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General educator training for the instruction of English language learners: is it sufficient?

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GENERAL EDUCATOR TRAINING FOR THE INSTRUCTION OF
ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS: IS IT SUFFICIENT?

A Thesis
Submitted
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Specialist in Education

Jane E. Zirkelbach
University of Northern Iowa
December 2002
This Study by: Jane E Zirkelbach

Entitled: General Educator Training for the Instruction of English Language Learners: Is It Sufficient?

has been approved as meeting the thesis requirement for the

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GENERAL EDUCATOR TRAINING FOR THE INSTRUCTION OF
ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS: IS IT SUFFICIENT?

An Abstract of a Thesis
Submitted
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ABSTRACT

The present study examined perceptions from a small sample of teachers from two small Midwestern districts. Teachers were interviewed to collect information regarding the teachers' training for the general education instruction and the identification process for special education for English Language Learners (ELLs). In addition, teachers were asked to suggest future methods of training and identify alternatives to special education referrals for ELLs. The results indicated that teachers are not adequately trained to instruct nor identify ELLs for special education and that future teachers should be trained to educate and communicate with ELLs. Recommendations include more comprehensive
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The number of people in the United States whose first language is not English is rapidly increasing and there is wide variability in their English acquisition. Kushner and Ortiz (2000) reported that there were approximately 32 million people, or 14% of the United States population over the age of 5, who were not native speakers of English. Of this linguistically diverse population, 21% of them reported that they spoke English less than well.

The increasing presence of multilingual students in the traditional United States' classroom is a significant educational issue. Language diversity among the United States' student population has an important implication in general curriculum, home-school communication, educational assessment, and special education programming. Because many general education teachers do not have the background knowledge and skills to teach in multilingual formats, they are not prepared to teach students who are learning English as a new language. For example, according to the department heads for the teacher education programs within the four large universities in Iowa, only one requires a course that addresses teaching methods for linguistically diverse students. However, school systems are having to require teachers to accommodate students who are learning English in their classroom, due to the lack of better options.

Given the situation, general education teachers need to learn either to modify or to develop curricula that will benefit both native English speakers and English learners. Classroom instruction should be enhanced through professional training or guidance to
assist English Language Learners (ELLs) in acquiring and using the language (Utley, Delquadri, Obiakor, & Mims, 2000). When training has not been provided through teacher education programs, teachers should seek professional training through alternative sources such as: Area Education Agency coursework, conferences and presentations, journal articles, organizations, and graduate coursework. The classroom curriculum should also be modified to serve a wide range of skill levels. More flexible and variable lesson structures will benefit more students who are diverse learners. An additional challenge for teachers is to overcome language barriers with their students' parents to have continual significant communication. More than 20%, over one in five, school-aged children live in a household in which English is not the primary language (Waggoner, 1994). Many parents of ELLs have had minimal schooling and may feel intimidated by educational professionals who do not speak the parents' language (Gersten & Woodward, 1994).

Teachers in Iowa turn to their local area education agency as a result of the confounding variables that make working with ELLs more challenging. Teachers seek support mostly to acquire special education assistance, when they are confronted with students who are not making the expected academic gains (Gersten & Woodward, 1994). Unfortunately, many teachers are not well trained in special education policy and procedures through their teacher education programs. Generally, teacher education programs require one course to introduce teachers to common disabilities and special needs that are present in a general education classroom. The special education staff is then faced with the evaluation and possible placement of students whose lack of progress
is not necessarily due to a disability. The presence of biases in standardized tests and the difficulty of differentiating language acquisition from a disability are tremendous challenges for the educational evaluators (Figueroa, 1989).

**Special Education Referral**

The provision of special education services to ELLs presents some unique challenges. There are growing concerns about their referrals, evaluations, placements, and instruction in special education and whether they should be conducted. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997 mandates a free and appropriate education for students with disabilities, however eligibility cannot be determined based on language, culture, or lack of opportunities to learn (U.S.C. 20). Due to the challenge in concluding whether a difference is a result of language acquisition or a disability, there is a polarization in the representation of ELLs in special education (Harry, 1994 as cited in Utley et al., 2000).

As a result of lawsuits and court orders based on the misdiagnosis of ELLs, there is a fear of litigation by school districts which leads to under-identification of minority students in special education (Vasquez-Chairez, 1988). For example, ELLs may be in need of special education but are not being identified and are not receiving specialized services. ELLs with disabilities receive little benefit from regular instruction in a general education classroom. (Campbell et al., 1993 as cited in Gersten & Woodward, 1994). To accurately identify those English Language Learners who are in need of special education, the professionals noting the initial concerns should be educated in common characteristics of students who are acquiring a foreign language (Lindholm-Leary, 2001).
On the other extreme, ELLs continue to be overrepresented in special education classes, specifically in classes for the learning disabled (Ortiz, 1992). For example, to reduce the number of over-referrals and the ensuing overrepresentation in special education, precautions must be made in the referral process. Garcia and Ortiz (1988) identified a prereferral process to reduce inappropriate referrals in the school. The process is designed to screen teacher referrals and only permit valid concerns to be evaluated for special education. A concern is considered valid when there is evidence that a disability may be present that hinders the student from learning at the same rate of his or her peers. For example, a teacher’s concern would be validated if the student were not successful due to a lack of an academic skill, not a lack of English acquisition. Educational Consultants and School Psychologists determine the validity of the teacher’s referral through record reviews, interviews, skill screening, and observations. Unfortunately, School Psychologists and Educational Consultants do not receive solid training in ELL assessment in their training programs. In Iowa, evaluators are typically trained to complete ELL assessments through an Area Education Agency on a need basis for a given area. The teacher referral is targeted in the assessment process because the determination of special education eligibility is more likely based on the teacher’s initial concerns in the classroom (Algozzine, Christenson, & Ysselddyke, 1982).

There is a significant probability that a student will be placed in special education based on the referring teacher’s input. Due the teacher’s knowledge of the student in the classroom and the need for the teacher’s cooperation for the student to be successful in a given environment, the teacher’s judgment is held very high. In fact, Algozzine et al.
(1982) found that 92% of all referred students were assessed and 73% were found to be eligible for special education. In 1983, Ysseldyke et al. concluded:

It is clear that the most important decision made in the entire assessment process is the decision by a regular classroom teacher to refer a student for assessment. Once a student is referred, there is a high probability that the student will be assessed and placed in special education. (p. 80)

Therefore, the teacher’s concerns should be taken into consideration but it is essential that the teacher’s initial referral reason is validated. The teacher’s report is a catalyst for a special education referral, but it should not be the basis of the decision. After a target concern has been validated with supporting evidence from multiple sources in multiple settings, a special education evaluation may take place with the parents’ permission.

Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of the present study is to identify how regular education teachers have been trained to instruct English Language Learners and how they decide whether an English Language Learner may benefit from special education services. A secondary purpose of the study is to identify any differences in teacher perceptions in schools with different language programming. The general focus of the research is to determine what teachers feel they need to learn about the instruction of ELLs and how they can better identify when ELLs need special education services. In addition, the study will compare the opinions of teachers’ from different language programs.
Research Questions

Research questions for this paper are:

1. How were current teachers trained to instruct English Language Learners and to identify possible special education needs within the group and what training do they think is needed for future teachers?
   - How were teachers trained to instruct English Language Learners in a general education setting?
   - How were teachers trained to identify English Language Learners in need of special education services?
   - In teachers’ opinions, what training will future teachers need to be able to instruct English Language Learners?
   - In teachers’ opinions, what training will future teachers need to be able to identify English Language Learners in need of special education services?

2. Where did the teachers receive training in English Language Learner instruction and identification?
   - Where have teachers acquired most of their training for the instruction of English Language Learners?
   - What training was provided through (a) teacher education programs, (b) group inservices, and (c) individual inservices?
   - If such training was currently not available through the teacher education program what would the teachers have replaced in the program to make that provision?
   - What sources have the teachers used for personal growth in this area? What of theses would the teachers recommend for pre-service and in-service teachers.
3. What are teachers’ primary bases for referring an English Language Learner for special education services?

- In the teachers’ opinions, what is the primary basis for an English Language Learner to be referred for special education services?

4. Do teachers think English Language Learners are referred more for special education services than native English speakers and why?

- In the teachers’ opinions, are English Language Learners referred more for special education services than native English speakers?

- In the teachers’ opinions, do English Language Learners benefit from special education services?

- What are possible alternatives to special education referrals for English Language Learners who are not succeeding in the general education curriculum?

Definition of Terms

The following terms were employed in this paper as defined below:

**English Language Learners (ELLs)** - the most recently used term to describe people whose first language is not English and are currently acquiring the English language. This term has replaced dated terms like, Limited English Proficient (LEP) and second language learner.

**English as a Second Language (ESL)** - a dated term commonly used to describe language services provided for English Language Learners. This service is provided as needed and typically focuses on English instruction. The term is used in this paper when describing an article that chose to use that term.
Educational Significance

This investigation is significant in the educational system because the federal law prohibits the misplacement of ELLs in special education and enforces the provision of services to students with disabilities. Teachers need to be aware of characteristics that differentiate language acquisition from a disability, and such knowledge can be acquired through teacher education programs, inservice programs, expert guidance, or independent research. Educators have to be culturally and linguistically sensitive to accurately identify multilingual students that need special education. ELLs may require additional instruction and interventions in the general classroom, but placement in special education does not meet their instructional needs. Special education is designed to educate students with disabilities and may help ELLs master a new language and use it successfully.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1997 requires that a student’s difficulties in the classroom are not a result of differences in language, culture, socioeconomic status, or not having had opportunities to learn (U.S.C. 20 Sec. 1414(b)(5) & Sec. 1401(26)(c)). It is a federal mandate that a student is not qualified for special education as a result of cultural or linguistic variables. Therefore, during the four-step referral process, it is necessary to ensure that a student’s determination of eligibility for special education services is not affected by language and/or culture.

For an English Language Learner to be referred for Special Education, the general education teacher must view the student as unsuccessful in the present educational setting independent of culture or language. To reduce the number of English Language Learners referred to special education, the general education teachers must be sensitive to the
characteristics of a multilingual student. However, teachers are coming from a homogeneous population that may not be able to comprehend their students’ cultures and the corresponding characteristics. According to Choy, Henke, Alt, Medrich, and Bobbitt (1993), 87% of the teachers in the United States are Caucasian, whereas 31.4% of the student population is from diverse cultures. It is essential that teachers take the initiative to empathize with the diverse students they are instructing.

Misplacement in a special education classroom is not only illegal and inappropriate, it does not provide education benefits to the non-disabled multilingual child. Wilkinson and Ortiz (1986) reported that after two years in a special education classroom, English Language Learners did not make any academic achievement gains in reading and a drop was reported in standardized intelligence and achievement scores.

Limitations

When analyzing a decision making process after the final decision has been made, the validity of the teacher responses are questionable. The interview data will be subjective and measure personal opinions. The teachers may be inclined to respond in a manner to reflect themselves, their preparation, and their building more positively. In addition, the decision making process of the interviewees may appear more culturally sensitive because the teachers will be aware of what is being analyzed and will want to portray an appropriate referral process. Therefore, the results of the interviews may not indicate a true representation of teachers’ perspectives and processes.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Teacher Perception of Need for Referral

Recent research has addressed the significance of cultural knowledge and awareness in the understanding and referral of ELLs. Results from surveys, interviews, case studies, and behavior scales have supported the significant influence of teachers’ perceptions on resulting decisions for ELLs. Specifically, research has examined the effects of prior knowledge, diversity perception, intercultural communication, problem behaviors, and assessment accuracy on the evaluation of ELLs in the classroom. These variables are interwoven in a teacher’s decision to refer a student for special education. The reader will find them discussed in the sections below. Any reader desiring to skip to specific sections of interest may use the side headings as a guide.

Prior Knowledge

A study conducted by Gonzalez and Felix-Holt (1995) examined the influence of evaluators’ prior knowledge on the diagnosis of Hispanic kindergartners. The purpose of the research was to address how cultural and linguistic backgrounds and personal beliefs about the assessment of ELLs could affect the diagnosis and special education placement of ELLs. The study also considered factors relating to the awareness of the influence of personality factors and the ability to personalize questions during the assessment of ELLs.

Gonzalez and Felix-Holt (1995) focused on one subject who was a Caucasian female school psychology trainee in a large university in the Southwest region of the United States. She was one of 10 volunteers for the project. The school psychology
trainee was asked to evaluate a Hispanic kindergartner with a specific qualitative assessment tool and determine a diagnosis and placement for the student. Following her assessment and decision, she was interviewed to explore her beliefs about ELLs language development and corresponding measurement tools, her personal background, and her diagnostic and placement behaviors. A complementary report was provided on the same case administered in a different language and a control case was presented with contradictory information on qualitative and standardized assessments of a different case. The study concluded that personality factors of evaluators influence their beliefs about constructs and corresponding measurement tools. Therefore, the authors predicted that diagnostic and placement decisions would vary among evaluators with different personal and academic backgrounds. The authors addressed the implications for higher education training programs for evaluators. They stressed the importance of providing students with the opportunity to gain awareness of the influence of the evaluator’s personality on diagnosis and placement. In addition, they discussed that the evaluators’ understanding of language development and how it should be measured will affect the assessment of ELLs. Therefore, they concluded that students in education programs should receive course work that emphasizes the significance of their own personality and their prior knowledge on the evaluation of ELLs. Increased knowledge of linguistically diverse students and an empathetic personality would improve the quality of assessments of ELLs in the schools.
Diversity Perceptions

A study conducted by Utley et al. (2000) focused on general educators’ and special educators’ perceptions of working with multicultural students with and without disabilities. The authors developed The Multicultural and Special Education Survey (MSES) and distributed them to 833 teachers throughout the state of Kansas, of which 48% were returned. Of the returned surveys, 45% came from schools with less than 10% multicultural students and 50% came from schools with 1% or more multicultural students. The survey addressed the following categories: professional development, cultural knowledge, multicultural and special education, linguistic foundation, assessment, classroom management, teaching strategies, curriculum and materials, Individual Education Plan (IEP), monitoring and evaluation, community relations, parental communication, and professional communication.

