

A CASE STUDY OF THE ACADEMIC AND SOCIAL NEEDS OF HISPANIC  
ELEMENTARY DUAL LANGUAGE LEARNERS

by

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Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this instrumental case study is to describe the educators' perspective of the academic and social needs of Hispanic elementary dual language learners (DLL) at a school district in a southern state's northwestern region. The theory guiding this study is the Krashen's second language acquisition theory, using the five main hypotheses: (1) the acquisition-learning distinction, (2) the natural order hypothesis, (3) the monitor hypothesis, (4) the input hypothesis, and (5) the affective filter hypothesis. Vygotsky's social development theory will also guide this study as social development and interaction have a vital role in the process of cognitive and cultural development. The central research question is, "what are educators' perspectives of the academic and social needs of dual language learners?" The participants were 11 elementary educators, including teachers and former school administrators from three schools in an urban district in the northwestern region. This qualitative inquiry will collect data from in-depth interviews, focus groups, and analysis of documents and data analysis will be conducted using embedded analysis, within case patterns with an interpretational analysis, and cross-case synthesis. The results of this study may help teachers and administrators improve the success of early childhood education DLL students.

*Keywords:* dual language learners, elementary, second language acquisition, academic needs, and social needs

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## **Dedication**

I dedicate this dissertation to my family, who have always believed in me, prayed for me, and encouraged me forward in my education. To my husband, who has encouraged me, through the late hours, and wise counsel, reminding me that it was possible. To my parents, Erick, and Maria, who have always been my biggest supporters, who have taught me to be resilient and guided me. Thank you, mom, for endlessly inspiring and reminding me that "it is not to begin, but to finish what you started." She is, aside from God, my motivation for success. To Ana, my daughter, who constantly smiled and gave me a thumbs up, reminding me to always lead the path for her. Thank you to my daughter Naomi, who was born during the final stages of my journey, for encouraging me to keep going even when it seemed impossible. Thank you for your unwavering love and support to my sister Marie, brothers Elvin and Joshua. Who would have guessed that four Latino children from Puerto Rico would achieve great things in God's perfect plan. I also want to thank my friend and sister in Christ, Dajunna Howell, and her family for their unconditional support, prayers, and conversations.

All strength, determination, and perseverance come from God, my creator, my Lord. May this degree be useful to others, in keeping with my purpose and God's perfect plan for my life and His kingdom.

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### **List of Abbreviations**

Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS)

Child and Family Development (CFD)

Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP)

Common Core State Standards (CCSS)

Community-Based Service-Learning (CBSL)

Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR)

Content and Language-Integrated Learning (CLIL)

Dual Language Education (DLE)

Dual Language Immersion (DLI)

Dual Language Learner (DLL)

English Language Learner (ELL)

English-Only (EO)

English Proficiency (EP)

Early Care Education (ECE)

Early Education and Care (EEC)

Early Education Programs (EEP)

English as a Second Language (ESL)

English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)

First language (L1)

Language Minority (LM)

Language Support Practices (LSP)

Professional Development (PD)

Randomized Control Trials (RCT)

Second Language (L2)

Second Language Acquisition (SLA)

Social Development Theory (SDT)

Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)

Two-Way Dual Language (TWDL)

Two-Way Immersion (TWI)

## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **Overview**

The population of students whose second language is English has increased in classrooms in today's schools. Researchers assert that changes in educational processes and the academic preparation of educators must meet the needs of dual language learners (Chang, 2015; Kelly, 2015). Latino / Hispanic students who are learning two languages at the same time, tend to understand better when there is a connection between both languages, especially in the promotion of literacy skills at an early age (Castro, 2019; Raikes et al., 2019). Positive effects can be observed in DLL children's school readiness and achievement when educators have high-quality instructional practices and knowledge of the bilingualism context (Castro, 2019). An understanding of the acquisition of a second language is crucial due to the cultural and linguistic differences at home and the developmental needs of dual language learners. Therefore, the need to conduct a qualitative case study focusing on the academic and social needs of Hispanic elementary dual language learners is vital.

### **Background**

The background of the study establishes a base of knowledge of the historical aspects that are essential parts of the development of the culture and the language of the students who are learning two languages simultaneously. This section explains the implications of learning two languages at the same time and the need to provide an education at an early age and elementary school for the proper development of developing student language and social skills. The theoretical framework establishes the parameters around which I will conduct the study.

## Historical

The immigration of different racial groups has been the leading cause of language dualism in the United States. During the late 1800s, the Chinese Exclusion Act passed in 1882, leading to the immigration of Mexicans for work with American employers. During the twentieth century, other Hispanic immigrant groups began immigrating to the United States including the Caribbean, Central Americans, and South Americans (Koppelman, 2019). The Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s served as a foundation for the establishment and positioning of bilingual education among the Latino community in the United States, especially to promote equality (Flores, 2016). The Civil Rights Act of 1964 promoted nondiscriminatory practices based on race, color, or national origin through Title VI, which involves services to minority groups, or neighborhoods, or failing to provide services due to the limited English proficiency of individuals (Hersch & Shinall, 2014). The need for bilingual education functioned as part of the new vision towards liberal multiculturalism and the empowerment of minority groups in language, and the programs to serve those for whom English is not their first language (Escamilla, 2018; Flores, 2016; Herch & Shinall, 2014). As part of the same vision, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was passed in 1965 as part of a fight against poverty that affected education, better known as the *War on Poverty*, influencing schools and school districts, promoting education, and supporting eligible students under Title I (Bishop & Jackson, 2015).

