2022

Systemic Challenges During Assessment of Emerging Bilingual Students: Perspectives of Speech Language Pathologists and School Psychologists

Courtney Smith

LOYOLA MARYMOUNT UNIVERSITY

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by

Courtney Smith

A dissertation presented to the Faculty of the School of Education,

Loyola Marymount University,

in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Education

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Courtney Smith

Loyola Marymount University
School of Education
Los Angeles, CA 90045

This dissertation written by Courtney Smith, under the direction of the Dissertation Committee, is approved and accepted by all committee members, in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education.

3/4/2022

Date

Dissertation Committee

Rebecca Stephenson, Ph.D., Dissertation Chair

Gina Chavez, Ed.D., Committee Member

Karen Huchting, Ph.D., Committee Member

ACKNOWLEGMENTS

Completing this dissertation would not have been possible without the support, guidance, feedback, and love from my family, friends, professors, and colleagues. It is with a full and grateful heart that I would like to thank the following people for their role in this journey:

To my Chair, Dr. Becky Stephenson, thank you for being the best chair ever! Your feedback, support, and guidance during this process was crucial to my success. I have learned so much from you and I am so grateful to know you.

To my committee members, Dr. Karie Huchting and Dr. Gina Chavez, thank you for your thoughtful feedback and guidance. I am grateful to have had such inspiring mentors guiding me during this process.

To the group text, Jane, Korey, and Deonna, thank you for being my constants throughout this program. I cannot fathom how I would have survived the last three years without your friendship, feedback, support, or encouragement. I am a better educator and a better person because of you three.

To Cohort 16 and my professors at LMU, thank you for your friendship, feedback, and support. There is no one else I would want to navigate getting doctorates during a global pandemic with.

To The Ladies, thank you for being my cheerleaders. You believed in me when I did not believe in myself. I am not sure how I got this lucky, but I am eternally grateful to call you my best friends.

To my best friend and roommate, Jessica, thank you for your love and encouragement. You always understood when I disappeared for hours to work, and you were always there to distract me and make me laugh when I needed a break. I am so incredibly grateful to call you my best friend.

To my parents and sister, thank you for your fierce support and understanding as I took on this challenge. Your willingness to listen to me talk about my project, your understanding when I cancelled plans, and your help with groceries, editing, and more were integral to my success. Mom, thank you for your thoughtful feedback and willingness to "talk shop" with me anytime I asked – I am a better educator and a stronger woman because of you.
Dad, thank you for your unyielding belief in me (and your patience when mom and I "talk shop") – I am a more confident and kinder person because of you.

And to my sister, thank you for your fierce love and support through this process – I still want to be like you when I grow up. I love you!

Finally, to all my friends, family, and colleagues who talked with me, encouraged me, and cheered me on the last three years – thank you for everything!

DEDICATION

For my parents, whose belief in me made me believe in myself.

Mom, you are my guidepost for everything.

Dad, you are my pillar of strength.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

Table **Page**

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure **Page**

ABSTRACT

Systemic Challenges During Assessment of Emerging Bilingual Students: Perspectives of Speech Language Pathologists and School Psychologists

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Courtney Smith

This study explored the perspectives of speech language pathologists and school psychologists, to identify the systemic challenges they identified that negatively impact how emerging bilingual students are referred, assessed, and identified for special education. This qualitative study used semi-structured interviews with 6 speech language pathologists and 6 school psychologists (n=12) to explore these challenges and barriers, as well as to look at the systems of belief present on campuses, that impact this process. Using a systems thinking framework and detailed inductive analysis of the data many themes emerged related to barriers such as difficulty finding an interpreter and ensuring that interpreter was reliable in their translations, limited access to bilingual resources, and inconsistent and unclear referral systems. Moreover, participants reported that many biases related to race and culture were present on their campuses and impacted how emerging bilingual students were referred for assessment. This study's findings

indicate a need for changes to be made at the federal, state, district, and school levels to address the various challenges present and to improve the overall system.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The public education system's primary objective is to provide instruction that meets the needs of all students (Zetlin et al., 2011). However, the United States' long history of racist and ableist practices and policies continues to negatively impact the educational outcomes of marginalized students. There have been numerous court cases filed (e.g., *Lau v. Nichols,* 1974; *Castañeda v. Pickard*, 1981) and legislation passed (e.g., *Every Student Succeeds Act*, 2015; *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1990,* 2004) in response to unequal and inequitable practices within education. While progress has been made toward equitable education, research has shown continued inequities for students from marginalized groups such as English learners and students with disabilities (De Valenzuela et al., 2006). Research has found that English learners are disproportionately represented in special education, which has adverse impacts on their educational outcomes (Artiles et al., 2005; De Valenzuela et al., 2006; Linn & Hemmer, 2011; Liu et al., 2008; Morgan et al., 2012, 2017; Ortiz et al., 2011; Samson & Lesaux, 2009; Sullivan, 2011; U.S. Department of Education [USDE], n.d.). While systems such as Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS), Response to Intervention (RTI), and recommended assessment practices for bilingual learners have been implemented to reduce inappropriate referrals and assessments, data has suggested continued misrepresentation of marginalized students including English learners in special education (Artiles et al., 2005; De Valenzuela et al., 2006; Linn & Hemmer, 2011; Liu et al., 2008; Morgan et al., 2012, 2017; Ortiz et al., 2011; Samson & Lesaux, 2009; Sullivan, 2011; USDE, n.d.). Prior research has focused on the roles teachers play in student referrals and assessment for special education (Ferlis & Xu, 2016;

Mitchell, 2019; Ortiz et al., 2011; Stein, 2011). However, research on the role of other professionals involved in these processes, including speech language pathologists (SLPs) and school psychologists, is less (Adekanye, 2017; O'Bryon & Rogers, 2010; Vega et al., 2016). A school psychologist is a professional with expertise in mental health, learning, and behaviors. They also have specialized knowledge about child development and the ability to assess, diagnose, and treat cognitive, behavioral, academic, or social-emotional challenges. At a school they are responsible for a small caseload of students who they provide therapy to, as well as, completing assessments and Individualized Education Program's (IEPs) for students as needed. An SLP is a professional who is trained to assess, diagnose, and treat individuals who have speech, language, voice, or communication disorders. At a school they provide therapy to students and conduct language and speech assessments as needed. In this way, SLPs and school psychologists are highly trained and qualified to work with students with linguistic and academic differences and deficits; however, the continued disproportionate representation of English learners in special education raise questions about the preparation and support these professionals have for identifying English learner students.

Emerging Bilingual Students

Although "English learner" (EL) is the most commonly used term to describe students who speak a language other than English at home, Yamasaki and Luk (2018), influenced by the work of García et al. (2008), proposed using the term "emerging bilingual" (EB) to better encompass these students' capacity to not only learn English, but also to concurrently develop their home language. Research has shown that students' proficiency in their home language was directly related to their English proficiency, which in turn impacts academic outcomes (Artiles et

al., 2005). Throughout this dissertation, I described students who speak a language other than English at home but who are not yet proficient in English as emerging bilinguals (EBs) to both celebrate their ability to learn another language as well as to acknowledge the importance of their home language. I used the term "English learner" within quotations from cited material or when it appeared in the title of a law, policy, or research article.

In the United States, the EB population has steadily grown, with an increase from 3.8 million EB students in 2000 to 5.0 million EB students in 2017 (Hussar et al., 2020). This means that EB students represent about 10% of all students enrolled in the public education system in the United States (Hussar et al., 2020; USDE, n.d.). In California, EB students represent one in five students or about 20% of all students enrolled (Warren et al., 2020). The ever-growing EB population in the United States and California are mostly students of color (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2009), many of whom live in urban areas. Nationwide, 75% of EB students are Hispanic/Latinx although only 25% of the general student population is Hispanic/Latinx (USDE, n.d.). In California, nearly 85% of EB students speak Spanish as their primary language (USDE, n.d.). The intersection of the linguistic and racial identities of these students "is shaped by the institutional/school structure that privileges race over language and obscures the racial identity of non-Black and non-white ELs" (Morita-Mullaney, 2018, p. 2).

Another population with steady growth in the United States is students receiving special education services (Hussar et al., 2020). Between 2004-05 and 2018-19 there was an increase from 6.3 million students to 7.1 million students who receive special education nationwide, with about 33% of these students qualifying for services under the eligibility of specific learning disability (SLD) and 19% under the eligibility of speech or language impairment (SLI) (Hussar

et al., 2020). According to the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1990* (IDEA) (2004) a specific learning disability is defined as "A disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written" and that can "manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations and conditions such as dyslexia or brain injury might result in an eligibility of SLD (Sec. 300.8 para. 10). Additionally, section 300.8 of IDEA (2004) defined a speech or language impairment as "A communication disorder, such as stuttering, impaired articulation, a language impairment, or a voice impairment, that adversely affects a child's educational performance" (para. 11). The California Department of Education (CDE) reported that during the 2018-2019 school year, nearly 800,000 individuals from newborn to age 22 were provided special education services through the public education system (California Department of Education, 2020c). Research has revealed that a disproportionate number of EB students are identified for special education, especially in these high incidence categories of SLD and SLI (Liu et al., 2008; Ortiz et al., 2011; USDE, n.d.).

Similar to the choice to use EB, the term dis/ability, with a slash, is used throughout this dissertation. Guided by the definition of dis/ability proposed in Dis/ability Critical Race Studies (DisCrit) the slash was used because it "disrupts misleading understandings of disability, as it simultaneously conveys the social construction of both ability and disability" (Connor et al., 2016, p. 7). The traditional use of dis/ability without the slash was maintained when referring to particular official or conventional uses, such as in eligibility categories, like specific learning disability, and within cited quotations.

Disproportionate Representation

The representation patterns of EB students in special education have been a topic in the literature for many years. Despite the plethora of work done to address the disproportionate representation of marginalized populations in special education, the response for real change has been inadequate at both the general and special education levels (Connor et al., 2019). In fact, some have argued that this research has actually had little to no impact on the presence of inequity in our educational system (Blanchett et al., 2005; Connor et al., 2019; Skiba et al., 2008). Recent government data indicated that while EB students represent about 10% of the United States student population they represent more than 14% of students with dis/abilities (Hussar et al., 2020; USDE, n.d.). This is consistent with recent studies that have suggested that EB students are overrepresented in special education, especially in the specific learning disability category (Liu et al., 2008; Ortiz et al., 2011; USDE, n.d.). Linn and Hemmer (2011) found that in a number of districts in southeast Texas, across a seven-year period, there was a decreasing trend of EB students in special education overall, with some districts decreasing the number of EB students in special education by half. However, despite the downward trend of the numbers, there remained an overall overrepresentation of EB students in special education at the end of the seven-year period (Linn & Hemmer, 2011). Similarly, De Valenzuela et al. (2006) found that in comparison to monolingual students, EB students were overrepresented not only in individual eligibility categories, but also generally in special education.

In direct contrast, some research found an underrepresentation of EB students in special education. Morgan et al. (2012) found that in early intervention and early childhood special education, 4-year-old EB students were less likely to be identified with a dis/ability than their

non-EB peers. Although the study was not specific to EB students, they found underrepresentation of EB students was evident both before and after controlling for potentially confounding factors, such as socio-economic status (SES) (Morgan et al., 2012). Morgan et al. (2017) later reported that minority students were less likely to be identified as a student with a dis/ability. While this study was also not specific to EB students, the researchers isolated various groups, including EB students, while analyzing their data and found that under-identification was still consistent when only EB students were considered (Morgan et al., 2017).

However, there has been notable disagreement with the work of Morgan and his colleagues (Blanchett & Sealey, 2016; Collins et al., 2016; Ford & Russo, 2016; Harry & Fenton, 2016; Morgan et al., 2012, 2017; Skiba et al., 2016; Welner, 2015). In their article, Connor et al. (2019) briefly outlined the criticisms of these articles, such as outdated longitudinal data, use of teacher reports whose accuracy could not be certain, and use of a limited range of dis/ability categories in their initial studies. Despite these criticisms, the work of Morgan and his colleagues (Morgan et al., 2012, 2017) was quickly accepted by many in the mainstream, including former United States Secretary of Education Betsey DeVos, who used their work to justify suspending federal support for research which explored overrepresentation (Connor et al., 2019). In fact, some have believed that this research, which suggested underrepresentation, indicates that systemic bias does not exist (Connor et al., 2019). In turn, Connor et al. (2019) argued that this only solidifies the needs for continued work which examines how we conceptualize and research overrepresentation, including a close examination of how racism and ableism impact this process.

Leading researchers in this field, including Alfredo Artiles and Amanda Sullivan, among others, proposed a different explanation of the data. Artiles et al. (2005) reported findings that demonstrate inconsistent representation of EB students in special education. In this study the researchers looked at the data by grade level, as well as, by level of English proficiency and created three groups: White English only students, English proficient students (previous EB students who have met requirements for reclassification), and EB students. When controlling for these factors they found that EB students were overrepresented in secondary grades but underrepresented in elementary grades (Artiles et al., 2005). They also found that there was a direct correlation between grade and eligibility as more EB students were found eligible for special education as the grades progressed (Artiles et al., 2005). They further delineated EB students into two groups based on language proficiency, Limited L2 only and Limited L1 and L2 where L1 is their primary or home language and L2 is the second language they learn. With these groups, they found inconsistent representation for each group (Artiles et al., 2005). Specifically, EB students with limited L1 and L2 were overrepresented as students with specific learning disabilities at all grade levels, overrepresented as students with an intellectual disability in secondary grades and were almost four times as likely to receive language and speech services in elementary school (Artiles et al., 2005). Students with only limited L2 were less likely than their English proficient and White peers to be placed into high incidence dis/ability categories, except for learning disability where they were 75% more likely to be placed (Artiles et al., 2005). In a 2009 study, Samson and Lesaux similarly found inconsistent representation of EB students based on grade-level. They concluded that EB students were underrepresented in special education in kindergarten and first grade but were overrepresented by third grade indicating that EB students

were more likely to be identified for special education services later than their White non-EB peers (Samson & Lesaux, 2009).

Sullivan (2011) also found disproportionality in the identification and placement of EB students in special education. Her research looked at both state and district level data. She found that at the state level there was an overrepresentation of the EB population in specific learning disability and intellectual disability categories and an underrepresentation of EB students in the emotional dis/ability category (Sullivan, 2011). In contrast, both under- and overrepresentation were seen at the district level, with an increase in the trend toward overrepresentation (Sullivan, 2011). Similarly, De Valenzuela et al. (2006) looked at general disproportionality of minority students and found that EB students were generally overrepresented in special education, especially in emotional disability, intellectual disability, specific learning disability, and speech language impairment. In contrast, they found that EB students were underrepresented in developmental delay and gifted instruction categories (De Valenzuela et al., 2006). Disparity by dis/ability category has consistently been noted by researchers. Specifically, EB students have been found to be overidentified in high-incidence categories, especially specific learning disability (SLD) and speech or language impairment (SLI) (Artiles et al., 2010; Cramer, 2015; DeMatthews, 2019; Gandara & Hopkins, 2010; Samson & Lesaux, 2009; Sullivan, 2011). These high-incidence categories may also be referred to as judgmental categories because identifying students for these eligibilities is not a medical diagnosis, but rather relies on clinical judgments determined by school-based professionals, such as SLPs or school psychologists (Artiles et al., 2010; Ortiz et al., 2011). Unlike with an eligibility like intellectual disability, where a student may have a medical diagnosis, such as Down syndrome, which helps guide school eligibility,

SLD and SLI are determined solely by assessments done by school professionals, usually the school psychologist and/or speech language pathologist.

Notably, approximately half of the EB students identified with a dis/ability will receive some or all of their services in a separate, more restrictive setting (Artiles et al., 2005; Castro-Villarreal et al., 2016; De Valenzuela et al., 2006; Hosp & Reschly, 2003; Rodríguez & Rodríguez, 2017) and "may be enrolled in schools and classrooms that have not traditionally served linguistically diverse learners" (Theoharis & O'Toole, 2011, p. 647). This suggests that when EB students are not appropriately identified for special education there may be distinct outcomes which impact their academic progress.

Adding to the difficulty of this problem are the inherent beliefs about race and ability that educators hold (Marx, 2004; Park, 2020; Pettit, 2011). Cultural, ideological, and personal beliefs impact educators not only in the way they view their role but can also influence their choices with students (Park, 2020; Pettit, 2011). Even those individuals who describe themselves as open-minded have been found to believe that students of color are disadvantaged by their culture (Marx, 2004). This deficit thinking permeates education and influences how students are viewed (Marx, 2004). As a society, we have socially constructed normative standards that are either explicitly or implicitly expected. These standards are based on White, middle-class, able-bodied standards and students are compared to this arbitrary ideal. Therefore, when a student does not fit into these normative standards, there is a tendency to want to "fix" what is wrong, to see the student as deficient in some way (Park, 2020). This is seen in the experiences of EB students whose linguistic differences, as well as their racial, cultural, and socio-economic differences, lead educators to believe they are deficient and therefore need special education to "fix" them.

This is why Park (2020) argued that "the prevention of erroneous co-construction of EL and disability statuses requires changing the ways in which English learner and disability are conceptualized—shifting away from deficit views of these student groups and toward recognition of their many assets" (p. 1).

Implications of Disproportionate Representation of Emerging Bilinguals

Disproportionate representation, both over and under identification, of EB students puts an already vulnerable population at risk for further isolation and academic challenges. The implications for overidentifying EB students for special education are vast. For example, research has identified the impact restricted educational settings may have for misidentified EB students. Time spent receiving special education services may reduce students' access to general education teachers, peers, and curriculum, and can influence their academic outcomes (Artiles et al., 2005; Castro-Villarreal et al., 2016; De Valenzuela et al., 2006; Hosp & Reschly, 2003; Rodríguez & Rodríguez, 2017). Hosp and Reschly (2003) summarized implications for overidentification of EB students by providing three considerations for educators. First, they ascertained that there are possible negative outcomes children could face due to the stigma attached to certain special education labels. Second, students in special education may have limited or reduced access to general education classrooms and peers. Finally, they stated that there is no conclusive evidence that special education programs work (Hosp & Reschly, 2003). In fact, students who are inappropriately placed into special education may actually demonstrate regression of skills (Rodríguez & Rodríguez, 2017).

In contrast, when students who have a dis/ability are not provided the services they need, they are underserved by their placement and lack access to the appropriate supports they need for

success (Castro-Villarreal et al., 2016). Based on their review of the literature, one conclusion that Rodríguez and Rodríguez (2017) found was that the longer an EB student who has a specific learning disability went without adequate services, the harder it was for them to catch up to their peers. Moreover, they may end up having both emotional and social distress which in turn may lead to a dislike of school (Rodríguez & Rodríguez, 2017). Similarly, Samson and Lesaux (2009) suggested that EB students who are not identified in early elementary years are at a disadvantage to improve their reading skills as compared to their peers. By not being identified appropriately, EB students may miss out on critical services at a pivotal point in their learning (Gandara & Hopkins, 2010). The underrepresentation of EB students in the preschool and elementary years (Artiles et al., 2005; De Valenzuela et al., 2006; Morgan et al., 2012, 2017; Samson & Lesaux, 2009; Sullivan, 2011) suggests that some students with needs are not receiving adequate services, which may lead to reduced outcomes for them in later years.

Disproportionate representation has also been shown to impact students' social emotional development. In 1999, ValÅs conducted a study to identify if students identified as having a specific learning disability demonstrated difficulties with psychological development. He found that students who were identified as having a learning disability reported being less accepted by peers, felt lonelier, and had decreased self-esteem (ValÅs, 1999). This suggests that when EB students are overidentified as having a dis/ability, specifically a learning disability, they may be at increased risk for challenges related to peer interaction and self-esteem. Similarly, when EB students have dis/abilities, but do not receive services, it may lead to emotional and social suffering, as well as a dislike of school and learning (Rodríguez & Rodríguez, 2017). Given the disproportionate numbers of EB students identified for special education, the current study

explored how the intersection of race, language status, and dis/ability showed up at schools and impacted EB assessments.

A Brief History of EB and Dis/ability Rights

Historically, both EB students and students with dis/abilities have faced discrimination and prejudice within and outside of education. Table 1 outlines some of the various acts, court cases, and legislation that have been implemented both nationally and in California in an attempt to provide guidance to educators about how to improve the outcomes for each of these populations of students.

These policies shaped our system of education and continue to influence it today. The *Civil Rights Act* (1964) which prohibited discrimination in education, among other things, preceded both the *Bilingual Education Act* (1968) and the *Rehabilitation Act* (1973) which acknowledged and funded bilingual education and protected the civil rights of people with dis/abilities respectively. Moreover, the *Rehabilitation Act* (1973) contains Section 504, which required schools to provide a free and appropriate education for all students regardless of ability. Similarly, the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1990* (2004) which was reauthorized in 2004, guaranteed a free and appropriate education for all students with disabilities and provides aid to meet students' needs. These along with many other policies continue to have a substantial impact on EB students and students with disabilities academic experiences.

Table 1

Federal and State Policies Impacting EB Students

Year	Name	Federal or State	Content/Impact as it relates to EBs
1964	*Civil Rights Act*	Federal	Prohibited discrimination on the basis of race/ethnicity in housing, employment, education, and more
1965	*Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA)	Federal	Focused on improving the quality of education and improving equitable outcomes by offering grants to districts serving low-income students, funding for special education centers, etc. Introduced Titles I – VI
1968	*The Bilingual Education Act*	Federal	Also known as Title VII of the ESEA; Acknowledged the value of bilingual education programs and offered grants to establish these programs
1973	*The Rehabilitation Act* (Section 504)	Federal	Protected the civil rights of people with dis/abilities as it related to federal employment and public services
1974	*Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974*	Federal	Prohibited schools from denying educational access on the basis of gender or race/ethnicity and requires that if barriers exist that limit students' equal participation, districts must act
1974	*Lau v. Nichols*	Federal	United States Supreme Court ruled that EBs have a right to equal access to a meaningful education that is "appropriate and targeted" to their needs (California Department of Education, 2018)
1975	*The Education for All Handicapped Children Act* (EAHC)	Federal	Guaranteed the right of education to all children and mandated full inclusion of children with dis/abilities
1976	Chacon-Moscone Bilingual Education Bill (California Education Code, 1976)	State	Required that EBs would have access to ELD program, instruction in a language that they understood, and access to the regular curriculum
1981	*Castañeda v. Pickard*	Federal	United States Court of Appeals, Fifth Circuit ruled that schools had a dual obligation to provide EBs with an ELD program and access to the same goals as their peers
1990	*The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1990* (IDEA, 2004)	Federal	Renamed and revised version of the EAHC; focused on a parent's right to involvement with educational decisions that will affect their child
1990	*The Americans with Disabilities Act*	Federal	Ensured equal treatment and access for people with dis/abilities in both employment and public accommodations

Table 1 (continued)

Federal and State Policies Impacting EB Students

Year	Name	Federal or State	Content/Impact as it relates to EBs
1994	*Improving America's Schools Act*	Federal	Reauthorization of the ESEA; included significant increases in funding for bilingual and immigrant education
1998	*Proposition 227*	State	Stipulation that EB immersion programs would typically only be provided for one year
2001	*No Child Left Behind Act*	Federal	Reauthorization of the ESEA; included revisions to Title III, influenced by CA ELD Standards and Assessments; revision mandated that states adopt ELD standards and conduct annual assessment to monitor progress toward English language proficiency
2004	*The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1990* (IDEA)	Federal	Aligned to NCLB; clarified language that disproportionately negatively impacted Black students; allows schools to provide interventions to students to reduce misidentification for special education
2015	*Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA)	Federal	Reauthorization of the ESEA; included accountability for EB progress in Title I, stipulated that former EB students could stay in the EB subgroup for up to 4 years after exiting to reduce bias and promote long term success, and required states to establish entry and exit procedures guided by research
2016	*Proposition 58*	State	Repealed the Prop 227 stipulation for one year of English immersion; provided districts and schools the opportunity to use a variety of models to support their EB students
2017	California English Learner Roadmap State Board of Education Policy: Educational Programs and Services for English Learners (California Department of Education, 2017)	State	Published to provide guidance to local educational agencies regarding how they could best support and educate students in California public schools who were EBs
2018	California English Learner Roadmap: Strengthening Educational Policies, Programs, and Practices for English Learners (California Department of Education, 2018)	State	A supplementary guidance document intended to elaborate on the 2017 policy and provide examples to support educators in understanding and using the policy

Table 1 (continued)

Federal and State Policies Impacting EB Students

Year	Name	Federal or State	Content/Impact as it relates to EBs
2020	Improving Education for Multilingual and English Learner Students: Research to Practice (California Department of Education, 2020b)	State	In response to request for more clarity on the 2017 policy, this was published by the California Department of Education (CDE) with the intention to further support educators to implement the policy and improve instruction for students learning multiple languages

As seen in Table 1 above, there have been many attempts at the state and federal level to address the education of EB students and students with dis/abilities. Despite the progress made, racism and ableism permeate all levels of education (Harry, 2008) and "researchers have documented the need for educators to facilitate relevant curricular access for all diverse learners, with and without dis/abilities, highlighting the significance of meeting federal mandates by incorporating cultural and linguistic strengths and qualities into teaching and learning" (Hoover et al., 2019, p. 14). This is challenging because certain policy or programmatic resources, which are created to address the needs of one marginalized group (i.e., students with dis/abilities), may inadvertently lead to inequality or inequity for another marginalized group (i.e., EB students) (Artiles et al., 2010). Additionally, most special education policy comes from the federal level, but there are many state and federal policies related to EB students, especially in California. Fortunately, exploring the challenges of the policies and programs for EB students and students with dis/abilities is an area of research that has become a more significant focus in recent years (Tankard Carnock & Silva, 2019).

