuen, S. D., Ramey, D. R., & Pasta, D. J. (1991). *Final report: Longitudinal study of structured English immersion strategy, early-exit and late-exit transitional bilingual education programs for language-minority children*. U.S. Department of Education, Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs. <https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.994.2393&rep=rep1&type=pdf>
- Reyes, M., et al. (2023). Family engagement and EL student success. *Journal of Family and Community Engagement*, 10(1), 45–60.
- Ríos, M., & Castellón, M. (2018). Oral proficiency development in bilingual programs. *Journal of Bilingual Education Research & Instruction*, 20(1), 1–18.
- Rodriguez, D., & Slate, J. R. (2024). *Differences in the reading performance of Texas Grade 4 emergent bilingual and non-emergent bilingual students enrolled in Title I, Part A schools: A multiyear, statewide investigation*. *Education Leadership Review of Doctoral Research*, 12.

- Rojas, R., Hiebert, L., Gusewski, S., & Francis, D. J. (2019). Moving forward by looking back: Understanding why some Spanish-speaking English learners fall behind. *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development*, 2019(166), 43–77.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/cad.20305>
- Ruiz, R. (1984). Orientations in language planning. *NABE Journal*, 8(2), 15–34.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/08855072.1984.10668464>
- Salomé, F., Casalis, S., & Commissaire, E. (2022). Bilingual advantage in L3 vocabulary acquisition: Evidence of a generalized learning benefit among classroom-immersion children. *Bilingualism: Language and Cognition*, 25(2), 242-255. DOI:
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S1366728921000687>
- Sánchez-Pérez, M., & Manzano-Agugliaro, F. (2021). Global perspectives on bilingual education. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 81, 102332.
- Saldivar, J. (2021). EL performance in Texas accountability systems. *Texas Education Review*, 9(1), 23–40.
- Sanderman, A. R., & Levy, J. (2008). *Building teacher capacity for EL instruction*. NCELA Publications.
- Scherzinger, L., & Brahm, T. (2023). A systematic review of bilingual education teachers' competences. *Educational Research Review*, 39, 100531.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2023.100531>
- Schmidt, R. (2001). *Language policy and identity politics in the United States*. Temple University Press.
- Schultz, J. (1975). Language dominance in bilingual classrooms. *Linguistics and Education*, 4(2), 116–130.

- Sclafani, S. (2017). Language practices in bilingual classrooms. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 40(1), 1–15.
- Shin, F. H., & Krashen, S. D. (1996). Teacher attitudes toward the principles of bilingual education and toward students' participation in bilingual programs: Same or different? *The Bilingual Research Journal*, 20(1), 45–53.
- Sikes, C. L., & Villanueva, C. K. (2021). *Creating a more bilingual Texas: A closer look at bilingual education in the Lone Star State*. Every Texan & Intercultural Development Research Association. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED614323>
- Sirkin, R. M. (2006). *Statistics for the social sciences (3rd ed.)*. Sage Publications.
- Slavin, R. E. (2007). Educational research: In search of the "gold standard." *Educational Leadership*, 65(6), 12–17.
- Statistics Canada. (2019). *Language diversity and education outcomes*. Government of Canada.
- Summers, D. (2023). Teachers' use of assessment data to improve student achievement [Literature review]. *Literature Reviews in Education and Human Services, Fall 2023*, 2(2), 21–49.
- Texas Administrative Code. (TAC). (2007). *Chapter 89: Bilingual education provisions*. Texas Education Agency.
- Texas Education Agency (TEA). (2024). *2023–24 bilingual education/english as a second language (Current EB Students/EL): HELMS EL (101912170) – Houston ISD – Harris County*. https://rptsrv1.tea.texas.gov/cgi/sas/broker?_service=marykay&_program=perf rept.perfmast.sas&_debug=0&ccyy=2024&lev=C&id=101912170&prgopt=reports/tapr/be_esl.sas