Regarding professional development, 37% of the respondents cited “no training” in multicultural education. Of those that received training, the most commonly cited experiences were workshops, coursework, and conferences. In addition, teachers sought informal training through professional reading, involvement in community activities, and writing and/or presenting papers in the area of multicultural/bilingual education.

The MSES identified the importance of teachers’ cultural knowledge in order to teach multicultural students with and without disabilities (Utley et al., 2000). A high percentage (40%) of respondents reported that “cultural knowledge would help them understand the influence of their students’ verbal and non-verbal learning/behavioral styles.” In addition, the teachers identified the importance of cultural knowledge to
conduct assessments as well as to understand their students’ behaviors and learning
techniques. This study demonstrates the desire of teachers to relate to their students
through increased cultural knowledge and identifies how increased knowledge would
help teachers conduct assessments and individualize instruction with multicultural
students. The survey also asked respondents to rate how teachers’ increased cultural
knowledge would benefit their students. Educators indicated that it would help students’
behavior and academic performance as well as peer interaction and coping with a new
environment. This study identifies the teachers’ view on the significance of cultural
knowledge in the classroom and teachers’ awareness of the benefits for both educator and
student. The authors concluded that teachers should evaluate their beliefs and
expectations and be prepared to instruct and assess multicultural students. Through
increased self-awareness and cultural understanding, educators may be able to provide
more effective teaching strategies and assessment techniques.

Intercultural Communication

Interviews were conducted and examined by Gougeon (1993) to discuss
communication with ESL students and their parents. Gougeon interviewed 27 senior high
school teachers from a nonreligious school district. Over 90% of the teachers in the
district were white, middle-class, middle-aged men and women. On the other hand, the
students were comprised of students from 43 different countries and spoke 29 different
languages. The focus of the study was to gain understanding about the relationships
among ESL students, their parents and the school system and to identify the needs of
those involved individuals.
The teachers in Gougeon (1993) described ESL students as feeling displaced, higher achievers, and feeling alienated and denied. Students have a difficult time adjusting to a new culture and school environment. However, many teachers felt that the ESL students were motivated to work hard and achieve success in the classroom. As a result, many ESL students feel displaced from their family and school because they are dissimilar to both. Teachers felt that the ESL students needed a connection, to be considered as whole people, increased self-empowerment, and to learn intercultural awareness. The teachers thought it would be helpful if the students were made aware of cultural and school expectations to better adjust to the new environment.

Gougeon (1993) also found that teachers felt the school system was ethnocentric and uncommitted to ESL students and their families. The school system does not compromise with the ESL families and expects the students and families to adapt to their way of functioning. In addition, the school does not make an effort to involve parents with the school. Translation of some school information is limited to only English and communication between teachers and parents is also limited due to the language barrier. The study concluded that the teachers felt that the ESL students, their parents, and the school system needed additional intercultural awareness. The teachers’ responses in this study indicate their awareness that more cultural knowledge needs to be provided to all individuals involved with the decision-making process. Through increased awareness and understanding of other cultures, the teachers would be more equipped to make knowledgeable decisions on behalf of ESL students.
Problem Behaviors

A study conducted by Spomer and Cowen (2001) used child and teacher rating scales to identify differences between ESL students and non-ESL students referred for mental health services for adjustment. Prior to the study, several teachers were interviewed informally about the school adjustment of ESL children. The teachers reported that the ESL children had more learning problems related to language deficits, were underachievers or poorly motivated, were frustrated and demonstrated shy/withdrawn behaviors, and were non-risktakers. The study used 648 children referred to a mental health project. A sample was formed that matched ESL children with non-ESL children. The study compared the groups with the Teacher-Child Rating Scale and the Child Rating Scale.

Spomer and Cowen (2001) found that the ESL children were expected to have more learning and shy/anxious problems rather than acting out problems than non-ESL children. In addition, ESL students were assumed to have less developed task orientation, assertive social skills, and frustration tolerance. Results from the Teacher Rating Scales confirmed that ESL students had fewer acting out problems and more anxious/shy problems than non-ESL students. The authors concluded that the differences found between ESL and non-ESL students are due to the added difficulty of acquiring a new language and adjusting to a new culture. In addition, they reported that while attempting to learn English and adapt to new environments, the ESL children are more cautious and less assertive that non-ESL peers. As a result, ESL children have less social interaction and less opportunity to develop appropriate social and communication skills. The authors
recommended that interventions for ESL students should not be limited to language development and should also focus on the development of social interaction.

**Assessment Accuracy**

A study conducted by Limbos and Geva (2001) examined the accuracy of teacher assessments of native English speakers and English learners for reading disabilities. Teacher rating scales, teacher nominations, and objective reading assessments were examined for correlations, accuracy, and sensitivity in identifying native English speakers and ELLs. A total of 369 students were used in the study, 249 of which were ESL students. The students were given a battery of cognitive, linguistic, and reading tasks were tested twice at one year intervals. The students’ oral proficiency was also measured using a battery of tests. In addition, 51 teachers completed the interviews and rating scales.

Limbos and Geva (2001) determined that teacher rating scales and nominations had lower sensitivity in identifying ELLs than native English speakers for reading disabilities at Time 1. However, the differences were reduced at Time 2. When these methods were compared to spontaneously expressed concern by teachers, Limbos and Geva found that the latter was significantly less accurate, especially with ELL students. The authors also discovered that teachers relied on a student’s oral language proficiency as an indicator of overall academic performance when making a referral. Objective measures of performance indicated a moderate correlation with oral language proficiency, whereas teacher ratings of a student’s oral proficiency and performance were highly
correlated. When oral language proficiency is used as a gauge to measure overall academic performance, teachers make more inappropriate referrals of ELL students.

**Summary**

In summary, it has been evidenced that teacher knowledge and preparation has an effect on the resulting decisions for the instruction and referral of ELLs in schools. According to previous research, teachers are not receiving adequate multicultural training in order to effectively instruct ELLs and identify those in need of special education. In addition, teachers have admitted to their lack of preparation to instruct ELLs and to make decisions regarding their instructional needs.

Previous research has indicated the importance of cultural knowledge to better instruct and identify ELLs. Teacher preparation and cultural knowledge also assist in assessment accuracy and identifying the cause of problem behaviors with ELLs. Studies indicate that teacher’s are not as accurate when rating ELLs for assessment and that they tend to rely on oral language proficiency as a measure of academic performance. In addition, a study found that ELL students are more prone to withdrawn behaviors and learning problems due to the language and cultural immersion.

The current study intends to measure how well teachers are prepared to instruct and make decisions regarding ELLs. Teachers will be asked to describe how they have been trained to instruct and identify ELLs for special education. The teachers will also be asked to identify where they have received their training and what they recommend for future teacher training in the areas of instruction and identification. In addition, teachers will be asked to discuss some of the topics related to the referral of ELLs; including basis
for referral, appropriateness, and amount of referrals. The focus of the study will be to
examine what training current teachers are receiving and discuss the areas of training that
would benefit future teachers working with ELLs.
CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

Setting

Town A

Town A is a rural town in the Midwest. The county has a population of 40,750 with the primary employment being manufacturers shipments and retail sales. The county population is 92.4% white and 5.4% Hispanic (County Census Report, 2000). The town of Town A has a population of 7,633, with 24.5% or 1,873 residents of Hispanic or Latino origin (City Profiles, 2000).

Town A Community School District serves 1,744 students kindergarten through grade 12 (Annual Enrollment Report, 2001). The district consists of one elementary school, one middle school, and one high school. Town A Elementary School, which was one of the settings of this study, serves 923 students kindergarten through grade six. The student population consists of 476 male students and 447 female students. Fifty-six percent or 520 or the 923 students qualify for the Free and Reduced Lunch Program. Seven students are Black, 15 students are Asian or Pacific Islander, and 36%, or 332 students, of the elementary student population are Hispanic. Of the 332 Hispanic students, 125 students or 38% are receiving English as a Second Language (ESL) services. There are three ESL classrooms in Town A Elementary. A bilingual teacher instructs a sheltered ESL class for young and less proficient ELLs, and two full-time ESL teachers and one part-time ESL teacher instruct students with higher levels of proficiency
and older students on a pull-out program. The primary focus of the ESL classrooms are English instruction and supplementary support for the general education curriculum.

Town B

Town B is a rural town in the Midwest. The county has a population of 39,311 with the primary employers being manufacturers shipments and retail sales. The county population is 90.4% white and 9.0% Hispanic (Country Census Report, 2000). The town has a population of 26,009, with 12.6% or 3,265 residents of Hispanic or Latino ethnicity (City Profiles, 2000).

According to the Enrollment Report for Town B (2001), the Town B School District serves 4,891 students in early childhood through grade twelve. The district has six elementary schools, two middle schools, and one high school. One specific Town B Elementary School was the other setting of the present study. The Town B Elementary serves 341 students in early childhood through grade five. Eighty-three percent of the building population is eligible for the Free and Reduced Lunch program. Fourteen students are Black, two students are Asian or Pacific Islander, one student is American Indian or Alaskan, and 58% or 198 students of the elementary student population are Hispanic. Of the 198 Hispanic students, 173 have limited English proficiency and are receiving language services. There are four ESL teachers employed at Town B Elementary with five tutors and assistants. Most of the teachers and assistants are bilingual and use both Spanish and English for instruction and clarification. The focus of the classroom curriculum is to develop proficiency in English and the students’ native language.
Participants

Eleven full-time general education teachers grade one through five in the Elementary School in Town A were randomly selected to match the staff composition in the Town B Elementary School. All 11 full-time general education teachers grade one through five from Town B and the 11 randomly selected general education teachers from Town A were asked to participate in the present study. Three first grade teachers, 2 second grade teachers, 2 third grade teachers, 2 fourth grade teachers, and 2 fifth grade teachers from each district were included in the study. A total of 22 general education teachers grade one through five were asked to participate.

All 11 the teachers from Town A returned their consent form with complete demographic information. Of the 11 teachers, 10 agreed to participate in the study. Three first grade teachers, 2 second grade teachers, 1 third grade teacher, 1 fourth grade teacher and 3 fifth grade teachers were willing to participate in the research. All of the participants were Caucasian with a median age of 46 years. Only 1 participant was male and the remaining 10 were female. The median total years of teaching was 12 with a median of 10 years of teaching in Town A. The teachers reported a median of 29% of ELLs in their classroom and a median of 6 years teaching experience with ELLs.

Of the 11 teachers from Town B, 5 returned their consent forms with complete demographic information. All 5 agreed to participate in the study. One kindergarten teacher, 1 second grade teacher, 1 third grade teacher, 1 fourth grade teacher, and one fifth grade teacher were willing to participate in the research. All of the participants were Caucasian with a median age of 43 years. Only 1 participant was male and the remaining
4 were female. The median total years of teaching was 9 years with a median of 8 years of teaching in Town B. The teachers reported a median of 62.5% of ELLs in their classroom and a median of 6 years teaching experience with ELLs.

Procedures

Consent Form

The researcher developed a brief survey to collect demographic information as an attachment to the consent form. The teachers were asked questions regarding personal demographic information and professional demographic information. They were asked their gender, ethnicity, age, the languages they spoke for personal information. Professional information included the school district in which they taught, the grade they taught, the total years they have taught, they years they have taught in that district, the years they have taught ELLs, the percentage of ELLs in their classroom, and the languages their students spoke. Following the demographic questions, was an agreement statement and a place for the teacher to sign and date. An example of the consent form can be found in Appendix A. Attached to the consent form was a individualized sheet introducing myself, the purpose of my thesis project, and where to return the form once they were complete.

The consent forms were distributed to the teachers through their mailbox in the school office. A box labeled UNI Research was left in the office above the mailboxes for the teachers to return the forms. The following week the returned forms were collected and reminder notices were placed in the teachers’ boxes that had not returned their forms. The remaining forms were collected a week later. Only one teacher from Town B
returned a signed consent form after two weeks. An ESL teacher in the building sent an electronic reminder to the teachers and an attached consent form for the teachers who required another form. The following week forms were returned from the Town B teachers.

**Interview**

Teachers were selected from those who were willing to participate and completed the brief survey. A second, third, and fourth grade teacher were selected from each school district. From Town A, only one third grade and fourth grade teacher were willing to participate in the study so they were chosen for the interview. Two second grade teachers agreed to participate, one of them was the only teacher in Town A who had listed experience in another language and was chosen for the interview. From Town B, only one teacher from second, third, and fourth grade agreed to participate in the study and were chosen for interviews. Half-hour time slots for the interview were arranged with each teacher based on their schedule.

The selected teachers were interviewed to collect specific qualitative data on the current training for general education teachers for the instruction and special education identification of ELLs. The interview used closed questions to answer the direct questions and open-ended questions to encourage discussion about the primary topics. During the interview, the teacher was asked questions that addressed their training in working with ELLs and the needs in training programs for future teachers. Specifically, the questions addressed the teachers’ type of training in working with ELLs and where they received the training. The questions were designed to determine whether teachers’
are receiving training from a teacher education program, group inservices, or individual inservices. A list of the interview questions can be found in Appendix B.

Analysis

The demographic information on the teachers was examined and presented in the study in median scores and percentages. Median scores were used to report central tendency because the data was in whole number increments. Demographic information expressed through qualitative data was reported in percentages; for example gender, race, and grade taught. Percentages were used to identify the majority in comparison to the whole.

The interview questions were analyzed according to a basic thematic analysis of key-words-in-context (KWIC) technique (Ryan & Bernard, 2000). This technique is the most direct and simple way of analyzing what is important to the interviewees (Ryan & Bernard, 2000). Content analysts suggest using KWIC when identifying themes in text. In the present study, the author analyzed each interview and noted commonly used words and ideas in the interview. The commonly used words were kept in the context of the interview and used to report similarities and disparities with other interviews. In the current study, ideas and words were drawn from the teachers’ interview responses to the direct questions and open-ended questions using the KWIC analysis. The words and themes were tallied and are reported in the study. Visual representations of the data are presented in a table and various graphs.
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Interview Responses

Direct Responses

The responses to the direct questions are displayed in Table 1 according to the broad questions and the districts. The four broad research questions that were addressed in each of the teacher interviews are individually examined under the corresponding header in Table 1. Town A and Town B are compared to identify differences in teachers' opinions in schools with different language programming.