Current Policies

In 2019, Janie Tankard Carnock and Elena Silva published a report which aimed to provide insight and guidance on what they called dual-identified students, meaning students that are both an EB and qualify for special education services. This report stated that federal policy impacted these two student populations "in parallel but distinct ways" (p. 7), which led to legislation that protected each group separately. For students with dis/abilities, the most prominent policy is IDEA (2004), specifically Part B, which required schools to provide services in the "least-restrictive environment" meaning that a student's education plan should include access to peers without dis/abilities and to general education to the maximum extent feasible. While this policy was well-intentioned, there are some challengers who have argued that this allowed and indeed often led to segregation of students of color with dis/abilities into separate classrooms or schools (Connor & Ferri, 2007; Ferri & Connor, 2005). For instance, the IEP team may have decided that for a student who qualified for support under the eligibility of specific learning disability, the least restrictive environment was a special day class that has a special education teacher and smaller class size. This would move the student out of the general education classroom for the majority of the day. Even those students who do not move to a special day class are often taken out of class in order to receive specialized services to target academic or language goals. In this way, critics of the least restrictive environment have suggested that it is a tool which perpetuates White privilege and racism (Blanchett, 2006) because when more students of color are identified as having a dis/ability and segregated into different special education programs, it leads to disproportionate outcomes based on race or ethnicity.

While IDEA (2004) has been in place for many years, there are periodic changes, amendments, and updates made to improve its application and use. For instance, how schools support students with dis/abilities through IDEA (2004) was further impacted by the recent United States Supreme Court decision *Endrew F. v. Douglas County School District* (2017) which stated, "To meet its substantive obligation under the IDEA (2004) a school must offer an IEP reasonably calculated to enable a child to make progress appropriate in light of the child's circumstances" (p. 2). Within IDEA (2004) there is also the "Child Find" mandate which required that schools seek out any and all students who may have a dis/ability (Ennis et al., 2017; Tankard Carnock & Silva, 2019). Although this mandate has been in place for many years, it continues to be a challenge for schools to comply (Ennis et al., 2017). Many schools fail to identify and evaluate students who may have a dis/ability in a timely manner as required by IDEA (2004) (Ennis et al., 2017). In this way, students are denied the free and appropriate public education that IDEA (2004) also requires (Ennis et al., 2017).

Title III of *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) (2015) is one of the most prominent policies which focused on EB services and funding (Tankard Carnock & Silva, 2019). Under Title III schools must utilize a process to identify EB students, however it allows for variation in what this process looks like, which means this process may look different from state to state (Tankard Carnock & Silva, 2019). Moreover, this funding can be difficult for districts to use because of the supplement, not supplant rule, which requires districts to use federal money to augment educational programs, not to substitute for programs or services required by state law (*Every Student Succeeds Act* [ESSA], 2015). For instance, California state law requires that if more that 15% of families at a school report speaking a language different than English at home,

translation is required for all parental notifications (California Education Code, 2019). While Title III federal funding can be used for translators or interpreters, California districts cannot solely use these funds and must first use state funds, then supplement with federal funding as appropriate. The nuance of these policy rules and regulations can be confusing and districts may misinterpret how they can use federal funding to supplement their English learner programs.

California has a unique history with policies affecting EB students. In 1976, California was the first state to enact state law that delineated specific regulations on how EB students should be supported in schools such as providing access to the regular curriculum and instruction in a language understood by the student (California Department of Education, 2018). Then in 1997, the state passed *Proposition 227* (*Proposition 227*—English Language in Public Schools, 1998) which had a substantial effect on EB programs (California Department of Education, 2018). For instance, *Proposition 227* (*Proposition 227*—English Language in Public Schools, 1998) stipulated that EB immersion programs would typically only be provided for one year, despite research that a better timeline would be 4-7 years (California Department of Education, 2018). In 2010, Artiles et al. explored how policy changes impacted EB students. They found a rising number of EB students were being placed into special education following the implementation of these restrictive language policies. This highlighted the importance of educators being aware of policies and understanding how implementation of these policies affects their students. In 2016, voters in California approved a new proposition which reaffirmed public schools' obligation to ensure English language proficiency for English learners (*Proposition 58*—Non-English Languages Allowed in Public Education, 2016), while simultaneously repealing the previous restrictive language provisions (Proposition 227—English

Language in Public Schools, 1998). While this suggested a positive shift for EB students, the negative patterns and habits educators formed may not be easily unlearned (California Department of Education, 2018).

While EB students and students receiving special education represent two marginalized groups that have differing guiding policies, research is beginning to shift in an attempt to coordinate these two domains for those students who are dually identified (Tankard Carnock & Silva, 2019). Policies for both groups agree that educators must provide services to meet the individualized needs of students without restricting their access or progress (Tankard Carnock & Silva, 2019). However, in education the tendency to employ macro-level policies can lead to outcomes which can "constrain and contain local actors' daily practice in ways that are counter to policy that promotes inclusive educational systems" (Kozleski et al., 2020, p. 497). Policies, even when well-intentioned, may not appropriately address the intersectionality of students in these populations and in turn may perpetuate continued practices which fail to address their unique needs.

In recent years, some steps have been taken to better coordinate these policies such as amendments included in the 2004 reauthorization of IDEA (2004), which mandated local education agencies to "use 15% of their Part B funding to provide additional academic and behavioral services to members of overidentified groups" (Morgan et al., 2012, p. 340). IDEA (2004) also required states to report on representation pattern by student groups, including English proficiency level, while Title III of ESSA (2015) now requires that states report specifically on the progress and achievement of students who are dually identified as EB students and students with a dis/ability (Tankard Carnock & Silva, 2019). Moreover, schools can use Title

III funds to provide special education teachers with trainings on English language development, language acquisition, or other topics relevant to working with EB students (Tankard Carnock & Silva, 2019). However, using these funds in this way is not required and many districts may not make this work a priority. Additionally, while there has been a marked attempt to better coordinate these groups, there has also been chronic underfunding of these policies, which compounds the impact on EB students with dis/abilities (Tankard Carnock & Silva, 2019). Without proper funding from Congress these policies cannot be properly implemented, which may impact how students are supported and identified at the school level. Additionally, research has also shown that these policies may be misinterpreted or misunderstood by those expected to implement them (Castro-Villarreal et al., 2016; Fernandez & Inserra, 2013; Samson & Lesaux, 2009). These policies guide practice and therefore the language they use, as well as how they are interpreted and implemented at the school level, may lead to disproportionate representation.

Problem Statement

EB students frequently are misidentified during assessment for special education, perpetuating over representation and segregation within schools. However, more information on the reasons and processes that lead to incorrect identification is needed. This is a problem because when these students are not appropriately assessed there is an adverse impact on their academic outcomes. Moreover, these actions reify racist and ableist practices because students are inappropriately compared to the socially constructed normative standards. Throughout the years, different research has suggested that EB students are both overrepresented and underrepresented in special education. For instance, Artiles et al. (2005) wrote that Latino students were not overrepresented at the national level, but that data looked different in certain

states or districts. At this time, most scholars agree that discrepancies in how EB students are represented in special education can be accounted for by the various control factors, such as grade level and eligibility category, researchers apply. For instance, when Samson and Lesaux (2009) controlled for grade level, they found that before third grade, EB students are underrepresented in special education, but after third grade they are overrepresented. Similarly, when controlling for eligibility categories, EB students have been found to be underrepresented in certain eligibility categories such as gifted instruction (De Valenzuela et al., 2006). According to the USDE (n.d.) nearly half of all EB students with dis/abilities are identified under SLD, compared to non- EB students where 38% are identified under SLD. Similarly, 21% of EB students are identified under SLI, wheras 17% of non-EB students with a dis/ability are identified under this eligibility (USDE, n.d.). The disproportionate patterns presented across the literature have suggested that how EB students are defined and what confounding factors are considered, such as grade level and dis/ability category, may impact the patterns found in the research. Moreover, the manifestation of power and privilege at the state, district, and school levels may also impact who qualifies for special education (Kozleski et al., 2020).

Students who need additional resources but are denied them under the pretense that their difficulties are based on their EB status often have negative school outcomes (Castro-Villarreal et al., 2016; Rodríguez & Rodríguez, 2017). Their lack of access to the appropriate supports makes it harder for them to catch up to their peers if and when interventions are put in place and they may end up disliking school and learning due to lack of success (Castro-Villarreal et al., 2016; Rodríguez & Rodríguez, 2017). In contrast, students who are placed in special education when their difficulties are based on their emerging bilingualism will have reduced access to

general education teachers, peers, and curriculum, which can in turn negatively influence their academic outcomes and in some instances may lead to regression of skills (Artiles et al., 2005; Castro-Villarreal et al., 2016; De Valenzuela et al., 2006; Hosp & Reschly, 2003; Rodríguez & Rodríguez, 2017). Therefore, it is imperative that all educators work to dismantle the systems of oppression perpetuated through the assessment practices used for EB students in order to improve student outcomes.

While there have been many studies that explored the role the teacher plays in these processes (Ferlis & Xu, 2016; Mitchell, 2019; Ortiz et al., 2011; Stein, 2011), there are fewer which explore the role of other stakeholders, such as school psychologists and speech language pathologists (SLPs) during this process (Adekanye, 2017; O'Bryon & Rogers, 2010; Vega et al., 2016). Both school psychologists and SLPs have an important responsibility to assess and mediate appropriately with culturally and linguistically diverse students (Rodríguez & Rodríguez, 2017) and they have specialized expertise on language acquisition which impacts how EB students are identified for special education services. However, research has demonstrated that these professionals face barriers such as lack of interpreters, limited time, and insufficient training (Arias & Friberg, 2017), which may impact their ability and accuracy when identifying students. As such, understanding the current practices and policies these stakeholders are using provided needed insight. Additionally, exploring the challenges they face at the individual and systemic levels as well as the beliefs present on campuses about EB students and students with a dis/ability provided needed insight into this discursive problem.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to describe and explore the processes used by SLPs and school psychologists in assessing EB students at schools in large urban school districts in Southern California in order to identify the systemic challenges that result in the disproportionate representation of emerging bilinguals in special education. In this way, this study identified current systems of referral and assessment for EB students used by SLPs and school psychologists and explored what challenges exist within these systems which negatively impact the process. It also explored the systems of beliefs about race and ability and how they impacted participants' praxis.

Research Questions

In order to address the disproportionate representation of EB students in special education, it is important to understand the factors during the assessment process which lead to over and under representation. In an attempt to address the gap in the literature related to how stakeholders, such as school psychologists and speech language pathologists impact this process, this study answered the following questions:

RQ1: What practices do speech language pathologists and school psychologists in urban school districts use when assessing emerging bilingual students?

RQ1a: What are some individual challenges/barriers that speech language pathologists and school psychologists in urban school districts face during the assessment process for emerging bilingual students?

RQ1b: What are some systemic challenges/barriers that speech language pathologists and school psychologists in urban school districts face during the assessment process for emerging bilingual students?

RQ2: How do speech language pathologists and school psychologists in urban school districts beliefs about race and ability affect their assessment practices of emerging bilingual students?

Significance and Link to Social Justice

While there are many resources, articles, and policies that provide guidance on how teachers can better serve the EB population, they continue to be inappropriately referred to and placed in special education. The members of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team, like the school psychologist and speech language pathologist, play crucial roles in the identification process. For instance, these members are more likely to have training and education regarding the difference between language acquisition and language disorders or learning disorders. This differentiation is important because research has found that understanding the process of language acquisition and how it impacts academic performance is essential to providing appropriate supports to EB students and reducing referrals to special education (Garcia-Joslin et al., 2016). However, data have suggested that even though SLPs and school psychologists should be more knowledgeable about this process, EB students continue to be misrepresented in special education (Artiles et al., 2005; De Valenzuela et al., 2006; Linn & Hemmer, 2011; Liu et al., 2008; Morgan et al., 2012, 2017; Ortiz et al., 2011; Samson & Lesaux, 2009; Sullivan, 2011; USDE, n.d.). As opposed to the literature for teachers, there is limited research on how the IEP team impacts the misidentification of EB students for special education

and even less that explores multiple team members in tandem. This study provides additional research on this topic, exploring both school psychologists and SLPs, which provided an opportunity to explore the similarities and differences in the challenges each group faces.

In their work, Connor et al. (2019) acknowledged that race is a divisive issue that must be intentionally addressed and focused on in a prolonged way, especially in the special education field. EB students need this sustained focus not only on their race, but also considered through an intersectional lens alongside their language status. With most EB students being students of color, it is both their race and their bilingual status which impacts their educational outcomes. Therefore, continued research is needed that provides information on how to improve equitable outcomes for EB students.

Connor et al. (2019) also explored research which refutes that minority students are overrepresented in special education. In their analysis, that specifically explored the research completed by Morgan et al. (2012) and Morgan and Farkas (2015), Connor et al. (2019) outlined the historical and systemic ways that overrepresentation has been ineffectually responded to, while underrepresentation research is quickly lauded as truth. Most recently, Betsey DeVos, in her previous capacity as United States Secretary of Education, suspended federal support for research on overrepresentation based on the findings of Morgan et al. (2012), which suggested underrepresentation. Connor et al. (2019) further argued that historically, the field of special education and its leading scholars struggled to address their prejudices. This led to a privileging of certain types of research, most often adhering to a traditional or incrementalist paradigm rather than a progressive or reconceptualist one (Connor et al., 2019). In turn, much of the research that is heralded in this field failed to purposefully address the social and contextual

factors such as race and language status which impact academic outcomes for students. As such, research studies such as the current study, which explored how intersectionality or the lack thereof shows up at schools and impacts student's academic experience, continue to be needed.

By interviewing school psychologists and SLPs, this study addressed systemic challenges to improve the equitable services for EB students. This study provided insight into the knowledge and potential misconceptions these particular team members have as it related to identifying EB students for special education. Similarly, it identified the self-reported barriers these individual faced during the assessment process for EB students. The results of this study were then used to make recommendations for possible ways to improve these processes in order to reduce the disproportionality of EB students in special education in an attempt to address and eliminate marginalization in schools (Theoharis, 2007).

Systems Thinking Framework

As described above, there are ingrained challenges within the educational system which perpetuate inequities such as the overrepresentation of EB students in special education. Systems thinking is an interdisciplinary conceptual framework which is focused on looking at a system holistically, thinking about how interactions between components relate to the whole (Gharajedaghi, 2011; Senge, 2006; Shaked & Schechter, 2018). Senge (2006) explained how companies could use systems thinking to transform into learning organizations by looking at the change patterns rather than fixed glimpses into one aspect of the problem. It is about seeing "the whole system, and thinking about each separate component as a part of the whole system" (Shaked & Schechter, 2017). In this way, systems thinking allows the user to work through complex problems.

Shaked and Schechter (2018) contended that, while researchers have explored the systems thinking framework in relation to some educational outcomes, systems thinking had not been sufficiently researched in relation to school leadership. For instance, some research argued that the redesign of schools cannot be effectively achieved without using systems thinking (Shaked & Schechter, 2017). They argued that using systems thinking enables exploration of the interactions between the people and elements of existing school environments, which allows for meaningful analysis and change (Shaked & Schechter, 2017). Similarly, Cheng (2011) found that teachers' cooperative learning was bolstered by a systems thinking approach, which highlighted the interrelatedness of goals. Moreover, Fullan (2005) upheld that "systems thinkers" were needed in order to maintain improvements by addressing all aspects of the system including school, district, and state or national policy. It has been contended to help schools make continuous improvements and "may also be significant in evaluating curricula and educational programs" (Shaked & Schechter, 2017). In general, systems thinking can be a useful framework for educators to use in order to productively manage complex problems (Shaked & Schechter, 2018).

From their research, Shaked and Schechter (2017; 2018) proposed four practical characteristics—leading wholes, adopting a multidimensional view, influencing indirectly, and evaluating significance – which educational leaders can use when implementing systems thinking. A leader with the capacity for leading wholes is focused on the big picture and effectively sees the individual parts within the larger system (Shaked & Schechter, 2017, 2018). Adopting a multidimensional view relates to being able to simultaneously see the issue from different perspectives or aspects (Shaked & Schechter, 2017, 2018). A leader's ability to

recognize the various reciprocal relationships between elements and strategically influence them discursively is demonstrating the third characteristic, influencing indirectly. And finally, they ascertained, leaders using systems thinking will consider the individual parts based on how significant they are to the larger system (Shaked & Schechter, 2017, 2018).

LaFasto and Larson (2001) wrote "An organization's systems provide information, set standards, and drive behavior toward desired results (LaFasto & Larson, 2001, p. 186). They shared that reliability and relevance are key factors to determining how useful a system is and wrote that "teams depend on information to establish the facts that are the basis for decision making" (LaFasto & Larson, 2001, p. 187). When this information is lacking, clarity, confidence, and commitments are decreased (LaFasto & Larson, 2001). They also wrote that leaders are best suited to ask the current staff if the current systems are meeting their needs, as they are likely to share relevant information to improve the system (LaFasto & Larson, 2001).

LaFasto and Larson (2001) also spoke to the importance of communication within organizational systems. They stated, "The power of effective communication processes lies in their ability to mainstream messages critical to success" (LaFasto & Larson, 2001, p. 182). They further shared that it is crucial to understand not only what the entire organization is trying to accomplish but also to improve the communication between leadership and their employees (LaFasto & Larson, 2001). Interestingly, they shared that the desire to know is so substantial, that when communication and information is lacking, people will build their own set of facts to fill in what has been left out (LaFasto & Larson, 2001). They wrote that this leads to rumors and inaccurate information permeating the organizational system (LaFasto & Larson, 2001). While they argued that communication is part of everyone's roles, they purported that it most falls on

the shoulders of those in position of leadership to ensure they are communicating information to employees effectively (LaFasto & Larson, 2001). However, they also acknowledged that for an organizational system to have a truly effective communication process the lines of communication flow in all directions and leaders should ask themselves "What means do you have in place for people at all levels to communicate in all directions?" (p. 185). Not only should leaders communicate information to their staff, but also the staff should have a clear way to communicate questions, concerns, ideas, or other comments back to the leadership.

Yukl (2013) also spoke to the importance of understanding the system and the multifaceted interrelationships that exist within them so that when change is implemented it does not have unintended consequences. Yukl (2013) also acknowledged the importance of organizations to have "strong cultural values for personal development and lifelong education" as well as providing "training and development programs to help individuals learn new skills" (p. 99).

Systems thinking has suggested "The only way to fully understand why a phenomenon arises and persists is to understand its parts in relation to the whole" (Shaked & Schechter, 2017). Therefore, a systems thinking framework was usefully applied to the complex phenomenon of overrepresentation of EB students in special education. Analyzing the individual parts in relation to the larger system afforded the opportunity to reduce systemic inequities and improve outcomes for this marginalized population of students. In this way, for this study, the perspectives and roles of SLPs and school psychologists were explored as smaller parts of the larger assessment system.

Method

Research Design

This qualitative study consisted of semi-structured interviews with school psychologists and speech language pathologists from schools in urban school districts in Southern California. This qualitative approach was selected as it allows for an investigation of this nuanced problem to generate meaning (Leavy, 2017). Orosco and Klingner (2010) called for qualitative studies to describe school personnel's understanding and application of Response to Intervention (RTI) strategies for EB students. Similarly, both Levey and Sola (2013) and Shenoy (2014) suggested that there is a need for a deeper exploration through interviewing and using open ended questions to explore the assessment and identification process for EB students. Therefore, by utilizing interviews this study provides an in-depth description of the systems, policies, and procedures affecting the identification of EB students as experienced by school psychologists and SLPs. I chose to look at these two groups of professionals not to compare their experiences but rather to explore their roles as parts of the larger assessment system.

Participants

The participants in this study were six school-based SLPs and six school psychologists working at public schools in Southern California. They were purposefully sampled from my personal, professional network and represent six school districts in Southern California. Three of the 12 participants (two school psychologists and one SLP) self-reported as bilingual Spanish speakers.

Data Collection

Qualitative data were collected during semi-structured interviews conducted via Zoom (https://www.zoom.us). These semi-structured interviews focused on the perceptions the participants have about the process for identifying EB students for special education. Specifically they explored what successes and challenges they have experienced during this process as well as their beliefs about EB students and students with dis/abilities and how that impacts this process. Interviews were video and audio recorded, and transcripts were collected via Zoom. Transcripts were reviewed and edited for accuracy before being analyzed.

Data Analysis

Interviews were transcribed and analyzed for themes. An inductive analysis was conducted to identify emerging themes and patterns. Additional information and details regarding this study's methodology can be found in Chapter 3.

Assumptions

The study made certain assumptions about the participants. For instance, it assumed that the school psychologists and SLPs participating in the study intended to appropriately identify emerging bilingual students in their praxis. It also assumed that during interviews, participants engaged in honest conversation. Because I used my personal, professional network to recruit participants, my positionality may have impacted participants during the qualitative interviews. In order to address this, participants were afforded the opportunity to check the transcript of their interview.

Limitations

Limitations of this study were related to sample size and demographics, the use of self-reported data, the relationship of the researcher to the participants, and the global world event that impacted personal and professional lives. This study may have reduced generalizability due to its sample size of 12 individuals, reducing how this study's results can be used and interpreted by districts. Participants also self-reported their experiences and praxis during semi-structured interviews. Participants may have been inclined to report behaviors they know they should be engaging, regardless of whether they actually engage in them. Additionally, selected interview participants sometimes had personal, professional relationships with this researcher; therefore, it is possible that participants knowledge of my positionality impacted their engagement in our interviews. While these limitations could not be eliminated, participants were reminded of the confidentiality of interview data. Additionally, participants were reminded that the intention of the study was to improve outcomes for EB students, not to analyze the quality of their performance. I also provided participants time to ask clarifying questions about the process of confidentiality as well as the general study to ensure they felt comfortable with the process. They also had the opportunity to review the transcript of their interview. Finally, this study took place in summer of 2021 as the world continued to feel the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. For many providers in this study, there had been a reduction in the number of assessments for EB students they had completed as compared to before the pandemic began. Participants were asked to reflect back on their assessment procedures prior to the shift to distance learning as well as any current experienced they had; however, this large time gap may have impacted how individuals think about their experiences and how they answered questions.

Delimitations

A delimitation of this study was the choice to limit participants to certain job titles within one geographic area (Southern California). While limiting the generalization of the results, this choice allowed for a deeper exploration of the patterns present. Specifically, by limiting the study to only SLPs and school psychologists, the unique successes and barriers of these important team members could be acutely investigated. This in turn provided an opportunity for specific results and recommendations from the study to be identified. These recommendations could be shared with districts, leading to possible change which would positively influence EB students who are currently overrepresented in special education.

Definitions of Key Terms

Dis/ability: first proposed by Connor et al. (2016) the slash was used because it "disrupts misleading understandings of disability, as it simultaneously conveys the social construction of both ability and disability" (Connor et al., 2016, p. 7). When referring to particular official or conventional uses, such as in eligibility categories like learning disability or within quotations, the traditional use of dis/ability will be maintained.

Eligibility: to receive special education in schools students much have one of 14 specified dis/abilities and that dis/ability must have an adverse impact on their learning; the term eligibility is used to describe the dis/ability category under which a student qualifies for special education services.

Emerging bilingual (EB): a term proposed by García et al. (2008) and used by Yamasaki and Luk (2018) in order to better describe how an individual is learning English while also developing their home language leading to bilingualism.

English learner (EL): According to California Education Code an EL is a student whose native or home language is not English and currently does not have English proficiency necessary to access their classroom work in English (CDE, 2020a).

Fluent English proficient (FEP): a student whose native or home language is not English but who has demonstrated fluency or proficiency in English based on a standardized measure.

Individualized Education Program (IEP): a written legal document that outlines a child's unique areas of need and strategies, accommodations, and goals to meet those needs.

Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS): often erroneously equated with Response to Intervention (RTI), MTSS is a broader system which includes RTI, while simultaneously working to align systems to improve outcomes for all students.

School psychologist: professionals with expertise in mental health, learning, and behaviors; specialized knowledge about child development; and the ability to assess, diagnose, and treat cognitive, behavioral, academic, or social-emotional challenges.

Special education: refers to instruction designed specifically to "meet the unique needs of a child with a disability" and may include related services such as speech-language pathology (IDEA, 2004, Sec. 300.39a para. 1).

Specific learning disability (SLD): "a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations" (IDEA, 2004, Sec. 300.8c para. 10).

Speech language impairment (SLI): "a communication disorder, such as stuttering, impaired articulation, a language impairment, or a voice impairment, that adversely affects a child's educational performance" (IDEA, 2004, Sec 300.8c para. 11).

Speech language pathologist (SLP): professionals trained to assess, diagnose, and treat individuals who have speech, language, voice, or communication disorders.

Student Support Team (SST): also sometimes referred to as Student Study Team (SST); a multidisciplinary team that uses a systematic approach guided by MTSS and RTI to ensure student success and reduce achievement gaps.

Response to Intervention (RTI): a school-wide, multi-tiered, prevention and intervention model which provides increasing general education intervention to students demonstrating limited progress.

Organization of the Dissertation

Chapter 1 consisted of an overview of my research including background information about the disproportionate representation of emerging bilinguals in special education. I explained the purpose of my study and why it is significant and important work. In Chapter 2, I provide a review of literature related to this study. In Chapter 3, I describe the methodology of my study in greater detail and in Chapter 4, I present the results from my study. Finally, in Chapter 5, I conclude by discussing my findings and making recommendations based on my data.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter begins with an exploration of language acquisition and the challenges of differentiating between the characteristics of learning a language and those of a learning dis/ability. Subsequently, I describe the referral and assessment processes for school-based services. Then, this chapter explores what research suggests are the best practices to use when assessing EB students for special education, as well as what the current patterns in assessment are according to research. Finally, the way educator beliefs impact their view of students, and a description of Dis/ability Critical Race Studies is presented.