In 1967, the Bilingual Education Act (BEA) was significant for the recognition and establishment of bilingual and bicultural programs; however, it could not meet the goal of implementing equity, social justice, and educational access for all children (Escamilla, 2018). Since 2010, student enrollment grew by only 4.9%; however, students in the United States who

were English language learners (ELLs) grew by 32percent (August et al., 2014). For many years different terms have been used to refer to this population of students whose first language is not English. For example, we find terms like English as a Second Language (ESL), English Language Learners (ELL), Dual Language Learners (DLL), and Bilingual students. Some educators and researchers use simultaneous or compound bilinguals for the children who grow with two languages. In contrast, those who "learn one language at home and another at school are being called sequential or coordinate bilingual," and some educators promote the use a more generic term "emergent bilingual" (Mohr et al., 2016).

Each of these groups brings with them their language, culture, values, and social aspects that shape their perspective on life. Language is paramount to communicating with other people. According to Ortega (2009), language is one of the most uniquely human capacities and one that is involved in all others, including consciousness, socialization, and culture. In this case, dual language learners are acquiring two languages at the same time, meaning that students of Hispanic origin mostly learn Spanish from their parents and English because of their educational and community environments.

## **Social**

Human beings are social by nature; therefore, we need to communicate with each other to establish a social link with people who are in our environment. Language a vital part of the learning process in school; it is needed for the students to understand lessons and to have success in school (Franco et al., 2019). Within language, some different skills and abilities are a vital part of our social interactions. These skills learned at an early age in school include literacy skills. According to Artieda (2017), strong literacy skills are required to have better opportunities in our social life and, education and would be of benefit for our well-being compared with those who



have low levels of literacy skills and therefore, higher chances of living in poverty, greater employment, or difficulty finishing secondary school.

### **Theoretical**

Krashen's (1982, 1987) theoretical framework, Second Language Acquisition (SLA), will be an essential conceptual foundation of this case study. The SLA theory consist of five main hypotheses: (1) the acquisition-learning distinction, (2) the natural order hypothesis, (3) the monitor hypothesis, (4) the input hypothesis, and (5) the affective filter hypothesis. As stated by Krashen's second language acquisition learning hypothesis, acquisition and learning are two different independent ways to develop and enhance linguistic skills. This theory is of considerable significance in today's language acquisition, providing a foundation for second language acquisition.

*Acquisition* is defined as the subconscious process of acquiring information while the individual is unaware of when or how the new knowledge is acquired (Krashen, 1987). According to Krashen, the process of acquiring a language can occur subconsciously in both children and adults. The process in the writing and oral language skills is perceived, comparable to the process of learning a native language. Differently, as is defined by Krashen, the process of learning a language is conscious and is less effective as it implicates formal instruction by correcting errors.

Vygotsky believed that language develops from social interactions, for communication purposes; Vygotsky viewed language as man's most excellent tool, a means for communicating with the outside world (McLeod, 2018). Vygotsky (1987) differentiates between three forms of language: social speech which is external communication used to talk to others, typical from the age of two; private speech, typical from the age of three which is directed to the self and serves

an intellectual function; and finally private speech goes underground, becoming less audible as it takes on a self-regulating function and transforming the function into silent inner speech, typical from the age of seven. The internalization of language is essential as it drives cognitive development (McLeod, 2018).

### **Situation to Self**

In the reflection of paradigms and assumptions regarding the investigation, it is necessary to understand my experiences, observations, and motivation. In the last few years, I have been working and serving Hispanic families, in which one or both parents do not speak English, their children go to school in this country with development in both languages simultaneously. The foundation of my motivation to investigate educators' perspectives on the academic and social needs of dual language learners, or more commonly known as English language learners, in elementary school is on observations and experiences gained over the years. According to Patton (2015), "paradigms are deeply embedded in the socialization of adherents and practitioners; they tell us what is important, legitimate, and reasonable" (p. 89). The experiences that I have acquired through socialization with families has created a desire to study and analyze the perspectives of educators in terms of the preparation they have when working with dual language learners, which are the services they are offering for the excellent performance of the students in elementary school, collaboration and communication is active between educators and parents. Based on my professional observations, the educators have a perception of what the needs of these students are according to what educators can perceive within the classroom. However, the needs of dual language learners go beyond the classroom, and the understanding of this could be of benefit in the implementation of bilingual educational programs (Baker, 2018). Considering

their shared culture and language at home, the legal situation of the parents, among others, adding to the understanding of a simple linguistic barrier.

As an English language learner, I have learned that each level has its degree of complexity in the process of language acquisition until they both become one. However, if the students do not have a solid base in the language provided in the first years of their education, in the future, it may be difficult for them to understand the language at the level in which they are learning. I am, also, a former co-pastor in a Hispanic/multicultural ministry. My experiences and observations working with Hispanic families established the philosophical assumptions and paradigms. For the last six years, I have been an educator in the K-12 setting in four public schools from two different states. While in the first state, I was able to work with diverse and Dual Language Learners who are called bilingual students. Over the years, by working with Hispanic families and their children in elementary school, I have gained experiences and made observations about their learning needs, their struggle because of the language barrier or lack of understanding of the expectations from their teachers, and the little understating of the second language. In addition to observations on how they struggle to help their children without having the skills or tools necessary in the learning process. Based on observations, educators have a perception of what the needs of these students are according to observations in the classroom. As an English language learner, I understand that the needs of dual language learners go beyond the classroom.

Therefore, the use of the ontological paradigm will provide details and characteristics, having the opportunity to reveal different realities and perspectives (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Moreover, social constructionism permits the study of multiple realities that are constructed by different groups of people, implying that those constructions and perceptions have as a

foundation their lives and interactions with each other. Using social constructionism, I will examine the implications of different perspectives or multiple realities. I intend to be a good steward of the experiences, observations, and knowledge that I have gained by sharing with Hispanic families in the educational environment as well as in their spiritual growth through the ministry that God has allowed me to serve. In Romans 11:33-34, Saint Paul says, "Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! "Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?" (New International Version, NIV).

