

English Learners With Learning Disabilities: What is the Current State?

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As the demographics across the United States continues to change, specifically with increases in school age English Learners who speak a home language other than English, it is imperative that schools meet the diverse needs of these children. This article summarizes studies about English Learners with learning disabilities. It reports on the analysis of 21 articles. Results indicate that the areas of prevention and early intervention, referral and decision making, assessment procedures, teaching strategies, and disproportionality and overrepresentation are important topics to consider with respect to the education of English Learners with learning disabilities.

Keywords: English learners, learning disabilities, bilingual assessment

According to Title VII of the Improving America's School Act of 1994 (Public Law 103-382), a Limited English Proficient student has significant difficulty reading, writing, speaking, or comprehending English, which may not allow for the student to learn or participate fully in a classroom where instruction is solely delivered in English (Rhodes, Ochoa, & Ortiz, 2005). States have operationalized this federal definition, and thus, state-level definitions and criteria vary (Rhodes, Ochoa, & Ortiz, 2005). According to Kindler (2002), approximately three quarters of English Learners in schools in the U.S. are Spanish speakers. The term "Limited English Proficient" will not be used in the remainder of this article due to its negative connotation; instead, the term "English Learners" (ELs) will be used.

Rhodes and his colleagues (2005) discuss three elements important to consider in bilingualism: variations in degrees of proficiency across both languages, sequential versus simultaneous bilingualism, and elective versus circumstantial bilingualism. Bilingualism is best understood as a continuum. There are three types of variations in degree of proficiency. A non-balanced bilingual is stronger across all domains (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) in the first primary language than in the second language. A balanced bilingual has commensurate levels of proficiency across domains in both languages. A mixed bilingual is stronger in one domain in the first language but stronger in another

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domain in the second language. Regarding the second element, a sequential bilingual is initially a monolingual speaker in their native language and then exposed to a new language at a later time while a simultaneous bilingual learns both languages at the same time. As for the third element mentioned, an elective bilingual selects to learn a new language while a circumstantial bilingual has to learn a new language in order to survive. The majority of bilingual students are non-balanced or mixed bilinguals with sequential and circumstantial bilingualism (Rhodes, Ochoa, & Ortiz, 2005).

With respect to accurate identification of ELs with disabilities and their programs of study, school psychologists need to be prepared to accurately and appropriately assess and intervene with culturally and linguistically diverse students. After reviewing the policies and guidance for identifying learning disabilities (LD) in EL students in each state, it was revealed that some states have no policies regarding practices with EL students (Scott, Boynton Hauerwas, & Brown, 2014). Literature has also documented an overrepresentation of CLD children in special education (Sullivan, 2011), especially when these students are EL (Sullivan, 2011). Hence, it is important for school psychologists to have access to and to be trained to use nondiscriminatory assessment procedures in order to distinguish between second language development and learning disabilities (Olvera, & Gomez-Cerrillo, 2011). The difficulty of accurately identifying LD in EL students is further complicated by the shortage of appropriate assessment tools for ELs and by the lack of staff who are multilingual and multiculturally competent (Zehler, Fleishman, Hopstock, Pendzick, & Stephenson, 2003). A bilingual assessment needs to be conducted before bilingual children can be identified as having a LD. This can be done by a bilingual school psychologist or by a monolingual school psychologist with an interpreter (Rhodes, Ochoa, & Ortiz, 2005). The most common practice is to use interpreters (Chu & Flores, 2011). When working with interpreters it is important that the interpreter be both fluent in the language and knowledgeable of the culture (Rhodes, Ochoa, & Ortiz, 2005). Interpreters should also be trained in the goal of special education and assessments; the importance of confidentiality; their role and the role of the assessment personnel; how to administer assessments; and accurately report responses (Ortiz & Yates, 2001). In most US States, EL guidance recognizes the importance of having bilingual specialists and second language acquisition experts involved in the referral and assessment process (Scott, Boynton Hauerwas, & Brown, 2014). It is important to keep in mind that ELs often exhibit similar learning characteristics as children with LD (Barrera, 2006). In order to distinguish between second language acquisition and learning disabilities, the school psychologist must assess language proficiency in all languages the child is exposed to because a learning disability is manifested in both the native (L1) and secondary (L2) language (Olvera & Gomez-Cerrillo, 2011).