Second Language Acquisition

Although students may be learning their third, fourth, or fifth language, the process of how EB students learn a new language is typically called *second language acquisition* (Klingner & Eppolito, 2014). This is a dynamic process which will look different for each individual based on the unique combination of their disposition, language experience, teacher, etc. These factors may impact the speed and accuracy with which they will acquire another language and research suggests that providers should understand the second language acquisition process in order to differentiate dis/ability from typical second language learning (Stein, 2011; Zetlin et al., 2011).

Stages of Second Language Acquisition

One of the seminal researchers on this topic, Jim Cummins (1999), has contributed to many key studies and concepts that have impacted the way bilingualism is taught and understood by educators. Cummins (1999) first introduced the concepts of basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) to counter

the idea that all language proficiency is the same. With this model he purported that language acquisition is not global as other researchers had described, but rather that "there are clear differences in acquisition and developmental patterns between conversational language and academic language" (Cummins, 1999, pp. 2-3). Cummins (1999) further argued that a history of not accounting for these differences led to EB students being subjected to inappropriate psychological testing as well as being exited from bilingual support programs prematurely due to the false belief that their academic, or CALP, language was proficient because their social language, or BICS, was appropriate. In this way, the misunderstanding of language development and proficiency directly impacted EB students' academic successes or more commonly their failures as they did not receive adequate support to promote their academic language proficiency.

Notably, in 1999, nearly 20 years after first proposing BICS and CALP, Cummins clarified that while there is a common sequential learning that occurs, it is not an absolute and there may be instances where CALP progress surpasses BICS (Cummins, 1999). Moreover, he argued that while BICS and CALP may be distinct concepts they are not developmentally separate (Cummins, 1999). For instance, much of the foundation for our academic learning is formed through conversations with parents, siblings, or friends and we must use our cognitive skills to engage in social conversations (Cummins, 1999). In this way, Cummins (1999) clarified that it is important to understand these differences, so that a proficiency in BICS does not lead to the misconception that English proficiency has been gained, but also that they are interrelated. While there is no consensus on exactly what this process looks like, most scholars have come to agree that there are certain stages that learners pass through as they gain proficiency in their new language (Klingner & Eppolito, 2014). These stages are typically referred to as preproduction or

receptive, early production, speech emergence, intermediate fluency or intermediate language proficiency, and advanced fluency or advanced language proficiency (Klingner & Eppolito, 2014; Yang, 2008).

Preproduction or Receptive Stage

At this stage EB students may understand around 500 words and can learn new words that are made understandable to them, but they may not be comfortable speaking the new language (Klingner & Eppolito, 2014; Salmona Madriñan, 2014; Yang, 2008). This stage is sometimes referred to as the "silent period" as EB students may respond to simple, familiar directions and gesture or nod in response to yes or no questions, but typically are not using expressive language in the new language (Salmona Madriñan, 2014; Yang, 2008). Researchers have suggested that this stage can last anywhere from a few hours to six months (Yang, 2008). Students at this stage benefit from visual aids, body language, and other non-verbal supports, as well as a lot of repetition to help them understand concepts and vocabulary in their new language (Salmona Madriñan, 2014).

Early Production Stage

The early production stage is gauged to last about six additional months (Yang, 2008). At this stage EB students have about 1,000 words they understand and use to communicate with others (Yang, 2008). They will begin using simple phrases of one or two words to communicate and can memorize and use short chunks of language (Klingner & Eppolito, 2014; Salmona Madriñan, 2014; Yang, 2008). Students at this stage may be able to begin giving short answers to simple questions (Yang, 2008).

Speech Emergence Stage

This stage, which can last up to a year, is marked by another increase in vocabulary to nearly 3,000 words (Klingner & Eppolito, 2014; Yang, 2008). Students at this stage of language acquisition begin using longer phrases and simple sentences or questions to communicate (Klingner & Eppolito, 2014; Yang, 2008). Students may also begin attempting to use longer sentences; however, these sentences may be marked by grammar which follows the rules of their first language but is grammatically incorrect in their L2. These errors negatively impact how others understand their intended message (Yang, 2008).

Intermediate Fluency/Language Proficiency Stage

At the intermediate stage students will have a vocabulary of around 6,000 words which they use to produce more complex statements and opinions (Klingner & Eppolito, 2014; Yang, 2008). This stage may last for another year, during which time students begin speaking longer, sharing their thoughts, and asking for clarification when confused (Yang, 2008).

Advanced Fluency/Language Proficiency Stage

Advanced proficiency or fluency may take five or more years to achieve (Klingner & Eppolito, 2014; Yang, 2008). Generally, students at this stage speak their new language comparably to native speakers of the language (Klingner & Eppolito, 2014; Yang, 2008). They will be able to fully participate in grade-level content and use vocabulary and grammar that is similar to their non-EB peers (Yang, 2008).

Krashen's Theory of Language Acquisition

In addition to the above stages, one widely known and widely accepted theory of second language acquisition was developed by Stephen Krashen in the 1980s (Yang, 2008). Krashen's

work focused on non-English and bilingual language acquisition has impacted research and teaching strategies for many years. His theory of second language acquisition consisted of five hypotheses: the acquisition-learning distinction, the natural order hypothesis, the monitor hypothesis, the input hypothesis, and the affective filter hypothesis.

Acquisition-Learning Distinction

Krashen (1982) described this as "perhaps the most fundamental of all the hypotheses" (p. 13). This hypothesis stated that there are two independent systems, acquisition and learning, which develop language competence in distinct ways (Krashen, 1982). The acquisition system closely resembles the way a first language is learned in that it is done subconsciously or implicitly through natural learning (Krashen, 1982). While those who acquire language may follow the appropriate rules of that language, they may not be able to explain them, but rather just feel that a certain grammar structure is right or wrong (Krashen, 1982). A speaker who is acquiring language is more focused on the communicative act rather than on producing perfect grammar (Krashen, 1982). Language learning, however, refers to the explicit learning and understanding of the rules of a language (Krashen, 1982). Both of these systems may help a student learn a language, however Krashen has suggested that acquisition is more important than learning (Schütz, 2007).

Natural Order Hypothesis

Guided by research on grammatical structures, this hypothesis stated that regardless of the learners age, L1 background, or conditions of exposure to L2, there is a predictable natural order with which learners acquire the grammatical structure of a language (Krashen, 1982). Notably, while there are some similarities, the natural order of acquisition for a second language

differs from first language acquisition (Krashen, 1982). While understanding that language acquisition follows a natural order is useful, Krashen argued that when language acquisition is the goal, the focus should not be on grammatical sequencing (Krashen, 1982).

Monitor Hypothesis

This hypothesis attempted to explain the relationship between the systems of acquisition and learning (Krashen, 1982). It postulated that these two systems, which are used in distinct ways, interact when learning monitors or edits the acquired systems utterance (Krashen, 1982). Essentially, it posits that our acquired language initiates communication, which our learned system then monitors and edits our output accordingly (Krashen, 1982). Krashen (1982) argued that this indicates that learned rules are only responsible for a minimal part of second language acquisition and is only used under certain conditions (Krashen, 1982). According to Krashen (1982), individuals can only monitor their output when they have time to think about the rules, they can focus on the form or correctness, and they know the rule.

Input Hypothesis

Building off of the idea that language acquisition is more important than language learning, the input hypothesis attempted to address how we acquire language (Krashen, 1982). Thus, the input hypothesis stated that when learners receive input of their second language that is just beyond their current competence level, they will improve their language acquisition (Krashen, 1982). Within this hypothesis, Krashen also stated that speaking fluently cannot be directly taught, but rather will emerge naturally after providing adequate input to the learner (Krashen, 1982).

Affective Filter Hypothesis

This hypothesis stated that variables such as motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety play a facilitative role when acquiring another language (Krashen, 1982). While the relationship is not causal, positive affects like high motivation, high self-confidence, and reduced anxiety tend to do better in language acquisition while low motivation, low self-confidence, and high levels of anxiety may impede the process (Krashen, 1982).

Language Acquisition Versus Learning Dis/ability

Best practice guidelines from the research have suggested that it is imperative for assessors to understand language acquisition and how to determine if a student's reported challenges may be the result of language acquisition rather than a true dis/ability (Arias & Friberg, 2017; Garcia-Joslin et al., 2016). Without this knowledge students may be over referred and over identified for special education (Garcia-Joslin et al., 2016).

Common Learning Dis/abilities

Most commonly, learning disorder refers to specific learning dis/abilities that impact reading, math, or writing and may co-exist with disorders related to attention, behavior, and/or language (National Center for Learning Disabilities, 2014). Some examples of common learning dis/abilities include dyslexia, dyscalculia, and dysgraphia (National Center for Learning Disabilities, 2014). Dyslexia refers to an SLD in reading often characterized by difficulty with phonemic awareness, phonological processing, and decoding as well as difficulty with fluency and comprehension when reading. Dyscalculia is an SLD in math and some common characteristics include difficulty with counting, learning number facts, telling time, mental math, and problem-solving strategies. Finally, dysgraphia is an SLD in writing and may represent

difficulties in both the physical process of writing as well as with "the quality of written expression" (National Center for Learning Disabilities, 2014, p. 4). Dysgraphia may present as tight or awkward grip on a writing instrument, difficulty with letter formation, avoiding writing, difficulty organizing thoughts in writing, difficulty with syntax and grammar, and a clear gap between their verbal and written skills (National Center for Learning Disabilities, 2014).

Associated Disorders

Additionally, some disorders or deficits that are often associated with learning dis/abilities include auditory processing disorder, visual processing disorder, non-verbal learning dis/ability, executive functioning deficits, and Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) (National Center for Learning Disabilities, 2014). While these are not specific subtypes of SLD they represent challenges with information processing commonly associated with learning dis/abilities and can often co-exist or result in dyspraxia, dyscalculia, or dysgraphia. Auditory processing disorder is a dis/ability that impacts how a person understands and interprets verbal information due to a breakdown between the ears and the brain (National Center for Learning Disabilities, 2014). Similarly, a visual processing disorder is a dis/ability that impacts how a person understands and interprets visual information due to a breakdown between the eyes and the brain (National Center for Learning Disabilities, 2014). Non-verbal learning dis/abilities is "used to describe the characteristics of individuals who have unique learning and behavioral profiles that may overlap with dyslexia, dyscalculia and dysgraphia but that differ in significant ways" (National Center for Learning Disabilities, 2014, p. 4). These individuals often have strengths in their verbal expressive and auditory memory, but struggle with mathematics and problem-solving, visual-spatial tasks and their motor coordination, and reading social cues

(National Center for Learning Disabilities, 2014). Executive functioning deficits refers to challenges with planning, organizing, strategizing, and managing time in order to complete tasks (National Center for Learning Disabilities, 2014). These challenges are often seen in individuals with ADHD which "is a brain-based disorder that results in significant inattention, hyperactivity, distractibility or a combination of these characteristics" (National Center for Learning Disabilities, 2014, p. 5). Additionally, while not an SLD, speech or language impairment is often explored when a student is demonstrating academic difficulties. A speech or language impairment (SLI) is described as a communication disorder which negatively affects a student's academic progress (IDEA, 2004). This disorder may be related to fluency, articulation, language, or vocal quality (IDEA, 2004). An EB student who is not yet proficient in English may present with some similar behaviors to learning dis/abilities and/or SLI as they are progressing through their language acquisition. For this reason it is important that educators understand both learning dis/abilities and language acquisition so that they can make more accurate decisions regarding students needs.

Challenges With Differentiation

Unfortunately, the language acquisition process is not well understood by educators (Fernandez & Inserra, 2013). Fernandez and Inserra (2013) found that at four schools in New York teachers reported a lack of training about second language acquisition, as well as a lack of training about effective practices for EB students. While this study included only a small sample from one geographic region limiting its generalizability, the researchers found that when teachers had more knowledge about EB students they were less likely to refer them to special education and more likely to implement appropriate practices in their classroom (Fernandez & Inserra,

2013). This is consistent with other research that has indicated students are often referred to special education due to language concerns and teams have difficulty determining if the student is struggling due to language acquisition or a dis/ability (Brown & Ault, 2015; Samson & Lesaux, 2009; Zetlin et al., 2011). It is important educators working with EB students understand the similarities and differences of first and second language acquisition as well as the impact of cultural differences (Mitchell, 2019; Orosco & Klingner, 2010; Schon et al., 2008).

Teams may struggle with this differentiation because many characteristics or behaviors observed when a student is learning a new language are also observed in students with certain dis/abilities, namely specific learning disability (SLD) and speech or language impairment (SLI) (Klingner & Eppolito, 2014; Orosco & Klingner, 2010; Tankard Carnock & Silva, 2019). For instance, a student with a learning disability might have trouble retelling and sequencing a story because of difficulty with retrieval skills or auditory processing, whereas an EB student might have trouble retelling and sequencing a story because they do not have the expressive skills or vocabulary to complete the task in their new language (Klingner & Eppolito, 2014). Teachers who lack training in language acquisition may mistakenly refer students to special education because of these behaviors (Fernandez & Inserra, 2013; Zetlin et al., 2011). Differentiating between these etiologies is also challenging for the school psychologists and speech language pathologists responsible for assessing students who were referred to special education.

According to IDEA (2004), a school psychologist must conduct a comprehensive psychoeducational assessment using appropriate and nondiscriminatory procedures in order to differentiate a dis/ability from language learning and acquisition. Similarly, a speech language pathologist would need to complete a comprehensive language assessment using

nondiscriminatory procedures to differentiate if a student was demonstrating a true language disorder or behaviors consistent with being an EB (IDEA, 2004). Despite these professionals having training and knowledge about language acquisition and differentiation of dis/abilities, research has demonstrated there are many challenges they face when referring and assessing EB students, including confusion or lack of knowledge about the referral and assessment processes.

Systems of Referral and Assessment

While there is consensus that "neither a positive nor a supportive relationship existed between the population of students designated English language learners (ELL) and the field of special education" (Zetlin et al., 2011, p. 59) the reasons for this discrepancy are wide-ranging. Zetlin et al. (2011) ascertained that EB students are affected by challenges at the referral, assessment, and placement stages of this process.

At the identification and referral stage, one challenge is that the federal and state policies guiding educators are not clear and may be misinterpreted (DeMatthews et al., 2014; Mueller et al., 2004). This is further exacerbated because historically focusing on EB students in special education has not been an area of emphasis for state agencies, thus leaving it up to district leaders to fill in the gaps left by federal policies such as IDEA (2004) (DeMatthews et al., 2014). The impact of these policy challenges can be seen at the school level with teachers reporting that policies and procedures for referring and assessing EB students are unclear (Castro-Villarreal et al., 2016; DeMatthews et al., 2014; Fernandez & Inserra, 2013; Samson & Lesaux, 2009). For example, Response to Intervention (RTI) is a model of multi-tiered support to ensure all students are appropriately accessing instruction by implementing increasing levels of intervention based on individual student progress. Students who are struggling academically do not have to be

immediately referred for special education assessment if the school believes their challenges can be addressed through classroom-based interventions and support (Ennis et al., 2017). Therefore, most schools use a Multi-tiered System of Support (MTSS) including RTI to provide support to students.

Referral Process

Research has argued that the appropriate implementation and use of a referral process, including RTI, leads to improved results for EB students (Barrio, 2017; Rodríguez & Rodríguez, 2017). There can be important data collected during this referral and RTI process (Schon et al., 2008) therefore, there is a continued need for schools and districts to implement a standardized RTI process which would benefit all students, but especially EB students (Shenoy, 2014). Similarly, Orosco & Klingner (2010) argued that to avoid miseducating EB students, schools and districts need to develop and implement policies and standards for both assessment and instruction of culturally and linguistically diverse students.

However, based on their review of the literature Castro-Villarreal et al. (2016) concluded that the implementation of RTI lends itself to significant subjectivity which in turn may more significantly impact EB students due to the implicit or explicit bias of teachers and staff. Teachers have reported feeling pressure from special education teams, principals, or other stakeholders to not refer EB students, suggesting that the student needs more time before the referral process can begin (Castro-Villarreal et al., 2016; Fernandez & Inserra, 2013; Samson & Lesaux, 2009). Similarly, teachers may not refer EB students because they falsely believe that the student needs to have English proficiency before referral or that students cannot be dual identified (Samson & Lesaux, 2009). Because federal law states that students cannot be placed in

special education due to language difference or environmental factors, some teachers may be reluctant to refer EB students to the RTI or special education process (Samson & Lesaux, 2009). These misconceptions about how EB students should be supported during this pre-referral and referral stage only serves to negatively impact EB students' access to appropriate interventions and supports. All professionals at the school site should have a clear understanding of the referral process for EB students, as well as an appropriate and accurate understanding of the policies and laws which influence this process.

Assessment Process

In addition to the referral process, it is imperative that educators understand the assessment process. In order to qualify for special education services, a student must be evaluated and found eligible for services. A request for a special education assessment can be made by a number of people including teacher, parent, other school staff, or an outside professional, such as a doctor. Once a request for assessment has been made, the school has 15 days to respond (California Education Code, 2015). The district may deny the request for an assessment, but this denial must be in writing and outline why the request was not met. More often the request is accepted, and an assessment plan is created. Pursuant to California Education Code (2015) and IDEA (2004), parents must be informed of and consent to the plan for assessment. Assessments should be conducted by qualified professionals in all areas of concern within 60 days from receiving consent from parents (California Education Code, 2015; IDEA, 2004). The parent should then be invited to attend an IEP meeting where the results of the assessment are provided (IDEA, 2004). Parents should be notified "early enough to ensure an opportunity to attend" this meeting (California Education Code, 2015). At the meeting, all

appropriate providers should share their assessment results and the team, including the parent, should agree on whether or not the child is found eligible for services. If eligible, the team would then create an IEP with goals that appropriately target the students identified areas of need and provide an offer of how these goals will be met. This is the general assessment process for all students; however, unique student characteristics impact how individual assessments are completed. For EB students there are many recommended practices that educators should engage in to ensure they conduct appropriate assessments.

Evidence Based Assessment for Emerging Bilinguals

In order to appropriately identify and support EB students, there are certain evidence-based practices that are recommended not only in peer-reviewed articles, but also in IDEA (2004) and by national organizations like the American Speech Language-Hearing Association (ASHA). Their recommendations provide guidance and regulations on how to appropriately assess all children, including children whose native language is not English.

IDEA's (2004) Recommendations

According to IDEA (2004), when assessing any student, the assessor should select and administer assessment materials which will not be culturally or racially discriminatory. Additionally, it stated that assessors should provide materials in the language and form that is most likely to yield the most accurate information whether that be in the child's native language or using an alternative mode of communication (IDEA, 2004). IDEA (2004) also stated that the assessment measures should be focused on measuring the potential dis/ability of the student and not their English language skills and that they should be used in such a way that they yield valid and reliable results. Finally, IDEA (2004) stated that assessment procedures should be

comprehensive, including health, communication, motor skills, social emotional status, etc. based on the needs of the student and that these measures must be administered by trained and knowledgeable personnel (IDEA, 2004).

ASHA's Recommendations

Similarly, ASHA has released many position papers, policies, and guidance documents specifically targeting the issue of assessing students with cultural and linguistic differences. One specific set of knowledge and skills recommended includes using appropriate assessment procedures that are culturally and linguistically appropriate, such as dynamic assessment (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, n.d.-c, n.d.-d). Specifically, it was recommended that SLPs include a case history which explores the student's specific language history, a parent questionnaire or survey that provides additional information about the student's early language development, assessment tools focused on finding the students strengths and weaknesses even if they are not standardized, and a speech sample in all languages the student speaks (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, n.d.-a).

Additionally, this organization recommended that SLPs are aware of when and how to use accommodations and modifications during assessment in order to collect the appropriate and relevant information (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, n.d.-a). ASHA did not recommend translating test items from standardized measures to reach a standard score because once questions are translated the intended linguistic outcome may have changed (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, n.d.-a). Additionally, ASHA stated that SLPs should be knowledgeable about working with an interpreter and how that collaboration may influence or invalidate standards scores (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, n.d.-b). They also

acknowledged the importance of collaborating with both the family and other school professionals during this process to ensure that the assessment is non-discriminatory and appropriately measures the intended targets (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, n.d.-c).

Other Recommendations

In 2017, Arias and Friberg replicated a 2007 study by Caesar and Kohler, both of which aimed to look at the self-reported current practices of school-based speech language pathologists. In addition to Likert-type scale questions about the frequency of certain assessment techniques, Arias and Friberg (2017) included open-ended questions about the barriers and supports to bilingual assessments. After qualitative analysis the researchers identified themes in regard to barriers, which included a lack of interpreters as well as a lack of training for interpreters, a lack of time, a lack of training, a lack of appropriate standardized measures, issues with the referral process, and challenges with parent communication. Similarly, results from a 2014 survey of SLPs, school psychologists, special educators, and paraprofessionals found that a lack of bilingual language support and inconsistent implementation of RTI and referral processes negatively impacted EB assessment (Shenoy, 2014).

The need for trained interpreters to assist with assessment is high because both the SLP and school psychology careers lack bilingual providers (American Speech Language-Hearing Association, 2020a; Garcia-Joslin et al., 2016; Olvera & Olvera, 2015). It is important to consider that simply being able to communicate in another language does not necessarily indicate appropriate proficiency to conduct nondiscriminatory assessment in that language (Flanagan et al., 2000). Based on data from 2019, the American Speech-Language-Hearing

Association (ASHA) reported that approximately 6.5% of providers met the qualifications set in their definition to call themselves bilingual service providers (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2020b). ASHA also reported that nearly 92% of providers are White (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2020a). Similarly, research has reported a shortage of bilingual school psychologists (Garcia-Joslin et al., 2016; Olvera & Olvera, 2015) with about 92% of professionals in this career being White as well (Olvera & Olvera, 2015). The lack of diversity within these professions runs counter to the increased diversity in the student population and indicates an increased need to ensure providers are knowledgeable about and trained in how to best assess EB students. The lack of trained bilingual providers leads to a need for interpreters to assist with assessment and parent communication when EB students are referred for assessment.

Interpreters

The recommended best practices from IDEA (2004) and ASHA are echoed in many research articles along with other suggestions for how to best assess culturally and linguistically diverse students. For instance, the appropriate use of interpreters to communicate with family members and to assist with assessment measures is consistently regarded as a key factor in appropriate assessments for EB students (Arias & Friberg, 2017; Blanchett et al., 2009; Guiberson & Atkins, 2012; Olvera & Gomez-Cerrillo, 2011; Tankard Carnock & Silva, 2019).

Unfortunately, research has indicated that access and use of interpreters has been inconsistent amongst providers (Arias & Friberg, 2017; Caesar & Kohler, 2007; Guiberson & Atkins, 2012; O'Bryon & Rogers, 2010; Vega et al., 2016). It has been reported that only about one third of school psychologists use an interpreter when assessing students whose native

language is not English (O'Bryon & Rogers, 2010). Similarly, when surveyed only 48% of SLPs reported using an interpreter with EB students (Caesar & Kohler, 2007). It has been suggested that this may be related to providers having difficulty locating a well-trained interpreter (O'Bryon & Rogers, 2010). In the context of conducting these assessments a well-trained interpreter is one that not only speaks the language fluently and understands the culture, but also understands the importance of confidentiality, knows how to administer the assessments, and how to record and report responses accurately (Olvera & Gomez-Cerrillo, 2011; Ortiz & Yates, 2001). Unfortunately, O'Bryon and Rogers (2010) found in their research that many school psychologists from their sample reported using untrained interpreters including family members and friends of the student. Similarly, Vega et al. (2016) found that only approximately 20% of school psychologists from their sample reported that their interpreters were very well or well trained. This is troubling because without training "the interpreter may not relay the information as it was stated, the interpreter may omit or modify what is said as information is relayed" (Schon et al., 2008). When the provider is not fluent in the language, they may be unaware of the interpreter rephrasing questions or providing cues which alter the assessment outcomes (Schon et al., 2008). While some research has suggested that the use of untrained interpreters is the result of the time and work it takes to find an interpreter (Ferlis & Xu, 2016), there is a reported lack of training related to utilizing interpreters as well. Research has found that very few SLPs and school psychologists report getting training on how to work with interpreters either in their graduate coursework or through continuing education (Guiberson & Atkins, 2012; O'Bryon & Rogers, 2010; Schon et al., 2008). Providers enter the workforce without the knowledge of what makes a good interpreter and how to work with an interpreter to ensure assessments are

implemented accurately, which may lead to many providers feeling incompetent in their ability to accurately assess a student's language development when using an interpreter (Guiberson & Atkins, 2012).

Previous Knowledge and Professional Development

Across the professions there is also a documented benefit when teachers, school psychologists, and SLPs have knowledge about culturally and linguistically diverse students, language acquisition, and bilingualism (Fernandez & Inserra, 2013; Olvera & Gomez-Cerrillo, 2011; Paradis, 2016). Fernandez and Inserra (2013) found that even when teachers only had some knowledge of these concepts they referred students less frequently and instead supported their language development in the classroom. Paradis (2016) stated that to improve the outcomes for EB students, SLPs should have a greater knowledge of typical second language acquisition as well as strategies for how to best assess EB students appropriately. Similarly, Olvera and Gomez-Cerrillo (2011) purported that school psychologists need to be knowledgeable about how to assess students who are culturally and linguistically diverse, as well as with ways to conduct a nondiscriminatory assessment that will differentiate a student who is demonstrating behaviors of a dis/ability from that of typical English language development. Additionally, researchers have argued that these providers need to understand how culture affects the student at school, during assessment, and how it will impact communication with parents and families (Ferlis & Xu, 2016; Sullivan, 2011). Sullivan (2011) argued that respecting the student and family's cultural differences is a basic component of completing a culturally competent and nondiscriminatory assessment. She further wrote that in order to achieve this, professionals must reflect on their

own cultural experience and background in order to better understand how that impacts their views of other cultures (Sullivan, 2011).