Table 1
Interview Responses of Teachers from Town A and Town B

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTIONS</th>
<th>Town A (n = 3)</th>
<th>Town B (n = 3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Method of Training</td>
<td>Instruction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>33% No Training</td>
<td>67% No Formal Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>33% No Formal Training</td>
<td>100% College Classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>33% Brief Presentations</td>
<td>67% Observations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification</td>
<td></td>
<td>33% Read and Presented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>33% No Training</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>67% Like Other Students</td>
<td>Acculturation Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>33% Building Supports</td>
<td>100% Building Supports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future Instruction</td>
<td>Communication</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>33% English</td>
<td>33% College Class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>67% Spanish Lessons</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>33% Expectations</td>
<td>33% Observations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of Training</td>
<td>Source</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100% Trial and Error</td>
<td>66% Trial and Error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>33% Other Students</td>
<td>66% Workshops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>33% Workshop</td>
<td>33% College Course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>33% Articles</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(table continues)
### TEACHER RESPONSES

#### QUESTIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provisions</th>
<th>Town A (n = 3)</th>
<th>Town B (n = 3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100% No College Training</td>
<td>33% Briefly in Undergraduate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66% District Workshops</td>
<td>33% Current Graduate Course</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33% No District Inservices</td>
<td>33% No College Training</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66% No Individual Inservices</td>
<td>33% District Presentations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66% No Individual</td>
<td>33% No District Inservices</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33% Independent Spanish Lessons</td>
<td>33% Independent Conferences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Replacement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66% Add Spanish</td>
<td>66% None</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33% Offer as Elective</td>
<td>33% Math</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33% Assessment</td>
<td>33% Additional Component in Coursework</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>33% Add Reading/Written Language for ELLs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Growth</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33% Attend to Language</td>
<td>66% Spanish Lessons</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33% Spanish Lessons</td>
<td>66% Resources</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33% AEA Listserv</td>
<td>33% ESL Specialist</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Referral Reason

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary Basis</th>
<th>66% Math</th>
<th>66% Dual Language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>33% Reading Progress</td>
<td>Deficiency</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33% Similar Peer Comparison</td>
<td>66% Limited Progress</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Other Reasons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>100% Behavior</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

#### Appropriateness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>100% Yes</th>
<th>33% Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>33% No</td>
<td>33% Best Option</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Amount of Referrals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>More ELL Referrals</th>
<th>100% No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Benefit of Special Education</td>
<td>33% Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100% Yes</td>
<td>66% Depends</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Method of training.** Of the six teachers interviewed, three claimed to have no formal training for the instruction of ELLs in the general education setting and another teacher stated she had no training at all. Two teachers in Town B were taking classes through a local public university through federal grant funding that offers ideas for modification to the general curriculum. Other methods of training included short
workshops, AEA speakers, brief overviews in college courses, observations in other districts, reading, and presenting.

Teachers from Town A claimed to either have no training or to follow the same procedures used for other students when referring an ELL for special education services. One teacher stated that she was trained to identify ELLs in need of special education “just like the other students” (Appendix C). In addition, they used the building ESL teacher and a checklist for service need as resources. Teachers from Town B assessed the students' abilities in both languages and used a matched pair or sibling for comparison. In addition, they used the district bilingual coordinator, the special education teacher, and intervention data as resources. A teacher explained that a bilingual teacher will “see what [the student] can do in Spanish and [the teacher] can see what [the student] can do in English and then [the teachers] collaborate and watch [the student] and keep stats” (Appendix C).

Two teachers from Town A claimed Spanish lessons would be beneficial for upcoming teachers working with ELLs and another teacher felt that basic English communication would facilitate instruction of ELLs. One teacher stated that “the biggest thing would be able to speak the language. It would be wonderful [to know] how to speak it and then [she] could do a lot more” (Appendix C). Besides basic communication, one teacher felt it was important to know what to expect from ELLs at different stages and what demands the teachers should place on them. The teachers in Town B all felt it was necessary to be educated on methods of instruction. They mentioned classes in
teacher education programs, observations of other programs, meeting at the building level, and formal training from the district.

Three of the teachers interviewed felt it was important to have training in special education assessment and identification to better identify ELLs in need of special education services. One teacher stated that teachers are “going to need more help on just the special ed end of it, alone. [She does not] even feel qualified to identify the actual special ed kids, let alone the special ed kids that are Spanish speaking” (Appendix C). Two teachers claimed a better understanding of building or district expectations would facilitate the process. Other suggestions included; norms for ELLs and an understanding of the native language.

Type of training. All three teachers from Town A and two teachers from Town B stated that their training came from trial and error and experience. One teacher from Town B stated that “the experience, actually doing it, is just so beneficial” (Appendix C). Three teachers mentioned collaboration with the ELL representative and other types of training included a graduate level course, reading articles, and assistance from other ELLs in the classroom.

Of the six teachers, four of them had no training in their teacher education program. One teacher was currently taking a class through a teacher education program and the other teacher claimed the professors would briefly discuss the topic of ELLs in the education courses. A teacher from Town B stated that she did not “think there were any immigrants of any kind…that were here. [Town B] was a very elite area…where there was very little diversity…..” She felt her university “was good,…there wasn’t a
need for it at the time” (Appendix C). Three of the teachers had attended group inservices through district workshops, speakers, and the state diversity conference. Four of the teachers did not attend any individual inservices, one teacher took Spanish independently, and another teacher attended the diversity conference.

Three of the teachers would not have eliminated any courses from the teacher education program for the provision of ELL training. However, two teachers from Town A would have taken Spanish as additional training. The other teachers suggested having the training as a component in the present courses, offering it as an elective, or offering it as an entire course. One teacher suggested eliminating some of the math training and another teacher suggested removing assessment training.

Two teachers from Town B and the only teacher in Town A who had studied Spanish suggested that upcoming teachers learn Spanish for personal growth. They claimed that the vocabulary and the empathy gained from learning another language helped in understanding their students better. One teacher from Town B stated that the ELL students are “filled with all this anguish and they just need to sit there, and if they need to go to the bathroom ten times a day...let them go. They’re gonna get a headache. Just taking this Spanish class now, I understand it even more so” (Appendix C). Other suggestions for personal growth included paying attention to the language, joining an AEA listserv, reading books and articles, observing other programs and teachers, and seeking assistance from ELL specialists.
**Reason for special education referral.** Two teachers from Town A claimed the most common referral reason for ELLs was math because it was the easiest area to identify them in without the language barrier and two other teachers mentioned limited reading progress. One teacher from Town A mentioned comparing the student to a similarly acculturated peer. The teachers from Town B depended on assessments in both languages and large amounts of data and interventions. Other reasons the teachers felt an ELL might be referred for special education services included primarily behavioral concerns, learning, and speech. The three teachers from Town A included behavior as a referral reason.

All three teachers from Town A felt these reasons were appropriate where only one teacher from Town B felt that the reasons were appropriate. One teacher from Town A defended the appropriateness because “a referral doesn’t mean ok, you’re in. A referral means you’re not making the same progress everybody else is” (Appendix C). Another teacher from Town B felt they were doing they best they could at the time.

**Amount of special education referrals.** All six teachers felt that ELLs were not referred for special education more than native English speakers. Most of the teachers felt they were referred less because of teachers lack of confidence and understanding and the provision of additional time to allow for assimilation and language proficiency. All the teachers from Town A felt that ELLs benefit from special education and two teachers from Town B felt that it depended on the student and the situation. Most teachers felt it was the small group setting and slower pace at the student’s level that were the greatest benefits.
Teachers from both districts gave similar suggestions for alternatives to special education referral. These included: peer groups, one on one assistance, pull-out, instruction at their level, in depth English instruction, buddies, modifications, native specialist or ELL tutor, and development of both languages. Town A focused more on pull out alternatives and Town B suggested inclusion and native language promotion. A teacher from Town A suggested intensive “English instruction and tested out of that before they even enter a classroom” (Appendix C). Another teacher from Town B clarified that they “don’t have an ESL pull out at all. It’s all in the classroom [with] a native specialist” (Appendix C).

Additional comments. The teachers from Town A offered additional comments regarding the preparation for the instruction of ELLs and the identification for special education services. One teacher commented that the teachers generally “feel really, really lost even though [they] have lot of opportunity” and that they have not “been prepared as teachers”(Appendix C). Another teacher credited the ESL reading program as a primary resource, but commented that “it hasn’t helped [the general education teachers] to know what to do…with an ELL kid” (Appendix C).

Teachers from Town B also offered additional comments. One teacher would like to see a statewide framework for the assessment of ELL students because currently there is “no easy solution”. In addition, he felt instruction and assessment would be “hard for people who don’t speak the language” because it would be difficult “to understand what the problem is” (Appendix C). Another teacher from Town B claimed that the teachers
working with ELL students were receiving pretty good training for the resources available.

Thematic Analysis

General themes that were commonly addressed in the interviews are described below with individual teacher comments. Communication, building supports, and students are discussed under their corresponding header.

Communication. Clearly, when working with students whose primary language is other than English, communication is a notable factor. Teachers from both districts addressed the issues of communicating with their students in the classroom. The two towns were compared again to demonstrate differences in teacher opinions from schools with different language programming. Teachers responses to communication can be seen in Figure 1.

![Teacher Responses to Communication](image)

*Figure 1. Teacher opinions regarding language to use when communicating with ELL students in the classroom.*
All the teachers from Town A generally felt it would have been beneficial to have had lessons in the Spanish language so they could better communicate with their students and families. One teacher from Town A added that it was important to know “how you communicate simple commands, simple directions….We should expect them to understand in English” (Appendix C).

Most of the teachers from Town B had a general knowledge of the Spanish language and were grateful for the education because it improved their communication and increased their empathy for ELLs. One teacher stated that her “Spanish gives [her] confidence and makes the kids…think that [she’s] trying” (Appendix C). The funding provided to Town B through the federal grant allowed for Spanish classes to be available to everyone in the district. Even the building custodian was taking part in the classes and passed the test with 99% accuracy. In reference to knowing an additional language, one teacher from Town B stated that “there are so many people coming to the United States with other languages, we need to know how to communicate with them. It can only help” (Appendix C).

Building supports. The teachers gave credit to the various supports available to them in the building and district throughout the interviews. Figure 2 summarizes the supports that most of the teachers cited as beneficial to general education teachers and compares the opinions of the two towns.
Teachers from Town A appreciated the ESL reading program that was implemented in their building. The ESL teachers are consistently used as resources for the general education teachers and the pull out language program allows for the students to work at their level with their ELL peers. One teacher stated that “the thing that’s saved us as teachers, is the ESL reading program, because they have done a really, really nice job of serving the kids in a way that’s useful to the kids and also freeing us up, because we would be like, what do we do now….what am I going to do with you?” (Appendix C).

All of the Town B teachers were grateful for their district bilingual specialist that provided information, resources, and training. A teacher appreciated that the bilingual specialist could “see what they (ELLS) could do in Spanish and [the general education teacher] could see what they could do in English and then [they] would collaborate and keep stats” (Appendix C).
One teacher from Town B also credited the Principal for visiting the village from which most of their students originated. In addition, he returned with photos of the village which were posted in the building and information and slide shows that he shared with the staff. The teacher gained a better perspective of where her ELL students are coming from and stated that the students love to talk about their hometown with her.

In addition, two of the three teachers from Town B mentioned the grant funding available to their building. One teacher was ecstatic about the grant and its proposals. She thought the grant was “wonderful” because it was providing district wide Spanish classes and graduate courses for the teachers (Appendix C). However, another teacher was more apprehensive about the grant because she felt “a little overwhelmed with how this new program is going to work … how it’s going to work when it comes to third grade. But [the language staff] assured [her] there will be an ELL teacher in the classroom” (Appendix C).

Students. A common theme that arose in many of the interviews was the significance of the other ELL students in the classroom. Other ELL students in the classroom were beneficial to the teachers for two primary reasons; to gain resources for the building, an indirect benefit, or to provide resources to the teachers or students, a direct benefit. Results are presented in Figure 3 along with a comparison of teacher opinions from the two towns.
Some teachers suggested that the other students provided the teachers with additional resources, like the reading programs and a norm group. The students’ gained an indirect benefit by gaining external support and services just by attending that building. A teacher from Town A mentioned that “it’s the other kids that help us out, and if didn’t have other kids to help us out, we would be lost. We wouldn’t have the resources to turn to like the special teachers who are doing the ESL reading” (Appendix C). The other students are also used as a basis for comparison for individual students who are struggling. A teacher from Town A mentioned that “we never probably would have even considered special education for those kids (ELLs) in the beginning, because we didn’t know how to compare anything. And now, we do have a group to compare with” (Appendix C).
The other ELL students have also been beneficial to the teachers because they are themselves a resource and help other students who are having difficulties. The students provide a direct service to either the teachers or the students who are struggling. One teacher from Town A commented that “all the other kids have been invaluable. They are wonderful as translators, they’re wonderful at helping the other... ELL kids” (Appendix C). A teacher from Town B mentioned that “the kids take good care of each other. If they see someone is struggling, they do help them out” (Appendix C). In regards to peer tutoring, another teacher from Town B stated that the ELL peers “can really help more than [she] can because they have a better way of explaining things to them” (Appendix C).

Summary

Teachers generally feel that they have not been trained to instruct ELLs in the general education classroom. Teachers in Town A have not been adequately trained to identify ELLs for special education services, where teachers from Town B have been trained to assess abilities in both languages and make comparisons based on a matched pair or sibling. In both districts, the teachers depend on the language program teacher as a resource and gain most of their training through group inservices. All the teachers did not agree that ELLs were referred more for special education than native English speakers and all the teachers from Town A felt that ELLs benefited from special education services. All the teachers suggested good alternatives to referral and many mentioned the benefit of the other ELL students in the classroom.
In addition, teachers discussed the importance of communication in the classroom and the significance of a common language. The teachers praised some of the available supports in their building to better serve the high population of ELLs in their district, such as the language programming, staff members, and administration. Many of the teachers were also grateful for the other ELL students in their classroom. The other students help teachers with translation and tutoring as well as demonstrating general expectations for ELLs in that grade level.
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION

Summary

The present study supported previous findings that teachers need additional training and increased cultural knowledge to better instruct ELLs and identify those in need of special education. Teachers in the present study claimed to have little to no multicultural training and no additional training in special education referral. However, many were aware of the need for such teacher training.