It is essential that school psychologists remember the exclusionary clause of LD, which states that the learning problems experienced by the student cannot be primarily the result of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage (IDEA, 1997). Whenever assessing for learning disabilities, but also particularly important when assessing ELs, it is crucial to gauge opportunity to learn (Wagner, Francis, & Morris, 2005). Special education law requires that we distinguish between students' second language acquisition and those who also have LD (Barrera, 2006). The learning difficulties cannot be caused by or explained by environmental variables including second language acquisition (Barrera, 2006). Keeping this in mind, it is imperative that school personnel distinguish between three types of problems that the student may be facing. Type I problems are when students' academic difficulties are caused by ineffective or inappropriate teaching-learning environments (Wilkinson, Ortiz, Robertson, & Kushner, 2006). Type II problems arise when students' academic problems become worse over time because instructional approaches never meet the child's educational needs (Wilkinson et al., 2006). Students with Type I and Type II problems should have their needs met in general education through support programs or adapted instruction since their problems are believed to be the result of the environment, and thus are not a true disability (Wilkinson et al., 2006). On the other hand, students with Type III problems have educational needs that must be met by special education since they have disabilities and their needs cannot be addressed by general education alone (Wilkinson et al., 2006).

Learning disabilities is the most prevalent disability for ELs (Wilkinson et al., 2006). Cummins (1989) argued that it takes one to two years to acquire basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) and five to seven years to acquire cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) in the second language; however, these phases of language acquisition can take longer if the individual does not have a strong background in the native language. It is also expected that it will take individuals with LD longer to acquire basic communication skills and academic language in their second language than the aforementioned time frame (Echeverria, Vogt, & Short, 2008). As suggested by Echeverria and colleagues (2008), ELs with LD are thought to have language patterns that are distinct from others in their cultural and ethnic community. These people have limited vocabulary in both languages and demonstrate deficits in receptive and expressive language. In addition, they often struggle with understanding non-verbal language.

METHOD

We examined peer-reviewed studies related to English learners with disabilities. The studies reviewed in this article were selected by a two-step process consisting of (1) searching for all articles that pertain to culturally and linguisti-

cally diverse students with disabilities; and (2) applying selection criteria identified below to ensure the articles are recent, appropriate and, hence, should be included. Searches were completed using the ProQuest Education Journals Database, the EBSCO Host database, the PsycINFO database, and Google Scholar. Electronic database searches were followed by an ancestral search of the reference lists of relevant literature reviews and identified studies.

Searching for Articles on EL Students with Disabilities

Searches were conducted in educational databases and journals using sets of descriptors, such as “CLD students AND learning disabilities,” “EL AND learning disabilities,” and “bilingual learners with LD.” Several searches were conducted in the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) database. Searches were also conducted in the *Journal of Learning Disabilities* and *Exceptional Children*. Once articles were found, the keywords and citations were explored to find more related articles. Forty-four articles were identified and 21 were deemed appropriate for this review.

Applying Selection Criteria

Once articles were gathered, the authors read the studies to decide if they should be included in the analysis. The selection criteria consisted of the following: (a) studies must address and target EL students with LD; and (b) studies must concentrate on a K-12 population. Studies were eliminated if they did not look at both EL and LD. Several studies focused solely on EL students or on students with LD, but these articles were not included because this work is focused on the intersection of EL and LD. Studies that were conducted outside of the United States were also eliminated. Articles published before 2001 were not included in this analysis. Book chapters and dissertations were excluded from the final selection. We did include opinion pieces or reviews that provided suggestions on how to effectively distinguish between language acquisition and LD or how to effectively provide ELs sensitive instruction. General studies regarding the overrepresentation of EL students in special education were also included if participants in the study were LD.