### **Problem Statement**

The Hispanic population in the country is the nation's most populous ethnic or racial minority, which constitutes 18.1 percent of the nation's total population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). Due to demographic changes, the number of dual language learners is higher, representing a linguistic and cultural diversity in today's' classrooms leading to the study of teaching practices towards DLLs in early education (Chang, 2015; Kelly, 2015). The early education practices that support the development of language and literacy skills and the academic preparation of educators to meet the learning needs of the dual language learners is a concern among the education researchers, practitioners, and policymakers, particularly in programs that serve academically vulnerable children (Chang, 2015; Jacoby & Lesaux, 2017; Kelly, 2015). The problem is that a significant number of DLLs in the public schools are in the process of learning new skills in their second language, a language in which they are not yet proficient (Gómez et al., 2017), and therefore struggling to learn basic education and language concepts. Few studies provide an in-depth understanding of the context for the learning needs of Hispanic elementary dual language learners; therefore, a qualitative case study offers an initial exploration into

educators' perspectives in their "real-life context of the phenomenon" (Gall et al., 2007) of dual language learners.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this instrumental case study (Yin, 2009) is to describe the educators' perspective of the academic and social needs of Hispanic elementary dual language learners at a school district in a southern state's northwestern region. For this study, academic needs are defined as literacy skills and second language acquisition (Krashen, 1982; 1987), and social needs are defined as social development and interaction (Vygotsky, 1978). The theory guiding this study is the second language acquisition (SLA) theory, using the five main hypotheses: (1) the acquisition-learning distinction, (2) the natural order hypothesis, (3) the monitor hypothesis, (4) the input hypothesis, and (5) the affective filter hypothesis. Two aspects, basic interpersonal communication skills and cognitive academic language proficiency (Krashen, 1982) as the perspectives, beliefs, and practices of teachers, could be determined by their theoretical knowledge in the second language acquisition theories (Markham et al., 2017). Social development theory (Vygotsky, 1978) will also guide this study as social development and interaction have a vital role in the process of cognitive and cultural development.

### **Significance of the Study**

The findings of this case study may benefit a society experiencing an increase in the Hispanic population over the last several decades. The two main demographic processes are the natural growth and net migration reflecting higher growth in the United States between 2000 and 2010, representing sixteen percent of the U.S. population by 2010 (Johnson & Lichter, 2016). A new generation of dual language learners plays an essential role in the nation's educational system as they could require a curriculum to comply with their academic and social needs.

Language assessment as part of the effective instruction of DLLs is useful for organizing teaching and learning activities to meet curriculum content and for choosing scaffolds for learners with different language levels skills (Ortiz & Fránquiz, 2019). Accordingly, the higher requirement for teachers with a second language acquisition background supports the need for more effective, life-changing teaching approaches and methodologies to benefit DLL students. Selvi and Martin-Beltrán (2016) indicated how educator-learners outsourced their interpretation of second language acquisition, challenged against opposing viewpoints, and resituated theory in the context of prior, current, and future instruction.

The school district, or individual school, that implements the recommendations from this case study, may be able to prepare DLL learners better. The perspectives of educators on the teaching strategies of second language learners are a relevant language component for providing the skills of classroom teachers and thus the academic and social performance of the DLL population (Chang, 2015; Garrity et al., 2016; Sawyer et al., 2016). Educators' perspectives on the academic and social needs of Hispanic dual language learners should guide what is emphasized in the school curriculum by teachers in today's classroom. Likewise, to improve student performance in their second language, English, allows developing literacy and English language comprehension. This case study may help reveal crucial areas in the educational development and processes that previous researcher were not able to investigate. Consequently, the possibility of a new model on second language acquisition, bilingualism, and dual-language learners may emerge from this study.

### **Research Questions**

The central research question is, "What are educators' perspectives of the academic and social needs of dual language learners?" The central question of the study aims to investigate the

needs of dual language learners holistically, by listening to the different realities and perspectives of the participants of the study. Mohr et al. (2016) contend that many social and academic agents interfere with the process of becoming bilingual. The first sub-question is, “What are educators’ perspectives of the literacy skill needs of dual language learners?” This question stands on the premise of using the perspectives of the educator in terms of literacy skills as part of the social and academic needs of their students to understand and describe their point of view of the learning processes and second language acquisition within the classroom. To understand their background as an educator and the experiences that influence their current reality. The teacher’s beliefs and conceptualizations influence the school readiness in the language and communication of the students (Piker & Kimmel, 2016). The second sub-question is, “What are educators’ perspectives of the second language acquisition needs of dual language learners?”

The perspectives of the educators, in this case, the teachers, and school administrators, are vital in the process of the education and second language acquisition of students. Second language acquisition influences either social or academic development according to their age, their environment, the family context, and student proficiency development in both languages. The final sub-question is, “What are educators’ perspectives of the social development needs of dual language learners?” Educators are the most necessary and vital resource in the development of social skills in the students within the academic environment, especially at early developmental ages in school. The support and collaboration of educators and parents, as well as knowledge in language acquisition strategies, are crucial to providing academic and instructional support, thus covering the needs of students (Sawyer et al., 2016).

### **Definitions**

1. *Acculturation*- a process of change over time, acquiring the meanings and practices of a new cultural tradition (Doucercain et al., 2017).
2. *Dual language immersion program (DLI)*- a form of a two-way dual immersion (TWDI) program, seeking to have equal or nearly equal representation of native English and Spanish speakers, beginning in the 1960s in Dade County, Florida (Block & Vidaurre, 2019).
3. *Dual language learners*- children learning two or more languages at the same time or are in the process of acquiring a second language as they develop their first language (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services & U.S. Department of Education, 2016).
4. *Emergent bilinguals*- describe the many children who speak a family language at home and are learning another in school or their communities (Mohr et al., 2016).
5. *Hispanic*- this term refers to Americans who share a culture, heritage, and language that originated in Spain, but may have descended through Portugal or Latin America. At times, the term "Latinos" is used alternatively (Collins & O'Brien, 2011).
6. *Refugee*- is a legal term for displaced persons who have fled their countries of origin because of fear of persecution or imprisonment based on race, ethnicity, religion, political, or social affiliations (UNHCR, 2020).