In 1995, Gonzalez and Felix-Holt concluded that evaluators needed coursework that emphasizes the significance of evaluators own personality and prior knowledge on the evaluation of ELLs. Although they recommended that increased knowledge of linguistically diverse students and an empathetic personality would improve the quality of assessments of ELLs in the schools, the current study supports that evaluators are not receiving such training. Utley et al. (2000) also found that many teachers had no training in multicultural education and of those that received training, the most commonly cited experiences were workshops, course work, and conferences. In addition, teachers sought informal training through professional reading, involvement in community activities, and writing and/or presenting papers in the area of multicultural/bilingual education. The current study found a higher percentage of teachers claiming to have no training or no formal training (67%). The teachers in the current study cited similar informal training methods that were discussed in Utley et al. (2000).
Utley et al. (2000) also found that cultural knowledge would help teachers understand their students' behaviors and learning techniques and facilitate conducting assessments. Additional support for the need of cultural knowledge was found in Gougeon (1993). The author concluded that through increased awareness and understanding of other cultures, the teachers would be more equipped to make knowledgeable decisions on behalf of ESL students. These findings were addressed in the current study. Many teachers cited the importance of communicating with their ELL students. In this study, one district made the effort to understand their students cultural background and native language. The other district made more efforts to immerse their ELL students in the new culture and language. From the data gathered through the interviews, it appears that the former district has more comprehensive assessment techniques and alternative interventions because the staff is able to communicate with the students and families and the staff has a better understanding of their students culture.

Spomer and Cowen (2001) found that ESL students had fewer acting out problems and more anxious/shy problems than non-ESL students. The authors concluded that the differences found between ESL and non-ESL students were due to the added difficulty of acquiring a new language and adjusting to a new culture. In the current study, teachers cited behavior as one of the common reasons for an ELL student to be referred. Although the teachers did not discuss the root of the problem behaviors, one teacher mentioned the dilemma of determining whether the behavior is because the student is “a more physical kind of kid or whether they’re acting out because they’re frustrated” (Appendix C).
Limbos and Geva (2001) found that teacher rating scales and nominations had low sensitivity in identifying ELLs for reading disabilities and spontaneously expressed concern by teachers was significantly less accurate, especially with ELL students. Fortunately, the results from the current study indicate that data is used to make special education referrals and not solely based on teacher concern. Some teachers discussed the use of intervention data to determine the need for a special education referral. One teacher stated that “after lots of data from the Spanish teacher and an English teacher and ... a lot of interventions....we see what the problem is on our paper” (Appendix C). In addition, the techniques to evaluate an ELL’s abilities are not limited to teacher rating scales and opinions. The teachers in the current study mentioned the use of norms, comparison to a similarly acculturated peer and dual language assessment.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the responses gathered from this study have shown that teachers have not been adequately prepared to instruct ELLs nor trained to accurately identify ELLs for special education services. In addition, the information gathered from the interviews indicates that districts should promote dual language proficiency for students and teachers to facilitate communication and assessment.

The majority of teachers in both districts claimed to have little or no training in their teacher education program, but thought the training would have been beneficial. At the district level, a difference was apparent between the two towns. Town B sought federal funding and has been able to provide more training at the building level in comparison to Town A that does not have additional funding. Teachers from Town B
have been provided more opportunities to learn Spanish, familiarize themselves with the culture, and receive additional training. Teachers from Town A have not had such additional opportunities, but suggested that such training would be beneficial to improve the instruction of ELLs. However, most teachers in both districts have not taken the initiative to seek individual training. Such decisions were based on time constraints and assigned responsibilities. Many teachers did not feel they had the time to commit to independent training outside their current school duties. Other teachers did not seek the additional training because they did not feel ELL instruction was their responsibility.

The teachers in Town A claimed to have a more difficult time communicating with their students. Such miscommunication occurs because the district does not promote the development of the ELLs native language or teachers’ additional language acquisition. In Town B, the teachers are provided with Spanish classes and an ELL teacher works collaboratively within the classroom. Communication is not a barrier between student and teacher, so the teacher is primarily concerned about teaching methods that would be effective for an ELL. The development of both languages, for teacher and student, facilitates communication and allows for more focused academic instruction.

Dual language development also allows the student to be evaluated in both languages. Best practice for the assessment of an ELL is to evaluate the student’s abilities in their native language as well as their acquired language. If the concern is noted in both languages, then language acquisition can be eliminated as a hypothesis. However, opportunity to learn must also be taken into consideration in an evaluation and the presence of a disability should not be due to limited educational experience.
Therefore, dual language assessment would be valid if the ELL student had the opportunity to develop proficiency in both languages.

**Recommendations**

Based on the information gathered from teachers working with large ELL populations, the following recommendations were formed:

1. Teacher education programs should include additional training for the instruction of ELL students. Such training can be provided through a required course separate from the present coursework, and elective outside of the present coursework, or additional components within the present coursework. Another option would be to locate a university that provides courses via ICN or the Internet. For example, the University of Northern Iowa has offered a bilingual methods and materials course on ICN for graduate credit. To successfully train teachers at the university level, the professors must be trained in advance to present the most accurate and significant information.

2. Districts should seek additional training sources to prepare teachers to instruct ELL students in a general education environment and how to identify ELLs in need of special education services. Such training should be conducted by experts in the field of language acquisition and acculturation. In addition, the training should thoroughly explain the referral process so teachers better understand the purpose of special education and the corresponding procedures. The special education training should be conducted by AEA staff and special education teachers in the district to address how the process is handled in that district. The ELL division of Heartland AEA 11 has published a brief manual to aid in meeting the needs of diverse learners. The manual describes the
problem solving process that should be used when working with an ELL and suggests accommodations and resources that may benefit general education teachers. In addition, Heartland offers classes that train staff on the needs of diverse learners and the appropriate techniques to use when working with ELLs in the schools.

3. Districts with small populations of ELLs should seek resources from districts with larger populations of ELLs. Visitations, speakers, and materials should be arranged from those districts that have successful programs to provide guidance to teachers with less experience and smaller ELL populations. For example, in Iowa there are large school districts with a high population of ELLs that frequently give presentations on their building programs and are willing to have visitors observe them in practice. Contact the building principal or language specialist to make arrangements.

4. Districts with large populations of ELLs should seek federal and state assistance to design and implement programs that are theoretically sound and have empirical support. Contact the State Department of Education’s English Language Learner Department to learn more about possible funding. The contact person for the state of Iowa is Carmen Sosa, director of the English Language Learner Department in the Iowa Department of Education.

5. Individual teachers should make an effort to expand their knowledge of language acquisition and acculturation to better serve ELLs in the general education setting. Sources for personal growth may include: attending conferences, joining committees, reading materials, joining listerves, and observing other programs. For example, an annual diversity conference is held in Des Moines, Iowa during the Spring.
In addition, AEA’s have resources that may be checked out and listserves that provides additional information. Contact your building’s AEA personnel to learn more about the opportunities available in your area.

6. Teachers should attempt to use numerous interventions and alternatives to special education referral to ensure a least restrictive environment for an ELL student. Districts or buildings should provide teachers with examples of interventions and alternatives and enforce their use. The teachers interviewed for this study mentioned numerous interventions that were used in the classroom and as pull out techniques. Classroom support was provided by peers, reading specialists, ESL teachers, special education teachers, and native specialists. Accommodations may also be made to the student’s workload to focus on quality rather than quantity.

7. Districts with ELLs should promote the use and development of students’ native language. Dual language proficiency facilitates the acquisition of a new language and the process of special education evaluation. Language promotion can be facilitated through encouraging students to read in their native language at home or at school, speak their native language with peers, and to teach other students vocabulary in their native language.

8. School employees should seek language instruction to facilitate communication with students and parents and to better understand the difficulty of acquiring a new language. An empathetic teacher who is able to successfully communicate with a student and their family provides a more conducive learning environment. Language instruction can be provided by school staff or native specialists in
the district. Funding for foreign language classes is also available through state and federal grants.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

Informed Consent Form

The purpose of this research is to assess teacher training in working with English Language Learners and to determine what needs to be included in future training. You will be asked to complete the brief survey below and may be asked additional questions through an interview. As a general education teacher working with ELLs, you will be asked about your training in instructing ELLs, identifying ELLs for special education, and your opinions about what training is needed for future teachers. All names will be kept confidential in the research and your participation in the project is purely voluntary. You may discontinue your participation at any time, if you wish, at no penalty.

Researcher: Jane Zirkelbach
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You may also contact the office of Human Subjects Coordinator at the University of Northern Iowa, (319) 273-2748, for answers to questions about the research and about your rights as participants. If you are interested in participating, please complete the information below and sign at the bottom. Thank you.

Personal Demographics
Gender M F Ethnicity Age 
Languages Spoken (Teacher) 

Professional Demographics
School District Grade Total Years Taught 
Years Taught in District Years Taught ELLs 
Percent of ELLs in Current Classroom 
Languages Spoken (students) 

I am fully aware of the nature and extent of my participation in this project as stated above and the possible risks arising from it. I hereby agree to participate in this project. I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this consent statement.

(signature of subject or responsible agent) Date

(printed name of subject)

(signature of investigator) Date
APPENDIX B

Interview Format

District _______________
ID _____
Date ________

A. Features of teacher training in instruction and identification of English Language Learners:
   1. How were you trained to instruct English Language Learners in a general education setting?

   2. How were you trained to identify English Language Learners in need of special education services?

   3. In your opinion, what training will future teacher need to be able to instruct English Language Learners?

   4. In your opinion, what training will future teachers need to be able to identify English Language Learners in need of special education services?

B. Source of teacher training in English language learner instruction and identification:
   1. Where have you acquired most of your training for the instruction of English Language Learners?
2. What training was provided through a) teacher education programs, b) group inservices, and c) individual inservices?

3. If such training was currently not available through your teacher education program what would you have replaced in the program to make that provision?

4. What sources have you used for personal growth in this area? What of theses would you recommend for pre-service and in-service teachers.

C. Teachers’ primary bases for referring an English language learner for special education services:

1. In your opinion, what is the primary basis for an English Language Learner to be referred for special education services?

2. In your opinion, what other reasons might teachers refer an English Language Learner for special education services?

3. In your opinion, are these bases appropriate to refer English Language Learners to special education?
D. Referral of English language learners for special education services:
   1. In your opinion, are English Language Learners referred more for special education services than native English speakers?

   2. In your opinion, do English Language Learners benefit from special education services?

   3. What are possible alternatives to special education referrals for English Language Learners who are not succeeding in the general education curriculum?

Comments

Please add any relevant comments regarding the preparation for teaching and/or the referral process for ELLs in your district.
APPENDIX C

INTERVIEWS

Interview
P7
5/13/02

R: How were you trained to instruct English Language Learners in a general education setting?
T: Really I don't think we've had any training.
R: Ok. (intercom interruption) How were you trained to identify English Language Learners in need of special ed.?
T: Hmm, in need of special ed.? I don't think we were trained to do that. We go through the regular procedures of like taking kids to the BAT team if we think that there's a problem. But, a lot of times, it's the language difficulty keeps us from being able to really recommend them for special ed. training because, or special ed services because they tell us that they have to be like three years here before we can even see them in terms of an educational need let alone a language need.
R: Um-hm.
T: So, I don't think we have been trained, it's just every time you go through the process of recommending them for special ed, or any kind of special services, you have to wait three years until it's not a language problem.
R: Um-hm, ok. In your opinion, what training will future teachers need to be able to instruct English Language Learners?
T: What training....I guess I really don't know, um, maybe something as basic as how your communicate simple commands, simple directions. And maybe education on how much you should expect a person to know one year here or two years here.
R: Um-hm.
T: Uh, what demands, you know, can we place on kids or are we asking too much or are we asking to little.
R: Uh-huh. Um, when you say simple commands, do you mean like in Spanish, or...
T: I, I would think if you're working with English as a second language, an English Language Learner, that we shouldn't give them directions in Spanish. We should expect them to understand in English, but um, have the commands be simple enough that they know what we're talking about.
R: Ok. So just basic communication in English to help...
T: Uh-huh.
R: Ok, um, what kind of training do you think future teachers will need to be able to identify EL Ls in need of special ed?
T: Maybe going back to how much can you expect them to understand just of the language barrier, before it's not a language barrier, it's a learning problem. I think that's one of our big problems here, it's that a lot of times we have to wait three years before we can do anything at all and then we find out, oh my gosh, we could have helped them a lot, if we hadn't blamed it on the language.
R: Ok. Where have you acquired most of your training for the instruction of ELLs?
T: (laughter) By guess and by golly! Boy, we have not been trained at all. The very first student I had, I was just up a creek without a paddle. But since then, all the other kids have been invaluable. They are wonderful as translators, they're wonderful (intercom interruption) at helping the other kids, the other English, the ELL kids as they come and learn the language that helps us out. Every time another new kid comes, its the kids.
R: And it kinda helps you to build expectations for other students?
T: Yeah, yeah. And also to see a light at the end of the tunnel, too. And how quickly some of these kids pick this language up. We've got a little guy here, that when he came, at the beginning of this year, well, he was completely non English speaking. But, he writes paragraphs for us now, in English!
R: Wow! It's amazing what they can accomplish.
T: It is, it is. He’s just an astounding kid. You were looking at special ed, but also in terms of the gifted program. We’ve had kids float in here and we go “Wow!”, you know, they need to be served in another capacity, too. But, they fight the language problem too, they can’t show us how smart they really are, until they can, you know, speak the language.