Descriptions of Analyses

Once articles were deemed appropriate, they were re-read and the key findings were identified. The studies that reported original data were coded in a spreadsheet that addressed various components of research, such as, but not limited to: (a) type of sampling used; (b) geographic location; (c) how students were identified as LD; (d) overall sample size; (e) participant type; (f) grade levels; (g) data collection procedures; (h) data analysis procedures; and (i) focus of study. The articles that were opinion pieces or reviews were coded in a separate spreadsheet that addressed the purpose and key findings. The purpose of each article was identified and the articles were then categorized into broad themes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Prevention and Early Intervention

We searched for research on prevention and early intervention to understand the referral process of ELs to special education (Table 1). Prevention and early intervention are imperative and more cost effective than special education if students do not truly have disabilities (Ortiz & Yates, 2001). Ortiz and Yates (2001) recommend professional development for educators to help inform them about the diverse characteristics and needs of ELs. Areas of focus for these professional development programs can include: language acquisition of both the native and second language; assessment of both native and second language; socioeconomic and cultural influences on teaching and learning; effective instruction of native language and English as a second language; and working with families of ELs. Schools should have high expectations; a challenging curriculum; embrace linguistic and cultural diversity; provide instruction that is supportive of native and second language development; and use systematic evaluation of student progress (Ortiz & Yates, 2001). Professional development for assessment personnel is also recommended. Topics of importance include, for instance: procedures for choosing appropriate and relevant instruments for ELs; alternative assessments; appropriate modifications of standardized tests; the use of interpreters; and interpreting results in context of linguistic and cultural diversity (Ortiz & Yates, 2001).

Rodríguez, Carrasquillo, and Lee (2014) suggested that pre-referral interventions were infrequently and inconsistently used before referring students. Early intervention consists of intense supplementary instructional services that are provided early enough to help students quickly reach a level at which they can succeed in a general education classroom (Ortiz & Yates, 2001). An example of effective early intervention is clinical or diagnostic/prescriptive teaching, which requires teachers to analyze student academic performance once they are observed to have a problem (Ortiz & Yates, 2001). Teachers then have to identify the gaps in knowledge and skills and develop instruction that targets and fills in those gaps. Once this information is gathered, teachers can conduct curriculum-based assessments and maintain assessment portfolios. Curriculum-based assessment (CBA) consists of taking student samples in the area being assessed and grading the work based on identified targeted skills. CBA can be standardized or non-standardized (Barrera, 2006). Typically, CBA requires the teacher or assessor to gather baseline data on the targeted task; find an appropriate intervention to address the targeted content or skill; conduct the intervention; and then retest to measure progress (Barrera, 2006). He advocates the use of curriculum-based dynamic assessment (CDA) in assessing ELs. CDA requires teaching a new learning task and collecting progress data. Response to Interven-

tion (RTI) deems students with LD as those who fail to respond to sequential tiers of evidence-based instruction and intervention (Barrera, 2006). Failure to respond is conceptualized as the student exhibiting little to no progress after being given research-based interventions (Barrera, 2006). The dual-discrepancy model is used to assess students' failure to respond to research-supported instruction and interventions (Barrera, 2006). Regardless of which approach is used, assessment portfolios should be included and reviewed if the student is ultimately referred for special education (Ortiz & Yates, 2001).

Table 1. Article Included in the Review Regarding Prevention and Early Intervention

Study	Purpose
Ortiz & Yates (2001)	To propose a framework to guide special education services for CLD students, including policies and procedures that address disproportionality, as well as suggestions for referral, assessment, and teaching practices.