### **Summary**

In summary, due to the increase in the Hispanic population, it generates the need to evaluate, examine and explain the educational and social needs of this demographic group. The study will describe the perceptions of the educators (administrators, curriculum coordinators, and teachers) regarding the academic and social needs of the dual language dual-language Hispanic



elementary students. Furthermore, while important research and study of this demographic have been undertaken, there are still areas in which it was not possible to create a link between the learning process and the development of students in terms of their academic needs and social needs. Studying and assessing the academic and social needs of Hispanic elementary dual language learners is therefore important to define their achievement and preparation during the early school years. The outcome of the present research will enable society to understand the growth of the Hispanic population in the U.S. in the last decades. The new generation of dual language learners plays an important role in the country's education system as it might influence the curriculum to meet academic and social needs.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Overview**

The literature provides essential aspects of the preparation and professional development of teachers and beliefs regarding the instructional practices and education of the Dual Language Learners and crucial aspects of analysis such as dual-language programs, language and literacy development and instruction, and the acquisition and development of the second language. The theory framing this qualitative inquiry is based on the theory of second language acquisition (SLA) (Krashen, 1982) in bilingual education and proficiency in the language by investigating bilingualism as a phenomenon. Social development theory and sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978) are part of the theoretical framework. In the literature review, will analyze and identify areas and factors related to beliefs, perceptions, and processes of instruction, how they influence the preparation, professional development of teachers and service programs for dual language learners.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Five main hypotheses comprise Krashen's (1987) theory of second language acquisition (SLA): (1) the acquisition-learning distinction, (2) the natural order hypothesis, (3) the monitor hypothesis, (4) the input hypothesis, and (5) the affective filter hypothesis. The perspective of educators regarding the academic and social needs of Hispanic dual language learners will be analyzed using the SLA theory and social development theory (SDT). The conceptual elements to be used in this study from the SLA theory are bilingual and language proficiency, academic achievement, and communicative competence. The constructs related to the principles of SLA are preparation, professional development, and service programs that the researchers could use as predictors of the beliefs, perceptions, and process of instruction.

## **Second Language Acquisition Theory**

Second language acquisition (SLA) knowledge could shape the beliefs of teachers and their curriculum knowledge as well as the perspectives of the program coordinators (Cruze, Cota, & López, 2019; Markham et al., 2017). Krashen's second language acquisition theoretical frame consists of five principal hypotheses, the acquisition-learning hypothesis, monitor hypothesis, input hypothesis, affective filter hypothesis, and the natural order hypothesis (Krashen, 1982). The hypothesis that provides a better foundation in Krashen's theory for language teachers and linguists is the acquisition-learning hypothesis. Krashen's theory (1982,1987) explains two independent systems for the second or foreign language to function, which are the acquired system and the learned system. The process of language acquisition, it happens subconsciously, where the child obtains vital information about the interactions with their natural environment and the language to be learned. On the other hand, there is an integration of the learning system with formal teaching and a student's conscious process (Schütz, 2019).

The monitor hypothesis is causally related to the acquisition-learning hypothesis, but it is used or activated when it does not interfere with the communication of the students. The monitor hypothesis consists of three roles, adequate time to use grammar productively, a focal point to form the language while considering the usefulness of the language, and the recognition of grammar concepts and rules (Lai & Wei, 2019). The input hypothesis is an effort to describe the process of second language acquisition, and it is only focusing on acquisition and not the learning-process. An enhancement and progress in the learner's acquisition are along with the natural order of the language (Schütz, 2019).

The affective filter hypothesis has its foundation on how emotional variables play an essential role in the acquisition of the second language in children. Krashen explains that the

variables of motivation, self-confidence, anxiety, and personality traits have to do directly with their learning. The learners with a higher motivation with self-esteem and confidence are more prepared and successful than those with lower motivation, self-confidence, introversion can lead them to have a mental block preventing the comprehension of the second language acquisition (Krashen, 1982; Schütz, 2019). Lastly, the natural order hypothesis, according to Krashen (1982), follows a structure and a pattern in a predictable order. There is a relationship within the children's first language acquisition and second language learning as they tend to choose from definite grammatical expressions (Lai & Wei, 2019).

### **Social Development Theory**

Social development theory (Vygotsky, 1978) asserts that social interaction influences cognitive development in powerful ways and takes place continually throughout one's life (Collins & OBrien, 2011). Vygotsky's social development theory (1978) affirms that dialectical interaction of elementary cognitive processes in the human being produces a greater sense of consciousness, which also directs cultural concepts and lifestyles (Lantolf & Poehner, 2014). Vygotsky's theory promotes social development and the learning context within the student's active role in interacting with the learning process and collaborating with the teacher. Lantolf and Poehner (2014) allude to the framework of the theory of developmental education, having the assumption that the social setting could have a significant impact in second language classrooms and language development of the students. Thus, the SLA foundation in the theory of social development will expose the beliefs, perceptions, and process of instruction of the educators serving dual language learners.