R: Uh-huh. Were you provided with any training through your teacher education program?
T: Uh, no. That was back in the ancient history days.
R: Um, were you provided with any group inservices through the district or through the AEA?
T: Oh, gosh. I don’t think so. I can’t remember that we were.
R: And, did you attend any individual inservices?
T: In terms of ELL?
R: Um-huh.
T: No.
R: Ok. Um, if there was training available in your teacher education program would you have replaced something else with that training? Is there something you would have got rid of in your teacher ed program?
T: Well, probably not though, because my teacher ed training was like 30 years ago. And, not knowing, you know, how burdened the influx of non English speaking people was going to be. Because in my mind, I was going to be the teacher of all these little blond haired, curly, you know? I had not a clue that a third of my class would be, you know, not English speaking people. At the time I chose to take my classes, no I wouldn’t have replaced it, unless I had realized how important it would be now, how much, how helpful it would have been.
R: Um-huh.
T: I would have taken Spanish is what I would have done.
R: Yeah. Is there something you would have got rid of in the program, some of the other requirements that they had?
T: No, everything I took, really, really, liked.
R: They really cram everything into those programs, too.
T: Yeah, yeah.
R: What sources have you used for personal growth in this area?
T: In terms of the English as a second language? Ohhhh, I pay real close attention to what Spanish words mean. I mean, I don’t speak Spanish, but I pick up a lot more than people think I pick up.
R: Um-hmm.
T: So, I do pay attention to the language, I love to listen to it. Um, I would guess that’s the greatest thing, to pay attention to the language and pick up what they can to communicate. Even through I can’t communicate in it, I can understand what the kids are talking a little bit of what they’re talking about.
R: Um-hmm. And would you recommend other teachers to do the same thing then?
T: Oh yeah.
R: Ok. In your opinion, what is the primary reason for an English Language Learner to be referred for special ed?
T: Just for the amount of time it takes them to comprehend lessons, we’ll go for math right off the bat. Because math is so standard in any language that when we see kids in that language is a barrier that they’re not picking up simple math things, that’s a lot of times the clue that we’d say “Hey wait, you know, the kid should be picking this up faster than he is”. And also the reading, when it’s just, you know, two years and they’re only at the level whatever, it’s like, they should be picking this up faster than they have.
R: Um-hmm. And then do you compare that reading progress to the other ELLs in the classroom. Like, based on how much they’ve progressed...
T: Yeah, well, I think I don’t as much as when special teachers and I get together and talk, like Pat Latham (ESL teacher) is the one that serves the third graders. We get together and say, I’ve had these kids for six months and this child’s gone this far and this child’s gone this far. So when we talk and compare like how the child’s doing in the classroom but also the progress that he’s making in the reading class. A lot of times, it’ll be the ESL teacher, reading teacher that brings it to our attention.
R: Ok.
T: Right at first because she sees the progress made among kids that are of, ELL kids.
R: Uh-huh.
T: A lot of times, we don’t even teach them reading we do have an ELL reading class. Thank heavens! I don’t know what we’d do if we didn’t have that.
R: It’d be very challenging.
T: It’d be very difficult, because so much of what we do is so skill orientated and comprehension but if they can’t even, by the time they get to third grade, if they don’t know their sounds and their letters which is where a lot of our new kids coming in are, we can’t back track three years and still have them pick that up, which the ESL kids can do when they go down to Pat Latham’s. She just backs way up to where they can pick it up.
R: Uh-huh. In your opinion, what other reasons might teachers refer an ELL for special ed?
T: Maybe behavior, because sometimes we’ll see behavior we don’t like, and we don’t know if it’s because that’s just the way, you know, there’s just a more physical kind of kid or whether they’re acting out because they’re frustrated. So sometimes, you know, we try to look at why is that behavior happening. Is it because they seem to be frustrated, that might be a reason.
R: Ok. Do you think these reasons are appropriate to refer ELLs?
T: For special ed?
R: M-hm.
T: Yeah, for a referral. I mean, a referral doesn’t mean, ok, you’re in. A referral means you’re not, you know, making the same progress somebody else is. Is it a language problem or is it a learning disability.
R: Uh-huh.
T: And if you don’t refer, you’ll never find that out.
R: And that referral process helps you to distinguish?
T: Yeah.
R: In your opinion, are ELLs referred more for special ed than native English speakers?
T: No. Because one of the things here, especially, is they told us you’ve got to be here three years before you can even possibly be expected to catch up with the regular kids. So because that’s kinda been a, ok, well let’s wait three years before we decide, so, it’s been a, I think it’s been a big hindrance, because sometimes right off the bat you can go, wait, you should be picking up little things faster than this.
R: Ok. Do you believe ELLs benefit from special ed?
T: Oh sure.
R: Do you think there are any alternatives to special ed referrals for English Language Learners who aren’t succeeding in the general education setting?
T: A lot of times, before we do the referrals, we do a lot of the alternatives, and that’s a lot of the peer groups, where you have the kids have the one on one, we send things home to the parents, if they can, um… I think a lot of times we do a lot of the alternative things before we refer them to special ed.
R: Going through the different stages of the referral?
T: Uh-huh, just different interventions actually before we do refer.
R: Kay. Um, is there any additional comments you’d like to make about the preparation for teaching or the referral process for ELLs?
T: The preparation for teaching, you know, I think we feel really, really, lost, even though we have lots and lots and lots of opportunity. I don’t think we have bee prepared as teachers. I think the school system has done a really nice job of putting out the money and making sure that there are classes where we the teachers, you know, can send them, but I’m not sure sending them away is the total answer. Is it better to send them away or is it better to train us on how to do it? I don’t know. I would say that we’ve definitely been stronger at sending them to another class until they can handle it, than training us to know what to do.
R: Do you think it would be more difficult for a teacher in a district where they don’t have very many students that speak another language, to try make those comparisons and make modifications?
T: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Because, I think, a lot of times, it's the other kids that help us out, and if we didn't have other kids to help us out, we would be lost. We wouldn't have the resources to turn to like the special teachers who are doing the ESL reading. And that's been, I think, the thing that's saved us as teachers, is the ESL reading program, because they, um, they have done a really, really nice job of serving the kids in a way that's useful to the kids and also freeing us up, because we would be like, what do I do now? I have a kid at level Ns, Os, and Ps and then you that come in at B, what am I going to do with you? And so...I think that it's worked well. But it hasn't helped us to know what to do in terms of, you know, how do you work with an ELL kid?
R: Uh-huh. Ok, great. Thank you
T: You're welcome.

Interview
P5
5/13/02
R: How were you trained to instruct English Language Learners in a general ed setting?
T: I think we had one workshop, is mainly what we had.
R: Ok.
T: And someone from AEA came.
R: And that was through the district then?
T: Uh-huh.
R: How long was the workshop?
T: Probably half a day.
R: Ok. How were you trained to identify English Language Learners in need of special ed?
T: (laughter) Oh...could you repeat that?
R: How were you trained to identify ELL students for special ed?
T: Uh, just like the other students.
R: Ok.
T: The ones that are having trouble with anything.
R: Uh-huh. Did the ESL teachers or the AEA give you any kind of guidelines to follow?
T: Not that I remember.
R: Ok.
T: This isn't going to be very good (laughter).
R: Ok. In your opinion, what training will future teachers need to be able to instruct English Language Learners?
T: Well, when we have so many Hispanics and we know we have a lot of Spanish speaking students, it would be nice to be trained in some basic Spanish lessons.
R: Uh-huh. Do they provide anything like that in the summer?
T: Not for the teachers, I mean, they might have something in the summer that wouldn't be...unless an AEA rep did something.
R: It seems like the focus is on English instruction.
T: Uh-huh, the night classes are for the Spanish speaking people to learn. There was one, there's been some. There was one night class that was Spanish, now I don't know if they offered it this year or not. But, I did take it one year, but the instructor was awful.
R: Oh..
T: (laughter) But that was just offered to anybody in town that wanted to take Spanish. I'm not even sure if they continued that anymore or not. If they would have a different instructor I'd take it maybe again, but...(laughter)
R: In your opinion, what training will future teachers need to be able to identify ELLs for special ed?
T: I think maybe we need norms just for them.
R: Uh-huh.
T: I think sometimes it seems like it takes us longer to get them into the program.
R: Uh-huh. Is there any kind of training that you think would help teachers that are in the university still or just coming out that would help?

T: (laughter)

R: Like, maybe, could the AEA or the district provide any kind of guidelines, like checklists or anything that might help?

T: They might help, I don’t know if there’s things available like that or not.

R: Ok. Um, where have you acquired most of your training for the instruction of ELLs?

T: Huh, I guess we just kind of picked it up. The ELL teacher gave us a workshop one time, too.

R: Ok.

T: When that program, I think, was first started she kinda told what she would be doing, and what we could reinforce.

R: Ok.

T: And that AEA program, we came to.

R: Was there any training provided through your teacher education program, at the university?

T: (laughter) I don’t think so. That was a long time ago!

R: I don’t think they do much now either.

R: Ok, for group inservices, it sounds like you had a couple half day workshops?

T: Yeah.

R: And then have you gone to any individual inservices or workshops that are in the area?

T: I just took Spanish on my own.

R: Uh-huh/

R: If such training was, ok, since the training wasn’t available through your teacher ed program would you have wished that it was there?

T: Uh-huh.

R: Would you have replaced something else with that training? A different requirement that they have in the teacher ed. program?

T: I mean, would I rather have that, is that?

R: Um… I don’t know what to say, we’ve only had one practically this year which is, this year, would be just the assessment. You know, that’s maybe all we’ve had, um, this year. So I would rather have had more training with the ESL students than, or the Spanish, than the assessment.

R: Ok, and then what sources have you used for personal growth in this area? And then, you said you took the Spanish. Do you think, um, would you recommend for pre-service and in-service teachers.

T: Uh-huh.

R: In your opinion, what is the primary basis for an English Language Learner to be referred? What’s the most common reason for a referral?

T: Uh-huh, I’d probably say math. Math, to me, is the easiest to identify them in.

R: Uh-huh.

T: Because usually they can understand that in English and Spanish, it’s so much a like. So when they are having trouble in math, it is easier to identify, I mean, against the others, because you don’t know for sure if it’s the language, otherwise the written language, too. Um….

R: Do you consider that a red flag when one of your students is having difficulties in math?

T: Uh-huh.

R: Ok, what other reasons might teachers refer an ELL for special ed?

T: Behavior (laughter).

R: Do you think these reasons are appropriate to refer ELLs?

T: Yes.

R: Do you think ELLs are referred more for special ed services than native English speakers?

T: No.

R: Do you believe ELLs benefit from special education services?

T: Yes.
R: What are possible alternatives to special education referrals for English Language Learners who aren't succeeding in the general education curriculum?

T: I think maybe a more in depth ELL program where they are total language before they could even enter a regular classroom.

R: Ok.

T: Our kids are not, they're put into a classroom and maybe for a half hour a day get English language support.

R: Uh-huh.

T: And now our kids aren't even get that this year. I don’t think. I don’t have any this year, but as far as I know, they’re just getting a reading teacher in the afternoons to read with and not getting English instruction this year as second graders. So I would like to see the English instruction and tested out of that before they even enter a classroom.

R: It gets more complicated with the... not being able to tell if it’s the language or if it’s the ability.

R: Ok. Do you have any additional comments about the preparation for teaching or the referral process for ELLs?

T: I guess not.

R: Ok, great. Thank you.

Interview

P9

5/13/02

R: How were you trained to instruct English Language Learners in a general education setting?

T: Wasn’t! (laughter. There was no formal training for that at Iowa State at the time.

R: Ok. How were you trained to identify English Language Learners in need of special ed?

T: I think just through a checklist type thing um and working with the ESL teachers.

R: Ok, did the AEA help with the checklist, or was that something the district did?

T: I think the ESL.

R: Oh, the ESL program?

T: Yep.

R: Ok. Great. In your opinion, what training will future teachers need to be able to instruct English Language Learners?

T: I think the biggest thing would be able to speak the language, you know. With the high number of kids that we have speaking Spanish, it would be wonderful if I knew how to speak it, and then I think I could do a lot more.

R: Do you think any formal training should be done like at the University level or at the district level?

T: Well, I think that the population is growing so much in Iowa, I don’t think it would hurt to say that even Spanish should be possibly an elective but is strongly encouraged.

R: Yeah, uh-huh.

T: And at the time when I was at Iowa State, there was no foreign language requirement. So, I think maybe that’s been changed.

R: Ok. In your opinion, what training will future teachers need to be able to identify ELL students in need of special ed?

T: I think it helps to have the special education background, and I happen. I mean I was a SCI teacher and Resource teacher in the past, so I think I have a little bit more of a heads up on that, um, on who is identified and who isn’t. But, um, as far as regular education teachers, probably some kind of an identification type course would probably be helpful.

R: Uh-huh. Did you think the checklist helped?

T: Yeah, and that was more, not necessarily special education, but more, that was more do you think they need extra services to....

R: Ok, it could be special ed or ESL?

T: Yeah.