Referral and Decision Making

We explored the literature to better understand the referral and identification process of EL students in special education classified as LD (Table 2). Referral committees decide whether students will be assessed for special education (Ortiz & Yates, 2001). Data gathered through the prevention, early intervention, and referral stages should be reviewed and used to guide the decision (Ortiz & Yates, 2001). In addition to the data on the student, referral committees should also consult with parents and seek their perceptions regarding the problems faced by the child (Ortiz & Yates, 2001). Assessments require informed consent and parents are more likely to consent when they understand and agree with the problems under evaluation. Often times educators are hesitant to refer young ELs to special education because they want to give these students more time to acquire the language (Huang, Clarke, Milczarzki, & Raby, 2011). While this is understandable, the longer EL students who actually have LD go without services, the farther these students can get behind their peers. This can result in the student suffering emotionally and socially, and the student potentially developing an aversion to school and learning. Thus early identification and intervention is crucial. On the other hand, some educators are very quick to refer ELs to special education without modifying instruction to meet the needs of ELs (Huang et al., 2011). The over-referral of ELs to special education is problematic because the classification stays with the student and often leads to educators expecting less of the student.

Klingner and Harry (2006) observed Child Study Team meetings and placement conferences/multidisciplinary team meetings and found that most EL students were pushed toward testing because the school personnel believed that the poor academic performance or behavioral difficulties were indicative of the child needing special education services. Unfortunately, what was observed in these meetings might be commonplace and might contribute to the disproportionate amount of ELs in special education.

Overton, Fielding, and Simonsson (2004) conducted a study with assessment personnel (school psychologists) who analyzed four hypothetical cases to determine eligibility for special education services. All cases were about a bilingual third grader named Ben who changed schools multiple times and struggled academically despite his effort and motivation. It was expected that the assessment personnel would defer making eligibility decisions because of language proficiency, environment, culture or lack of data. Results showed that 83% of the assessment personnel made an eligibility decision with insufficient data. Only 13% of the participants deferred making eligibility decisions and four percent disagreed with Ben being eligible or ineligible for special education, suggesting that more information is needed. Interestingly, responses to cases that provided language information and cases that did not provide language information were significantly different, with cases not providing language information more likely to be rated as eligible for special education. When language information was not provided, participants were less likely to consider language dominance or proficiency in their eligibility decisions for Ben. Some school psychologists listed the reason for eligibility as educational need, suggesting that assessment personnel might classify children as eligible for special education to ensure that they receive services since they are struggling academically. While educators may believe there is no harm in placing ELs in special education for the extra individual instruction, research has demonstrated that students who were inappropriately placed in special education actually regressed (Huang et al., 2011). The participants often indicated that they needed more information but still made an eligibility decision for Ben, which unfortunately may be commonplace. In another study reviewing eligibility decision making, Wilkinson, Ortiz, Robertson, and Kushner (2006) found that a panel of three bilingual special education faculty members reviewed the cases of 21 EL students with LD and differed significantly in their eligibility decisions. This shows that experts in the field can reach different eligibility decisions.

Table 2. Studies and Articles Included in the Review Regarding Referral and Decision Making

Study	Purpose	Participants
Huang, Clarke, Milczarzki, & Raby (2011)	To discuss issues and concerns in the referral and assessment of ELs with LD, as well as suggest implications for educators and assessment professionals.	N/A
Klingner & Harry (2006)	To examine the referral and decision making process for referring ELs to special education by observing Child Study Team meetings and placement conferences.	CST meetings and placement conferences were observed for 19 EL students referred for special education.
Overton, Fielding, & Simonsson (2004)	To examine the decision-making process in determining eligibility of CLD students with Learning Disabilities by providing four different hypothetical cases.	93 school psychologists reviewing four different cases.
Wilkinson, Ortiz, Robertson, & Kushner (2006)	To examine how a panel reviewing eligibility decisions made for 21 EL students with LD.	Panel of 3 school psychologists reviewing the cases of 21 students.

Assessment Procedures

We examined studies that explored the assessment process to see if there are any practices that may contribute to the disproportionality of ELs classified as LD (Table 3). US State policies and guidance for identifying learning disabilities in ELs provided the most specific practices for ELs in the area of assessment (Scott, Boynton Hauerwas, & Brown, 2014). Georgia prohibits any academic decisions based on English-language tests that were administered by translation or interpretation (Scott, Boynton Hauerwas, & Brown, 2014). Colorado’s guidance documents include a list of approved tests that can be used with ELs and an appendix outlining the stages of language development (Scott, Boynton Hauerwas, & Brown, 2014). These policies and guidance documents might have been created in light of the documented shortcomings of the assessment process.