### **Related Literature**

Latino / Hispanic students who are learning two languages at the same time tend to understand better when there is a connection between both languages, especially in the promotion of literacy skills at an early age (Castro, 2019; Raikes et al., 2019). Positive effects can be observed in DLL children's school readiness and achievement when educators have high-quality instructional practices and knowledge of the bilingualism context (Castro, 2019). The perspectives of educators regarding the needs of English as a second language reflects different aspects, concepts, and issues represented in the current education of Spanish native speakers. Guo (2018) asserts that the preparation of teachers and teacher candidates is especially important to be able to work with dual language learners, also known as English language learners, given their increase in population as students in recent years. This increase in the population represents changes in the diversity of classrooms, which suggests the need for different preparation for the educators.

Researchers suggest the inclusion of the second language acquisition theory (Castro, 2019; Guo, 2018) in the education programs for teachers and teacher candidates to work with diverse students from different cultures and language backgrounds (Guo, 2018). Studies about the perspectives of educators and teachers regarding some areas of instruction, achievement, or literacy of the students of English as a second language are available (Jacoby & Lesaux, 2017; Sawyer, Manz, & Martin, 2016). However, there is little literature accurately describing the perceptions of educators regarding the needs of this. Although the educators' perspectives of the needs of dual language learners are not directly present in the literature, several related topics exist in the literature.

## Dual Language Learners

The Dual Language Learner population is composed of students who are learning two languages simultaneously during their early education developmental years, and the number of DLD children living in the United States is increasing significantly (Hammer, Hoff, Uchikoshi, Gillanders, Castro & Sandilosa, 2014). The increase of the DLL population in the United States has created the need for preparation and understanding of the educational services given to DLL children and their families by early childhood educators (Baker, 2018). The increase in this population has led for several studies and literature reviews to be carried out on the subject to evaluate and analyze the development of literacy in the process of acquiring two languages and the developmental trajectories of L1 to L2 (Baker, 2018; Hammer et al., 2014; Franco et al., 2019). Hammer et al. (2014) identified that the community had not developed an agreed-upon definition of what a dual language learner is; therefore, a researcher's theoretical perspective and associated research question(s) often dictate the definition of DLL used in an investigation. Hammer et al.'s (2014) metanalysis of 182 articles which identified numerous methodological concerns, including lack of a description of the language experiences of young DLLs. Hammer et al. (2014) also had difficulty making reliable conclusions in most areas, despite such a volume of articles.

Establishment of bilingual or dual programs is part of the preparation of dual language students' instruction, bilingual or dual programs to provide a better service to this population. Due to the change in the demographics of students in the United States, dual language programs have been analyzed and studied to support this population (Alvear, 2018; Kelly, 2015; MacSwan et al., 2017). Kelly (2015) analyzed the language environment of dual language learners and the use of language support and explained that DLL learn two or more languages. Thus, students are

learning how to speak their native or family language at home while going to school, in which they learn their second or a new language as part of their academic instruction. Comprehension and implementation of instructional practices are crucial to support the DLL children in the L2 (English) classrooms in the acquisition of both languages (Baker, 2018). Kelly (2015) examined the language environment in which DLL developed their English language skills using language support practices (LSP) in four preschool classrooms and found that all teachers were monolingual, native English speakers. Alvear (2018) conducted a case study of bilingual programs in a large urban area in the state of Texas, with 28% of its Spanish-speaking students identified as ELLs. The study highlights the diverse, bilingual programs such as "transitional, two-way bilingual immersion, and developmental" (p. 490). According to Kelly (2015), the examination and analysis of educational practices included studying the language environment and how it supports dual language learners' language development.

Hence, there is a need for the development of literacy skills as part of the language development of the dual language learner (DLL) population to be successful academically and have the readiness skills during the early school years to transition to upper levels of school and social life. According to Jacoby and Lesaux (2017), there is a concern regarding education researchers, practitioners, and policymakers with identifying and replicating high-quality early education practices that support the development of language and literacy skills, particularly in programs that serve academically vulnerable children. A considerable number of DLL in public schools are in the process of learning new vocabulary and reading in a language in which they are not yet proficient (Gámez, Neugebauer, Coyne, Mccoach & Ware, 2017). The population of students whose second language is English has increased in today's schools. Researchers have stated the issue of the changes in the educational processes and the academic preparation of

educators to meet the needs of dual language learners (Chang, 2015; Kelly, 2015). Given these changes, the perception and training of educators in the process of acquiring the second language in educators are relevant in today's education. According to Kelly (2015), the examination and analysis of the educational practice include studying the language environment and how it supports dual language learners' language development. The formation of collaborative relationships between parents and teachers of dual language learners (DLLs) can link parents' funds of knowledge with teachers' needs for the supports for DLL (Sawyer, Manz, & Martin, 2016). Understanding of acquisition of the second language is crucial, as well as the cultural and linguistic differences in the home and the needs of the dual language learners.

Moreover, other theories help understand second language acquisition and the relationship with the social development of dual language learners. Cummins's (2016) SLA theory integrates the developmental perspectives within the language proficiency aspects that differentiate between the school demands and the outside interpersonal connections between the first language (L1) and second language (L2) proficiency. Theoretical foundational knowledge regarding the acquisition of the second language is crucial for teacher candidates (Guo, 2018). SLA Cummins's theory uses two concepts in the discussion of bilingual education. Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) in the second language, which describes the development of conversational fluency in the second language. The second concept, Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) which describes the use of language in decontextualized academic situations (Cummins 2016; Guo, 2018). The implication of SLA theory with L2 proficiency refers to the educator's understanding of language development and its application in the classroom (Selvi & Martin-Beltrán, 2016).



In the second language acquisition, the interaction within the two languages is related to the role of the comprehensible output and the comprehensible input (Cummins & Swain 2014). The main two aspects of the theory, basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) and academic, cognitive language proficiency (CALP) with the interconnection between the two languages, establish the difference between learning social language and academic language (Cummins & Swain, 2014). Cummins (2008) defined BICS as the fluency in conversational language. In other words, in the social area while CALP is defined as the ability of the student to comprehend, perceive, and express in their oral and written modes the relevant concepts or ideas to be successful at school.