R: Ok.
T: We don' have anything that's necessarily setup right now that says do you think that the child needs special education, or do you think they just need ESL?
R: Yeah, ok. Where have you acquired most of your training for the instruction of ELs?
T: Hands on (laughter).
R: Ok, and you said that there wasn't any training provided through your teacher ed program at Iowa State?
T: No
R: Ok, and did they have any group inservices here at the district?
T: Um, we've had one, last year at the end of the year, working with ESL. Trying to help you modify the curriculum.
R: Ok, did that help?
T: It did seem to help, to get us a contact person, but actually it was even better for me, because I was trying to find specific stuff for science.
R: Ok
T: Like Spanish textbooks, and where can I find things that where the kids can be doing their work in Spanish, even, if they can, you know?
R: Yeah.
T: That kind of thing, so that was really helpful.
R: And have you done any individual inservices, like conferences?
T: No.
R: Ok. If such training, ok, if it wasn't available through your teacher education program would you have replaced that in the program with something else? Would you have gotten rid of another requirement so you could have had that training?
T: If I knew where my teaching experience would have been, I may have.
R: Ok, what would you have gotten rid of to make room for that?
T: Umm, it would have been hard to decide (laughter). Cause, mine was minor in preschool/kindergarten endorsement, so I was working pretty hard towards that. I mean, I can't say I would give that up, but I probably would have liked to take an elective or two to try to help myself with that.
R: Uh-huh, and I suppose with your special ed, too, you would have, your course load was pretty full.
T: Uh-huh, uh-huh.
R: Ok. What sources have you used for personal growth in this area?
T: Uh, I went on the listserve for the English Language Learners just to try to see what was coming up if there was any...I've been on that for a year, just reading the emails and you know, seeing if there was anything new that I could pick up on.
R: Stay on top of things? Is that the one from Heartland?
T: Uh-huh, uh-huh.
R: Would you recommend that for other teachers.
T: I recommend, uh, I have a new niece who is just teaching ESL in Clarion and I recommended it to her, but she's, that's her full-time position. Um, I did just go off of it because there were a lot of repetitive email coming through. I don't know if you're on it?
R: No, but I've heard that listserves can be very repetitive.
T: You're right, all of the responses come to us and all of the...it just got to be a lot of extra. So I did just go off of it.
R: Does that, the website that they have for the ELL department for Heartland, does that provide any resources..
T: I haven't been on that website, but I was just on the listserve hoping to pull information from that, you know, the most current, like who's talking about what and that kind of thing. But, I wasn't seeing a lot lately (laughter).
R: Ok. In your opinion, what is the primary basis for an ELL student to be referred for special ed?
T: So you're saying what would be the reason we would refer?
R: Yeah.
T: I would say significantly below grade level, even among their peers that have been here the same amount of time.
R: Ok.
T: I have had two, I think, that have gone in.
R: Has it been a hard decision to make?
T: It is hard because you really do want to be sure that the language was not the problem.
R: In your opinion, what other reasons might teachers have to refer an English Language Learner?
T: Uh, possibly a work completion type thing, uh... usually, I would say most of us are pretty much that, you know, if they're significantly below grade level and we've tried and tried and we've heard of a history of this in the past. I mean it's not just the one year, we go and see what's been going on before. I kinda think that's pretty much what most of us do.
R: Do you think it's easier having a larger peer group to compare the student to than like in a district that doesn't have very many ELLs?
T: Yeah, I think so. When we first started out, I first started out at Perry, we had one person for the entire district and we didn't have, I mean I've seen that growth from the 5% to what we have now. And, yeah, I mean, we never probably would have even considered special education for those kids in the beginning, because we really didn't know how to compare anything. And now, we do have a group to compare with, so...
R: And you can even build norms for those groups.
T: Yep.
R: And then do you think these reasons for referral are appropriate?
T: Yes.
R: Do you think English Language Learners referred more for special education services than native English speakers?
T: No, I think less. Because it's been very difficult to get beyond the language part and I think that we're starting to get a little better at that lately, than we were maybe three or fours years ago. It was not even to be considered.
R: Do you think English Language Learners benefit from special education services?
T: Yes.
R: And do you think there are possible alternatives to special education referrals for English Language Learners who are not succeeding in the general education setting?
T: Other than pulling them just a little bit more, one on one, and, but it would still be bringing it to their level and providing what they need at their level. Which, you know, you do in the special education background, or services, but then if they were to have that with their own peers, that's maybe....
R: Ok. Are there any other comments you'd like to add regarding the preparation for teaching and/or the referral process for ELLs?
T: I did like that we were starting to build norms for those kids, so we did have a little bit of a basis to compare and I'd like to see that probably updated now that we have a larger population. I think that's been done two or three years ago, I think maybe it's close to three years ago.
R: I think they're working on that right now.
T: Ok, that would be good.
R: And does that compare how many years they've been here or is it just ESL services, do you know?
T: They didn't only pull just the kids in that were in ESL, they pulled some of the kids that were just Spanish speaking or from Spanish speaking homes, they pulled all of those kids.
R: Ok.
T: And they should because that's gonna build that pool.
R: Yeah. Ok, great. Thank you very much for your time.

Interview
M5
5/31/02
R: How were you trained to instruct English Language Learners in a general education setting?
T: In college, uh, there really wasn’t a lot of specific training. Uh, in a few classes there was a paragraph or two in the book, and we briefly went over it maybe for like 15, 20 minutes in the class. Besides that, I really didn’t get a lot of specific training, um, and since I’m not endorsed in that, I didn’t take any special classes towards that. So that was about it.

R: Ok. And what college did you go to?

T: Wartburg.

R: Ok.

T: And I know since then, they’ve been trying to get better at that and things, cause I keep in touch with the professors there.

R: Ok. Great. And you say you speak Spanish, did you get a degree in Spanish, too?

T: No, I did not get a degree. I had four years in highschool and then took two semesters in college and studied abroad in Mexico for five weeks.

R: Oh, Ok. That’s great.

T: So...

R: How were you trained to identify English Language Learners in need of special education services?

T: (laugh) That’s a difficult question. Um, we do a lot of that here, and we kinda have a checklist that we did. We do a lot of things where we look at the students and see if the problem in their native language or if it’s in their second language. A lot of times, we’ll take kids, um, who work in the general area, the same general area, and have been in the United States for the same amount of time, basically like a matched pair and see if one kid is progressing much faster than the other kid. Um, see if there are any problems with siblings, and things like that. So we do have a nice checklist system that we use here and go through.

R: Ok. It sounds like you feel pretty comfortable doing that, then.

T: I wouldn’t say comfortable. I’ve done it a couple times, it’s a hard thing to do, because you definitely don’t want to make a mistake and staff a kid who is just having difficulty learning the language, in special ed, so...

R: Ok. In your opinion, what training will future teachers need to be able to instruct English Language Learners?

T: Well, I think if trends continue, and we have, like for example our school has a high percentage of ELL kids, I think there need to be either a large portion of a class or else a separate class and maybe teaching minority students, or teaching something like that, so that the teachers have an idea, because when you come out and you’re new, I know when I came in I was kinda of just, my eyes were wide open, I was shellshocked, I wasn’t ready for it. I remember my first year, I had my spanish dictionary with me all the time, I didn’t want to lose it. So, I think it would be nice to get a class such as Teaching to Minority Students or something to that effect.

R: Do you think it helps knowing the language that...

T: Oh, Definitely, definitely. It helps to know that foreign language, I think. I know the foreign language requirements are pretty good right now, but if they could even be beefed up a little bit. I think that, now, especially, then ever teachers should have a second language. And it’s just so important. It may not be Spanish, it may be French, Russian, German, Japanese, whatever. But, there are so many people coming to the United States with other languages, we need to know how to communicate with them. It can only help.

R: Uh-huh. In your opinion, what training will future teachers need to be able to identify ELLs in need of special ed?

T: A magic wand (laugh).

R: That would help.

T: No, you know I don’t know, I’ve been to so many conferences and so many workshops and you always think you’re going to get the answer on how you do it. And no one has the answer, right now. They don’t have it, so...I don’t know, I don’t know if you can train in a college setting, I don’t know if you can, cause you really haven’t been out teaching and you haven’t seen what’s expected for your students at a certain grade level. I guess they could maybe go through and talk about you know, identifying special education students, compared to identifying other kids and differences, you know? I guess, also
talking about, like I said the foreign, the native language and seeing if there is a problem in that native language or not. But I don't know how they go about doing that?

R: Well, I know in, um, it seems like here, they try to promote, encourage using their native language, where in other schools they're not encouraged to develop that, so then they have a difficult time comparing the native language with the second language.

T: Yes, and that is so important, too. Cause if you know their problem is prevalent in their native language, and it shows up in their new language, their second language, it's just a big red flag.

R: Uh-huh. Ok, where have you acquired most of your training for the instruction of ELLs?

T: Here, Woodbury, other stuff, Lisa Wymore, in particular has been very good. I did ESL/Bilingual Ed for four years and she taught me so much about it, and I just learned a lot from her. And I guess also workshops and other things like that.

R: But the experience is....

T: The experience, actually doing it, is just so beneficial and I don't know how else...and you know, you go through student teaching and you think you're really ready to be a teacher and then you get out there and you're like, I didn't learn a thing. (laughter) What did they teach me? Nothing, I'm not ready. That was my thought my first year.

R: Yeah, well I think everyone kinda feels that way.

T: Uh-huh.

R: Ok, uh, through your teacher education program, it sounded like they kinda touched on it, but nothing specific or formal.

T: Nope.

R: And then, have you attended any group inservices, workshops, conferences?

T: Um, yeah. I've gone to the ESL conference a few times.

R: In Des Moines?

T: In Des Moines, and I've also done, um, we've had some conferences and people come in and speak at our AEA, and uh, I've been to those.

R: Are they pretty good about bringing people in the AEA and...

T: Yeah, they're not too bad. I mean, they do a lot and now with the budget cuts I think there will be a lot less, I know there's going to be a lot less. So, but they have been very good at doing that.

R: And then have you done anything on your own, as far as workshops, or conferences, inservices?

T: No. Not really. I'm a busy guy, so I don't have a lot of time.

R: Ok, we talked about having specific classes or formal training in the teacher ed program, is there something you would get rid of in the teacher ed program to make room for that new training?

T: I don't know. I don't know, um, I don't think, not that I can remember back, you know, it's been, I can't believe it's been that long since I've been in there! But, uh, you know, I think all the classes we took were really needed, at least to a point. I can't think of anything that I would really have to take out.

R: Ok. What sources have you used for personal growth in this area? And which one of those would you recommend for pre-service and in-service teachers.

T: There's some decent books out, some different, good text books they have, or books, you can read on it. There's some good Internet sites that are out. And I guess the best thing you can do, is if you have some really good teachers that are doing it, talk to them.

R: Do a lot of teachers from other districts come in and talk to you guys?

T: Yes, we get a large amount of people coming in to observe, talk with us, they're in taking notes, we've been on TV, Iowa Public Television, and all kinds of stuff. So...and I get emails from people asking questions.

R: Ok. In your opinion, what is the primary reason for an ELL student to be referred for special education services?

T: In my opinion?

R: Uh-huh.

T: Uh, that they are having some skill or some area of deficiency in their primary language. And that's the biggest thing, that they're not, they can't see that that problem, you know, they may have a problem in
their new, second language, but their problem is based in their own language, it has to base cause that’s where they’re comfortable at. So let me go back and see, well, you know, if Francis, if her doing a reading and we do it bilingually and if we see that this student is really struggling in reading in English, she can’t pick it up, and they go her Spanish isn’t very good either, that’s a good possibility that there’s a problem there and need to go look further into.

R: Do you do, um, assessments in both languages?
T: Yes.
R: Do you do assessments for other teachers?
T: Uh, I don’t personally anymore, I used to. But…
R: Time conflicts?
T: Yeah, and we have so many people that are bilingual here, that they take care of that. Our ESL teachers take care of that.
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R: Time conflicts?
T: Yeah, and we have so many people that are bilingual here, that they take care of that. Our ESL teachers take care of that.
R: Um…, in your opinion, what other reasons might teachers refer an English Language Learner for special ed?
T: You mean others that might not be good reasons? Um, I’ve seen, no, they’re not paying attention, they can’t focus, um, they can’t read, you know, they can’t read English, um, they can’t answer my, you know, they don’t give me eye contact, if they’re depressed, like I mean not depressed, what’s the word, yeah, they’re having depression because they’re not making eye contact, their head’s always down, um, all kinds of things like that. Which are definitely not the right thing to do.
R: And that’s my next question, do you think those are appropriate?
T: No, no, they’re not appropriate. Cause I think a lot of kids who are staffed in special education that did not need to be staffed.
R: Here?
T: Maybe here, before, awhile, a long time ago. But I know in other buildings that I have talked with people have said that there’s kids getting staffed and they don’t think they should be getting staffed and after they talk with us, they go, oh they shouldn’t be staffed.
R: Ok. In your opinion, are English Language Learners referred more for special ed than native English speakers?
T: Um, here, I don’t think so. I mean it’s tough when you look at all the referrals and kinda look at the percentages. We do that, too. And you have to realize that we are a very high percentage in that, so a higher percentage of our kids probably are going to be referred are going to be EL Learners. So, I don’t think it out of the...what’s the word?
R: Out of proportion?
T: Yes, thank you, out of proportion for what we’re looking at as far as the population goes.
R: Do you think in other schools it would be different?
T: I think it might be different in other schools, I think there would be too high of a percentage of ELL students being referred.
R: Do you believe that ELLs benefit from special ed?
T: I think, it depends individually on each student. And I know in the past I’ve had a student who you know, definitely we knew there was a problem, and we went through the referral process, he was, he needed special education, but we deemed it more important for him to stay in here and get Spanish help. Cause he didn’t speak English. And, so, he stayed in there. That’s an example of that case. Um, but there are other students who are ELL learners that cannot function in the classroom, they need to get out, and they do get more out of it. Although it would be nice if there was a bilingual tutor or a bilingual person who could help him out in there if possible. But at the time, we don’t have it.
R: Ok.
T: Yeah, the kids do take good care of each other, though. If they see someone is struggling, they do help them out.
R: That’s good. Um, what are possible alternatives to special ed referrals for ELLs who are not succeeding in general ed?
T: Um, can you repeat that one more time?
R: What are some alternatives to special ed referrals for ELLs who are not succeeding in general ed?
T: I don't know, um...
R: Well, a lot of times, we get them with a buddy, maybe an older buddy an older kid, or you pair them up in the classroom with somebody who can kinda help them out a little bit, you might do some modifications on their work load, do less problems, they can do them better. And there's all kinds of modifications, in their program. What you do for kids who are resourced for special ed... what you do in the classroom.

R: And it sounds like what you said before with the student that needed to continue getting help in the classroom rather than putting him in special ed, that's a good alternative.

T: Yeah, it's a very individually based decision, so...

R: Ok. Are there any other comments you'd like to add about teacher preparation or the referral process for ELLs?

T: I think, like I said, the referral process is hard and there's no, as I call them, no easy solution to it. It's a case by case situation. And hopefully, it would be nice if we could get, if there was some kind of framework for, it'd go across state or something like that. So you'd know to check this, this, this, this, and this. Um, cause it's so hard to make it up and not so hard to follow. It's hard for the people who don't speak the language to understand what the problem is. And I think, the teacher preparation program, in Iowa, especially Wartburg, for the most part, is fairly good. At least when I was there. I would like to see a higher foreign language component with it, if possible. I think that might help.

R: What was required at Wartburg? One semester?

T: I think we had to have one year.

R: One year?

T: Yeah.

R: Wow, that is good.

T: So, I'm not positive, but I think it was one year.

R: Great, thank you very much.

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Interview

M6

5/29/02

R: How were you trained to instruct English Language Learners in a general ed setting?

T: How were we trained? We have had no formal training, we have been to districts and watched how they are doing their program. Um, we have had just recently, some training with Dr. Tidwell and some math training from Heidi Barnett, Burnett and they're helping us with um, what am I trying to say, they are giving us some ideas, I guess, of things we can do also. Otherwise it's been a lot of trial and error. I've been teaching it for, with a Spanish teacher for the last, I think it's been six years, we're the first ones who started. There's just been a lot of trial and error, we read books, you know, we presented at conferences in Des Moines, and listened to other people, you know, so, we've had no formal training.