A survey of 859 school psychologists conducted by Ochoa, Rivera, and Powell (1997), found that native language and number of years of English instruction were rarely ever asked about or considered during the assessment process. In addition, classroom observations were infrequently made and it was

often expected that the student had some kind of internal deficit (Ochoa, Rivera, & Powell, 1997). Classroom observations are important because they can demonstrate whether students have had adequate opportunity to learn in an appropriate, culturally responsive environment. Child study teams and IEP team members are recommended to keep into account classroom context when assessing students' behavior and learning. It is also suggested that IEP committees include professionals with expertise in English language acquisition (Klingner & Artiles, 2003). Rueda and Windmueller (2006) propose that the individual, as well as interpersonal and cultural-institutional factors should be analyzed and considered when students are being assessed. Individual factors include motivation and cognition. Interpersonal factors include relationships and how they affect engagement, cooperative learning, participation and achievement. Lastly, the cultural-institutional factors include family, community and sociopolitical circumstances.

Barrera (2006) recommended that school psychologists not rely on standardized tests that did not include EL in the norming sample. Test accommodations have been used to help fairly assess ELs (Chu & Flores, 2011). It has been suggested to simplify language when assessing ELs (Chu & Flores, 2011). Also, it has been shown that ELs perform better on assessments when they can use dictionaries (Chu & Flores, 2011). As suggested by Chu and Flores (2011), reducing the language difficulty allows school psychologists to get a better picture of what the student knows and can do. Furthermore, it is recommended to give weight to informal assessment measures, such as student work samples (Barrera, 2006). Assessments are to be conducted in the dominant language of the student. Formal and informal measures should be used to determine the student's dominant language (Ortiz & Yates, 2001). Macswan and Rolstad (2006) suggest that commonly used native language proficiency tests over identify students as having limited proficiency in their L1. They used the Language Assessment Scale-Oral Español (LAS-O Español), Idea Proficiency Test (IPT) Spanish and a natural language sample to assess Spanish proficiency of EL elementary school students. They found that approximately three quarters of the children were classified as less-than-fluent speakers of Spanish with the LAS-O Español; 90% of the students were classified as less-than fluent with the IPT Spanish. In sharp contrast, only 3% of the students were classified as less-than-fluent using the native language sample (Macswan & Rolstad, 2006). Thus, the instruments used yielded drastically different classifications for these students. Wagner, Francis, and Morris (2005) suggest the development of comparable native language assessments is challenging for several reasons, including the fact that speakers of a language may have different dialects and cultural characteristics. When keeping in mind that students who are identified as less-than-fluent in both their native language and in English have the highest rates of identification in special

education among ELs, it is important to evaluate the language proficiency instruments commonly used.

Olvera and Gomez-Cerrillo (2011) recommend using an assessment MODEL (Multiple sources of information, Observation, Data-driven hypothesis, English language development, and Language of assessment) when conducting a bilingual assessment. The beginning of the process should begin with a review of the student's file by the school psychologist, with particular attention paid to any information regarding the student's culture, language history, and language of instruction. Anecdotal notes, attendance records, behavioral logs, and achievement results should also be reviewed before the assessment. Thus, the assessment process begins with obtaining multiple sources of information that will give the assessment and results a context. According to Olvera and Gomez-Cerrillo (2011), observations are imperative and should be conducted in multiple settings. As noted above, the literature has suggested that observations are not always included in the assessment process (Ochoa, Rivera, & Powell, 1997). After the observations and review of multiple sources of information, the school psychologist must consider exclusionary factors and ensure that the learning difficulties experienced by the child are not due to environmental factors. This model suggests that the learning difficulties may coexist with exclusionary factors but may not be caused by the exclusionary factors. Once the environmental factors are ruled out, the school psychologist should develop a data-driven hypothesis for assessment, which leads to the decision-making process regarding the selection of the assessment tools to use. As for English language development, the school psychologist must assess the level of CALP in both languages. It is important not to make assumptions about the student's English language development because some students may be able to converse in English (BICS), but would struggle with tests in English because they have yet to fully acquire CALP in English. This leads to the last step in the MODEL, which is language of assessment and eligibility. The CALP levels must be examined to determine in which language(s) the child should be assessed.