### ***Dual Language Learners' Support***

Pedagogical support to dual language learners provides benefits in vocabulary development by receiving input in the first and second languages (Wong & Neuman, 2019). Instructional support provided to the dual language learner population has become a necessity given exposure to both languages from an early age. Instructional support includes scaffolds, visual representation, and the use of multimedia to reinforce vocabulary concepts (Wong & Neuman, 2019). The exposure of young children to media programs with educational content equips them in early language development (Danielson, Wong & Neuman, 2019). Common Core State Standards (CCSS) adaptation into the K-12 curriculum represents a positive impact and support in the second language acquisition process, literacy, and writing development in higher elementary grades (O'Hallaron, 2014). Thence, the influence of the use of different pedagogical strategies are factors of great importance in vocabulary instruction, which helps in the process of language acquisition and literacy skills. In the learning of young children in both languages,

Spanish and English, repetition and frequency influences new vocabulary words (Danielson et al., 2019).

A study in Rio Grande Valley of Texas, with 85% of the population being Hispanic, predominantly from Mexico, demonstrates the need to promote new instructional for the benefit of DLL and ELL student learning (Lumbrears & Rupley, 2017). Lumbrears and Rupley (2017), indicate that students of Latino origin have been divided into two main groups, immigrant students (or children of immigrant parents) being Spanish their home language is with very little English; the second group identified as bilingual, with different levels of knowledge in Spanish or those who only speak English. Accordingly, the practices used by teachers, which can be adapted at home, help the student to be successful academically and socially.

Additionally, early childhood classrooms can provide support for oral language learning to assist further and create a foundation for higher elementary school grades. Language development both at home and in the classroom provides appropriate learning experiences for active learning (Cheatham, Jimenez-Silva & Park, 2015). In the self-identification and self-esteem of the students, the influence of the teachers, parents, and peers plays a significant role in the simulation of the new culture and educational development (Lumbrears & Rupley, 2017). Meaningful interactions provide children with opportunities to practice the new language, model what they hear, and put it into practice in different contexts (Cheatham et al., 2015). The repetition of vocabulary, a language learned in the classroom, and purposeful contribution of the teacher establishing a strategic classroom organization and modifications in the curriculum helps the cognitive and linguistic development of the student (Cheatham et al., 2015; Danielson et al., 2019; Lubrears & Rupley, 2017).

Teachers' practices and learning has become an emphasis in today's classroom, predominantly in bilingual elementary classrooms. There is little documentation of promotion of instructional adaptations, enacting instruction according to their knowledge, and changing disposition when serving multilingual or bilingual students (Daniel & Pray, 2016). However, there is a notable need for the establishment of educational programs where teachers can develop and enhance student-centered pedagogy by supporting instructional practices. Community-based service-learning (CBSL) programs provide the opportunity for the schools to create collaboration within the stakeholders (Baker, 2018). Baker (2018) establishes the position of elementary classrooms to provide meaningful school settings to help develop relationships supporting second language acquisition and collaboration with secondary and post-secondary Spanish and bilingual learners. In progress tracking, instructional planning, and to provide adequate resources relevant to the needs of DLLs, additional information on regular school year progress is needed (Wood, Wofford, Gabas, & Petscher, 2018). Therefore, more critical for educators is a greater understanding of the traditional impact of second language learning on academic achievement and complex home language services (Wood et al., 2018).

### ***Dual Language Learners' Academic Needs***

When we talk about the academic needs of second language learners, there is a wide range of possible areas that we can find. According to studies, there are latent subgroups within the population of dual language learners (Kim, Lambert & Burts, 2018; Lumbrears & Rupley, 2017). Diversity among the DLL population is present, representing a wide range of ethics, races, cultures, religions, linguistics, and communities, meaning social background, including previous political situation (Bialystok, 2018; Kim et al., 2018). Founded in these differences, Kim et al. (2018) presented three latent subgroups among the DLL population, (a) emergent

bilingual children, (b) bilingual children, and (c) heritage language speakers. Each one of these subgroups presented has a unique and different academic need, which is following the environment represented in the home and the level of proficiency in the language. Emergent bilingual children favor the use of their native language with little English use in the classroom and home, bilingual children differ in their use of English only at school but speak at home both languages (Kim et al., 2018). The heritage language speakers tend to only speak their native language in both the classroom and at home (Kim et al., 2018).

The 1968 Bilingual Education Act acknowledged the plight of immigrant children with inadequate English skills and provided incentives for services that would assist these children in excelling in American schools and improving their English and home language skills (Bialystok, 2018). However, bilingual education topic, in recent years, controversy has been observed in the educational system, specifically regarding the application and suitability to meet the academic needs of students. For Hispanic children from Spanish-speaking families in the U.S., the primary concern is how they can develop enough levels of English language skills and literacy to work in school and beyond (Bialystok, 2018). The exclusivity of bilingualism could be re-evaluated when working with subgroups within the DLL population, thus also considering language emergent (Bialystok, 2018; Kim et al., 2018; Lumbrears & Rupley, 2017).

**Writing Skills Development.** Developing the writing skills of young dual language learners is considered one of the foundation areas of literacy achievement. The growing knowledge of children's literacy is apparent as they write. Therefore, when writing, it is easier to understand children's ideas of their alphabetic principles, phonological understanding, print concepts, and orthography (Gillanders et al., 2017). Moreover, Gillanders et al. (2017) described that DLLs prefer to extend their phonological knowledge of language 1 to the writing of

language two before obtaining formal literacy instruction. Therefore, the role of the first language is vital in the process of transition to the second language, not only the development of writing but also in the development of oral language and reading. Unlike monolingual children, however, DLLs have language and literacy skills in multiple languages, providing the need to investigate the role of L1 skills and the ability to read L2 (Conso, Mesa & Yeomans-Maldonado, 2019).