R: Ok. When you say you were working with a Spanish teacher, is it like a bilingual, um, and she's an accredited teacher or is it an ESL teacher?

T: Lisa Wymore is a, she is now our district bilingual person, and um, she's, I think she's certified in whatever, has her Master's. And she's wonderful.

R: So then do you collaborate with her? Does she come to the classroom when your teaching?

T: Uh-huh. We taught all, teach from 8:30 to a quarter to eleven with all of our reading and writing. And then she comes back for Math for one hour and, um, and now she has that job and Anel took over, so Anel's doing it now. And Anel has come in with a lot of fresh ideas and knows where our kids have been and where they're going because she was there, too when she was younger.

R: Ok. How were you trained to identify English Language Learners in need of special ed?

T: Um, there again, Lisa has probably helped me the most with that, and we would, there's a lot of um, I can't even talk this morning, um, people are still, have a lot of different feelings on special ed and what, when you should identify them, and uh, like we just went to West Liberty, and they don't even have a special ed program there.
R: Oh wow.
T: And their kids are just kinda in there with them and, I take that back, I think they do, but its just that, they don't identify them as young, and so we just collaborate again, we say, you know, with Lisa here, as a second language, you know the Spanish teacher, she can see what they can do in Spanish and I can see what they do in English and then we collaborate and watch them and keep stats, I guess. You know, like our principal, he might, he has, he seems second ideas on that, but he listens to what we say, because he knows we know best on that. It's hard with the language barrier, it really is.
R: And with the young kids, too.
T: Exactly, right. But when you see time over time over time, that you know, we compare them, you know, a lot with the average child, or the average child that has been in the states that long, too. So...
R: So you look at acculturation and...
T: Uh-huh. (laughter)
R: Ok. What training, do you think future teachers will need to be able to instruct English Language Learners?
T: Honestly, as much as I griped about this class that we're taking, it's wonderful to just see how others and to visit other schools and to see how they're doing it, and not that they're all, you know, doing the right thing, but there again, they're just trying too. But, I think, I don't know how valuable our math was, you know, it's just, I think just the main thing is you getting together as your school, you deciding on your goals, your, which we have, we have had, we have a school belief system that we all believe in, and um, then we meet regularly, you know, like twice a week at our school. And I think it's real important that, and we talk about a lot of things. It's just an ongoing process.
R: Uh-huh. So you would say it should be done at the district level rather than the teacher ed program or individual research?
T: I think all of its good, you know, because I have learned from all that. I think they need to be educated, though. Like some of the other schools, are like ohhhhh, you know, when we first started, I got a Spanish kid here what do I do with him? You know? They're just paranoid at what to do and I think they just, I think they need to be educated on what do you do with them. And there again it's, there again, its teacher opinionated, you know? So, everybody has their different ideas on what they think. And know we're talking about the two languages, you know, should they, the code switching, you know? Should we talk in Spanish and then in English, should we, in our dual language program, now, next year, it's going to be one day Spanish, one day English, or morning Spanish or afternoon, it's just going to be one or the other. And we will not interpret for them. So....
R: It'll be hard.
T: It will be hard, it'll be hard for me, I don't know that much Spanish.
R: You'll learn quick though.
T: I'm taking a Spanish class now, twice a week, and it's hard you know, when you're older, it's hard. Oh yeah, they're going to do great things. And one of the gals who watched a dual language video, it was these kids have gone just like what ours are going to do. K through 7, hers went through and ours are going to go K through 5 or K through 4, she said they're proficient in both languages. I mean, it's wonderful.
R: Kids learn so fast.
T: Yeah, oh yeah, they do! They just soak it right up. You know, when they come in here, they just, they know, not know, but they, you know within a year they're great. But, even with months it's amazing. But we have a lot of help here, at Woodbury.
R: Yeah, you have a lot of support.
T: Yeah, we really do.
R: Are there other teachers from other districts that seek your help if they, you know, like I worked in West Des Moines, last semester and they had one English Language Learner, and they didn't know what to do, so they put him in special ed. And so, I think this would be a good resource for other districts.
T: Yeah, we have school districts that come in, we have student teachers from UNI come in by the droves, we have teachers, yes from all over the district asking us things, and um, we have a wealth of material and resources here at Woodbury. Yeah, we know next year it's even going to be worse.

R: Uh-huh, yeah. What training do you think will future teachers might need to be able to identify English Language Learners for special ed?

T: Um, training for that, well there again, we haven't had any formal training, um, there all still out there trying to, you know, get even papers in Spanish. We just this year got um, special education papers for parents, like their rights and everything, all in Spanish. That was helpful, we just staffed one of our little girls, and that was helpful to the parent, I know. But, a lot of them can't read, a lot of parents can't read English or Spanish, they've had like a second grade education. So, um, I guess there again, maybe their school needs to get together and they need to say, what are we looking at and what kinds of things are we looking at if we think, what's your criteria? You know?

R: Uh-huh. Do you think building level or district level norms would help for identification?

T: I don't know, they need to look at district too, though. You know? They do.

R: I know one thing Perry's been working on is developing the ELL norms. But then that doesn't take into consideration if they're receiving ESL services, or how long they've been there, you know they can't pull that out, but they'd have separate norms for ELL students. Which I think is going to help.

T: Hmm, uh-huh. There is a lot of data on the kids, as much data, there's as much data going on in school (laugh).  

R: It's the right place for it. Ok. Where have you acquired most of your training for the instruction of ELLs?

T: Training? On our own. I mean that's basically been it.

R: Did you gain any training through your teacher ed program?

T: Teacher ed, as in college?

R: University level, uh-huh.

T: Just now! This has been a good crazy class that I'm in.

R: Ok, uh-huh. And that's the bilingual ed...

T: Uh-huh, methods and materials class.

R: And is that a graduate level?

T: Yes. (laughter). I'm trying to think if we've taken any other classes, not really, there's not a lot. I've been out of school for your know, 24 years, so, they had nothing. We had no Spanish speakers at that time, you know, so...

R: Where did you go for your college?

T: UNI.

R: OK, and then you've been here at Marshalltown?

T: Uh-huh, I was born and raised here (laughter).

R: And then, group inservices, like through the district...or....

T: I'm trying to think if Lisa ever taught anything, I think Lisa, um, Lisa teach... I don't think she taught anything either, even though she is our district person. We haven't had anything really.

R: And then, um, like individual inservices? Did you go to any conferences or workshops on your own?

T: Um, we went three years in a row to um, the big, um Diversity Conference in Des Moines. And we presented once there and just talking with all those people kinda got us started, you know, it kinda helped us understand what we're doing more. We've read lots of articles, you know, just, I think it's good that again, that you're educated as far as you understand that when a child comes in, their not going to understand you know, be fluent in their language for seven years, you know, and, and, instead of, you know, they just need, you know, they're filled with all this anguish and they just need to sit there, and if they need to go to the bathroom ten times a day, you know, let them go, you know, they're gonna get a headache, you know, just taking this Spanish class now, I understand it even more so, you know. That's more training that our school has gotten at the district is that we have a free Spanish class offered twice a week.
R: Oh, that’s really nice.
T: It’s through our grant, though.
R: Ok.
T: See, and our grant is going to offer, you’ll need to come back when our grant gets rolling, cause that’s wonderful. In fact, they’re paying for this class.
R: Oh really? Wow.
T: (laughter) 690 dollars.
R: And that was a federal grant, wasn’t it?
T: Um, I think so.
R: Now, that Spanish class is that free to all the teachers or is it a requirement?
T: The Spanish classes are free to the whole school. Parents, secretaries, our custodian just passed the test with 99% accuracy.
R: Wow, that’s incredible!
T: Yeah, I mean and we have other teachers that, no way, they’re not passing, you know, so she’s real happy with herself.
R: I know, one day I came in here and I heard the gym teacher speaking Spanish.
T: Oh, did you? And he is like me, I mean doesn’t know anything, so that’s good, very good (laughter).
R: Ok, since such training wasn’t available through your college program, would you have liked it to be in the program?
T: When I went to UNI you mean?
R: Uh-huh.
T: Oh yeah! I mean and there might have been, it wasn’t through education, no it wasn’t in the education part, I’m sure it wasn’t.
R: Uh-huh, I know they still don’t have it for just general ed teachers.
T: Yeah, they need a lot of it. Yeah, they need a lot of that.
R: What would you have gotten rid of in the program to make room for that training?
T: Oh, let’s see. (laughter) Statistical, no, any of the math part, (laughter), um, I would have gotten rid of teachers (laughter). Is, um I think she’s still there, and everybody hates her, but I really liked her, it was her first year, and she’s like, oh, darn it, she’s the only one left I think, real tall and skinny, and she’s like your, one of the block teachers.
R: Oh, I don’t know.
T: Oh, you’re not there?
R: I’m not in the teacher ed program, I’m in the school psych program.
T: Oh, oh, the school psych program, I hope you’re not analyzing me right now.
R: No, I just work with the kids. (laughter)
T: Alright, are you going to be a psychologist, is that it?
R: Uh-huh.
T: Oh, my daughter was kind of interested in that. You have to get your Masters for that?
R: Yeah, well for school psychology, yeah, a Masters plus 30.
T: Oh, oh, oh my gosh you must be smart. How many years have you gone?
R: Well, I went three undergrad and then two graduate.
T: Two years.
R: It was full time, 15 credit semesters.
T: Oh, ummm.
R: I’m glad to be done.
T: Oh, I bet you are. Oh dear.
R: Ok, so is there anything else that you would have gotten rid of in the program to make room for the ELL training?
T: Oh, honestly, let’s think, I really liked Tella, that was good, we always made puppets and games and stuff … no I don’t.
R: I know other people have talked about adding it as a theme in the classes, you know, like you had your math class, and then you'd have a section on how would you do this with ELL students, and then you'd have your reading or writing class and they'd say this is how you'd do it with, you know...

T: That'd be a wonderful idea! That's a wonderful idea, it really is. Like your math section, I had this one math class with this horrible teacher, and she's gone, but then I took a methods class, with this tall, big, guy and he's still there, and he taught it like, you know, hands on, like it should be taught, and that would be wonderful to incorporate, you know, if you had, you know, some second language learners, you know, this is how you would teach, how would you do that. That's a really good idea, it really is. It's almost like those college professors would have to do training, to you know. But, that's a wonderful idea, it really is. A component in each one of those education classes. It really would, especially the reading and language, you know, course.

R: They could almost do a whole class.

T: Yeah, yeah. Reading and language with second language learners, that's a good idea.

R: Ok, you've talked about this already, what sources have you used for personal growth in this area? You talked about reading articles, and taking those classes.

T: I try to do anything that's available, you know, but things are really limited around here, because we're about the only school that really does anything. But, um, yeah, we read articles and books and we've had, um, yeah, a couple people come in, not much. We visited, I visited, quite a few schools that had any type of program. And, my class is helping out, my Spanish gives me some confidence, and makes the kids, you know, think that I'm trying.

R: Do you use it in the classroom very often?

T: Oh, very, just a little, you know, and it's really fun because then they'll laugh, you know, because I'll get new little words, you know, sentences like, sientense, um, por favor, um, and they're like ohhh, especially the ones that are just here and just smile like, she's learned some Spanish (laughter).

R: They just love it.

T: Oh, they do, they love it. And so they're helping right now, cause for our test we had to know all the days of the week and the months of the year, so, I'll put my body in front and I'll say them, you know, for ever. It's so hard, I missed like the last two on the days of the week and they'd say no, try it again Mrs. Harvey, so I'd try it again, so, you know, it's kinda fun that way.

R: Uh-huh. Ok, in your opinion, what is the primary reason for an English Language Learner to be referred for special ed?

T: The primary reason? Um, after um, after lots of data from the Spanish teacher and an English teacher and you know, lots of interventions, that's kinda what we do. We see what the problem is on our paper and then we um, we contact the parent and tell them our concerns and then we're gonna try some things, a couple of things, ok? And so, if those don't work, then we call the parent again and say we're gonna try a couple more things, so we try a couple more things, and um, then we have them in. And sometimes, I do feel like I wait too long. Like I think I waited too long on this little girl this year, but I just, I was just hoping that maybe she was just going to click with me, you know? But, you know, she didn't, and there again we did a lot of assessing in English and Spanish, we did small groups with her, I had her work with a native specialist, and then we finally did a pull out, she wasn't identified yet, she just went in with a special ed teacher and with all those (interruption)

R: So, small groups, a native specialist...

T: Uh-huh, assessing in both languages, talking with parents, um, making sure the special ed team knows of the name maybe and um... When we had three of our kids go with the special education teacher, and she kinda see what they were doing, what they were like, and what she thought. And, now it's at the end of the year and we just had a staffing for them and the parents knew all along that we were looking, they were all very supportive, they all have to be very supportive and they just want their kids to learn English. I mean they don't even care about Spanish. They really want them to learn English, they do. So we say, read in Spanish and they're like, we can? Oh yes, have lots of things around, and then you wonder how much they can read and you don't want to insult them, but um, this last daddy said, oh I will, I promise I will. (laughter) He just didn't realize that he could do that, you know?
R: And that's like a cultural difference, as far as what they were used to in the school system being separate and not working together more. We really focus on collaborating in the school.

T: Yes, and if you could see where Dr. Renze just got back from, I'm going to say it wrong, it looks like Micochichin, or something like that, that's where most of our families are from.

R: Oh, ok.

T: And they took pictures of the school.

R: So he went down there and visited?

T: It's awesome, I mean, I know.

R: That's incredible.

T: Goll, if we could go down there, but it's so poor down there, and just little actual shacks for houses, the school looks like a bomb shelter, we wanted to adopt them, you know. And I said think of all the stuff I could send down there, tons of stuff? Nothing on the walls, they had like tables and chairs that looked like they'd been through bomb shelters, I mean, you know, like a bomb. It was just, no light in there, I mean it was, and he said it was all ages in there and the teacher might go for a couple hours in the morning, so you can see the....

R: Where they're coming from.

T: Oh yeah. Yeah, it's something. I mean, he had picture of little boys walking burros down the dirt roads, you know?

R: Traditional Mexico (laughter).

T: Yeah, and they, the kids, I love talking to them about, I love talking to them about the things, that you know, they went back, a lot of them go back and for like two weeks at a time. And oh, they had to help their grandmother wash, you know, in the creek.