Table 3. Studies and Articles Included in the Review Regarding Assessment Procedures

Study	Purpose
Barrera (2006)	To explore the nature of the learning problems experienced by ELs who have learning disabilities.
Chu & Flores (2011)	To discuss the issues with assessments utilized to identify ELs with LD.
Klingner & Artiles (2003)	To address some of the challenges in the special education referral system when dealing with EL students and to provide suggestions for strengthening this process.
Macswan & Rolstad (2006)	To propose that EL language proficiency tests account for ELs' disproportionate representation in special education by comparing how many students are identified as limited L1 students by two common tests and natural language measures.
Olvera & Gomez-Cerrillo (2011)	To propose a bilingual assessment model based on CHC theory in the effort to better identify ELs with learning disabilities.
Scott, Boynton Hauerwas, Brown (2014)	To investigate how each state assesses and identifies LDs in CLD students.
Wagner, Francis, & Morris (2005)	To review the literature and discuss challenges to assessment and identification of ELs with LD.

Teaching Strategies

Various models, teaching strategies, and content area methodology have been presented over the last decade for teaching English learners with disabilities (Table 4). Rodríguez, Carrasquillo, and Lee (2014) stated that selecting the appropriate language of instruction is imperative in teaching English learners with disabilities. Hoover et al. (2008) recommended that the following questions be asked to determine the most appropriate language of instruction: (1) What is the student's native language; (2) What is the student's English language proficiency level; (3) What is the student's most proficient language — English or native language; (4) What native language instructional resources are available; (5) What English language development instructional resources are available; (6) Does the student's IEP specify language of instruction; and (7) If not specified in the IEP, what is the district policy for selecting language of instruction? (p. 16)

Nine states highlight the importance of providing culturally appropriate instruction and ten states emphasize the importance of considering the effectiveness of the curriculum and/or intervention (Scott, Boynton Hauerwas, &

Brown, 2014). As stated by Cartledge and Kourea (2008, p. 353), “teachers who understand culturally different behaviors respond in ways that appropriately and proactively accept or redirect students’ behaviors when necessary.” ELs with disabilities are impacted by mandated curriculum and legislation. On behalf of English learners with disabilities, we need to stress the importance of providing and meeting the educational needs interrelated with bilingualism and disability.

Table 4. Articles Included in the Review Regarding Teaching Strategies

Study	Purpose
Cartledge & Kourea (2008)	To demonstrate optimal learning environments for culturally diverse students with or at risk for disabilities that are grounded in the empirical literature and emphasize the cultural competence of teachers, culturally responsive effective instruction, and culturally appropriate development of social behaviors.
Nguyen (2012)	To provide a collaboration model and encourage general education teachers, special education teachers, and other staff to work together to create appropriate and enriching learning experiences for ELs and ELs with LD.
Paneque & Barbetta (2006)	To explore perceived teacher efficacy of special education teachers of English Language Learning students with disabilities and to find themes.
Paneque & Rodríguez (2009)	To investigate how 5 bilingual teachers use English and Spanish with their EL students with disabilities.
Santamaria (2009)	To provide a case study of two schools that are reaching high levels of academic achievement and are closing achievement gaps in an effort to identify complementary teaching practices for all students.
Zimmerman (2008)	To review literature on general education’s ability to address the needs of EL students and to provide suggestions to schools of education on how to better prepare teachers for working with EL students.