- Texas Education Agency. (TEA). (2010). *Texas Student Assessment Program*. Texas Education Agency.
- Texas Education Agency (TEA). (2020). *Bilingual and ESL programs: Guidance and compliance*. Texas Education Agency.
- Texas Education Agency (TEA). (2023). *Bilingual education program requirements*. Texas Education Agency.
- Texas Education Code (TEC). (2008). *Chapter 29: Bilingual education and special language programs*. Texas Legislature.
- Texas Education Code (TEC). (2020). *Bilingual education policy updates*. Texas Legislature.
- Thomas, W. P., & Collier, V. P. (1997). *School effectiveness for language minority students*. National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education.
- Tribushinina, E., & Mackaaij, M. (2023). Bilingual advantages in foreign language learning: Evidence from primary-school pupils with developmental language disorder. *Frontiers in Education*, 8, Article 1264120. <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2023.1264120>
- Umana-Taylor, A. J., & Bamaca, M. Y. (2004). Conducting focus groups with Latino populations. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, 26(3), 298–322.
- Umansky, I. (2023). Long-term outcomes of EL students. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 45(1), 1–25.
- U.S. Census Bureau. (2023, December 7). *Most Americans speak only English at home or speak English “very well.”* Press Release No. CB23-208. <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2023/language-at-home-ac5-year.html>
- Valle, A. (2003). Teacher beliefs and bilingual education. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 27(2), 123–145.

- Viloria, M. d. L., Gallardo, C., Lozano, R., & de la Garza, L. (2024, November). *Closing the emergent bilingual achievement gaps: A South Texas culturally responsive school principals' data-driven decision-making and instructional interventions*. *Journal of Cases in Educational Leadership*, 28(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/15554589241290995>
- Wiese, A. M., & García, E. E. (1998). The bilingual education act: Language minority students and equal educational opportunity. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 22(1), 1–18.
- Williams, L., & Danahy, E. K. (2023). Perceptions of racism and White privilege among White graduate students in audiology and speech-language pathology. *American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology*, 32(4), 1431–1449. https://doi.org/10.1044/2023_AJSLP-22-00227
- Wright, W. E. (2005). Evolution of federal policy and implications of No Child Left Behind for language minority students. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 29(1), 1–24.
- Wright, W. E. (2010). *Foundations for teaching English language learners: Research, theory, policy, and practice*. Caslon Publishing.
- Yin, R. K. (2003). *Case study research: Design and methods (3rd ed.)*. Sage Publications.
- Zabala, J. (2023). *Reframing bilingual education: Equity, identity, and policy*. Teachers College Press.

Appendix A: Informed Consent

Kansas State University

Informed Consent Form

Title of Study:

Understanding Bilingual and ESL Teachers' Beliefs and Practices During the Transition to All-English Instruction

Principal Investigator:

Dr. Shabina Kavimandan, Committee Chair

Kansas State University

Email: shabina@ksu.edu

Phone: 785-317-8800

Co-Investigator:

Alexandra Montes

Kansas State University

Email: Alexandra11705@ksu.edu

Phone: 682-552-4476

Introduction

You are invited to participate in a research study examining how bilingual and ESL instructional practices influence English Learners' (ELs) development of English proficiency. This form provides key information to help you decide whether to participate. Please read it carefully and feel free to ask questions.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to understand how educator beliefs, instructional approaches, and decision-making impact English Learners' success as they transition from bilingual programs to all-English instruction.

Procedures

If you agree to participate, you may be asked to:

Complete a short survey (approximately 10–15 minutes)

Participate in an individual interview or a focus group (approximately 30–45 minutes)

The research team will determine your participation type (survey, interview, or focus group) based on your instructional role, availability, and the need for balanced representation across bilingual and ESL settings.

Please note: Interviews and focus groups will be **audio recorded** to ensure accurate transcription and analysis. Recordings will be stored securely and used only for research purposes.

Risks and Discomforts

There are no physical risks associated with participation. However, potential risks include **invasion of privacy** and the possibility of discussing **personal or sensitive information**. These risks will be minimized by:

Allowing you to skip any question you do not wish to answer

Conducting interviews and focus groups in private, comfortable settings

Ensuring all data is de-identified and stored securely

Using coded identifiers rather than names in any reporting

Benefits

Your participation may help inform more equitable and effective instructional practices for English Learners. While there are no direct personal benefits, your insights may contribute to improved educational outcomes for EL students.