Despite this research, another reported challenge to assessing EB students is a general lack of training related to EB students. In their research Schon et al. (2008) reported that not all school psychologists received adequate training in how to assess EB students and participants. Vega et al. (2016) found that school psychologists reported wanting continued training on how to best complete assessment for culturally and linguistically diverse students. Similarly, Guiberson and Atkins (2012) reported that even when SLPs have received diversity training they demonstrate a continued need for training specifically related to working with this unique population of students.

Assessment Activities

A lot of research has provided guidance on specific assessment activities that providers should use when assessing culturally and linguistically diverse students. These recommendations have included conducting a comprehensive case history, using rating scales, completing parent/family interviews, conducting classroom and playground observations, collecting language samples, using formal and informal measures, conducting dynamic assessment, assessing in all languages, reviewing work samples, and using other non-standardized assessment measures (Caesar & Kohler, 2007; Liu et al., 2008; Olvera & Gomez-Cerrillo, 2011; Paradis, 2016; Peña et al., 2014; Rodríguez & Rodríguez, 2017; Shenoy, 2014). Dynamic assessment is a strategy that blends teaching and assessing together to determine if the student is making progress with the provided intervention. It uses a test-teach-retest model which allows the provider to assess the student's modifiability for the skill. Peña et al. (2014) argued that

dynamic assessment is a valuable tool when assessing EB students as it has "consistently demonstrated good classification accuracy when applied to differentiation of [language impairment] in children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds" (p. 2217). Because it is focused on learning rather than comparing the student to a normative sample, dynamic assessment can provide useful diagnostic information, especially with EB students (Peña et al., 2014). In addition to using the above procedures, it is also required by federal and state law that assessors consider exclusionary factors, such as cultural, economic, or environmental factors that may explain the discrepancy in the student's performance (Olvera & Gomez-Cerrillo, 2011).

Despite research describing the importance of appropriate assessment, research has also found that another challenge facing providers is finding and using appropriate assessment materials. Testing can be completed using an assessment available in the student's native language; however, if this is not available, some providers may have an interpreter translate test questions from an English assessment. This poses a problem because the test items may not target the intended concept after translation and may be more or less difficult in the native language (Schon et al., 2008). Recently there has been a shift toward using more native language assessments, however, English assessments are still the most commonly used measure when assessing EB students (Arias & Friberg, 2017; Caesar & Kohler, 2007). Unfortunately, even when assessments are conducted in the student's native language, some research suggests that these measures may not provide reliable or valid results (Arias & Friberg, 2017). Similarly, while informal measures of assessment, such as language sampling, are reportedly being used more frequently, formal standardized measures continue to be used at a high frequency (Arias & Friberg, 2017; Caesar & Kohler, 2007). Because it is often difficult to find tests that have

normative samples which represent EB students, formal standardized tests cannot and should not be the main or only assessment measure (O'Bryon & Rogers, 2010).

The vast number of articles addressing this topic seem to indicate that there is a continued challenge when it comes to referring and assessing EB students for special education. The intersection of their identities, often as students of color, who speak a language other than English at home, and who may or may not have a dis/ability is unique and not well understood.

Educator Beliefs

Park (2020) found that educators beliefs about EB students influences how they perceive them and refer them to special education. Based on her research, she found that most educators took one of two stances when it came to referring EB students, "wait to be sure" or "the sooner the better" (Park, 2020). Interestingly though, although these approaches seem to be in opposition, they share one key factor in that they otherize dis/ability (Park, 2020). Park (2020) argued that the wait to be sure group tends to have a negative view of dis/ability, which leads them to delay referring EB students because they view special education as undesirable. In contrast, the sooner the better group typically has a positive view of special education which leads to over-referral of students to special education because only a specialist could help the student (Park, 2020). In this way, although differing in how they view dis/ability in a positive or negative light, both groups demonstrated a deficit view of dis/ability (Park, 2020). Moreover, Park (2020) found that teachers held deficit views about EB students as well, expecting that they would struggle academically. She found that school psychologists felt that teachers were not prepared to explore students' achievement patterns and make knowledgeable decisions about who qualified for special education (Park, 2020).

Park's (2020) results have been echoed by other researchers who have consistently found that teachers' beliefs about race, culture, ability, etc. impact the way they view their role in the classroom and the choices they make (Marx, 2004; Pettit, 2011). Teachers have continually compared students who are identified as "English learners" to the same normative standards as monolingual students and then believe the EB students are failing (Park, 2020). Educators' continued deficit view of both emerging bilingualism and dis/ability impacts the way EB students are referred to and assessed for special education. The intersection of their linguistic, racial, cultural, and ability identities interact in unique ways which impact their educational experiences.

Dis/ability Critical Race Studies

The challenges and misconceptions of identifying the needs of EB students leading to misrepresentation in special education can be usefully explored by considering Dis/ability Critical Race Studies (DisCrit). DisCrit, first proposed by Connor et al. (2016), is a dynamic framework rooted in the work of both Disability Studies and Critical Race Theory that "incorporates a dual analysis of race and ability" (p. 9). Guided by a critical analysis that Critical Race Theory lacked sufficient representation of special education and dis/ability and that Disability Studies often left race unexplored, the authors proposed seven tenets of DisCrit (Connor et al., 2016).

Tenet One

The first tenet of DisCrit is focused on how ableism and racism interdependently "uphold notions of normalcy" (Connor et al., 2016, p. 19). This tenet argued that the disproportionately higher number of students of color who are identified as having a dis/ability demonstrated the

way the interplay of racism and ableism continues to exist (Connor et al., 2016). DisCrit therefore engaged critically with the idea of "normative" produced from a society entrenched in racism and ableism and argued that "normative cultural standards such as Whiteness and ability lead to viewing differences among certain individuals as deficits" (Connor et al., 2016, p. 20). In this way, DisCrit challenges the common assumption those who deviate from the norm want or need to achieve the normative standards (Connor et al., 2016). Instead, DisCrit tasks society to focus on accepting differences rather than remediating perceived deficits.

Tenet Two

DisCrit's second tenet was focused on valuing "multidimensional identities" rather than concentrating on identities such as race, gender, dis/ability, or social class in isolation (Connor et al., 2016, p. 19). The stigma associated with different identity markers is complex, especially when multiple identities such as gender, race, language, and class, are all present. DisCrit considers that with those identities which deviate from "normative cultural standards" there is space for others to see them as deficient or inferior (Connor et al., 2016). For this reason, DisCrit amplifies these issues and gives prominence to those identities which have been seen as divergent.

Tenet Three

The third tenet of DisCrit was about recognizing that while race and ability are socially constructed, there are real material and psychological impacts associated with that label (Connor et al., 2016). While race as a social construction is becoming more widely accepted, there are many who have argued that dis/ability is a biological fact (Connor et al., 2016). However, DisCrit argued that these differences only exist because of the comparison to "normal" peers and

does not justify the segregation and marginalization that students with dis/abilities experience (Connor et al., 2016). The authors argued within this tenet that addressing overrepresentation of students of color in special education is not enough because that only addresses the race-based segregation and not the dis/ability-based segregation that exists (Connor et al., 2016).

Tenet Four

The fourth tenet was to privilege the voices of marginalized populations (Connor et al., 2016). This tenet contended that the voices of traditionally marginalized groups are too often left out of the research and discussions about them (Connor et al., 2016). DisCrit ascertained that those voices should not only be included, but central to the work being done (Connor et al., 2016).

Tenet Five

DisCrit's fifth tenet was to consider the way legal and historical aspects of identity labels work independently and together to withhold rights (Connor et al., 2016). Historically, racial hierarchies have been guided by "science" which claimed that some races were more intelligent or more able than others (Connor et al., 2016). DisCrit argued that today's reliance on standardized assessments and evidence-based interventions stems from this unproven science and in turn works to continue to uphold these false hierarchies (Connor et al., 2016). DisCrit challenges "beliefs about the inferiority of the intelligence and culture of people of color" (Connor et al., 2016, p. 23).

Tenet Six

Tenet six of DisCrit was about recognizing the power that comes with being White and able-bodied, and how positive outcomes for those who differ usually only exists as the result of

interest convergence (Connor et al., 2016). Put another way, this tenet acknowledged that historically the interests of people of color and people with dis/abilities are typically only accommodated or addressed when the interests are shared by the White, able-bodied population (Connor et al., 2016). In addition to identifying when interest convergence occurs, "DisCrit also makes visible the ways in which the same labels provide different opportunities to students of different races" (Connor et al., 2016, p. 25).

Tenet Seven

The final tenet was that activism and all systems of resistance are promoted in DisCrit (Connor et al., 2016). This tenet highlighted the need to support diverse forms of expression since many traditional activities thought to be activism such as marches or sit-ins are not accessible to all individuals (Connor et al., 2016). It argued that activism can take many forms but should be informed by and connected to the community (Connor et al., 2016).

DisCrit and Systemic Change

While each of these tenets represents a unique belief of the framework, DisCrit is generally focused on exploring how racism and ableism impact Black students and students of color both with and without dis/abilities (Connor et al., 2016). Because of their focus on rejecting a singular concept of identity in favor of a focus on multidimensional identities, as well as ensuring the voices of marginalized groups are privileged, these tenets can act as leading principles to help guide personalized change and learning (Kozleski et al., 2020). DisCrit acknowledges there are entrenched educational inequities which impact students of color disproportionately, such as the overrepresentation of students of color in special education

(Connor et al., 2016). Connor et al. (2016) purported that DisCrit offers the opportunity to analyze these deep-rooted inequities through an intersectional lens.

As an educational framework, DisCrit theorizes the unique ways that the practices, dialogues, and traditions of education are systemically influenced by racism and ableism, which impact students of color differently than they impact White students (Connor et al., 2016). More specifically, DisCrit argued that trends in overrepresentation of Black students and students of color in special education must be explored with an intersectional lens in relation to race and ability (Connor et al., 2016). In their seminal work Connor et al. (2016) wrote specifically about the overrepresentation of Latinx students and explicitly identified "the ways those who speak a second language intersects with notion of ability" (p. 16) as an example of how racial hierarchies negatively impact students of color. Using a DisCrit lens, research has found that systems of data collection, which have traditionally been considered infallible, are often based on assumptions about sorting and categorizing based on comparison to the social-constructed standards, which means their results maintain inequity (Connor et al., 2016).

Racism and ableism are seen not only in the actions of individuals but also at a systemic level (Kozleski et al., 2020). Societally, our systems, including education, are based on normative notions (Thorius, 2019) meaning that everything from the placement of a light switch to the way language emerges is assumed to fit within a socially constructed and reinforced standard. And while there have been attempts to improve this, the policy work often ends up addressing these inequities from within the same bounded standards without challenging the assumptions of Whiteness and ability from which the standards were created (Kozleski et al., 2020). Research has demonstrated that who qualifies for special education varies based on state,

district, and school level nuances, including how power and privilege manifest (Kozleski et al., 2020). In this way, "DisCrit provides a lens to understand how ability, race and other marginalized differences become conflated through interwoven systems that trade in dominance and subordination" (Kozleski et al., 2020, p. 491). Therefore, Kozleski et al. (2020) argued that leaders, whether they be principals, school psychologists, assessment personnel, etc., need to be informed by DisCrit and in turn focused on disrupting the entrenched normative standards which perpetuate inequity. Similarly, they suggested a need to foreground capacity and personalization in education rather than standardization because standardization perpetuates social binaries and lacks intersectional understanding (Kozleski et al., 2020).

In order to improve policy and practice, one must first unearth and analyze the oppressive current patterns within the system (Kozleski et al., 2020). Therefore, educational leaders, especially those in special education, must actively engage in reshaping how systems are designed in order to improve equitable outcomes for all students. Using a DisCrit lens provides an opportunity to explore how both ableist and racist biases may affect the process of identifying EB students for special education. For instance, there are specific categories of eligibility that students must fall into in order to receive special educational support. While these categories may be useful to organize groups and are required for federal funding, there is the inherent possibility that cultural perceptions or biases may influence the interpretation (Connor et al., 2019). In fact, DisCrit would argue that biases do play a role in interpretation, which in turn leads to disproportional representation in special education. In this same vein, some research suggests that for many, once a dis/ability label has been given, the dis/ability begins to

overshadow all other characteristics, masking the idea that race may have influenced the educator to give the dis/ability label in the first place (Connor et al., 2016).

Although there are decades of research demonstrating an overrepresentation of students of color in special education, there fails to even be an agreed upon definition of what "representation" is within this context (Connor et al., 2019). Connor et al. (2019) argued that one of the reasons this disproportionality exists is because of the limitation of current government policies and the reduced use of the plethora of accessible research on this topic. It is imperative to acknowledge race and include interdisciplinary work when completing research related to overrepresentation (Connor et al., 2019). Moreover, in order to produce productive outcomes, researchers need to recognize and examine the longstanding links between race and dis/ability with not only the general culture, but also within the educational system (Connor et al., 2019).

Looking at this problem systemically, DisCrit provides an additional lens to explore the ways that racism and ableism impact the process of referral and assessment. These inequities are present not only in the individual actions of educators, but also built into the system which compares all students to norms based on Whiteness and ability. In this way, EB students face discrimination based on their linguistic, racial, and ability differences. The intersection of these identities results in unique injustices within this system.

It has been suggested that "disproportionality illustrates the applicability of a DisCrit framework" (Connor et al., 2016). Harry and Klingner (2014) argued that technical fixes, such as switching to an assessment measure that has a more diverse norming sample, may initially appear to improve the equity in the identification process, but it does not address the complexity of why the student was referred for special education in the first place. This speaks to the deeply

rooted systemic challenges of disproportionality. More recent revisions to the IDEA (2004) attempted to address these systemic challenges by requiring states to implement policies and practices that prevent and reduce disproportionate representation in special education, specifically inappropriate overidentification (Thorius & Stephenson, 2012). However, how "inappropriate" is defined is left up to the individual states and local educational agencies. As such, some researchers have instead suggested that the focus be not on practices to eliminate disproportion, but rather on those practices which address the inequity underlying it (Connor et al., 2016). In this way, systems thinking can be used to look deeply at the whole system and its underlying roots, rather than attempting to address one specific outcome.

In considering the recommended practices offered above, it is beneficial to critically examine the ways racism and ableism may permeate their good intentions. For instance, much of what is done during the assessment process is comparing students to "the norm" whether that be through standardized tests, or through informal expectations. Historically, tests have been used to predict performance and schools were organized based on that information (Connor et al., 2016). But there has also been a long history and close relationship between race, intelligence, and ability, which led to an intellectual hierarchy within schools that was based on race (Connor et al., 2016). This hierarchical ideology continues to impact the practices and structures within schools, such as the overrepresentation of marginalized groups in special education. Even when following best practices for EB students by conducting non-standardized measures, results may still be compared to White normative expectations. For instance, when considering the process of second language acquisition, stages have suggested timelines that students may or may not progress through uniformly. These variances do not necessarily indicate dis/ability or abnormal

progression. While many educators may lack knowledge of these stages, those familiar may inadvertently use them too strictly, assuming that all students will follow these stages similarly. This is just one way that teachers' beliefs, practices, and ideologies can impact the referral and assessment process. Research has found that patterns of inequity interact with teacher expectations and how teachers determine who gets referred to and found eligible for special education is impacted by their deficit thinking and personal judgments (Connor et al., 2016). These perceptions of student ability based on teacher attitude and bias, influence the pattern of overrepresentation in special education.

DisCrit has aimed to emphasize how ableism and racism uphold perceptions of normalcy (Connor et al., 2016), which has negative impacts for those who do not fit into the norm, such as EB students and students with dis/abilities. There is a need to disrupt these outdated ways of thinking, in favor of creating learning spaces that "create awareness of common-sense notions around race and ability" (Connor et al., 2016, p. 80). By using systems thinking and the underlying assumptions present, we begin to dismantle what does not serve all students and build a more equitable system. In order to best serve students who are emerging bilinguals and appropriately determine if they need special education support school systems need to improve the policies and procedures they use to assess and refer students.

Conclusion

There is a long history of research that has asserted that students of color are disproportionally represented in special education. The system of referral and assessment of all students, including EB students, is influenced by ideologies with racist and ableist beliefs. As such, there is a continued need to examine the practices, policies, beliefs, and attitudes being

used to refer and assess students in order to improve equitable outcomes. To that end, the purpose of this study was to look at the assessment process of EB students in order to address their disproportionate representation in special education. To shed light on this issue, school psychologists and speech language pathologists participated in semi-structured interviews to explore their experiences with the process of assessment. The specifics of the methodology are presented in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This study explored how systemic factors at the individual and district level, as well as how beliefs about race and ability held by speech language pathologists and school psychologists impact their assessments of emerging bilingual students. This study used a qualitative approach to conduct semi-structured interviews with speech language pathologists and school psychologists in urban school districts in Southern California to explore this problem. This chapter provides an overview of this study's methodology including the research questions, context, participants, procedures, and data collection for this study. Subsequently, the analysis procedures are described before discussing the limitations and delimitations of this study in more depth.

Research Questions

The goal of this study was to address the systemic factors that negatively impact the assessment of EB students for SLPs and school psychologists, as well as to explore how their beliefs about race and ability impact the process. Therefore, in order to address this phenomenon, this study answered the following questions:

RQ1: What practices do speech language pathologists and school psychologists in urban school districts use when assessing emerging bilingual students?

RQ1a: What are some individual challenges/barriers that speech language pathologists and school psychologists in urban school districts face during the assessment process for emerging bilingual students?

RQ1b: What are some systemic challenges/barriers that speech language pathologists and school psychologists in urban school districts face during the assessment process for emerging bilingual students?

RQ2: How do speech language pathologists and school psychologists in urban school districts beliefs about race and ability affect their assessment practices of emerging bilingual students?

Method

Context

The interviews for this study were conducted with SLPs and school psychologists working in public schools. Participants represented six different urban school districts in Southern California. Together, the six districts serve more than 640,000 students, approximately 18% of whom are EB and 15% are receiving special education (California Department of Education, 2022). Southern California was purposefully chosen because of the population in this area, which has about twice as many EB students enrolled in public schools compared to the nation at large (California Department of Education, 2020a).

Participants

Participants for this study included 12 individuals, six school-based SLPs and six school psychologists, who were purposively sampled to be participants in semi-structured interviews. These individuals all work at public schools in Southern California. Table 2 below includes additional information regarding participants' demographic information.

Table 2

Participant Demographic Information (n=12)

Characteristics	n	%
Gender		
Female	12	100%
Male	0	0%
Non-binary/third gender	0	0%
Prefer not to say	0	0%
Race/ethnicity		
White	5	42%
Black or African American	0	0%
American Indian or Alaska Native	0	0%
Asian	1	8%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0	0%
Hispanic/Latinx	4	33%
Multi-racial/Multi-ethnic	2	17%
Other	0	0%
Age		
<30	5	42%
30-39	6	50%
>40	1	8%
Years practicing		
1-5	5	42%
5-10	5	42%
10+	2	17%
Speak a language other than English fluently		
Yes	3	25%
No	9	75%

Procedures

This study was a qualitative study that used interviews to explore participants' subjective experiences and develop a deep understanding of a complex problem (Leavy, 2017). Rather than attempting to compare the experiences of the two groups, this study explored how these particular professional groups experiences were as parts of the whole within the system of assessment. Qualitative semi-structured interviews were used to describe the current perceptions and practices of SLPs and school psychologists for referring and assessing EB students and to explore the nuances of this problem such as the systemic challenges these professionals may face. Further, it expanded on the beliefs on school campuses related to comparing students to socially constructed normative standards. Through a qualitative design this study was able to provide more robust insight and analysis.

This study began by reaching out to potential interview candidates from my personal, professional networks. The qualitative design was chosen in order to deeply explore how SLPs and school psychologists participate in referring and assessing EB students and how those choices impact the disproportionate representation of these students in special education in their own words. The interviews provided an opportunity to acutely explore SLP and school psychologist perceptions about this process such as how systemic factors impact their choices.

Gaining Entry

I used my personal, professional networks to gain access to SLPs and school psychologists working in public schools in Southern California to participate in the semi-structured interviews. I reached out to numerous colleagues to gauge their interest, as well as to ask them to share this opportunity with any peers they had that might be interested. Because of

the global pandemic, I reached out to all potential participants via email as most educators were working remotely. Because of the stress that the pandemic and the challenges that switching to a remote model posed, I anticipated that finding willing participants might be difficult. I worried that many of my peers would feel too burnt-out to want to spend their personal time participating in this study so I purposefully reached out to over 20 individuals knowing that some would not want to participate.

Recruitment

I used purposive, snowball sampling to identify individuals in my personal, professional network that would make good candidates (Seidman, 2019). This method of selecting participants is "designed to gain maximum variation" which I wanted to achieve (Seidman, 2019, p. 58). I was looking for school-based clinicians who worked at public schools in Southern California. I emailed these individuals to explain the study and ask them to complete the consent form if they were interested in participating. They were also provided my contact information if they had questions about the study. The consent form also contained some basic demographic questions (see Appendix A). Once the consent from was completed another email was sent with a link to sign up for an interview day and time. At the end of their interviews, I asked participants if they had any peers or colleagues they believed would make good participants in this study. If yes, I collected their contact information and initiated email communication with them. This purposive-snowball sampling was used and about 20 individuals were contacted, and 15 individuals completed the consent form giving consent; however, not all individuals responded to schedule an interview, despite multiple attempts to contact them. Therefore, I conducted a total of 12 interviews.

Data Collection

This study used semi-structured interviews that were guided by a set of preset but open-ended questions (see Appendix B) that allowed for other questions to be asked as participants explored topics (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Seidman, 2019). Semi-structured interviews, using active listening and follow up questions, commonly take anywhere from 30 minutes to multiple hours to complete (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Seidman, 2019). For this study, interviews were all 30-75 minutes long and used the guide of the predetermined questions to engage in natural conversations. They were conducted with 12 individuals, six SLPs and six school psychologists. Interviews were conducted individually via a video conferencing platform, Zoom. Interviews were video and audio recorded, and the transcript generated by Zoom was used. This transcript was not completely accurate, so I listened to interviews and edited transcripts for accuracy.

The goal of the interviews was to explore how individuals interpret and describe the assessment process for EB students, especially the systemic factors which support or impede this process. Interviews also provided an opportunity to explore the beliefs and attitudes these providers and their colleagues have about working with marginalized students. Interview questions were developed based on my literature review and aligned to my framework of systems thinking. I was especially guided by what the research described as best practices and asked questions about participants experiences in order to explore what practices were and were not used. This opened the door for conversations about the systemic challenges that might impede conducting all of the best practice protocols. Once transcribed, the transcripts of the interviews were analyzed for themes using inductive analysis.

Analysis

The video conferencing platform, Zoom, which was used to record the interview generated rough transcripts of the interviews. I downloaded transcripts and edited them to improve their accuracy. I then imported the qualitative data into a data analysis software and coded it using inductive analysis to identify emerging themes and patterns across the different interviews. I developed initial codes during a first pass after which I reviewed the codes I created and identified where codes overlapped and merged them. Additionally, I placed codes preliminarily into overarching themes. I then completed a second pass of the data to review data and codes and to ensure accuracy. After this pass, I began to analyze the data and organize it into my writing. During this writing process, I identified in vivo codes, and further merged codes as writing continued. This inductive process and in vivo coding allowed for a robust exploration of the data and a deep investigation of this complex process for EB students.

Limitations

One limitation of this study was that I recruited participants from my personal, professional network. As a current SLP working for a large, urban school district, my positionality as a colleague and peer may have impacted participants during the qualitative interviews. In order to address this, participants were reminded of the confidentiality of the study and the focus on improving student outcomes, not assessing their professional skills. Additionally, interview participants were afforded the opportunity to check the transcript of their interview.

Additional limitations of this study included the sample size and demographics as well as the use of self-report data. Because this study focused on 12 individuals' experiences from one

geographic area of Southern California, the potential for generalizability is reduced. Additionally, interview participants may have self-reported behaviors they think they are supposed to engage in rather than their actual behaviors. To combat this, participants were reminded that their responses are confidential, and they were provided time to ask clarifying questions about the process of confidentiality as well as about the general study to ensure they felt comfortable with the process.

A final limitation of this study was the time during which it was conducted. The interviews began in June 2021, while the world was still responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. Because of school closures and social distancing protocols, some providers may have not conducted as many assessments during this time. Moreover, many of them provided services virtually for most or all of the prior school year. As such, they were sometimes reporting on behaviors that they had not engaged in in over a year. This may have impacted how participants responded to some questions.

Delimitations

The choice to limit this study to participants representing only two job titles within districts in a specific region was a delimitation. As discussed, although this choice limited the ability to generalize the results, it also allowed for the patterns present within this district to be explored. More specifically, by limiting this study to participants who were SLPs and school psychologists, the particular positive and negative aspects of these team members' experience with this process was more thoroughly investigated, which in turn provided the opportunity for specific recommendations to be shared with districts. Sharing these recommendations may lead

to change within these districts which has the potential to positively influence EB students who are currently misrepresented in special education.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of SLPs and school psychologists in assessing EB students to understand their practices, identify challenges, and explore the relationship between their beliefs about race and ability and their assessment practices. This qualitative study used semi-structured interviews with six SLPs and six school psychologists from Southern California school districts to explore the systems in place which impact this process. Specifically, it was guided by the following research questions:

RQ1: What practices do speech language pathologists and school psychologists in urban school districts use when assessing emerging bilingual students?

RQ1a: What are some individual challenges/barriers that speech language pathologists and school psychologists in urban school districts face during the assessment process for emerging bilingual students?

RQ1b: What are some systemic challenges/barriers that speech language pathologists and school psychologists in urban school districts face during the assessment process for emerging bilingual students?

RQ2: How do speech language pathologists and school psychologists in urban school districts beliefs about race and ability affect their assessment practices of emerging bilingual students?