R: Wow.

T: I mean, just on a rock and then they lay them out and let them dry, and then they brought back pictures and there's, you know, they had a tub outside and I said what is that for and she said oh, it's for, oh I had to take a bath in there. I said you did?

R: Oh my gosh.

T: So, yeah that's where they took their baths.

R: I bet they just love that you know, understand where they came from, you know?

T: I love it.

R: That you know what their hometown looks like and...

T: Oh yeah, and the pictures, Dr. Renze made an actual, you know, a three, a poster, and put it down there so all the parents, cause there's a lot of Spanish parents that come in and pick up their kids and bring them in the morning, they're really good. And so they could see that too. It was really nice. And he's done a couple slide shows, and they have a diversity committee here in town that's he's on, and people from all over the committee come and try to learn about...but it's not, our town isn't real accepting right now.

R: But there's other towns that are worse.

T: Really?

R: They're further behind. Ok. Do you think there are other reasons might teachers refer an English Language Learner for special ed?

T: Other reasons why they might refer them. Well there mostly learning problems. Can you give me any hints what you're thinking about?

R: Well, um, like some teachers have said that they use Math as an indicator

T: Use what?

R: Math as an indicator because they don't feel like the language is that intertwined. So, they, they think, that is a good indicator that they have a learning problem, without having to get into the language issue. Or, like I said, some districts who don't have the language services want to give the student some help, you know, any way they can, so they try to get them in through special ed to get them that extra help.

T: I see, uh-huh. It's amazing, all of our, all of our math, all of our Spanish kids are really strong in math. You know, because they have that, you know, there is not as much reading in there. We have a new, a new investigation program in all those tubs over there and there's a lot of hands on, or it's all hands on,
and um, then we, then there’s not as much, you know, with the reading, and um, there’s more talking, therefore they can have a proficient Spanish person and one that’s just learning and I mean, it’s just, it’s amazing, but all of ours are pretty high in Math right now.

R: That’s nice, it helps when you can take out the language factor and let them use their hands.

T: That’s right.

R: Ok. And the reasons that we talked about for English Language Learners, do you think those are appropriate? Like how you do your referrals here in your district.

T: Um, we just have such great help from our special education team and we all try to work together, because, it’s just like kinda scaffolding here type of effect I guess. We’re all one, we all work with them, we eventually we might get them, you know, so I mean, um, we just want the best for them, and um, this is the best we can do right now, you know, what we see, I guess. I’m happy with what we’re doing, yes I am. I know, I think if you interviewed like a kindergarten teacher right now, or first grade teacher, they wouldn’t say the same thing. They, I think their philosophy downstairs, I don’t know if it’s our principal’s more, they want to give them that time. So when they come to us, in second grade, then it seems like we’re the ones doing all the referring and, you know. I had Lisa so she was kinda our district person anyway, so she really seemed to be more qualified with, you know, really with that.

R: Uh-huh.

T: So, no, I think that, I’ve heard some little gripes down there about, because they’re feeling bad because they just know this child is going to be problems in second, when they come to second grade and, we’re trying to get them help, but they know they won’t. So they’re just letting us know, that they’ve tried everything. And, nothing’s going to happen I don’t think until the second grade, so...

R: And at that point, you still continue to do interventions?

T: I do, yes, because I think they’re going to change. You know? And sometimes, they do, you know? Teachers, or growing up, or the language clicks, you know, there are different things that, you know, all kinds of factors! So, yeah, I do. No I don’t put them right in, I never do. I want to give them the gift of time for something.

R: In your opinion, are English Language Learners referred more for special ed than native English speakers?

T: No, no. With our percent climbing though, it might be beginning to change just a little bit. Cause we have more Spanish than English here now, you know, so that might be changing a little bit. I’m just thinking, if I went down into Siryel Mann’s room, I’d see more English kids right now, but it’s close, it’s close.

R: Do you think they’re referred about equally then? Or do you think it’s easier for a teacher to refer a native English speaker?

T: I think it’s easier for a teacher to refer a native, yes, I sure do. Well, because we always have that language barrier, is it just that? But just getting an English one in our, you know, our school, it’s hard. You have to do a lot of things first. Which is good, you know, it’s very good.

R: Do you think English Language Learners benefit from special ed services?

T: Oh yeah, yeah, definitely. My kids, my three that have been going there then that weren’t in the program yet, she can just, you know, there they are, right here, you know, I mean, and she has, um, like I steal a lot of her ideas when they come back with stuff, you know, but she has the training in just the special ed things that apply to all kids, you know. But she has some really neat things, and then I’ll just steal her ideas and use them with the whole class. But she has that time to work with them and touch them, you know. Oh definitely, yeah.

R: So, the smaller ratio helps?

T: Oh my gosh, yes. And she can find what might work with them, and you know, even though we’ve all tried at that.

R: Ok. And a lot of these you already talked about. What are possible alternatives to special ed referrals for English Language Learners who aren’t succeeding in general ed curriculum? And I heard you talk about small groups and pull out, and a native specialist, assessing in both languages, involving the parents, the special ed team, reading to them in Spanish, diversity committee, I don’t know if there’s anything else you use. It sounds like you do a lot of interventions inside the classroom.
T: Yeah we do.
R: And you pull out other people to come in, like other specialists, to come into the classroom.
T: Yeah, and I was going to say, most of, we don’t have an ESL pull out at all. It’s all in the classroom, and I have a native specialist working with, you know, we rotate groups saying who needs, it’s just, you know? It’s amazing, now if they have their first language, if they can read and write in their first language and then they come here and then the other one, we’ve been watching them, that’s so much fun, and then maybe the other one hasn’t had much schooling, no matter where they’re from. It’s amazing to see the takeoff, I mean, they can just, cause they have, you know, the Spanish language and English aren’t that much different, you know really different. And they, except their vowels are different and so that...
R: Pronunciation?
T: Yeah, so they still have some problems with that, but um, (interruption)
OUT OF TIME

Interview
M11
5/30/02
R: How were you trained to instruct ELLs in a general education setting?
T: We really haven’t had formal training, um, I know that several people in the building that have ELLs, had been off daily for training and have had different conferences they’ve attended. Um, right now, I’m starting to attend some classes from Deb Tidwell.
R: Ok.
T: That’s through the grant. But that’s really, and I’ve missed the last two classes because we had a death in the family and a birth in the family. So, I’ve been gone the last two sessions, I’ve had very little of that, too.
R: And then, are you taking any Spanish classes? You say you speak a little?
T: I’m taking a Spanish class through the grant, yes.
R: Ok. How were you trained to identify ELLs in need of special ed?
T: Basically I have a special ed teacher in here that really helps me identify, um, I don’t sometimes feel qualified to identify them. Sometimes I feel like they need help and I’m never sure if they’ve been here long enough to qualify, so that’s something that I still question. The special ed teacher works with me, and that’s why I have special ed kids in here and the ELL kids are in the other.
R: Ok, so this is a collaborative classroom, then with the special ed teacher.
T: And basically, I have, any of them that are in here, um, usually don’t qualify because they’re more advanced. I either have the top end or the special ed, but I don’t have a lot of the ELL kids that need a lot of Spanish instruction.
R: Ok, what training do you think future teachers will need to be able to instruct English Language Learners?
T: Uh, I really feel that you need some formal training, um, I think the grant is going to help us a lot. I think when we’re finished with this, we’ll probably be more qualified than any school in Marshalltown.
R: And maybe even the state.
T: Maybe the state.
R: Do you think that formal training should come through the district then, rather than like through the college, or on your own?
T: Well, yeah. I think the district, since we have such a high population, I think we’re in the seventies, or close to seventy here. But the district should provide some training. But I know if it’s left up to classes that you’re to take, a lot of people will steer away from them. I really feel they would.
R: What training will future teachers need to be able to identify ELLs in need of special ed?
T: Well, I guess if their going to expect the classroom teacher to do this, they’re going to need more help on just the special ed end of it, alone. I don’t even feel sometimes qualified to identify the actual special ed kids, let alone the special ed kids that are Spanish speakers.
R: Uh-huh. And do you think would be something they could provide through the district or the university, or how, where do you think the best...
T: Well, I think each district probably needs to provide what is necessary for their area.
R: Uh-huh. More individualized then.
T: And since the kids are going to have a choice, and since they're going to have a choice all over Marshalltown, whether they come here or not, and we see the instruction, I think the district should be expected to provide that help.
R: Uh-huh, ok, great. Where have you acquired most of your training for the instruction of ELLs?
T: Deb Tidwell, um, actually uh, I'm only in the third grade, it hasn't come here because Lisa Wymore is in the other third grade. So, she has helped the third grade a lot.
R: But she's with another class?
T: She's with the other class.
R: And do you do any research on your own or articles.
T: Every once in a while, I'm on the SIP team here and every once in a while Tom will send out articles for us to read and discuss. That's probably, the articles I have read have been through our principal.
R: And you said SIP team, what's that?
T: Uh-huh, the School Improvement Team.
R: Ok. Was there any training provided through your teacher ed program at the University?
T: Not way back when I was there(laughter). No.
R: And, what University did you attend?
T: University of Iowa.
R: Ok. Um, and then group inservices, did you attend any group inservices?
T: Here again, since I'm not on that end of it, the other third grade teacher had the opportunity to go those inservices. And she's really the one, and I know Julie, Julie Harvey and Kathy and a few of them downstairs would attend conferences and things in Des Moines, and I've never had that opportunity.
R: Ok. And then, have you done anything individually, like have you gone to workshops or conferences on your own?
T: Since I really wasn't responsible for them, I need to do that now, I really do.
R: Ok, would you have liked to replace something in your teacher ed at the University level to make room for the training for ELL instruction?
T: Yeah, but you know it's been such a long time. I don't even know if they would have had those special classes then.
R: Well, they don't have many now, either.
T: The thing of it is, I don't think there were any immigrants of any kind that I can even recall that were here. Especially when I went to Marshalltown, it was a very elite area, you know, where there was very little diversity, period. And so, I just think that's why because I feel the University of Iowa is good, that I just feel like there wasn't a need for it, at the time I was taking it.
R: Right. Is there something that you think they could get rid of in the programs they have now to make room for that training?
T: I don't know if I can help you, because I don't know what's available right now. I felt at a lot, at the time, a lot of, at that time, a lot of the elementary education core classes, like elementary science, and elementary reading, really did not prepare me because we were reading philosophy books and I never got into the classroom.
R: Oh, ok.
T: So, I know that's happening now, so I think that's good. But as far as changing it, I wouldn't know, you know, what it really looks like.
R: What sources have you used for personal growth in this area?
T: I use Lisa a lot, um, and I did take one, I did take a Spanish class from a high school instructor and that was offered like maybe 5 or 6 six years ago and that where I have a little bit of background, but not much.
R: Ok. Would you recommend that for teachers that are coming into the district?
T: (nod)
R: Ok. In your opinion, what is the primary reason for an English Language Learner to be referred for special ed?
T: Umm, I guess I feel if they’re not making gains at all if they do not really have a strong understanding of reading and written language at this level, that they’re not going to take off, and if they’ve had previous, if they’ve been here all they way through from kindergarten on and they’re still struggling. I feel there’s probably a need to intervene, especially with the vocabulary and, I really feel that that’s, the vocabulary is a real barrier for most of those kids.
R: What other reasons might a teacher refer an English Language Learner for special ed?
T: Hmm, well special ed encompasses BD and everything else, if their behavior is hindering their learning. Or speech, I guess, is special ed, I mean... We had a little girl this year who was having some real difficulty with retrieval problem, it was a retrieval problem, but that, she didn’t seem to have it in her native language or English.
R: Ok, so that’s something that they’ll look at both languages then as well.
T: Yes.
R: Do you think these reasons are appropriate for referral to special ed?
T: Uh-huh.
R: Ok. In your opinion, are English Language Learners referred more for special ed services than native English speakers?
T: No. Not here anyway.
R: Do you think they’re equal or less?
T: I think we refer them less, simply because it’s taking us awhile to figure out if they’ve had enough of their own language reading to qualify.
R: Uh-huh.
T: And maybe lack of understanding, you know, lack of our understanding. We just kinda leave it up to the ELL teacher.
R: Do you believe that the English Language Learners benefit from special ed services?
T: Sometimes.
R: Could you explain that?
T: Well I think they move at a slower rate, the teacher that’s working with them, well it depends on if it’s SCI. Sometimes they end up in SCI and they move at a much slower rate. If they’re in a regular classroom, immersed in the classroom, the special ed teacher is usually there, available, and so they’re getting more individualized help.
R: Uh-huh. Ok. And then what possible alternatives for special education referrals for English Language Learners who is not succeeding in general ed?
T: I think maybe ELL tutors, pull out at that point for periods of the day, not total day because they need to be immersed in the language, too. I mean, I think maybe, for the reading block, then have them in the regular classroom for the rest of the time.
R: Ok, are there any other interventions that you do in the classroom, or....
T: Well I do a lot of, I work with buddies a lot and peer tutoring. They can really help them more than I can, because they have a better way of explaining things to them. Simpler I guess.
R: Ok. Are there any other comments you’d like to add about the preparation for teaching or the identification for special ed in your district.
T: Really, I feel that the teachers that from what I’m seeing, the teachers that have been involved with the ELL learners, have gotten a pretty good training here. I guess I feel that I’m not one of those lucky people for now. I’m a little overwhelmed with how this new program is going to work, the grant, how it’s going to work when it comes to the third grade. But they assured me there will an ELL teacher in the classroom.
R: Ok, so there’ll be a collaborative classroom? That will be nice.
T: Yeah.
R: And then as the grant gets rolling, are they going to provide more training to the rest of the teachers?
T: Yeah. There’s a lot of funding for that and I think there’ll be a lot of ongoing, right now, it’s K,1, and a little bit of 2 that’s going to be starting next year, but we’ve all started our training. So I think it’ll be
ongoing for the next five years, when they’re by the end of fifth grade, all of these kids are supposed to be speaking both languages fluently. Here, they’re going to be hearing in English one day and Spanish the next day and they’re going to continue to move the lessons along, but they’re going to have an every other experience. It’ll be interesting.

R: Yeah, it’ll be exciting. Ok, that’s it.