Evidence in current literature demonstrates that writing at an early age plays an essential role in children's development process, particularly those who speak two languages. The method of learning to write and use language for young dual language learners (DLLs) is expansively different from "that of the children who are monolingual English speakers" (Wagner, 2016, p. 31). DLLs do not learn how to write in forms that reflect the learning processes of unilingual students; these variations in language acquisition and literacy development between DLLs and English speakers have not proven to be harmful to the cognitive or language growth of DLLs (Wagner, 2016). When learners engage in reading and writing practices, they acquire the concepts required for traditional writing in alphabetic languages about print and phoneme-grapheme correspondences (Gillanders, 2017). Bilingualism can have consequences for writing development; thus, teachers should provide several ways to explore writing without the need for an adult structure for students to show their ideas about the written process (Gillanders, 2017).

**Oral Language Development.** In oral language development, oral narrative retellings are valuable resources of knowledge to produce languages (Wofford & Wood, 2018). A study made over two years to Spanish-English DLL, investigated the development of oral narrative retelling skills among emergent bilingual children longitudinally from kindergarten to second grade, as they simultaneously learned literacy in both languages (Lucero, 2018). Lucero (2018)

concluded that children grew substantially in vocabulary in both languages; however, only English indicates overall, story structure that discourse skills were promoted in English although Spanish discourse growth may have ceased developing even within a dual language immersion curriculum. In this scenario, healthy development in Spanish oral language or phonological knowledge skills will lead to higher competencies in English word reading (Conso, Mesa & Yeomans-Maldonado, 2019). Accordingly, the learners become highly aware of the use of oral language and then use methods in their linguistic efforts via finding trends in their linguistic setting (Wofford & Wood, 2018).

In each grade level, needs change or evolve towards the development of more complicated skills considering the different areas of language development and literacy. The characterization of the language development trend can be challenged by the impact of two language usage (Wofford & Wood, 2018). Understanding the use of language in context enables the teachers to consider how to increase the metalinguistic understanding of the students to their academic achievement (Hopewell & Abril-Gonzalez, 2019). Conceptualization of bilingualism, multilingualism, translanguaging in the pedagogical context by educators, it can prevent limitations in the teaching and learning process, providing learning opportunities in the first language without giving the privilege only to the second, in this case, English (Conso, Mesa & Yeomans-Maldonado, 2019; Hopewell & Abril-Gonzalez, 2019; Lucero, 2018). Comprehending and considering how bilingual learners empower their languages to improve communication can help us build pedagogies that speed up language acquisition and literacy (Hopewell & Abril-Gonzalez, 2019).

Furthermore, exposure to expressive and receptive language among the DLL is as needed as the other academic areas, such as reading, writing, and literacy skill, to continue to develop

communication skills. Gámez et al. (2019) investigated children's expressive and receptive language growth over kindergarten year and the degree to which exposure to peer-based language can improve those skills. On the other hand, authentic learning also contributes to language and literacy development, providing meaningful and engaging instruction and learning. Authentic learning can vary from small to large, using a variety of materials that build associations and casual inquiries, integrating language with current events leading to conversations and reflection on specific issues or daily aspects of the learners' lives (Zwahlen, 2018). Nevertheless, on another study, findings showed that experiences varied in how the teachers perceive the dimensions of closeness, conflict, and the relationship between teacher and student according to their expectations (Timmermans, Werf & Rubie-Davies, 2019). However, classroom-based experiences improve the language abilities of learners, the teacher-learner relationship, or the learner-advanced peers' relationship favorably contributes to the diversity of DLL vocabulary (Gámez et al. (2019).

### ***Dual Language Learners' Social Needs***

One of the essential aspects that decide the quality of the interactions is social skills in which a person understands in his or her environment with people (Aličković, 2019). In the student learning process, it is necessary to consider the aspect of social relationships between their peers, teachers, and parents. Young learners who have acquired social skills work beyond the family atmosphere in which they are predominantly attracted, these children excel in developing connections and interactions with their peers (Aličković, 2019). The development of social skills in elementary school students is a vital tool, especially when preparing them for the future today. An individual must have familiarity with the rules, norms, and values of the society they live, as well as mastering the necessary skills for them to achieve successful interaction

within the group, to achieve social development as a social being (Selimović, Selimović & Opić, 2018). In the process of learning social skills in children, socio-demographic features, as well as the role of parents in encouraging pedagogical competencies, are essential (Aličković, 2019; Selimović et al., 2018). Regardless of cultural differences in objectives and procedures of social interaction, children whose parents are warm, firm, and supportive of their autonomy appear to display better results than their peers (Chung et al., 2019). However, in Latino cultures, there is a hierarchical focus on family and respect for authority (Chung et al., 2019). The assimilation of the new culture is linked to the socio-cultural setting of the student, where it can examine their behavior among peers as their emotions.

**Socio-emotional Needs.** The social-emotional learning (SEL) suitable for the U.S. school background can be mainly foreign to them when young refugee ELL starts formal schooling in the United States (Cho, Wang, & Christ, 2019). Many predictors for the social involvement of young migrants, immigrants, also known as refugees or dual language learners are assimilation and cultural orientation. Migrants arrive in the new community in a foreign country with a tendency for social interaction and cultural involvement (Doucerein et al., 2017). While forming relationships based on their perceptions of pre-existing interactions, these principles are initially identified, and can also set trends in new generations of dual language learners (Cho et al., 2019; Doucerein et al., 2017).