I analyzed data through inductive analysis, using close reading of the data to look for significant concepts and comparing the concepts across the data. I coded these concepts and then interpreted the patterns to create themes. Through this process, I noticed the themes I had

identified were wide ranging and initially seemed somewhat disconnected. However, as I continued to analyze the data, I identified themes linked to three parts of the assessment process: (a) the systemic challenges school psychologists and SLPs face prior to assessment, (b) the systemic challenges they face during the assessment, and (c) the systems of beliefs present on campuses that impact EB students and this process. This chapter explores the various themes that emerged within each part of the process.

Systemic Challenges Before Assessment

There are many systems and procedures in place surrounding the assessment process. Participants reported challenges throughout these various systems including during the prereferral or referral period. In general, two emergent themes were found, that there was a lack of clarity surrounding this process and who was responsible for various aspects and that there are specific pressures and challenges felt by SLPs and school psychologists based on teachers and administrators.

When discussing this topic, many participants spoke about the team of staff at their school who held meetings to discuss students who may be identified as "low achieving." These teams are commonly referred to with the acronym *SST*, which stands for Student Success Team or Student Study Team, depending on the district. While the individual experiences of participants may vary, in general, at most schools this intervention would involve a team of staff including an administrator, the classroom teacher, parent, and any other relevant educators (i.e., school psychologist, counselor, behaviorist, intervention specialist, etc.) who would meet to determine how the school can better support the student to improve academic success. Typically, during an SST process, the team would identify areas of need, propose interventions, set goals,

and schedule follow up meetings to discuss student progress through the interventions. The SST can be a crucial aspect of the pre-assessment period for all students, but especially for EB students because it would allow an opportunity to provide support to students and monitor their progress to ensure that they are accessing their academics. Since historically EB students have been inappropriately placed into special education, this team should be a way to analyze their needs deeply and make an informed decision to ensure their success.

Lack of Clarity

One of the themes that was identified from these conversations was related to the confusion and misunderstandings that SLPs and school psychologists reported facing. Almost all of the participants spoke to the ways that this process lacked adequate clarity and consistency for them whether that be in who carries the responsibility to follow-up after SST meetings or who did and did not follow the expected protocols for referrals. These inconsistencies were reported to lead to confusion and stress for the SLPs and school psychologists as well as insufficient supports for EB students. In general, participants seemed to want a more streamlined system that was understood by all staff members and implemented with increased fidelity.

"I Don't Know Whose Job is That Supposed to be"

One area of challenge identified by several participants was inconsistent referral practices between schools and teachers. This was especially evident when discussing the SST process, as many participants indicated that frequently it was unclear who was responsible for ensuring implementation of the intervention plan discussed during the SST meeting. From her experience Amy, a SLP, stated, "I don't know whose job is that supposed to be" when asked about who would follow up with teachers to ensure interventions were implemented and data were

collected. Similarly, Riley, a SLP, was unsure whose responsibility this would be at her school site, but hypothesized who might be responsible, when she shared:

> I mean, I guess, it would be on our coordinator. That's what I would guess, it would be between the coordinator, the teacher, and the parent to be communicating about how the student is doing with those supports in place.

Other participants expressed that this process varied between the different schools they are assigned to and the administrators at each. Brooke, a SLP, described that at her previous school, she had a principal who was good at following up with teachers to ensure interventions and data were being collected. In contrast she shared that at her school before that "the assistant principal, I highly doubt he followed up with any of it. So I can't tell you, who is following up, but if the teacher was involved and did have concerns they usually followed up with me."

Similarly, Val, a school psychologist, expressed:

> At my specific elementary school it's really driven by the SST team, but by the administrator is the one who ensures that it's being tracked. I know at other sites that is not the case and it tends to be, or it can be, that recommendations are made and then no one ever does it.

Most participants reported being assigned to two or more schools; therefore, these professionals may not be the most appropriate individuals to carry the responsibility of the SST because they were not consistently there for tracking and support. Moreover, the SST is a function of general education, so while SLPs and school psychologists may be a part of the conversation and provide support, the responsibility of this process would be more appropriately placed on school administrators. However, Val shared that in those instances when the administrator was not

leading the process then it "does fall on the psychologist if we really want the information to be taken and we want to make sure that it's being implemented with some sort of fidelity." Nicole, a school psychologist, echoed this notion that this responsibility "tends to fall on the psychs [school psychologists]." In contrast, in these instances, the school psychologist participants described a need to take the lead to ensure the process includes asking the right questions and following the right steps for these students prior to an assessment.

Interestingly, none of the SLPs spoke about feeling like this responsibility fell to them. In contrast, SLP participants indicated that they are often not a part of the SST process at all. This was despite a desire to be more involved. Olive, an SLP, expressed wanting a more active role in the SST process in order to help "screen out [students]; like no, that kid does need speech. No, that kid doesn't, and things like that." Similarly, Riley expressed that as a SLP she gets referrals for students "after the fact, they don't include me" and indicated that the SST was sometimes held without her input even when the main concern was language and speech. Amy further shared, "I think I have not been that involved with [the SSTs], because it seems primarily for academic reasons."

Even outside of the formal SST process, participants described variation with how EB students were being supported in their schools. Val described how her experience as a middle-school school psychologist gave her a unique perspective. She shared, "I get students that feed in from different schools, and I can see that there's different levels of support being offered at the different schools, so I wish that there was more consistency and more oversight with that." Kathryn, a school psychologist, similarly expressed a variation at her site where:

> [M]aybe half of the teachers will do a really good job of like monitoring or putting it somewhere in the [cumulative record] so that you know people like us can kind of find it somewhere, like when we're looking in or maybe the teacher will just have a comment at the end of the year, like we did an intervention, not very helpful.

While the challenges sometimes looked different between SLPs and school psychologists, almost all of the participants expressed that there was a lack of clarity around who was responsible to schedule, hold, and follow up with the SST meetings. Beyond this lack of clarity specifically related to responsibilities, many participants noted the SST and referral process in general was varied and inconsistent at different schools within their districts.

"Every School Does it a Little Bit Differently"

In addition to confusion over who was responsible, many participants also noted that the referral process itself lacked clarity and protocols may not always be followed. For instance Maria, an SLP, shared,

> So I know there's some teachers who just come directly to me or I'll get like emails from them like 'Hey I have concerns about so and so, can you please take a look?' So I'll do like a classroom observation. And then other times I do get referrals through the SST, so it's a little bit of both.

Similarly, Brooke shared that in her experience at her district, while there was a known SST process, "it looks different at every school." This lack of consistent structure was a challenge. As Nicole shared, "Sometimes kids unfortunately tend to slip through the cracks when there's no like designated person to be monitoring and keeping track and it's just tough it's one of those things that's just systematically hard." Catalina, a school psychologist, also shared,

"Unfortunately, at our district we don't necessarily always follow that … those steps that we should follow, right? Like let's try some interventions and see if the standard response to intervention before we're considering a referral to special education." In general, participants shared a sense of frustration that this process was not more streamlined. Elizabeth, a school psychologist, shared, "I literally, I got hospitalized with high blood pressure, after dealing with a referral process this year, it was a mess."

These challenges were further exacerbated when the SST process was not utilized at all by other staff members. For instance, Amy shared that from her perspective the "SST process can be long, and I mean most of these teachers don't even know what that is, so I don't really know how effective that actually is for schools." In contrast Brooke's opinion was that the teachers knew about the process but that "sometimes teachers like to try and jump over the process because they feel that the student is being so impacted."

Notably, some participants also spoke to the successes when the protocols worked well. Brooke shared that at one of her schools, the administrator "was really good about not taking forever to go through the process which, I think, made the teachers feel like they had a little bit more control and their voice was being heard." Val also spoke about her principal taking the lead in SST meetings, setting expectations, and requesting "that maybe we give some targeted intervention to kind of see, if the student is not already receiving it" and then "she [was] very good at following up to make sure data [was] being taken." This speaks to the important role that leadership played in this process. A strong leader who appropriately utilized the SST process led to a more positive outlook on the process from participants, although many participants

continued to feel the process lacked consistency. Regardless, participants also spoke about the challenge of receiving inappropriate referrals, either through the SST or not, for EB students.

Pressures and Challenges from Teachers and Administrators

In addition to the lack of clarity, another challenge faced by SLPs and school psychologists was coordinating with other staff members with limited knowledge of EB students and/or special education. Participants shared that they often felt that teachers and administrators had limited knowledge of EB students as well as reduced knowledge about special education which negatively impacted this process for students. In general, teachers required additional support, often from the SLPs or school psychologists, about the language acquisition process or what normal EB behaviors look like. Additionally, this theme revealed that there can be pressure from teachers and administrators to assess students and find them eligible for special education, possibly due to the belief that there were no other ways to support the students' progress. Finally, this theme revealed that SLPs and school psychologists often engage in their own "wait and see" behaviors in an attempt to limit inappropriate assessments due to a student's EB status. While well intentioned, this may in turn lead to inadequate supports for EB students who have a dis/ability.

"Teachers Need Reminders"

One perception some participants shared was related to how teachers and administrators understand EB students and the assessment process. Kathryn shared concerns that "all they get is like this ELD training and let's do these strategies" but then "a lot of their classes are made up of students, that are learning English, and they'll teach you all these strategies, but something isn't working." Similarly, when discussing which factors should be considered before referral to

special education, Joanne, a school psychologist, expressed "I think sometimes administrators or teachers need reminders about some of those things, especially if there's been a kid who you know is new to the country, I think that sometimes they need those reminders." Val further elaborated on the way that the home language of the student impacts the teachers comfort with the process. She shared that from her perspective, many teachers are somewhat comfortable with bilingual students who speak Spanish at home, but "if a student comes in and maybe like Mandarin is the L1 or I have some students, where ASL is the L1 at home, teachers don't know what to do with that." In these cases, she felt that teachers over-refer EB students whose home language was not Spanish because "they can't wrap their head around any other language, even though developmentally it would be very similar."

Katie, an SLP, also spoke to this, sharing that many teachers do not have a solid understanding that "a lack of exposure to concepts and materials does not equal having a learning disability or a need for special [education] referral." She further explained:

> [T]hat doesn't mean that they're not struggling in school, and that there aren't interventions that need to be put into place to help support them and make sure that they can access their class and that they can continue to make progress and catch up, but that doesn't mean that you need a special [education] eligibility if you really have not had exposure in English or otherwise.

When teachers and administrators lack knowledge about the process, it has led to providers like SLPs and school psychologists receiving inappropriate referrals for assessments. This would leave these providers to train and teach their colleagues about working with EB students in order

to better serve this student population. Without increased knowledge there was a tendency for teachers and administrators to over refer EB students and push for special education assessment.

"We Need to Just Do This"

Another challenge the participants described was a pressure to assess and qualify these students for special education services. Katie shared:

> And it just felt like a little bit of a game of hot potato where these kids are getting pushed to get special education intervention and eligibility because the gen ed side feels like you can't ask me to do that, that's too much work, that's unreasonable, I cannot be asked to do that, I want somebody else to be case managing that and like handling it.

From her experience, Katie went on to describe that "the higher that you get in elementary, the more it starts to be, people start to feel like this is not for me to deal with somebody else needs to step in and deal with that." This in turn often led to a push for the student to be moved from their general education classroom and curriculum into special education. Joanne also referred to "pressure you just get from administrators or teachers who are like 'What? You need to qualify this child'." She further expressed that this situation was "hard because if there isn't another option and there aren't a lot of other supports or maybe there aren't really supports at home, I think sometimes people just kind of feel desperate and don't really know what to do."

This pressure did not just come from teachers though. As a bilingual school psychologist, Kathryn stated she sensed the pressure at times from other school psychologists she has worked with. She shared that sometimes:

> We'll talk on the phone and I'll say I really think it's like, it just a learning English issue and they'll be like, you know, but my team is already, they already did the IEP or they

> really want this or that and it's like I can only help them, like they have to kind of carry all of this back to their sites and deal with you know kind of merging what I gave them with like their report.

Joanne and Kathryn, both school psychologists, spoke to their experiences yielding to this pressure because they felt a lack of options. Kathryn described that with these situations "it's really frustrating" because "we don't really see that maybe this isn't the best solution, but it just seems like the best at the moment" when a student is not performing well academically and there is a lack of interventions to support them. From her perspective Joanne stated sometimes with cases where there was a lot of pressure she does "end up just finding a way to qualify some of these kids and sometimes it doesn't feel good, but I also know that the alternative is like there isn't one."

There was also reported pressure coming not from other educators, but from a legal standpoint. Joanne shared that she has been in situations where she did not feel like the child needed special education but that it was hard to justify in a defensible report. She specifically shared:

> [F]rom a legal standpoint if a parent went to due process and read my report and this kid cannot read or write and they're in fourth grade and I'm saying there's nothing wrong with them and there isn't any clear exclusionary factor or reason why it's just that there isn't a clear learning disability it's like that won't hold up it won't. So it's like what do I do?

Kathryn also spoke to this challenge and shared that she has gone "to these seminars with lawyers that will say, well, you could get dinged later because your data shows that these kids

are all low and then you didn't do anything for years, and so now the district's getting sued." This adds to the complications of this process because as Joanne shared, from "a legal standpoint, when a kid is that low there needs to be a way, if I'm not going to qualify them there needs to be a way for me to explain in a way, why they're struggling so much."

This pressure to assess students may be leading to additional assessments of EB students which in turn could lead to disproportionate representation of these students in special education. Interestingly, despite this sense of pressure to assess at times, most participants also shared that there are times where they will recommend a more "wait and see" approach with young EB students.

"You Want to Let Them Wait and Get the Second Language"

One of the challenges almost all participants spoke to was the challenge of when to assess versus when to "wait and see." Only one participant, Katie shared, "I'm more likely to give services personally, then hold out and wait and see." Other participants primarily expressed a tendency to wait to assess EB students. When discussing receiving referrals for EB students, one school psychologist, Nicole, shared, "Typically I try really hard to put those off unless there's a truly, truly valid reason that they need to be assessed." Nicole went on to add, "With the English language learners I have tried to make it very clear to everybody, like if they're young they're ELL, no. Like it's a no for me don't, I'm not going to be pushed on that." One SLP, Olive, expressed a conundrum she has faced with assessing EB students:

> I feel like obviously you want to let them wait and get the second language and get to be exposed to it. But then, I feel like sometimes, the wait … there's no good way to do it, there's no perfect solution. So you wait, and then like that kid you were talking about it's

like oh there's a lot going on here and now we're in second grade. When maybe we had talked about this in kindergarten.

Kathryn shared a similar sentiment expressing that she has seen cases where a student was assessed in Kindergarten but the "psych's were like super bold and [were] like this is just language like they're just learning language, so this is not an SLD, we need to give them time, but I always end up assessing them" in the second or third grade. Participants seemed to express a general sense that giving EB students time before assessment was necessary, especially when students were younger.

Participants consistently shared that if the student was a Kindergarten student they typically tried to delay any assessment. Val explained from her perspective, "Kindergarten referrals I try not to take no matter what the student's background is because they are in kindergarten. And there's just a lot less … there's so much less information that I can go off of." In contrast, participants cited that an older fifth or sixth grade student would likely be assessed more readily. Again, Val shared, "If an initial referral is coming to me in sixth grade there's usually enough information for me to definitively say yes or no." Amy also shared that with a sixth grader who was behind in most subjects she was more likely to feel like "we need to really do something". In general, participants felt that younger EB students should be given more time, but when older EB students are not performing at grade level they were more likely to move toward assessment. Katie hypothesized that this may be partially due to other staff members who "start to feel like this is not for me to deal with. Somebody else needs to step in and deal with that" and refer them for assessment.

Participants expressed reasons for wanting to delay assessment citing a desire to not over identify students and as Riley, an SLP, shared, “Because a lot of times, it could be an English language learning issue and we need to give them time.” Similarly, Brooke stated, “I feel like you have to give them a chance you can’t just immediately assess them because you probably will find something to qualify them if you’re looking.” There was a general consensus that these students should be given time to build skills before being assessed, but only a few participants spoke to specific supports these students should be given in the meantime. Riley described that she would “just keep an eye on those kiddos.” Whereas Val, a school psychologist, shared “If the student is an English language learner then we give them interventions and supports and kind of use more of an RTI approach to see, are they making any progress with the interventions.” Other participants spoke about giving students more time but did not explain how they would determine if giving them time was successful or how the student would be supported during the wait.

These challenges during the pre-assessment period speak to a general challenge that the systems in place are not clear or consistent. This lack of clarity impacts the way students are moved from referral to assessment and in turn the disproportionate representation of EB students in special education. When the individual pieces of the system are not appropriately understood or implemented, the entire system is negatively impacted. While participants typically understood their role and certain parts of the system, the overall system is not well functioning because of these challenges. The lack of clarity and pressure participants described leads to various challenges which negatively impact this process for EB students. And these challenges extend beyond referral into the assessment system as well.

Systemic Challenges During Assessment

In addition to the challenges that exist during the referral period, participants also identified challenges they faced during the assessment process. Three emergent themes showed up: (a) inadequate resources and testing materials, (b) working with others like interpreters and parents, and (c) how EB assessment varies from monolingual assessment.

Inadequate Resources and Testing Materials

Completing assessments for all students requires many materials, including standardized measures. For monolingual assessments, the assessors would ensure they were familiar with the student and their needs before selecting relevant and appropriate materials to use during the assessment. For some students, that may mean primarily standardized measures targeting articulation or perhaps pragmatics, whereas for other students, a battery of expressive and receptive language assessments might be selected. Assessors would consider the age range that the test targeted and aim to select standardized measures that are most suited for that student's specific needs. Unfortunately, several participants shared that there was a lack of standardized measures in languages other than English both being produced and available at their district. Despite this challenge, standardized testing was the most commonly reported assessment task used by participants. Other assessment tasks were reported less frequently during our conversations but may have still been used by participants. In general, participants expressed a desire to have improved access to resources, both standardized and non-standardized materials, that would support their EB assessments and students.

"As a Part of my Assessments the Actual Standardized Test is Just a Small Part"

When asked about what their assessment process looked like all of the SLPs and four of the six school psychologists spoke about using standardized measures during these assessments, but other assessment activities were indicated with significantly less frequency. Half of the participants mentioned interviewing the student's parents. Kathryn, a school psychologist, shared that this can be a complicated process and stated:

> And then, if the parent is available, sometimes the parents are tricky to get a hold of but then I'll call the parents and I'll see you know what do you notice, you know how is your experience with like the home language first? Do you also see the concerns, is it just about learning English and I'll get, you know, kind of varied results with that.

Teacher interviewing was also reported by about a third of the participants. Maria shared that she used it to find out "what is the teacher saying" and Nicole said it was to find out "what are they seeing." Olive mentioned doing "a language sample in both languages" along with two other SLPs, and only four participants mentioned completing a record review. These can be time-consuming tasks with langauge sampling requiring the student to provide at least 50 utterances in both languages which are transcribed and analyzed for appropriate syntax and morpholology. A record review would consist of looking at the students school history including any previous assessments or IEPs, school-based interventions, sumulative record, or any other information relevant to the students school experiences.

Additionally, only three participants mentioned conducting an observation of the student and only two spoke about interviewing the student themself. Nicole, a school psychologist, shared that she felt like "a lot of people overlook this step, especially with the little ones of like

just talking with the kid and just having a conversation with them and just talking to them" because it can be an important part of the assessment process. And only Riley, a SLP, mentioned dynamic assessment in any way. She shared that often she was in situations where her available tests "are not standardized for bilingual speakers, they're standardized for monolingual English speakers. So it becomes more alternative assessment, dynamic assessing in that case."

Another difference in the assessment process was the way that EB students were reassessed. Val, a school psychologist, shared, "Once a student . . . they've determined that their academic language is proficient enough in English or more proficient than their L1 that we don't have to then go back and reassess them in their L1" and this sentiment was echoed by other school psychologist participants. Joanne shared that in her district this determination was made when a supervisor "looks at the data and they determine whether or not an assessment is required or if it's more of, you know, clearly it's related to their intellectual disability, not a language acquisition issue." None of the SLPs spoke about this being an option which would suggest that they re-assess in both languages regardless.

Despite these differences in assessment activities, almost every participant mentioned collaborating with a colleague during the EB assessment process. For instance Riley shared, "My AP will help me out, even my principal, my principal is very involved, she knows all the families" and Kathryn shared, "Meeting with all the special ED teachers and providers and the AP who's like you know spearheading that, that's really helpful." While Elizabeth shared "I haven't really worked with an SLP, to be honest with you" most other participants indicated that they work closely with the other discipline. For instance, Val shared "I collaborated a lot with

my speech language pathologist" and Olive said "Even though I don't see the psych that often I have communicated with her in the past."

In general, particpants consistently reported working with colleagues and using standardized measures during assessment, but other assessment activities were reported with less frequency. Although the use of standardized measures was highly reported, participants also spoke about the challenge of using these measures.

"Our Measures That Aren't Accurate"

Many participants addressed a challenge related to the standardized assessment measures used to assess EB students. They often shared a similar sentiment that frequently as an assessor looking for standardized tests, you are, as Brooke said, "Trying to pick the best option but knowing that you probably can't use the standardized form of it" because it is not standardized for EB students. In general, Joanne shared that there were "very few tests that we have that we have both English and Spanish for that you can really kind of cross reference" to determine if the challenges were a product of language learning or a dis/ability. Similarly, Catalina shared that at her district they had "only three Spanish test kits" available which was significantly fewer than the variety of English tests. Val similarly stated that she was aware that there were various "tests in different languages and we just don't have them as a district." Not only did this make it challenging to compare to English scores, but also it limited what standardized language testing could be completed which Maria described as "one of the biggest challenges." She expressed that with her English only students she could pick which test might be most appropriate for their needs, but:

> With the like emerging bilingual population there's not a lot of that kind of happening or there's a lot of situations where I've heard of colleagues where it's kind of like we're just doing a dynamic assessment, without any standardized scores for the Spanish portion. It's just the language sample and maybe an interview and then that's what we're have to like base our decision off of. So I feel like there's a lot of information that's missed on that end or just kind of just doing like screeners to kind of get more information.

Similarly, Riley shared that she often found herself using "more alternative assessment, dynamic assessing" with EB students because the tests available to her "are not standardized for bilingual speakers, they're standardized for monolingual English speakers." Similarly, Kathryn described that when she was assessing EB students she would often "try to go in and like give a lot of details like kind of compare what they could do in both languages and see how comfortable they were." This was in contrast to assessments she would complete with monolingual students whose assessments would be comprised of these non-standardized measures as well as standardized ones.

Additionally, both Kathryn and Joanne shared that within their district there was a measure used by the school psychologists when assessing EB students that was known to, as Joanne stated, "inflate their performance." Joanne also shared that an EB student "[could] be really low and maybe [get] like one answer right as like a third grader and then they still like score average." Kathryn articulated why this was such a concern because "sometimes like the hinge of the whole assessment is like how they did on this inflated measure" so finding "a more fair, valid tool, that's sometimes a challenge." Having reduced access to standardized measures for EB students and using measures which inflate their results will not equitably serve this

marginalized population. While research does describe a need for assessments to include a variety of non-standardized measures, increasing access to standardized tests may support the assessment of EB students in schools. In addition to standardized measures, there are many other assessment activities that can and should be completed to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the students skills has been done. Unfortunately, participants shared a general lack of resources as it related to EB assessments.

"We Don't Have the Resources"

Another challenge participants identified during assessments was related to the materials available to them. Some participants spoke to the general lack of resources available to support EB students. Katie, an SLP, shared that a "lack of resources is not really an excuse, but I think that it can be an explanation, sometimes for why choices are made." From her perspective the entire assessment process for EB students lacked support and resources to support these students to an equitable level as their monolingual peers. Catalina, a school psychologist, shared a similar concern, stating "We really don't have the resources for those students and it's unfortunate."

Brooke also spoke to the fact that "just trying to find enough resources to get a good picture of the student" can be one of the hardest parts of the process. However, she then went on to add, that her district "actually [had] a good number of resources, especially compared to other places." Amy and Val similarly shared that they felt their districts had a lot of resources to offer for EB assessments. However, these resources may not always be obvious as noted by Val when she shared that she recently learned "that there are a lot of great resources available" while completing a complicated case for an EB student. Maria spoke to why a lack of resources was such a concern, sharing, "I feel like systematically just having more resources available to us to

kind of really make those decisions and really represent the child as fully as we can, without misrepresenting them because we don't have access to resources." When resources are not available or not readily known, assessments for EB students may be lacking in information, which could lead to misidentification of needs. Best practice for assessment of EB students would suggest that a variety of standardized and non-standardized measures be used to ensure a comprehensive analysis of the students skills has been completed. Without proper resources this analysis may be lacking. Another resource every participant struggled with was access to interpreters to assist in assessing bilingual students.

Working With Others

A major theme that arose in every interview was the challenge of working with others during EB assessments. Most notably, participants all spoke at length about the challenges of finding interpreters to support assessment in a language other than English. This was reported to be a major challenge for both SLPs and school psychologists even though they reported different processes. Additionally, parent communication and the challenges that presents were also mentioned by many participants. Overall, participants reported that while working with these other adults was crucial to producing an appropriate assessment, it was also a time consuming and challenging part of the system.

"Finding Interpreters is Probably One of the Most Challenging Parts of Our Job"

Finding and working with interpreters was one of the biggest challenges participants spoke about during their interviews. Notably this process varied slightly between SLPs and school psychologists. For the school psychologists, across every district that participants worked at there was a process in which the monolingual assessor would have access to a bilingual school

psychologist who would come out to complete the home language testing for them. Most often these were Spanish speaking bilingual students, but some participants shared that their district had bilingual school psychologists who spoke a variety of languages who provided support. Val described the process at her district as:

> I look at the most recent assessment and if the student was not assessed in English, then I fill out a bilingual referral packet that kind of gives all the background information on the student. I look at all of their, language scores, whether it's like the ELPAC or whatever else they have, I think, even some of their like state testing scores I send in, any standardized information I can submit I put into that bilingual referral, as well as what is the primary language what other languages are spoken in the home, all that information. And then the district arranges to either have the Spanish speaking psychologist reach out to me if that's the student's primary language or if it's a different language, then I basically get in touch with an interpreter to try to figure out how to move forward with the assessment.