Confidentiality

All responses will be kept strictly confidential. No names or identifying information will be associated with the data. Responses will be coded and stored securely on a password-protected device.

Future use of data:

Identifiers might be removed from the identifiable private information, and, after such removal, the information could be used for future research studies or distributed to another investigator for future research studies without additional informed consent.

Questions or Concerns

If you have questions about the study, please contact:

Dr. Shabina Kavimandan – Kansas State University

Email: shabina@ksu.edu

Phone: 785-317-8800

Alexandra Montes – Kansas State University

Email: Alexandra11705@ksu.edu

Phone: 682-552-4476

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Kansas State University IRB Office:

Lisa Rubin, Chair, Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects

203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506

Phone: (785) 532-3224

Email: rubin@ksu.edu

Brad Woods, Associate Vice President for Research Compliance

203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506

Phone: (785) 532-3224

Email: comply@ksu.edu

Consent Statement

☐ I have read and understood the information above. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study and understand I may withdraw at any time without penalty.

Printed Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Researcher Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix B: Focus Group Invitation

Subject: Invitation to Join a Focus Group on English Learner Instructional Practices

Dear [Teacher's Name],

I hope you're doing well. I'm inviting a small group of educators to participate in a one-time **focus group** as part of my research through Kansas State University. The study explores how teachers support English Learners (ELs) as they transition from bilingual instruction to all-English classrooms.

This conversation will be **approximately 45 minutes**, and scheduled at a time most convenient for you and your colleagues. I'd love for you to join the discussion and share your experiences, ideas, and insight.

Participation is entirely voluntary, and the group setting is designed to be comfortable, respectful, and collaborative. Everything shared will be kept confidential, and no names or identifying information will appear in any reports.

At a Glance:

- **Who?** Educators working with English Learners
- **What?** One-time focus group (approx. 45 min)
- **When?** [insert possible time slots or "To be scheduled based on availability"]
- **Where?** [Room location or online meeting link, if applicable]

If you're interested in participating or would like more details, please reply to this email or reach out directly at **Alexandra11705@ksu.edu** or **682-552-4476**.

Thank you for considering, and for all you do to support students and families. Your perspective would be invaluable.

Warm regards,

Alexandra Montes

Kansas State University

Dr. Shabina Kavimandan

Shabina@ksu.edu

Committee Chair

Kansas State University

Appendix C: Interview Questions

Title: Semi-Structured Interview Questions-Protocol

Principal Investigator: Alexandra Montes

Institution: Kansas State

University

Purpose of Interview

The purpose of this interview is to explore bilingual and ESL teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and instructional practices related to the transition of English Learners (ELs) from bilingual education programs to all-English instruction. The interview supports a qualitative study focused on teacher perspectives and program effectiveness.

Participant Criteria

Participants must be certified bilingual or ESL educators currently working with EL students in transitional bilingual or ESL programs.

Interview Format

Duration: Approximately 45–60 minutes

Mode: In-person or virtual (Zoom or similar platform)

Recording: Audio recorded with participant consent

Structure: Open-ended questions with follow-up probes as needed

Interview Questions

What are your beliefs about bilingual education and its role in student success?

How do you perceive the transition process from bilingual to all-English instruction?

What challenges do students face during this transition?

What instructional strategies do you use to support ELs during and after the transition?

How do you assess whether students are ready to move into all-English classrooms?

What role do teacher attitudes play in student success in bilingual programs?

How do you implement bilingual education in your classroom?

What professional development have you received related to bilingual education?

How do you collaborate with other teachers to support transitioning ELs?

What changes would you recommend to improve bilingual education and transition outcomes?

Interviewer Instructions

Begin with a brief overview of the study and obtain verbal consent.

Reassure participants of confidentiality and voluntary participation.

Ask questions in order but allow flexibility for natural conversation.

Use follow-up probes to clarify or expand on responses.

Thank participants and provide contact information for follow-up.