Disproportionality and Overrepresentation

We explored the literature to get a better understanding of the disproportionality of ELs in special education (Table 5). Donovan and Cross (2002) found that race, ethnicity, gender, geographic region, variations across states in the eligibility criteria for disabilities, and different approaches for defining disproportion all influence under, proportionate, and over representation. Rueda

and Windmueller (2006) argue that overrepresentation is an indicator of underlying problems in the education system. Artiles, Rueda, Salazar, and Higuera (2005) explored the placement patterns of White English proficient learners and ELs and found that students whose native or primary language is not English are assessed for English proficiency. English proficient refers to students who indicated that their native language is not English but they have met district criteria for proficiency and literacy in English, while ELs refers to those who do not meet the district criteria. ELs were underrepresented at the elementary grade level but overrepresented at the secondary level (Artiles et al., 2005). Findings suggested that ELs with limited English (L2) were slightly overrepresented as Learning Disabled at the secondary level (Artiles et al., 2005). Conversely, English proficient students were found to be under-represented at both the elementary and secondary grade levels (Artiles et al., 2005). EL students in English immersion programs were more likely to be classified as special education than ELs placed in other language support programs. This suggests the importance of native language support and instruction (Artiles et al., 2005). The majority of EL students in LD programs are of low SES (Artiles et al., 2005). Sullivan (2011) analyzed existing data on district-level special and general education enrollment for the 1999 to 2006 academic school years to inspect the extent of disproportionality of ELs in special education. When compared to White students, ELs were less likely to be placed in the least restrictive environment (Sullivan, 2011). Furthermore, ELs were more likely to spend at least part of their day in separate settings, such as resource rooms (Sullivan, 2011).

Table 5. Articles Regarding Disproportionality and Overrepresentation of ELs in Special Education

Study	Purpose
Artiles, Rueda, Salazar & Higuera (2005)	To explore the within-group diversity of ELs in special education.
Rueda & Windmueller (2006)	To provide a multilevel approach on reviewing and evaluating the overrepresentation of ELs with learning disabilities.
Sullivan (2011)	A secondary analysis of existing data on 1.1 million students to investigate overrepresentation of EL students in Special Education.

CONCLUSION

As the number of ELs continues to increase in the public school system, educators must strive to be knowledgeable in the pre-referral process and non-biased in assessment in order to avoid over-identification and disproportionality in special education programs. In addition, experts in the field of special education should provide early intervention services to the general school faculty and staff. This will help prevent any potential problems related to misidentification and academic at-risk students.

Educators teaching English learners with disabilities must consider effective instructional strategies that are related to the cultural environment and prior knowledge backgrounds, integrated modes of skills to reinforce knowledge, higher order thinking skills in two languages, high expectations, and inquiry based learning, to name a few. Experts recommend use of the student's native language as a bridge to English language acquisition and academic content for English learners with disabilities.

Knowledge of the English language plays an important role in the academic life of English learners with disabilities in the United States. Successful students must use English for academic and career purposes. The reality is that in the United States, the linguistic and academic achievement of bilingual special education students is only measured by how well they perform on standardized tests in English. Perhaps that will change. In many instances, though, school districts do not put emphasis and rigor on the teaching of English as a Second Language. There are school districts that do not provide staff development for bilingual special education teachers. In other districts, bilingual special education teachers work without a structured curriculum. In some districts, small supply rooms or closets were converted into bilingual special education classrooms. There are occasions in which bilingual special education teachers are pulled-out of their teaching assignments to cover other teachers' classrooms, or to do assessment tasks. We recommend that bilingual special education teachers become knowledgeable about the latest research-based practices to teach ELs with disabilities effectively. We also recommend that teachers be creative as they seek to increase English proficiency of bilingual students with disabilities. In addition, we wholeheartedly recommend use of the native language as a teaching resource. The field of bilingual special education is too important not to take it seriously. Bilingual special education teachers have a big responsibility. Elevating the teaching status of bilingual special education teachers within the school and providing better working conditions for them (and for all teachers) would help improve the learning environment for all learners.

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