In contrast, the SLPs described being asked to find someone on campus to provide interpretation for common languages like Spanish. Amy shared that one of the most challenging aspects of the EB assessment process was that she "always [had] to try to recruit someone on campus to help with just the interpreting aspect of it." Olive and Riley both communicated a similar sentiment with Olive stating, "In a perfect world it would be easier to get a translator and be able to like set that up, 'cause I think that's where a lot of my anxiety comes from." Riley also shared, "I think finding interpreters is probably one of the most challenging parts of our job, making sure that we're adequately assessing." Research speaks to the importance of having a trained interpreter

assisting with assessment when the therapist does not speak the students primary language, but SLP participants consistently described using untrained school staff as interpreters.

And even though school psychologists described having access to bilingual support for the formal assessment many school psychologists still identified that, as Joanne shared, “it’s hard to find translators that are good.” Whether it was when their student spoke a language that no bilingual psychologist spoke or needing support with parent communication, school psychologists shared in the SLP participants complaint that finding interpreters for assessments was challenging. For instance, another school psychologist, Nicole, shared:

> I don’t really have access to an interpreter just to like call the parent for like a parent interview or just you know, explaining to them the assessment plan, like basic stuff like that we don’t have an interpreter. So I had to get very creative, and I would kind of find people on campus like maybe the counselor or one of the other teachers that would speak Spanish and if I had a good relationship with them, I would kind of ask them if they can help me.

Some participants did cite that they were able to build relationships with certain stakeholders on their campus who would then consistently help them interpret during these assessments. For instance, Katie shared “In terms of me wanting an interpreter and not being able to find one that was not really a case because I thankfully was on a team that was committed to helping me do that essentially.”

However, many participants also expressed concerns that even after an interpreter was found, it could be challenging to know whether or not they are translating the information with fidelity. As Katie described, often there was an “intense pressure to just seek out a staff member”

such as “incredible instructional assistants and special ED assistants who are fantastic but were they trained as actual interpreters? No, of course not.” This can lead to challenges because during an assessment information needs to be interpreted with reliability, but providers who do not speak the students home language have no way to know if the interpreters were doing that. Brooke shared that she has had some experiences “where you come across the word and they just say I don’t know what that is, and they’ll come up with something else. So just not knowing exactly what’s being translated.” And Riley shared that to her this was important because having appropriate interpretation is how we make “sure that we’re adequately assessing.” Val shared that sometimes when there was no bilingual psychologist who spoke a student’s home language she has had the district provide a trained interpreter to assist her. However, Val shared that some of these interpreters seemed to have experience conducting these assessments with students while others had no idea and required training beforehand. She shared that in these cases it was challenging “because I don’t understand the language I can’t tell if they’re actually following the protocol, even if I teach them five minutes before.”

Others also shared that even when a trained interpreter was identified there can be challenges. This was often because these professionals may have no experience working with young children or any specific training on the nuance of the assessments being given. Katie shared her perspective on this when she shared:

> I think I worked with like a Korean interpreter, and maybe Russian, like fewer than five times over the last eight years of being an SLP and these were people who interpreted for like adult meetings. So they were not remotely ready to do a language test with a seven-year-old even like a compliant one, they were not prepared for that. And it would be nice

> to have access to, I mean I'm sure that's a sub … I don't even, I don't know anything about like how you become trained and certified as an interpreter, but like it would be nice if that was a part of the field that you could specialize in, and then we could have more access to those people.

Similarly Val shared that she learned through experience that if she was requesting time with an interpreter she would need to "to book the interpreter for almost a full hour ahead of planning to test the students." This hour would give her some time to "review the test with them and what my expectations were, how we could make this valid according to the like manufacturer's instructions of using an interpreter." Katie expressed her frustration with this process, sharing that these individuals may be trained but lack the training for this specific task which means the assessors were left "trying to provide them training and get them up to speed, but we're just doing our best and sometimes there are breakdowns between the two of us that have nothing to do with the challenges of the [student]."

Brooke also spoke to the importance of preparing the interpreter by "going over the expectations for what's going to happen, you know if there's any questions ahead of time going through what they'll be translating and making sure they're aware of what you're looking for." Interestingly, when asked about how they learned to train and work with interpreters, most participants shared that they, as Katie described it, "learned that on the fly" and received little to no information about how to train an interpreter during their school or work experiences. These challenges with interpreters are vast and impact the ways we communicate with families, assess students, and identify them for services.

In general, the system of finding and working with interpreters was identified as a significant challenge during EB assessment. Participants all felt that they had to spend additional time training professional interpreters and school staff and even then, they were not confident that the interpretation led to valid or reliable assessment results. In general, working with others, such as parents, during the assessment process was reported as challenging by many participants.

"Sometimes the Parents are Tricky"

One challenge some participants noted was the impact that parents had on the assessment process. For some, they identified that communication with parents was challenging. Kathryn stated, "Sometimes the parents are tricky to get ahold of" while Olive expressed, "Communicating is really hard" when discussing parent communication. Other participants noted that parents personal beliefs or choices may also impact the process. For instance, Nicole stated that she has had situations where "the parents have been the ones that are like no" when an assessment was proposed. In a similar vein, Olive noted that some parents of emerging bilingual students may seem concerned about the way their bilingual status impacts the process. Olive shared:

> I feel bad like the parents, sometimes think they have to, and this is in general, all our, all assessments it's like they'll push the English and then be like, oh no don't pay attention to Spanish. Or you know, just like the communication back and forth, I feel like, and I get them wanting to like show off the kid in a good light, but you know I just feel bad because stuff that I'm looking for they might not think I am and then the communication kind of falls apart or I've had some where they'll mark second language like they're learning second languages, but then, when you ask it's like oh no their English only. But

the kid like I've seen the kid speak Spanish and I just I feel like maybe they don't understand that it's okay you're not gonna get in trouble, nothing's wrong.

Joanne also shared that her experience in the past few years has been a decrease in the number of students on her caseload designated as English learners, however as her assessment progressed she expressed finding out that "at home, they often speak Spanish or both languages. So I think sometimes their parents learned not to mark them as Spanish as their primary language, unless they really all only speak Spanish."

The challenge of working with parents was felt by both SLPs and school psychologists during the assessment process. While best practices for assessment call for parent involvement, participants shared that this may be a complicated process due to challenges with things like communication. However, many factors that should be considered in these cases such as how long they have been exposed to English and Spanish, are learned through speaking with parents or other family members.

EB Assessment Differences

The final theme identified during the assessment period was related to the ways that EB assessments differ from assessments of monolingual students. Participants shared that there are many things to be considered with an EB student that may not be factored in with other assessments. Moreover, the assessment process can be much longer because of testing in two languages, working with interpreters, and other factors. Finally, identifying how best to support an EB student with a dis/ability can be more complicated because both their EB needs, and dis/ability needs must be considered and supported adequately. Generally, participants felt that these factors made the entire EB assessment process more complicated.

"That's Something That I Would Want to be Taken Into Account"

In general, participants addressed many of the EB factors they consider or things they collect more information on when these students are referred. Factors such as how long the student has been in the United States, the length of their exposure to English, home factor considerations, as well as, current or previous interventions being provided were all discussed by many participants.

Although most EB students in California are native born, when asked about EB factors to consider nearly half of the participants began with some variation of, as Amy asked, "Have they just moved here from another country? Like how long have they been here in this country?" Congruently, Brooke, along with many participants, wanted to know "How long have they even been exposed to English" and Olive indicated she would want to know "How long they've been learning the two languages." Elizabeth further expanded on this as well as considered some home factors when she shared that she would consider "What language did they speak first, what language do they speak at home amongst their siblings, amongst their friends? Are they exposed to any other language?" Joanne similarly shared that she has found it to be important to find out what they are exposed to at home because it:

> [I]s just helpful in terms of knowing if there's any adults that can help them read or maybe that do read to them in English or that can help them with their homework you know all of those things are helpful in terms of getting a good picture as to kind of what the kid has experienced and what their environment is like and what may be impacting them.

Another factor many participants addressed was a desire to know what the previous or current school experiences and interventions were. Elizabeth shared that she would want to know "what their education background is, what their language background is, if there's reason to believe that like its not just English skills." Kathryn also shared that knowing about their past school experiences can be crucial. She shared that she likes to know:

> How did they do in kindergarten and first grade like were they learning the songs, were they doing rhyming and stuff, and that kind of, we're really interested in like that part I'm sure, as you are. Or is this something sudden where like now in third grade, all of a sudden they're just not getting the writing or they're not understanding, but you know if you see like the kid has always been struggling that's a clue.

These factors play a major role in determining if assessment is or is not appropriate. Participants were able to identify these factors, which would seem to indicate they consider these factors prior to assessing a student. While it is important to gather this information, it can take time to speak with parents, review previous records, talk with teachers, etc. This is just one of the aspects of EB assessments which take more time than an assessment with a monolingual student.

"It's a Longer Process"

Another challenge which may negatively impact the assessment process is the amount of time it takes, as Olive described, "to look at two languages and how two are developing." As an SLP, Maria stated "It does take a lot more work in these assessments" for EB students. And similarly, Val, a school psychologist, shared that testing students in multiple languages "add[ed] another several hours to the assessment sometimes and so pulling the students out of class for that long is obviously detrimental." Because of this, Riley shared that she felt it was extremely

important to “make sure that the team [knew] I’m going to need my full 60 days, so that I can assess adequately. I make sure that I manage my time.”

This challenge can also be magnified by caseload size. For instance, Olive shared “If you have a big caseload you don’t have time to like really detail look and analyze everything.” Similarly, Katie stated that her large caseload negatively impacted her “ability to have the time to like do multiple observations, to do multiple language samples and to have the breadth.” She went on to share that she felt that the district did not account for the fact that the large number of EB students on her caseload meant that a larger portion of her assessments took longer. When asked if she wished they would have considered that fact she shared:

> I guess I just felt like it’s not possible. Like I feel like it would not have been possible. I mean you know that’s letting them off the hook. But just knowing what I know about the fact that there are schools uncovered, the fact that we’re trying to get people their minutes.

In addition to that she also said she “felt like there was just not going to be support if I went up to the top, so I just did what I could on the ground.” The impact of this longer process for EB assessments was even noted by a bilingual school psychologist, Kathryn, who shared that she felt being bilingual herself “saves a lot of time” on these EB assessments because she did not have to coordinate with a bilingual psychologist interpreter if the student’s home language was Spanish. Not only does the assessment process take additional time but determining how an EB student can best receive services can also be a more complicated and time-consuming process.

"What Services are Now Appropriate"

Some participants spoke to the importance of EB students having access to FAPE but highlighted the challenge teams face in making these decisions. Amy identified determining "free and appropriate education in like the least restrictive environment" as the biggest challenge an IEP team faced. Brooke expanded on this idea when she explained that the team's goal was "[to] not throw them straight into the … most restrictive, to put them in the least restrictive to start and give them a chance." This process included not only determining class placement, but also creating appropriate goals for a bilingual learner.

Val shared that creating appropriate goals for EB students "[was] one of the more challenging things for the IEP team because [there was] not like a specific thing that they can follow." She went on to state that the lack of specificity was actually a benefit because she felt that having a specific plan to follow "would lead to a lot of misplacement of students." Instead she purported that the teams needed to think about what services were most appropriate right now and if the students' needs were best met "with a specific like EL instructor or is that best worked on in maybe a special education English class or is that best worked on in the general education setting." But making these decisions may be challenging, especially when the process of identifying these students took a long time. From her experience, Kathryn, a school psychologist, shared:

> The question about, you know, whether it's gen ed or special day sometimes if we've already waited and like I was covering a school and they were, these referrals were already like a year old, so it was like before COVID, maybe they didn't have like a psych that long. And so, by the time I assess them it's already been a year that they had already

> you know finished worrying about it, so these kids are so behind that they're, like the principal will be like I don't think this kid is going to survive in general ed, and I agree, and so it's not the best decision to go straight from you know from gen ed to special day at an initial but sometimes we've waited so long, the student is so behind that even putting them in there for like you know, sometimes we'll say let's try it and in six months we'll meet again and see and you know what are the chances of that kid is really going to be like reading at grade level if they're in third grade and they're only reading, you know, like barely some words you know? So unfortunately, often they will just go into special day.

Regardless of their classroom placement, the challenge of writing appropriate goals persists. Elizabeth described the importance of ensuring that the team created goals that "[were] appropriate, given the students language abilities." However, she further stated that this was "difficult because if they're in an English only learning environment that can definitely get in the way." Catalina summarized this process as a challenge when she stated:

> Something that comes up often I think when a student is an emerging English learner is well we know how to write a goal for them in math, we know how to write a goal for them for their social emotional skills, but what do we write for ELD? What do we do for ELD? It's kind of like a gray zone where I don't think that we have adequate support staff in that area, and so, nobody really knows what to do.

In general, there are many challenges that the participants identified facing as they progressed through from referral to assessment of EB students. These challenges made the process more complicated and time-consuming and may have led to inappropriate identification. The referral

and assessment processes are a complex system that involves numerous stakeholders and resources. These systems are impacted by the individual parts involved such as how protocols are interpreted, or which staff members are involved in what step. Participant interviews revealed that within this system there was a lot of confusion and a lack of knowledge about EB students which leads to reduced outcomes for these students. For instance, participants shared that at times pressure was placed on them to move struggling students to special education which may not be an appropriate placement. This was further challenging because this assessment process was lengthier and required a lot of collaboration with other adults, which in turn was its own challenge. This system was also impacted by the distinctive philosophies of the individuals working within it. For instance, participants reported a tendency to engage in a "wait and see" method for younger EB students often citing that they did not want to erroneously place them in special education when their needs were related to language acquisition. While this is an important factor to consider, it is equally as important for younger EB students who do have a dis/ability to be appropriately identified and supported. In this way, the beliefs that educators have about EB students, and the system of assessment can have a significant impact on the support students receive. Educators beliefs are an important aspect of this system as beliefs motivate our actions.

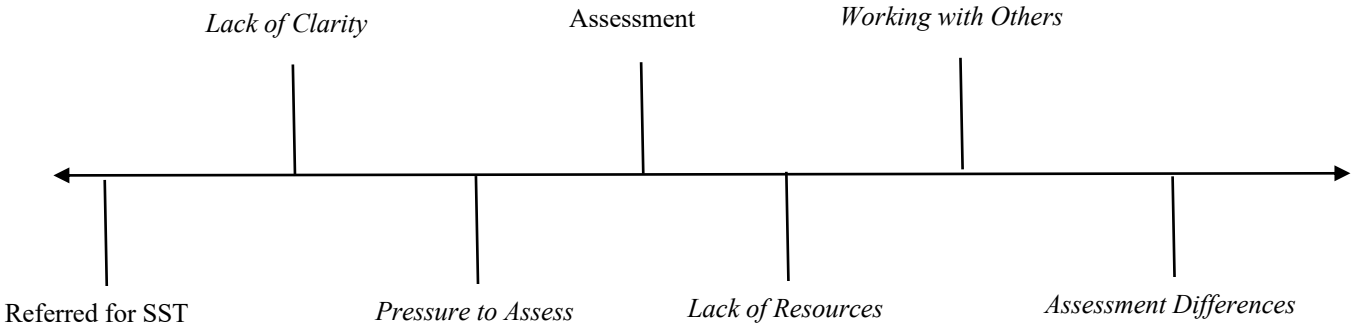
A Continuous Challenge

Through my analysis, I found that the themes I identified fit into larger categories related to where they occurred during the system of assessment (see Figure 1). While these themes did seem to arise in conversation about specific time periods, it was also clear that these they were not limited to one time. Rather, these challenges shift in nature as they progress. For instance,

while there was a specific lack of clarity identified during the preassessment period related to responsibilities and protocols, there was also a lack of clarity around which standardized measures were available and should be used. Similarly, there was a pressure to agree to assess a student during the referral stage as well as a pressure to find students eligible for services or placed into a more restrictive setting during the assessment process. In this way, it is important to identify that while organizing these challenges into particular parts of the assessment timeline was useful for analysis, they do not exist discretely in only that spot.

Figure 1

Timeline of Challenges During the Assessment Process



Systemic Beliefs

Individual beliefs have a significant impact on how educators engage with students. This study set out to explore how beliefs about race and ability impact the assessment of EB students. Interestingly, participants tended to speak to the larger system of beliefs at play in their schools. Many beliefs participants carry about race and ability were expressed through our conversations. These beliefs ranged from their experiences in professional development (PD) at their school to their perspective on a teacher's role in the assessment process to the biases present in their schools. Two emergent themes were that there was a range of beliefs and reactions related to

topics like racism and that there are biases that show up at schools in various ways and impact EB students uniquely. This was especially relevant as these conversations took place at the end of the 2020-2021 school year following a societal shift and racial awakening in the wake of the continued police brutality against marginalized communities. Schools and educators were called upon to deepen their knowledge and understanding of cultural differences and conversations about things like racism and bias and prejudice were more prevalent on many campuses.

Range of Reactions

The first theme that came up during our conversations about beliefs was that at their schools they saw a range of reactions to topics like racism. Participants shared that some staff members were positive and interested in professional development that touched on cultural awareness or anti-racism while other participants noted apathy or negative reactions from other staff. Participants shared their own belief that teachers have a lot, at times too much, on their plate which impacts how EB students are supported. These beliefs showed up at various schools and districts leading to increased difficulty with the way that EB students are supported within the educational system.

"It was on Like Cultural Awareness"

Participants were specifically asked about any professional development they had attended within the last school year related to race, identity, or ability. While some participants shared that they had not attended anything like that, there were some who mentioned they had. For those who had attended with colleagues they were asked how the PD was received and Joanne, Kathryn, and Val, all school psychologists, shared some of the positive reactions they observed. Joanne shared that at her school when a PD related to biases within the school system

was presented the teachers seemed "to be pretty receptive and open to it. So no there wasn't any pushback."

Kathryn and Val spoke specifically about their experiences during trainings with other school psychologists. They both shared that there was a sense of gratitude from their peers that they were being given tools which would help them improve their praxis. Kathryn shared, "The psych's were like yes, finally, like we're all interested in like supporting students anyway, and so it's just sort of made sense." Similarly, at her district Val shared that the school psychologists:

> [W]ere just grateful because they were saying like not being in school it's been difficult for them to kind of keep up with these things, and like learning about like how do I practice like supporting these students what are the theories behind it, so they were grateful and expressing like 'I had never like seen really the research behind this because of my limited access', whatever so they were definitely supportive.

Unfortunately, not all participants reported such positive reception to the professional development they attended. Other participants spoke to a sense of discomfort when these topics were presented or a disengagement with those attending the PD such as leaving their cameras and microphones off during virtual PD. Joanne reflected that these situations, "just [felt] uncomfortable right? Especially in a professional setting where maybe you don't feel so comfortable kind of being honest." Kathryn also shared that when her principal led a PD they were not "the most comfortable with like the topic of you know, maybe in this last year, like you know it was more like Black lives matter." She further shared that the teachers at her school were a bit resistant to the topic, especially at the beginning going as far as to ask things like "Why are we talking about this, why don't all lives matter?" She also shared a frustration from some

teachers that this particular PD focused on one population of students and not on other marginalized groups.

Katie, a SLP, also shared a sense of resistance at her school when these topics were covered in a PD. She shared that she felt like her colleagues were "receiving it openly and receiving it but also kind of feeling like this isn't—this doesn't apply to us" specifically because she works primarily with preschoolers and there were some teachers who believed that the students were too young for it to apply. Val also shared resistance which she noted might be partially due to the fact that she worked "in a very conservative area." For that reason she expressed that she was "not surprised at some of the responses or push back or questions that it got." Val also spoke to the fact that many of her colleagues left their cameras off and did not participate in the chat discussions. Val believed that this was an indication that "if they were not engaged and like asking questions or giving a response then my guess is they were probably feeling uncomfortable or they disagreed."

In talking about these experiences, as well as the general EB assessment topic, a few of the participants reflected on their own practices and beliefs. During our discussion, Olive, an SLP, noted a few times that it was making her think of things she was not doing or things she wanted to do. Specifically she stated "I'm really reflective all of a sudden, I'm like oh I should start doing that" during our discussion about the referral process. In a similar but different way, Joanne and Riley both spoke to an awareness of their own biases when working with EB students. Joanne shared:

> But when some kids, their home lives are so unstable and destructive and traumatic sometimes it's hard to have high hopes for those kids. And again, I would like to think

that I don't think that it's because they're Black or Latino or whatever. But maybe somewhere in my brain I do, but it's, I don't have that exact comparison.

For her part, Riley spoke to a possible bias when receiving referrals from teachers. She shared, "Because I know how those teachers probably operate in their classrooms and if I feel like they're getting, those kids are probably getting the support they need in that class" and therefore it might bias whether she would recommend the student for assessment or not.

These self-reflections and varied experiences with PDs at their schools are a great demonstration of the various beliefs individuals are bringing to work. While some educators and participants demonstrated openness and self-reflection when faced with topics like racism others were more defensive or disengaged. Participants tended to report that in their discipline meetings there was more conversation and positive feedback while at their schools with teachers, there was seemingly more pushback. This may be related to a general belief related to teacher overload and burnout.

"Gen Ed Teachers Feel Extremely Overburdened and Overwhelmed"

Some of the participants spoke about their belief that teachers lacked the time needed to appropriately support EB students. From her perspective, Nicole, a school psychologist, shared that frequently, there are no other support so "it's on the teacher, the classroom teacher." Nicole went on to explain that while she felt that teachers were doing their best, they were not providing true intervention because "they can't really, truly pull small groups for 30 minutes every day and still teach the class and do everything. It's not realistic. They try and they do a lot but, it's just, doesn't work." This perspective was also shared by Joanne who stated, "When a teacher has like thirty-eight kids and we're asking them to like every week take data with one kid plus, all the

other testing that they have to do throughout the year I'm just like how does that happen?" The participants who spoke on this seemed to share this belief that teachers are generally well-intentioned but do not have the time needed to appropriately support these students in the way they need. Katie shared, however, that she felt that the fact that "Gen Ed teachers feel extremely overburdened and overwhelmed" was "legitimate." Kathryn similarly shared the sentiment that "teachers don't have time like who has time to call a parent up and like have these deep conversations when they're working and it's all these other things." While participants were understanding of the ways that teachers feel overwhelmed, they also shared those biases at their schools are often evident because of comments they hear from teachers.

How Biases Show Up

The other theme that was revealed from our conversations around beliefs about racism and ableism was related to the biases that are present on campuses. Participants spoke about the implicit biases and explicit comments that they have heard about marginalized students. In general, participants agreed that these biases had a negative impact on the way that EB students were identified for and referred to special education. In this way, beliefs about race and ability that show up on campuses directly impacted how students of color and students with disabilities access their education.

"Comments That I Get From Teachers"

When asked about the way that biases show up at their schools some participants spoke about specific comments or types of comments they heard from teachers. Maria, an SLP, shared that on one occasion she was assessing a child and was surprised they had not been referred for assessment sooner. However when she spoke to the teacher they expressed a belief about the race

of the student sharing that "they're kind of all like that, they kind of all go through like a slower process of like learning." Elizabeth, a school psychologist, similarly shared an experience in which teachers at a school she had worked at began to:

> Openly voice that they weren't happy with like the students that the school really served, and that they wanted to make McIntosh great again. And I was like that phrase, you know, the connotation of it is definitely has like a, depending on who you ask, definitely has like a negative meaning and I was kind of shocked. But then I also wasn't really surprised when I saw that.

These biases can also show up in more subtle ways. For instance, at her site Katie shared that she sees the biases more in comments like "I don't even see color, I don't even care about that stuff."

Kathryn shared that in her experience sometimes she has heard "from the teacher 'Oh the parent never comes, don't even bother calling, forget it'" which she noted may not be an "inherently a racial thing, but more about like just their working status." Joanne shared a similar sentiment that sometimes teachers will assume that certain families care less about their children based on their perceived behaviors and "to be honest it's probably been said more about the Black families than the Latino families." Val also shared that she has heard teachers make comments about the perceived lack of support from a student's home and she expressed that "those comments have been really pointed and most often occurring about students of color whose parents are both having to work." Val went on to explain that at times it might not even be a direct comment about it, but that "the types of phrases they use to describe the level of parent interaction shows their mindset behind it."

"Biases Will Always Show Up Because They're Implicit"

As Val expressed above many participants spoke to biases that they felt or knew were present at their sites but that were necessary overt comments or incidents. Many participants however, clarified like Catalina "I see some of that bias like I said, not that these, not that I work with people that are in any way like trying to be that way just it's implicit." But these implicit biases have a big impact. Amy spoke to the way that biases may lead to students being over referred to special education or placed into certain classes. For instance she expressed: "I think that is that bias that you know black children are just behaved—behave more poorly and then you know they need to work on that and go to a specific classroom for that." Kathryn shared sometimes there can be a "teacher bias and I'm kind of picking up on it" based on how responsive and involved teachers perceive parents to be. Kathryn shared that she has seen "their attitude is already different with the kid" again speaking to an implicit bias impacting a marginalized student. Similarly, Maria shared that at her school she sometimes felt like there was "this expectation that if a child is of a certain race they're not going to perform as well, so it's like almost expected that they're you know falling behind or not where they're supposed to be."