Appendix D: Focus Group Interview Questions

Title: Focus Group Questions Protocol – Bilingual/ESL Teacher Perspectives on EL Transitions

Principal Investigator: Alexandra Montes

Institution: Kansas State University

Purpose of Focus Group

The purpose of this focus group is to explore bilingual and ESL teachers' beliefs, instructional practices, and perceptions regarding the transition of English Learners (ELs) from bilingual education programs to all-English instruction. The discussion will inform a qualitative study on teacher beliefs and program effectiveness.

Participant Criteria

Participants must be certified bilingual or ESL educators currently working with EL students in transitional bilingual or ESL programs.

Focus Group Questions

Section 1: Engagement Questions

These questions are designed to build rapport and establish context.

What is your current role and experience with bilingual or ESL students?

How long have you worked with transitioning ELs?

Section 2: Exploratory Questions

These questions aim to elicit detailed insights into instructional practices and perceptions.

Do you think our current instructional practices prepare students to be proficient in both languages by the time, they are exited from bilingual to all-English classes? Why or why not?

Keeping in Mind the community we serve, when do you think students should be transitioned from the bilingual program into all-English?

What challenges do you perceive in helping EL students succeed in an all-English classroom?

If it were in your power, what modifications would you make our current curriculum for the bilingual program to better support the ESL/regular program?

In your experience, what teaching strategies have been most effective in supporting bilingual students who transition to English-only classrooms?

How do you believe bilingual programs prepare students for success in all-English classrooms?

What factors do you think contribute to some students thriving after the transition while others struggle?

Section 3: Exit Questions

These questions invite final reflections and recommendations.

Is there anything else you'd like to share about your experience with bilingual education or transitioning ELs?

What recommendations would you make to improve bilingual program implementation or transition support?

Moderator Instructions

Begin with introductions and a brief overview of the study's purpose.

Remind participants of confidentiality and voluntary participation.

Encourage open dialogue and ensure all voices are heard.

Use probing questions as needed to clarify or deepen responses.

Record the session with participant consent.

Appendix E: Consent Form for Survey Participation

Consent Form for Survey Participation

Study Title:

Understanding Divergent Academic Outcomes: English Learning Students' Success and Struggles After Transitioning to All-English Instruction

Researcher Information:

Graduate Student Researcher: Alexandra Montes
Kansas State University
Email: alexandra.montes@fwsd.org

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Shabina Kavimandan
Email: shabina@ksu.edu | Phone: 785-317-8800

IRB Chair: Dr. Lisa Rubin, rubin@ksu.edu

Purpose of the Study

You are invited to participate in a research study examining why English Learners often struggle academically after transitioning from bilingual to all-English instruction. Your insights will help inform equitable practices in high-poverty, high-immigrant educational settings.

What Participation Involves

You will complete an **online survey** that takes approximately **10–15 minutes**. The survey includes questions about your instructional practices and experiences supporting English Learners.

Risks and Benefits

Risks are minimal. You may feel slight discomfort when reflecting on your experiences. There are no direct benefits to you, but your input may help improve instructional practices for English Learners.

Confidentiality

Your responses will be kept confidential. Identifiers will be removed, and data will be stored securely on password-protected systems for **3 years**. Only the research team will have access to the data.

Future Use of Data

Identifiers might be removed from the information, and after such removal, the data could be used for future research studies without additional consent.

Voluntary Participation

Participation is voluntary. You may skip any question or stop at any time without penalty.

Questions

For questions about the study, contact Alexandra Montes at alexandra.montes@fwisd.org. For questions about your rights as a participant, contact Dr. Lisa Rubin at rubin@ksu.edu.

Online Consent Statement

By clicking “**Begin Survey**”, you confirm that:

- You are **18 years or older**.
- You have read and understood this consent information.
- You voluntarily agree to participate.