"When There is a Language Barrier There I Do Feel That There is Going to be Some Bias"

Almost all participants felt that biases present at the schools impacted the way that EB students were referred for special education. Some participants, like Elizabeth, spoke to just a general bias that exists "on some level, conscious or unconscious level, that you know it might be equated with like lower SES," whereas Brooke shared an example from her praxis:

> I can think of, right now, I would have one teacher always refer me the students that she knew were in foster care just because they weren't performing well, you know? Some of

them are pretty smart, but they just have been changing homes so many times that there's a lot going on in their lives at home and she just wanted to refer all the time because she was like I'm just going to get them as much support that I can. And so that was her perception of it versus whether or not they actually would qualify for special education.

Similarly, while Catalina felt she could not give specific examples from her experience she shared:

> I think that if a student doesn't fit a certain mold of what is expected, especially when there is like a language barrier there I do feel that there is going to be some bias and that they are more likely to be referred for special—for special education assessments. And sometimes I question like well if the student, you know, looked different would we be having this same conversation, right? I think so, but I can't necessarily say that that's something that I've seen myself.

She went on to explore the ways that this may have been fueled by the schooling and training teachers and other faculty have received. She expressed, "It's kind of ingrained in you that EL students should not be referred to special education, you might over generalize that and miss some of the signs" and so "maybe teachers being hesitant because we've been told, for so long, like we shouldn't refer these students but there's exceptions to that obviously."

Additionally, Kathryn and Joanne both spoke to the way that factors like parent education or parent involvement may also impact biases. Kathryn shared that she has seen with some teachers that when parents were not viewed as responsive or participative there may be a sense of "the parent isn't going to care, then we're not going to go to all this effort, as if, like you know kids deserve more or less effort." Whereas if the parent was viewed as more involved or

supportive, Kathryn shared that "The teacher will kind of go that extra step of trying things before they just refer them and kind of move on." Joanne spoke to the ways that her own biases around parent education or involvement may impact her perception of a student's potential. She shared:

> I mean if there's you know both parents went to maybe up to second or third grade, they don't really read in either language or maybe they kind of read in Spanish, you know, I just I do have concerns about how well that child will do regardless as to the supports we provide them with.

In general most participants shared the belief that Elizabeth voiced, that biases were "associated with how people view special education students, especially those that are emerging bilingual."

The beliefs that educators hold related to race and ability have a direct impact on the way that they engage with students. Participants in this study noted that while there was a range of positive and negative reactions to specific PD topics, there were implicit and explicit biases that show up at their schools. Whether these were specific comments made by teachers or actions that led participants to make assumptions about their implicit biases, participants felt that these beliefs impacted EB students, specifically how they are referred for special education assessment. Moreover, the beliefs of SLPs and school psychologists, such as their belief that teachers are too overburdened to be able to appropriately support EB students impacted this system. Educators, including SLPs and school psychologists need to engage in robust self-reflection and actively address their beliefs about race and ability to improve the system for students.

Conclusion

In general, participants shared that the pre-assessment and assessment system for EB students presented many challenges. During the pre-assessment period, participants shared that a general lack of clarity about responsibilities and protocols negatively impacted how SSTs functioned and what supports EB students received. Moreover, there was a reported pressure to assess students who were struggling often when school staff felt that there were no other options to support the student adequately. This uncertainty paired with pressure from colleagues suggested that the system of pre-assessment does not adequately support the needs of EB students and led to challenges for SLPs and school psychologists among others. Moreover, during the assessment period, participants cited challenges with the resources available to them including access to adequate and appropriate standardized measures. One of the most prominent themes, however, was the difficulty working with others, specifically finding an appropriate interpreter. Despite their occupational differences, both SLPs and school psychologist participants identified finding and working with interpreters as a major difficulty. Participants also spoke about the beliefs related to race and ability that show up in their praxis and at their schools. They reported that in general, there were biases showing up which negatively impacted EB students, often because of how they were, or were not, referred for special education support. Chapter 5 further explores these findings and make recommendations to improve this system.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Findings

Overall, this study found that challenges exist at both the pre-assessment and assessment stages for both SLPs and school psychologists. Many challenges were reported by both disciplines while a few were discipline specific, but they all resulted in increased difficulties with this process. Additionally, this study found that the way that beliefs about race and ability show up on school campuses may also impact this process.

Pre-Assessment Challenges

One finding from this research was that there was a lack of clarity surrounding the pre-assessment process, especially the interventions provided and the SST. This is a problem because research has found that appropriate implementation and use of a referral process leads to improved outcomes for EB students (Barrio, 2017; Rodríguez & Rodríguez, 2017). Moreover, Schon et al. (2008) identified this period of time as crucial for collecting important data. While participants in this study had knowledge of the process and the need for data collection, they did not know how the data was collected or who was responsible for it. Additionally, while researchers have spoken to the need to develop a more standardized referral process to avoid miseducating EB students (Orosco & Klingner, 2010; Shenoy, 2014) participants in this study, such as Brooke, continue to report that the referral and SST process "looks different at every school." EB students may be being over or under identified for special education based on the way that their individual school handles the referral process.

This speaks to a significant challenge we face in education where our policies and protocols are set at federal, state, and/or district levels, but there is a lack of oversight in how these policies and protocols are implemented. Because of this there is significant variation in how students are supported at different schools. This not only negatively impacts student outcomes, but also add difficulty for staff members, especially itinerant positions like SLPs and school psychologists. These professionals are often assigned to multiple schools and managing these variations can add additional stress as they navigate different systems at the different schools. This all speaks to the need to provide increased clarity to this system and improve the fidelity of implementation to reduce challenges and improve outcomes for students.

The current research study also found that both SLPs and school psychologists tended to engage in a "wait and see" approach for EB students, especially when EB students are younger. When discussing a kindergartener who was referred, participants, like Olive, an SLP, consistently shared that they typically "want to let them wait and get the second language and get to be exposed to it." Teachers in various studies have even reported feeling a pressure from stakeholders like SLPs and school psychologists to hold off on referrals for EB students for this reason (Castro-Villarreal et al., 2016; Fernandez & Inserra, 2013; Samson & Lesaux, 2009). In contrast, participants also shared that for older students they were more likely to move to assessment quickly. While this desire to give young students more time is well intentioned, it overgeneralizes, leaving students who actually need support without it. This wait and see approach lines up with research that shows an under-representation of EB students in special education in kindergarten through second grade, but an overrepresentation in upper elementary grades and beyond (Artiles et al., 2005; De Valenzuela et al., 2006; Morgan et al., 2012, 2017;

Samson & Lesaux, 2009; Sullivan, 2011). By utilizing a general "wait and see" approach like the participants describe EB students who present with disabilities will not be provided needed support and will likely fall further behind. And older students who may simply need more substantial ELD support, may be identified as having a dis/ability when participants describe being more willing to move to assessment quickly. Older students may also be overidentified because of a "pressure you just get from administrators or teachers who are like 'What? You need to qualify this child'" (Joanne). Participants spoke about a pressure from other providers, teachers, and/or admin to assess certain students because they had not been making progress and as Joanne shared, if:

> This kid cannot read or write and they're in fourth grade and I'm saying there's nothing wrong with them and there isn't any clear exclusionary factor or reason why it's just that there isn't a clear learning disability it's like that won't hold up.

Unfortunately, this pressure as well as the participants self-described tendency to wait and see, are likely to lead to misrepresentation of EB students in special education. Students' individual needs should be explored and supported as appropriate rather than systemically saying students are too young to be assessed.

Assessment Challenges

Additional findings from this study were related to the assessment process itself when working with EB students. One finding from this study suggests an over-reliance on standardized tests being used by SLPs and school psychologists. While research has identified a variety of assessment practices that can and should be used with EB students (Caesar & Kohler, 2007; Liu et al., 2008; Olvera & Gomez-Cerrillo, 2011; Paradis, 2016; Peña et al., 2014; Rodríguez &

Rodríguez, 2017; Shenoy, 2014), the use of standardized measures was the only assessment activity nearly every participant spoke about. Other activities like parent interview, student interview, teacher interview, language sampling, observations, and dynamic assessing were mentioned with far less frequency. While this does not necessarily mean that participants are not engaging in these assessment activities, it is notable that they were more likely to mention standardized measures than other practices they use since research suggests that formal standardized tests cannot and should not be the primary assessment activity (O'Bryon & Rogers, 2010). However, this is consistent with research which has found while non-standardized assessment, such as language sampling, is being used with more frequency, standardized measures continue to be used more readily during assessments of EB students (Arias & Friberg, 2017; Caesar & Kohler, 2007).

Despite using standardized measures, participants also spoke to the challenges of these measures because there is limited access to tests in languages other than English. Some participants shared that they have some Spanish tests but it's a significantly smaller inventory than what they have for English. Some participants spoke about using an English test and having an interpreter translate it which may provide some insight into the students' skills, but it can also be problematic because once translated the test items may not target the intended concept or could be more or less difficult in the native language (Schon et al., 2008). Brooke spoke to this saying, sometimes you are "trying to pick the best option but knowing that you probably can't use the standardized form of it" because it is not standardized for EB students. Some of the school psychologists even spoke to using a measure which was known to inflate a student's score in Spanish so that when compared to their English language sores for the same measure it would

appear to be only a language learning challenge and not a learning disorder. Only Katie vocalized specifically that "as a part of my assessments the actual standardized test is just a small part." In general, based on what they shared, participants seemed to prioritize the use of a standardized measure over other assessment activities.

This was similar to another challenge participants shared which was a lack of appropriate resources for EB students. Not only did participants speak about a lack of access to appropriate native language standardized measures, but also to a general lack of resources. For instance, Katie shared that a "lack of resources is not really an excuse, but I think that it can be an explanation, sometimes for why choices are made." These choices can have a direct impact on how EB students are identified for and placed into special education. When these professionals do not feel that they have what Brooke described as appropriate "resources to get a good picture of the student" it could lead to a student who needs support not receiving it or the inverse where a student does not need support and receives it inappropriately.

One resource that was widely reported as difficult to access was an interpreter. This is significant because research is clear that having access to an appropriate interpreter is a key factor in completing appropriate assessments for EB students (Arias & Friberg, 2017; Blanchett et al., 2009; Guiberson & Atkins, 2012; Olvera & Gomez-Cerrillo, 2011; Tankard Carnock & Silva, 2019). But like many research studies have found (Arias & Friberg, 2017; Caesar & Kohler, 2007; Guiberson & Atkins, 2012; O'Bryon & Rogers, 2010; Vega et al., 2016), participants reported significant challenges in this area. For many participants finding an interpreter was the challenge as they had been instructed to utilize a staff member on campus to help whenever possible. These staff members were almost never trained interpreters, but rather

individuals who happen to speak the same language as the student. This is troublesome because research has found that untrained interpreters may not relay information adequately or with the reliability needed for an assessment (Schon et al., 2008). Many participants spoke to this concern, sharing that they often felt uncertain when working with interpreters about how the interpreter relayed the information. Interestingly, while researchers have called for an increased use of trained interpreters during these assessments (Olvera & Gomez-Cerrillo, 2011; Ortiz & Yates, 2001), some participants shared that this was also challenging. This was because while these interpreters may be well-trained in interpreting they may not have experience working with children or giving standardized tests. For this reason, participants spoke to the importance of spending time with the interpreters, trained or not, prepping them for the assessment and explaining the procedures. Participants generally felt that this was a skill they had to learn through trial and error and were not provided any district or school training in this area which is consistent with the current research on this topic (Guiberson & Atkins, 2012; O'Bryon & Rogers, 2010; Schon et al., 2008).

While all participants spoke about it, the challenge with interpreters was varied between the disciplines. An interesting finding from this study, found that there are two major factors which vary between the assessments done by school psychologists and SLPs. First, school psychologists at each of the different districts shared that they typically have a formal system to have an EB student assessed in their home language. Typically for common languages like Spanish there are bilingual school psychologists who will go to various schools and complete testing in the student's native language. This is beneficial because it saves time that the school psychologist has to look for a suitable interpreter, and as a trained school psychologist

themselves, they understand the assessment measures they are giving. Additionally, some of the school psychologists reported that they do not have to re-assess in the student's home language once language dominance in English has been determined. While this seems to be consistent with IDEA's (2004) requirement to use materials "in the child's native language or other mode of communication and in the form most likely to yield accurate information on what the child knows and can do academically, developmentally, and functionally" (Sec. 300.304c para. 1) it may not be appropriate if dominance is determined too early. We know that second language acquisition can take five or more years before students have advanced fluency in their new language (Klingner & Eppolito, 2014; Yang, 2008) but dominance may be determined at any time based on their performance on assessment measures. Without testing in their native language, nuances around their language learning could be missed.

Beliefs

This study showed that beliefs related to race and ability impact the processes and rates of referral for EB students. Participants displayed a variety of beliefs and identified the beliefs of other staff members which contributed to a misrepresentation of EB students in special education. Consistently, participants said that they felt that biases held by teachers and staff led to EB students being more likely to be referred for special education assessment. They shared some instances of apathy or indifference such as during PDs on things like cultural awareness via a video platform some of their staff left their cameras off and did not engage in discussion in the chat. Other providers shared specific comments made such as in Kathryn experience where they asked, "Why are we talking about this, why don't all lives matter?" which she felt spoke to the beliefs held by those teachers. Participants shared that these were not beliefs held by everyone at

their school and that many people were open to learning at PDs. However, almost all participants agreed that biases impacted the way that some teachers referred students for special education assessment.

While teachers were reported to have these deficit views, the participants themselves have them as well. In her research, Park (2020) argued that teachers "waiting to be sure" before referring students for assessment represented a deficit view of dis/ability because they viewed special education as an undesirable outcome. Participants who want to "wait and see" before assessing EB students may also hold this deficit view. While participants shared that they wanted to avoid identifying students erroneously, they may also hold some implicit biases about disabilities. Similarly, when participants shared that they were more likely to assess an older EB student if they had a history of underachievement, they were demonstrating the same bias as the "the sooner the better" group described by Park (2020). This push to get them assessed as soon as possible because they need support only a specialty in special education can provide, is also described as a deficit view by Park (2020). In this way, both teachers and special education providers like SLPs and school psychologists carry biases and beliefs which negatively impact EB students access to their appropriate educational environment.

Another finding was that there is a desire for changes to be made to improve outcomes for EB students. Participants were able to give specific feedback about what changes they believe would improve the process of referral and assessment for these students. Participants spoke to many ideas that research supports such as the need for education and training on second language acquisition and EB assessment (Arias & Friberg, 2017; Garcia-Joslin et al., 2016). Additionally, participants called for an improved referral process with more clarity and

understanding which researchers have also identified as crucial to ensuring appropriate identification of EB students (Barrio, 2017; Rodríguez & Rodríguez, 2017). And participants, SLPs specifically, were clear in their desire to have access to trained interpreters to improve their ability to conduct assessments with greater validity. In general, SLPs and school psychologists want to provide ethical, robust, defensible assessments that adequately identify EB students.

Overall, this study found that the current system of referral and assessment for EB students falls short. Based on participants reports, there are unclear protocols for the pre-assessment process and many providers feel pressured by administrators or teachers to assess EB students. This leads to additional stress for SLPs and school psychologists and reduced outcomes for EB students. Additionally, this study found that the assessment process for EB students is more time consuming and there is a lack of adequate resources and testing materials available for these assessments. There is also a significant need to improve how assessors are expected to find, train, and work with interpreters as this has a significant impact on assessment results. Interpreters that are not properly trained may not translate information with validity and reliability which in turn invalidates the results. These assessment challenges negatively impact the EB assessment process and may lead to assessments that are not as strong or accurate. Finally, this study identified that beliefs about race and ability have a negative impact on EB students and impact how they are referred for and identified in special education.

Theoretical Findings

Systems Thinking and Systemic Change

The systems thinking framework was developed to provide a framework that looked at things holistically and considered how the parts relate to the whole. It aims to analyze systems

and move toward improvements that will consider the interactions between people and elements within the system. Shaked and Schecter (2017; 2018) proposed four characteristics that leaders in education can use when implementing systems thinking. The figure below presents findings from the study in relation to these characteristics. The findings of this study can be purposefully explored by considering which of these characteristics could be used to address and remediate the themes identified (see Figure 2).

Figure 2

Themes Matrix

Leading Wholes - Lack of Clarity - Pressures and Challenges from Teachers and Administrators	Adopting a Multidimensional View - Range of Reactions - How Biases Show Up
Influencing Indirectly - Inadequate Resources - EB Assessment Differences	Evaluating Significance - Working with Others

Note: Adapted from "Systems Thinking Among School Middle Leaders" by H. Shaked and C. Schechter, 2017, in *Educational Management Administration & Leadership, 45*(4), 699-718, copyright 2017 by SAGE Publishing, and "Systems Thinking Among Enrollees in a Principal Preparation Program" by H. Shaked and C. Schechter, 2017, in *Journal of Research on Leadership Education, 13*(3), 259-282, copyright 2018 by SAGE Publishing.

Leading Wholes

From a systems thinking perspective the lack of clarity related to the pre-assessment period for EB students represents a failure of school and district leadership to engage in leading wholes by focusing on the big picture (Shaked & Schechter, 2017, 2018). While the smaller parts of the system might be in place and individuals may understand their role in the process, there is not a good understanding of the process as a whole leading to confusion and lack of clarity. Similarly, the pressure the participants felt from teachers or administrators speaks to a gap in their understanding of the whole system. They are focusing on a part of the problem and a part of

the system but lack the more holistic view with interrelated goals, which should be shared with them by district leaders (Cheng, 2011).

Adopting a Multidimensional View

Shaked and Schechter (2017; 2018; 2020) suggested that adopting a multidimensional view, which suggests the need to simultaneously look at different aspects on an issue, was another crucial step within systems thinking. However, participants' reports about the beliefs related to race and ability at their schools suggests that this characteristic is not fully developed within this system. Participants shared that while there was a range of reactions to professional development on topics like racism, there was a consensus that biases continued to show up at their schools and impact how teachers identify and refer students they believe need special education. Rather than focusing on multidimensional identities, as suggested by Kozleski, et al. (2020) in their discussion of DisCrit, these biases perpetuate continued focus on a singular concept of identity for these students. This is not surprising since research has shown that our systems, especially educationally, are based on normative notions (Thorius, 2019). In this way the lack of a multidimensional view of both students and of the entire system continues to perpetuate disproportionate representation of EB students.

Influencing Indirectly

Shaked and Schechter (2017; 2018; 2020) also spoke to the importance that a leader has the ability to influence indirectly by identifying relationships and strategically influencing them to benefit the system (Shaked & Schechter, 2017, 2018). This study found that participants reported having inadequate resource for assessments which suggests this is not being done at many school districts in Southern California. This is a problem because there is a relationship

between having adequate resources which will allow for conducting effective assessments, which in turn will lead to improved outcomes for EB students. But if this relationship is not understood and appropriate resources are not provided the system will continue to struggle. Similarly, participants spoke about the differences in EB assessments, specifically, how much longer they are and all of the additional information that should be considered before and during the assessment. Again, these factors have a deep impact on the outcomes for students but are not effectively understood or considered by leadership.

Evaluating Significance

Additionally, there is a failure to consider how certain parts of the system significantly impact the entire system (Shaked & Schechter, 2020). This is most obvious in the conversation surrounding interpreters and how challenging that process was described to be by all participants. This is a significant aspect of this system that continually falls short, which again, negatively impacts how EB students are provided their free and appropriate public education. When schools and districts fail to see the significance of having appropriate interpreters for assessment, the whole system is negatively impacted. By analyzing the themes in this way, the argument is made for schools to adopt a systems thinking approach as they address and improve the system of assessment for EB students.

Communication and Organizational Systems

This study's findings that there is a significant lack of clarity surrounding this process and a lot of variety between schools, speaks to LaFasto and Larson's (2001) argument that a lack of information will lead to rumors and partial truths prevailing. These authors shared that a lack of information would lead to a lack of clarity and reduced staff confidence, which was present

during conversations with participants (LaFasto & Larson, 2001). Participants reported being unsure about who carried responsibility for what during the pre-referral process and at times were even unsure about their role. These findings suggest that there is a breakdown in the information for these systems which is having a negative impact on how students are supported and ultimately assessed or not assessed for special education. Moreover, this study found that participants were interested in accessing additional information and training related to EB development and the assessment process. Yukl (2013) argued that for the most effective system to be in place, organizations should be providing staff with frequent learning opportunities to learn new skills.

Overall, this study identified that the system of referral and assessment in place for EB students is not adequately meeting their needs. Whether it be a lack of clarity around protocols, limited access to resources, or difficulty finding an interpreter, the current system means that EB students are more likely to be disproportionately represented in special education. Behaviors such as "wait and see" as described by participants continue the trend of underrepresentation in the early elementary years, while a pressure to assess students who are falling behind result in overrepresentation of EB students in special education. The findings of this study indicate a need for changes to be made at the federal, state, district, and school levels to address the various challenges present and to improve the overall system.

DisCrit

The findings of this study also speak to the relevance and importance of DisCrit in education. Most participants acknowledged a main argument of DisCrit, imbedded educational inequities, such as the overrepresentation of students of color in special education, exist and

impact students of color disproportionately (Connor et al., 2016). But while DisCrit focuses on the intersection of race and ability, participants tended to speak to racism with very little comment on ableism or the intersectionality of the two. Another argument of DisCrit is that the current systems of data collection are often based on assumptions and inappropriate comparisons to socially constructed standards (Connor et al., 2016) and yet participants responses indicated that there is a continued prioritizing of standardized measures during EB assessments. Moreover, Kozleski et al. (2020) noted that racism and ableism exist beyond just individual bias and are embedded in the system. This is consistent with participants talking about the entrenched beliefs and implicit biases at their schools. But even more than that, the general system of assessment across districts would seem to demonstrate these biases as all participants across the six districts identified ways that EB students and students with disabilities needs are not being met.

In many ways, DisCrit and systems theory seem like they would be opposed because of the way that DisCrit criticizes the way that our systems uphold socially constructed standards that negatively impact marginalized students. However, rather than forgo systems completely, this study's findings can be used to consider how DisCrit can be used to rebuild new systems that are appropriately inclusive and intersectional. Participants call for more clarity suggests there is a desire for a system to exist, but rather than a system built on assumptions and socially constructed standards, a system should be built on intersectionality and inclusion for all students. This new DisCrit guided system could be set up to push back against harmful standards and implicit systems. For instance, this study's findings that almost all participants engaged in a "wait and see" approach for younger EB students represents one way that they current system, or lack thereof, fails to adequately support EB students. Instead, if there was a clear system built

that ensured that students' progress was monitored, using data collection and targeted interventions, all students, including EB students, would be more appropriately supported.

The findings of this study clearly delineate a need for education to adopt a DisCrit lens in order to deeply uproot the entrenched practices and beliefs that negatively impact students. Administrators, teachers, school psychologists, SLPs, and all other school staff need to explore the ways that race and ability impact students as well as look at the ways that current practices are failing to meet the needs of dually identified students.

Limitations

This study was limited by its small sample size, self-reported data, professional connection to participants, and the global world event impacting personal and professional lives. Data for this study was collected during the summer of 2021 as the world continued to be impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. This may have impacted some individuals' willingness to participate in this study due to the personal and professional stress that resulted from the pandemic. Additionally, some providers had not conducted many assessments during the COVID-19 pandemic as schools were shut down for an extended length of time.

While about 20 individuals were contacted, only 12 participants responded and consented for this study resulting in a relatively small sample size. While this allowed for in-depth conversations to be held with the participants, this does reduce the generalizability of the study. Additionally, participants all work in Southern California. While this may benefit the use of these findings for districts in Southern California, it limits its generalizability outside of this region even further.

Another limitation of this study was that participants were self-reporting their experiences and praxis during the semi-structured interviews. They may have been inclined to report behaviors they thought they should be engaging in, even if they were not. Additionally, participants were recruited through my personal, professional networks meaning that participants' knowledge of my positionality may have further impacted how they self reported their experiences. This was addressed by ensuring that participants understood the confidentiality of the study as well as its intended outcome to improve outcomes for EB students, not to analyze the quality of their performance. Participants were provided the opportunity to ask questions about the study as well as review the transcript of their interview to ensure they were confident in the information being shared. Participants were also limited to SLPs and school psychologists as that gave the opportunity for this study to explore their unique experiences and perspectives on this topic; however, these are only two of the many educators who work with EB students and participate in their assessments.

Recommendations

Participant Recommendations

I wanted to find out the participants' perspectives on what they felt needed to change to improve the assessment for EB students since they are on the ground with these challenges. When asked, many participants spoke about things they wish were available or handled differently to improve this process. Participants shared an interest in various changes such as increasing the education and knowledge about EB students, improving access to resources, and even creating an alternative system to support EB students.

"It's Always Good to Have an Actual Consistent SST"

One change that a few participants spoke about was the need to improve the referral process to in turn improve the way EB students move through the system of referral and assessment. From her experience, Nicole shared that she wished there was:

> More of that like response to intervention model, which is lacking in my district, I think in a lot of districts, probably like the proper way to do that. I wish we had that more solidly in place, especially for kids like that.

Joanne similarly shared that she would like to see "an actual consistent SST that actually meets and then checks in and uses data" but feels that there needs to be more support given to teachers in order for that to happen. Amy also shared this sentiment identifying that if we are "saying let's give time but teacher doesn't do anything differently" then we are not actually utilizing the SST or RTI process effectively. Nicole, however, shared she thought expecting that of teachers might be too much but that "having like the dedicated person in charge of you know, we're going to go from level one to level two. Somebody really on top of it and monitoring, keeping track of all the things, would be nice." From her perspective, Olive was just wanting a chance to be included in the SST process or "at least just be involved in it, like a thought." Overall, participants described a desire for there to be a clear plan such as what Nicole shared that "would be addressing the kids' needs, exactly what their needs are, not just providing the blanket intervention for all of them." The referral process provides a specific opportunity to provide support to students within their least restrictive environment and should be fully utilized to support all students.