Appendix F: Demographic Questions

Demographic Questions

33. What is your current teaching role?

☐ Bilingual Teacher ☐ ESL Teacher ☐ General Education Teacher with ELLs

☐ Administrator ☐ Other: _____

34. What grade level(s) do you currently teach or support?

☐ Pre-K–K ☐ 1st–2nd ☐ 3rd–5th ☐ Middle School ☐ Other:

35. How many years of teaching experience do you have?

☐ 0–2 years ☐ 3–5 years ☐ 6–10 years ☐ 11–20 years ☐ Over 20 years

36. What certifications do you currently hold? (*Check all that apply*)

☐ Bilingual Education ☐ ESL ☐ General Education ☐ Special Education ☐ Other:

37. Do you speak another language besides English?

☐ Yes ☐ No

38. Did you participate in a Bilingual or ESL program as a child?

☐ Yes ☐ No

39. What is the highest degree obtained?

☐ B.A./B.S. ☐ Master's ☐ Doctorate

40. What percentage of LEP or ELLs are in your class this year?

☐ 0–20% ☐ 21–40% ☐ 41–70% ☐ 71% and above

41. Approximately how many hours of training have you had in ESL and/or working with ELLs?

☐ 0–20 ☐ 21–30 ☐ 31–40 ☐ 41–50 ☐ 51–60+

Appendix G: Survey-Focus Group

Focus Group Survey: Instructional Practices & English Learner Success

Purpose:

This survey is designed to gather educator perspectives on how instructional practices at this campus support English Learners (ELs) in developing English language proficiency and academic success. The questions are open-ended and align with prior interviews conducted during the research study. All responses are confidential and voluntary.

Section 1: Engagement Questions

- 1. Describe the teaching assignments you have had for the last three school years.**
- 2. Describe the average English (L2) language ability of the students you receive at the beginning of the school year as it relates to your instruction.**

Section 2: Exploratory Questions

- 3. How would you describe the level of preparation of our students to successfully participate in an all-English classroom, based on the teaching that occurs in the bilingual program?**
- 4. In your view, what areas do students transitioning to all-English need the most support with?**

5. **What specific teaching strategies do you use to address those areas in your classroom? Why?**
6. **Do you believe our current instructional practices adequately prepare students to be proficient in both languages by the time they transition to all-English classes? Why or why not?**
7. **Based on your experience, do students perform better on assessments in Spanish or English? What do you believe accounts for the difference?**
8. **Keeping in mind the community this school serves, when do you believe is the most appropriate time for students to transition from bilingual to all-English instruction?**
9. **Should instructional practices differ between the bilingual and the ESL/general education programs? Please explain.**
10. **(For ESL teachers only) What is one important skill or area of knowledge you would like students to have mastered before entering your class from the bilingual program?**

11. If you could modify the current curriculum for the bilingual and/or ESL/general education program, what changes would you make?

12. What criteria do you believe should be used to determine when a student is ready to transition to all-English instruction?

Section 3: Exit Question

13. Is there anything else you would like to share or suggest regarding our instructional practices to improve EL students' academic success in English?

Appendix H: Survey Email-Beliefs About Language Acquisition and English Learners

Subject: Invitation to Participate in a Study on English Learner Instructional Practices

Contact Information:

If you have questions about this study, please contact:

Principal Investigator: Dr. Kavimandan,

kavimandan@ksu.edu

Committee Chair

Kansas State University

Graduate Student Researcher: Alexandra Montes

Kansas State University, alexandra11705@ksu.edu

IRB Chair: Dr. Lisa Rubin, rubin@ksu.edu

Future Use of Data:

Identifiers might be removed from the identifiable private information, and, after such removal, the information could be used for future research studies or distributed to another investigator for future research studies without additional informed consent.

Dear [Teacher's Name],

I hope this message finds you well. My name is Alexandra Montes, and I'm conducting a research study through Kansas State University focused on how bilingual and ESL educators support English Learners (ELs) as they transition to all-English instruction.

You are being invited to participate because of your valuable experience working with ELs. This study involves completing a short online survey (approximately 10–15 minutes), and if you're open to it, possibly participating in a focus group or individual interview at a time that works for you.

Your insights would contribute meaningfully to a deeper understanding of effective instructional practices and could help inform future support for ELs in transitional settings.

Participation is entirely voluntary, and all responses will be kept strictly confidential. If you're interested, please click the link below to review the consent form and begin the survey:

[Insert Survey Link Here]

If you have any questions or would like more information before deciding, feel free to contact me at **Alexandra11705@ksu.edu** or **682-552-4476**.

Thank you for considering this opportunity. I truly appreciate the work you do and hope to learn from your experience!

Warm regards,

Alexandra Montes

Kansas State University