"They Do Need More Options Before Special Ed"

> And to be quite honest, I'm not so sure what we can do for them when we don't really have the adequate resources for them. And I've asked a lot of times like what kind of- what kind of interventions and what kind of programs are there? Are there any referrals that we can give out maybe to some community resources? And I always just get blank stares of like nobody really knows like where these students can go to get more support. (Catalina)

Some providers felt that in addition to improving the referral process, there might also be a need for an alternative program to support students other than special education. Kathryn spoke at length about this, sharing that sometimes she feels like low-performing students get identified under SLD "because then, what are we going to say? That the student doesn't have a learning disability and just didn't have the best support in the home language therefore we're not going to do anything?" She went on to share that she feels like there needs to be an alternative option to support these students besides special education. She shared:

> This shouldn't be the only answer. So it kind of goes back to we need another avenue. At least in California if we're going to be working here, we should really devote money to finding other solutions. Like they could have the Learning English Academy, or whatever you want to call it, where everybody is immersed and has these amazing programs and teachers and everyone just gets these things, even if they're not like in special ED.

And other participants agreed, such as Brooke who stated, "I think they do need more options before special ed" and Joanne who shared, "Ideally, there would be more opportunities to support kids like that either through at school or just you know after school programs that really

are like true enrichment programs or Saturday schools or summer programs." In general, the participants felt like there was a need to provide support to EB students who may be struggling but who do not have a dis/ability, but rather need more targeted language support based on their EB status.

"I Would Love to See More Continuing Ed on it"

Many participants also expressed a desire have access to more education and more PD related to EB students. Riley shared that she feels like the "lack of our PDs and CEUs regarding these issues is probably you know, probably something to be considered?" And Elizabeth shared: "Oftentimes I think that maybe if we did a simple like one-hour PD or two-hour PD on just hey this is some ways that we can better work with emerging bilingual students or things to consider." Val shared the importance "just from an assessment standpoint, of ongoing professional development for assessors on best practice, because I know that that's constantly changing." Other participants, like Kathryn, stressed the importance that these trainings should be "for teachers and staff in general." Brooke summarized this change well when she shared:

> Well, one thing that I think should happen at like the district level and I'm sure it does, but I don't know how well so maybe at the school level, is like a PD on information for differences that you might see within a student and the time expected that you know you might see him start to learn this versus a monolingual speaker who's only learning one language. And then even just a little information for teachers and staff about the simultaneous versus sequential learning of language. Because there are those differences. So I think just awareness throughout all school staff, not even just the teachers would be helpful. And I'm sure, you know what I'm sure there is something, we have so many

trainings but maybe just a little more emphasis on it or maybe a sequence of events you know?

"There's Not Enough Bilingual Therapists"

This call for additional PD may be because, as Catalina shared, "a lot of our special education staff don't have that bilingual background and I don't think they really know how to best support those students." That seems to be why another change many participants spoke to, was the need to improve the diversity of SLPs, school psychologists, and special education teachers and providers in general. Elizabeth shared that "It's interesting when the school staff doesn't really reflect the student population" adding that it "must be difficult for students and maybe even for teachers to relate or to maybe form those sorts of bonds that would lead to maybe a more fulfilling or just healthy or even happier or just meaningful relationships."

When asked if the student demographics and the staff demographics were comparable, Maria shared that "There's a slight mismatch" as did Katie. Katie spoke at length about this topic, sharing that from her perspective "the number one change would be, we need more SLPs who speak the languages of the students that we work with." She went on to describe a need for the SLP field "to attract a more diverse group" because there is not enough "diversity in the people that we are sending in to interface with these students who have various disabilities." Katie shared that she feels:

> [L]ike the most needy students who also would benefit from being able to get intervention from someone who speaks their language and knows their culture, they are not getting that like more than the gen ed kids are not getting that, the special ed kids are really not getting that.

Nicole shared a similar sentiment that "fitting the staffing needs to match the student needs" is one area that is lacking and could be improved. Overall, participants felt that this lack of diversity negatively impacted this group of marginalized students.

"Making Sure That We Have the Tools That We Need"

Another systemic change that was identified by participants was a need for improved access to assessment materials and resources. Katie shared that she wished there was "a greater breadth of testing materials that are available to us for those kids who are a little bit more mixed in their presentation." Similarly, Joanne shared that "There's very few tests that we have that we have both English and Spanish for that you can really kind of cross reference" which can in turn impact how students are identified for special education. When asked how this system could be improved Amy shared,

> To not rely so much on standardized measures and definitely to incorporate more dynamic assessments, you know that incorporate like getting more of a language sample trying to like you know teach something and then you know test after and then re-teach that kind of thing.

Similarly, Maria shared, "My biggest one will be like having a variety of assessments. I think that's one of the biggest challenges." She went on to add, "I look at like the amount of assessments that I have available at my fingertips for an English-only learner" and those options are not available for EB students. Maria shared that a big change she would like to see is "systematically just having more resources available to us to kind of really make those decisions and really represent the child as fully as we can, without you know misrepresenting them because we don't have access to resources." This was again echoed by Elizabeth who shared that

she would like it to be easier to make sure "that we have the tools that we need or maybe like an easy way to access tools that we may need when we need them when these assessments come up." Participants consistently described this desire to have easier and more access to assessment tests and resources, to ensure adequate assessment of EB students.

This desire for improved access did not end with tangible items. Some participants, primarily SLPs, also expressed a desire for improved access to well-trained interpreters. Amy shared that it would be beneficial if she had "support from the school that you work at to—to provide an interpreter, you know, on a kind of regular basis as needed, then I think that would be the best." Brooke, Riley, Olive, and Katie all agreed that they would love to have better access to interpreters for these assessments. And Katie emphasized that it would be ideal to have "interpreters who are accustomed to working with children" as well.

Additional Recommendations

I echo many of these recommendations made by the participants and well as sharing a few ideas of my own. Research has found that the policies surrounding the referral and assessment of EB students for special education are often unclear and may be misinterpreted by teachers and administrators (DeMatthews et al., 2014; Mueller et al., 2004). Moreover, there has been a lack of funding (Tankard Carnock & Silva, 2019) and a lack of emphasis on this problem historically (DeMatthews et al., 2014). Policymakers need to ensure that there is adequate funding to fully implement the policies at the school levels. Moreover, policies should be reviewed and updated to improve their language and reduce the confusion around this process. For instance, Title III of the ESSA (2015) stated that schools need to use a process to identify EB students but does not specify what that process might look like. Guidance should be provided

with ways to implement this with increased fidelity. Support could also include trainings and resources provided by the state so that schools can appropriately implement policies as intended. For instance, ensuring schools understand how Title III funds can be used for staff trainings would be one way state policymakers could help address these challenges and would address the call for more PD surrounding this topic. Making changes at the policy level would help clarify the pre-referral process as well as provide guidance about what options already exist before moving students to special education.

While policy change is needed, there is still a lot that district and school leaders should be doing to improve this process as well. District leaders should explore the current systems that are in place surrounding the pre-referral process and SSTs to identify what is and is not working within them. They should then work with staff members to create specific guidance on these processes that identifies who is involved and what each team members' responsibilities are during the process. LaFasto and Larson (2001) purported that asking staff about what is and is not working in the current system will provide practical and useful information. By including staff who are at schools and participating in the current system district leaders can ensure that the changes made to the system are achievable and will benefit the process appropriately.

Similarly, districts should explore their ELD programs to identify what is and is not working for students and teachers. One of the recommendations from participants was that there needed to be an alternative support option between general education and special education. The ELD program should be where those types of interventions and support would exist, but this study's findings suggest that they are not there or are not known. Either way, district leaders should explore how these systems can be improved, supported, and shared with staff so that they

can be appropriately implemented with students. Again, it will be beneficial to include teachers or other relevant professionals as these changes are built.

Additionally, a continued and increased need for professional development surrounding this topic is needed. Districts should use Title III of the ESSA (2015) funding to provide all staff with high-quality PD related to EB students to help reduce confusion. In Southern California, districts should also consider having a yearly mandated training, like the one all employees complete related to sexual harassment or child abuse reporting, that reviews important factors related to working with EB students. More than just professional development, university preparation programs should explore their coursework to ensure that they are adequately preparing candidates to work with EB students. These programs should ensure that their students understand the content and ELD standards and how they connect as well as understanding the process of referral and assessment before graduating.

Many of these same suggestions should be implemented by school leaders as well. School leaders need to ensure that they have adequate knowledge of state and district policies surrounding things like EB students, special education, SSTs so that they can appropriately implement them at their site. Moreover, they can train their staff on these policies and implement them appropriately at their schools. They should look closely at their current SST process, talking with the team and with teachers to identify what is and is not working about the current process and address the weaknesses appropriately. There is a reported discrepancy between how different schools implement this process, so school leaders should also use their networks to find a school similar to theirs that has a system that is working well to collaborate and discuss what has been successful for them. This could help teams build off an already successful process to

create a process appropriate for their site that would better meet students' needs. Similarly, if there is a teacher or grade level who seem to have more success with supporting EB students and promoting their growth without special education, leaders should consider how that teacher or grade level could be leveraged to help other teachers learn and grow in this area.

School leaders should also look for ways to increase and improve the PD and training they provide to their staff related to EB students and special education. In addition to longer structured trainings, school leaders should explore how they can use resources on their site, like the SLP or the school psychologist or the ELD specialist, to support staff members. These professionals could present information to the whole staff or meet with different grade levels periodically to check in or even provide a weekly five-minute "EB spotlight" to share a strategy to try using.

SLPs and school psychologists should be better advocates for themselves and their roles on the campus. Many SLP participants in this study shared that they are not involved in the SST process, however, it would be beneficial to be included when there are speech and language concerns for the student. Being involved from the beginning of the process would reduce confusion and improve outcomes. Similarly, some school psychologists shared that if they did not ensure interventions were being implemented by teachers, they might not happen. While collaboration is important, school psychologists are not supervising over teachers and therefore should not be responsible for monitoring their praxis. School psychologists need to ensure that their administrators understand their role and not take on tasks outside of their scope of practice.

Instead, SLPs and school psychologists should increase their collaboration with teachers, administrators, and other school staff. They should provide more trainings, participate in more

staff meetings, and provide more classroom support to teachers. By collaborating with teachers more, SLPs and school psychologists will have better knowledge about what teachers have been trained on which in turn will help them tailor how they will support teachers during the process. In order to ensure they are prepared to support teachers, SLPs and school psychologists should also seek out and attend more continuing education and PD related to EB students that is specific to our field.

In general both the SLP and school psychologist fields are predominantly White and monolingual providers, so there needs to be an increased focus on improving diversity in the profession. Leaders and professionals in these fields need to improve how they market these jobs to diverse students, especially at the high school and community college level. This could improve the diversity of who is applying to programs. Similarly, university programs need to improve their recruiting and enrollment practices to attract and enroll more diverse students, especially bilingual students, into their preparation programs. Additionally, hiring practices, whether they are at the district or school level, need to be improved to seek out and hire more diverse staff members, especially SLPs and school psychologists. There needs to be an increased momentum toward hiring staff that is more representative of the students enrolled including hiring bilingual therapists and staff.

Some of the recommendations I made for SLPs and school psychologists, like advocating for their role and participating in more school activities (like SSTs and PDs) would require time from their workday. As such, another recommendation is to examine the current caseload sizes that are recommended for SLPs and school psychologists and reduce them to allow for the time to complete these additional responsibilities. In order to address and support interventions before

special education assessment, these professionals need to have time to collaborate and engage with school staff meaningfully which is not likely to happen if their caseloads are too large. Similarly, since we know that EB assessments are more time-consuming, how many EB students should also be a factor in caseload to allow enough time for accurate and thorough bilingual assessments.

There are also many recommendations to be made in regard to working with interpreters. First, at the policy level, there is not enough specific language surrounding who can act as an interpreter. The department of education indicates that the interpreter must be appropriate and competent but provides no additional guidance on what that means. This language should be updated to specify what qualifies as appropriate and competent. Additionally, similar to the policy surrounding the referral process, policymakers need to ensure that there is appropriate funding for schools to hire and train interpreters that are appropriate and competent.

Districts need to invest in hiring and training interpreters that can support special education assessments. This would require them to be trained not only as professional interpreters, but also, receive training on administering standardized assessments used by SLPs and school psychologists. At the school level, if the district is not making these changes, school leaders should identify one to three bilingual staff members, based on that schools need, that will be the special education interpreters. They then need to invest in having them get trained as interpreters, if they are not already, as well as provide time for them to be trained on administering special education assessments. This will likely be an ongoing process as SLPs, and school psychologists select different assessments for different students.

Finally, I echo the calls of Kozleski et al. (2020) in arguing that educators, including SLPs and school psychologists, need to be informed by DisCrit in order to disrupt the entrenched normative standards that perpetuate inequity for marginalized students. In general, educators need to invest time, energy, and funding to ensure they have the knowledge and resources needed to support EB students in their academic progress. There needs to be increased clarity about the process, increased diversity in the professionals, and improved access to interpreters, amongst other recommendations, in order to begin to address the disproportionality present.

Future Research

This topic has been explored by many researchers from the perspective of teachers and administrators; continued research looking at the experiences and perspectives of other providers like SLPs and school psychologists should continue. I echo the calls of Orosco and Klingner (2010), Levey and Sola (2013), and Shenoy (2014) that there is a continued need to explore this topic deeply through robust qualitative research. Additional qualitative studies with larger sample sizes and participants from other regions would offer more insight into what systemic changes could be implemented to improve how we refer, assess, and identify EB students across the state or county. Additionally, while this study did not compare the experiences of SLPs and school psychologists, future research should continue to explore these roles as parts of the whole system while also comparing them. This research would provide additional insight into the strengths and challenges present within the current system of assessment.

Future research should also explore this topic from other perspectives such as administrators or parents and their view of the system. This would provide the opportunity to dig deeper into the system and explore other ways to improve how we support EB students.

Additionally, a quantitative or mixed-methods study that had a large sample size completing a survey about their experiences within this process would further add to our knowledge and understanding. Potential follow-up interviews with some participants based on the information reported on the surveys would allow for both a wide-reaching and deep exploration of this phenomenon.

Based on the significant lack of clarity reported by participants, future research should also be a critical policy analysis that looks closely at the current language of policies related to EB students, explores why it is misinterpreted, and how to improve it. Participants also called for an improvement to the bilingual and non-English standardized measures available, so future research should look at how reliable and valid current tests are as well as identifying what areas future assessments should target to ensure accurate and reliable assessments of EB students.

Finally, future research should explore how professionals including SLPs and school psychologists are prepared for assessing and working with EB students. Research should explore what coursework related to bilingual students currently exists in programs as well as what content is covered within the courses. By exploring the part of the process, research could gain insight into whether teachers and other professionals are prepared to work with these students and could identify how programs could better prepare students to enter the educational profession.

Implications

In addition to future research there are implications for this study as well. This study showed that SLPs' and school psychologists' unique experiences and perspectives on the assessment process for EB students provides a lot of feedback on how to improve this system.

While they are more likely to have training and education regarding the difference between language acquisition and language disorders or learning disorders, this study found that they continue to have difficulty with this topic and would benefit from (and even ask for) continued education and PD regarding EB students.

Many of the systems currently used at schools and districts should be reconsidered. Schools and districts need to improve the access that their providers have to various resources such as standardized assessments, non-standardized bilingual resources, community resources, etc. Moreover, they need to improve how providers access interpreters, ensuring they have access to interpreters that are trained and prepared to work with kids. There is also a need for schools and districts to improve the training they provide to teachers and other staff including SLPs and school psychologists related to EB students and bilingualism. This need is requested by the participants in this study and could also provide an opportunity for districts to address the belief that we need to "wait and see" when EB students are referred young or how to manage the pressure to assess providers feel from others. Additionally, the systems in place at the university level in how programs prepare SLPs and school psychologists should be reexamined. The lack of clarity and confusion around this process suggests that how these professionals are prepared is not sufficient for their roles at schools. Universities need to explore how they can better prepare their candidates, ensuring they have deep understanding of the content standards and process of assessment for EB students.

Additionally, there is a need to build clarity into the referral and SST process. There should be clear expectations about who is responsible for what and how data will be collected, reviewed, and used to determine future steps. This can also be targeted at the policy level as

research has shown that the policies related to EB support are unclear and often misinterpreted. Policymakers should work with educators to provide improved clarity so that schools can more effectively implement changes that will benefit EB students.

Conclusion

EB students are disproportionately represented in special education despite a plethora of research on this topic. This study explored this topic from the perspective of speech language pathologists and school psychologists, to identify the systemic challenges they identify that negatively impact how EB students are referred, assessed, and identified for special education. This study found that there are many difficulties present in this system such as difficulty finding an interpreter and ensuring that interpreter is reliable in their translations, limited access to bilingual resources, and inconsistent and unclear referral systems. These challenges are pervasive, existing across disciplines and between districts. Districts and schools need to explore ways to reduce these challenges and provide appropriate support to this process in order to more appropriately support EB students.

Additionally, the beliefs that educators carry about race and ability have an impact on how EB students are referred for assessment. Initially, I began with a DisCrit framework guiding my study; however, as I built my method and began constructing possible interview questions, I realized that I was asking about the systems in place. Because I was asking about systemic challenges, I moved to a systems thinking framework and used DisCrit as general research on this topic because of its critical analysis of the intersection of race and ability. However, as I analyzed the data, I found myself returning to the ideas put forth by DisCrit. DisCrit was developed to purposefully explore “a dual analysis of race and ability” (Connor et al., 2016, p.

9). These authors argued that the tendency to rely on normative standards leads to a false belief that differences are deficits. My findings highlight the importance of engaging actively with DisCrit as normative standards continue to dominate the process, with most participants reporting the use of standardized measures while other assessment tasks were reported with less frequency. Similarly, the tendency of participants to engage in the "wait and see" model suggests that there are certain standards that they are waiting to see if the student learns or catches up to. Again this speaks to this comparison to normative standards that Connor et al. (2016) argued perpetuates inequity for marginalized students. Moreover, the finding that some participants have assessments from their districts that are known to inflate scores for EB students further highlights the need for a DisCrit to be more purposefully explored by educators.

Additionally, one finding of this study was that participants felt that they did not have access to accurate and diverse enough assessment measures. While this speaks to a need for improved assessment measures available for EB assessments Harry and Klingner (2014) argued that technical fixes like this fail to explore how racism and ableism led to the assessment and normative standards to begin with. From a DisCrit lens these measures that have historically been considered infallible, are often based on assumptions and socially constructed standards, which means their results maintain inequity (Connor et al., 2016). This study's findings suggest that we need to dig into the underlying assumptions that lead to disproportionate referrals and assessments, while simultaneously improving the systems of assessment that exist for those EB students who need and benefit from additional support through special education.

Similarly, Kozleski et al. (2020) argued that in order to improve policy and practice, you must first identify and analyze the current oppressive patterns that exist within the system. These

findings seem to echo this as they call for a need to improve the systems of referral and assessment that exist for EB students. While improving the clarity of these systems, there is also an opportunity to unearth, analyze, and remediate the ways that these systems perpetuate oppressive patterns. Tankard Carnock & Silva (2019) spoke to this in their work which stated that policy for EB students and students with dis/abilities fail to consider each other which negatively impacts students who are dually identified as both EB and a student with a dis/ability. From a DisCrit perspective, if these policies do not consider all intersections for these students then they are not well-suited. Biases can also influence the way information is interpreted (Connor et al., 2019). My findings also found that educators carry beliefs both explicitly and implicitly that impacts how students are referred for special education assessment. In this way, while I did not begin my data collection or analysis with DisCrit as a theory or framework, in many ways it is the theory I arrived at.

I also think it is important to speak to this study as it relates to the state of the world at present as we continue to be in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 has impacted everyone, including students, but its impacts look different for different people (Goldberg, 2021). For this study, with EB students as its focus, it is important to speak to the way that COVID has not only impacted, but also amplified these challenges. During distance learning, collaborating with colleagues became even more challenging and identifying students who needed additional support, like EB students might, was even more difficult. While distance learning allowed for instruction to continue, there is evidence that there was a negative impact on academic growth, with more significant disparities for students of color (Goldberg, 2021). Further, Goldberg (2021) noted that while data showed that EB students' academic achievement fell below their

peers, “the abrupt shift to learning from home amid the challenges of the pandemic has made that struggle even harder” (p. iv). Similarly, this study found that for students with disabilities, the disruption to their services and supports “may be exacerbating longstanding disability-based disparities in academic achievement” (Goldberg, 2021, p. iv). This speaks to the continued importance of improving outcomes for EB students and students with disabilities and reifies the need to improve the systems that perpetuate reduced outcomes for these students. But the pandemic also showed that we are capable of revising and rebuilding systems when needed. This study’s findings make bold statements about what has not worked in this system in a long time and now is the time to rebuild the system to make it better. Because all students, including EB students and students with disabilities, deserve to have access to an education that will best support their academic growth and achievement.

APPENDIX A

Consent Form

Consent - SAMPLE

TITLE: Assessment of Emerging Bilingual Students: The Role of Speech Language Pathologists and School Psychologists

INVESTIGATOR: Courtney Smith, Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership for Social Justice, School of Education, 661-618-6621

ADVISOR: Rebecca Stephenson, Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership for Social Justice, School of Education, 310-338-4297

PURPOSE: You are being asked to participate in a research project that seeks to investigate systemic challenges speech language pathologists and school psychologists face when assessing students who do not speak English as their first language. You will be asked to complete a 45–90-minute semi-structured interview scheduled at your convenience during non-work hours. Interviews will be conducted via zoom and will be audio and video recorded for research purposes.

RISKS: Risks associated with this study include: potential discomfort sharing experiences from your work with students who do not speak English as their first language.

BENEFITS: There are no direct benefits to participation. However, you may enjoy the opportunity to reflect on your practice.

INCENTIVES: You will receive no gifts/incentives for this study. Participation in the project will require no monetary cost to you.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Your name will never be used in any public dissemination of these data (publications, presentations, etc.). You will have the opportunity to choose a pseudonym which will be used throughout the study. All research materials and consent forms will be stored in Qualtrics, a secure online data collection platform which will only be accessed by the investigator. When the research study ends, any identifying information will be removed from the data, or it will be destroyed. All of the information you provide will be kept confidential.

RIGHT TO WITHDRAW: Your participation in this study is *voluntary*. You may withdraw your consent to participate at any time without penalty. Your withdrawal will not influence any other services to which you may be otherwise entitled, your class standing or relationship with Loyola Marymount University.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS: A summary of the results of this research will be supplied to you, at no cost, upon request. You can make this request by emailing Courtney Smith, csmit178@lion.lmu.edu. A summary of the results will be available by March 2022.

VOLUNTARY CONSENT: I have read the above statements and understand what is being asked of me. I also understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my consent at any time, for any reason,

without penalty. If the study design or use of the information is changed I will be informed and my consent re-obtained. On these terms, I certify that I am willing to participate in this research project.

I understand that if I have any further questions, comments or concerns about the study or the informed consent process, I may contact Dr. David Moffet, Chair, Institutional Review Board, Loyola Marymount University, 1 LMU Drive, Los Angeles, CA 90045-2659 or by email at David.Moffet@lmu.edu.

- ○ I consent to participate in this study
- ○ I do not consent to participate in this study

Your name

Demographics

Please indicate the gender identity with which you most identify.

- ○ Male
- ○ Female
- ○ Non-binary / third gender
- ○ Prefer not to say

Please identify your race/ethnicity

- ○ White
- ○ Black or African American
- ○ American Indian or Alaska Native
- ○ Asian
- ○ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- ○ Hispanic/Latinx
- ○ Multi-racial/Multi-ethnic
- ○ Other

Please indicate your age

How many years have you been practicing as a school-based clinician?

I speak a language other than English fluently.

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

APPENDIX B

Semi-Structured Interview questions

1) Tell me about the population of students you work with at your school.
    a) What is the general demographics of the students on your caseload?
    b) How frequently do you engage in the assessment of Emerging Bilingual (EB) students?
2) I'm interested to know about your experiences assessing EB student's special education. Could you walk me through your assessment process?
    a) In your experience, what parts of the process work well? What parts can be improved?
3) What aspect of the assessment process do you find to be the most challenging?
    a) Have you encountered any challenges unique to assessing EB students (as compared to English only students)?
4) How do you feel about the frequency with which EBs are referred to special education—in general and within the district?
    a) In the research I have read, some people think EBs are over-referred to special ed, while other people think they are under-referred? From your experience, how do you feel about the rate at which students are referred?
5) What factors do you think should be considered when referring an EB student for special education?
    a) Why do you think these factors are important?
    b) Do you and your close colleagues discuss factors for referral?
    c) How did you learn about these factors?

6) What challenge(s) does an IEP Team face in making appropriate educational decision for EB students with a potential disability?
    a) Does grade level affect these challenges? If so, how?
7) Can you tell me about a time that the assessment process didn't go as planned or you ran into challenges?
    a) Some research suggests that working with interpreters can be challenging. How have you found that process to be?
    b) Have you faced any challenges with family communication?

As part of my research on assessment practices with EBs, I'm also interested in the ways educators think about the intersections of race, ethnicity and disability. Some of the research I have read says that biases related to race and ability can affect educators' beliefs about students, and I'm interested to know if that has been your experience working in the district.

8) Can you tell me about how you feel biases related to race or ability show up at your school?
    a) Do you think these biases affect the referral and assessment of emerging bilingual students?
9) Have you participated in any PD around race/identity/ability during the past year?
    a) Can you tell me about the experience?
    b) Are you learning from it?
10) What changes do you think could improve the way we assess and refer EBs for special education?

a) Are there potential changes to the referral process that might help to improve this process?

b) Are there potential changes to district policy that might help to improve this process?

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