Bilingual Latinx or DLL is a new generation in which language development, social interactions, bilingualism, are given a different perspective. Martínez, Durán, & Hikida, (2017) suggested that, given the diverse population in a two-way immersion program, the dynamics between the bilingual and multilingual learners in the classroom formed a translanguaging environment. The connection formed between the two groups will create new and different



functions between the leading group and sub-groups social relationships found in dual language, immersion, or bilingual programs. Landry et al. (2019) evaluated the efficacy of Preparing Pequeños, an interactive small-group curriculum designed to improve language, literacy, and mathematical learning for Spanish speaking DLL. Children's intervention showed substantially more significant improvements in Spanish oral language, writing comprehension, phonological understanding, and phonics, often as a consequence of enhanced exposure to children; individual needs and behavioral support reported significant reductions in school indifference, frustration, and hostility compared to control group (Landry et al., 2019).

Differently, Block & Vidaurre (2019) stated that all groups, English language learners, and non-English language learners in first-grade dual language immersion (DLI) have more positive behaviors and substantial benefits of DLI when assessing multiculturalism. Such programs prevent language-by-language segregation and provide an atmosphere where each subgroup of students may act as lead for the other at various times of a day (Block & Vidaurre, 2019). However, research has shown that grouping abilities have significant effects on students' academic and socio-emotional results (Palacios et al., 2019). Palacios et al. (2019) indicated that learners preferred high-level peers as academic partners in higher-achieving classrooms, they mostly excluded those with high-school misconduct, and educational relationships led to friendships, and vice versa, in both high- and low-level classrooms.

Therefore, determination, perseverance, and persistence of dual language learners as part of their contribution to and achievement in primary school literacy offer a more objective measure of their emotional commitment (O'Neal, Boyars & Riley, 2019). Socio-emotional factors (e.g., grit) can be possible mediators of the relationship between stress and attainment, including personality and self-regulation, as well as the construct of motivation (O'Neal, 2018;

O'Neal et al., 2019). Strong candidates as mediators of stress and accomplishment, declining motivation, and commitment over time are socioemotional grit factors in low-income ethnic minorities (O'Neal, 2018). Motivation is essential to learn English because the achievement of literacy demands perseverance, particularly in the context of systemic and educational challenges, also related to achieving literacy in the upper primary and secondary schools (O'Neal et al., 2019).

### **Teacher Preparation and Professional Development Beliefs**

Students in the process of acquiring English as a second language (ESL) create unique challenges to educators who often lack the expertise to make content accessible while supporting students' English language development (Hoover & Soltero-González, 2018). Researchers have indicated that the practices of teachers in professional development demonstrate their limited knowledge and acquired skills to work with students whose English is their second language (Hoover & Soltero-González, 2018; Zein, 2016). Zein (2016) recently investigated the generalist and specialist elementary school teacher's preparation. Generalist teachers are teachers appointed without applicable qualifications in the English classroom because of a lack of teachers, and teacher specialists are those who have received education in instruction, focused on English as a second language or foreign in this case. Zein's (2016) findings indicate that teachers with an English background in this study appeared to be confident with their English proficiency, and those without an English background showed a lack of confidence in their use of English (Zein, 2016).

In one of the earliest investigations of this topic, showed that during 2014-2015 school year, the United States average percentage of English learners (EL) in one state was 9.4% and there was not an increase of this population in only 15 states in the nation (Markham et al., 2017).

To demonstrate teacher preparation and the perception of the use of second language acquisition, the researchers evaluated a total of 75 graduate and undergraduate students. To explain teacher preparation and their perception of the use of SLA, Markham et al. (2017), collected data about teachers' basic knowledge of the theory of language acquisition, their perception of use and their educational theories data of the teachers and their incorporation into their practices. The results confirmed that the participants were willing to change their fundamental concepts because of participation in the SLA theory course, with 67% of pre-service teachers and 68% of practicing teachers showing a change in their informal personal theories. Professional development (PD) programs that emphasize the needs of the teachers regarding instructional practices and methods are more likely to enhance a teacher's instructional practice by deepening their pedagogical knowledge and increasing beliefs, self-efficacy, and willingness to change (Hoover & Soltero-González, 2018; Markham et al., 2017; Zein, 2016).

The absence of support of English to speakers of other languages (ESOL) has become a challenge to educational leaders. Schools highlighted how vital and necessary are teaching the second language for the DLL benefit; however, a few studies have examined the leadership practices that support teaching and language learners (Hoover & Soltero-González, 2018; Zein, 2016; Markham et al., 2017; McGee, Haworth, & Macintyre, 2014). A recent study in the leadership practices showed that the knowledge of educational leaders could generate opportunities in the educational environment "to support teaching and learning as another successful leadership practice" (McGee et al., 2014, p. 104).

### ***Dual Language Instructional Practices Beliefs***

To explain teachers' perspectives, Sawyer, Manz, and Martin (2016) analyzed and evaluated the beliefs of parents and early childhood teachers on the language development of

Spanish-speaking preschool DLLs and how they can collaborate to support DLLs. The teachers' perspectives on the instructional practices of English learners are a crucial factor of analysis to enhance educator's knowledge and student's academic achievement (Chang, 2015; Sawyer et al., 2016). Sawyer et al. (2016) focus on the first years of education, especially in preschool, which indicates that the importance of not drawing conclusions or creating generalizations from the findings on school-age literature but urge more research on this increasing population of young DLL in the country. Sawyer et al. (2016) reported the benefit to the educators of professional development with a focus on diverse approaches of collaboration with other educators and with the families based on their knowledge. Chang (2015) investigated an elementary education program to identify and address the misconceptions of second language acquisition among teacher candidates. Findings revealed that there was a significantly higher percentage among teacher candidates in the understanding of second language-acquisition by incorporating courses of the SLA in elementary education making an impact "on clearing teacher candidates' misconceptions of second-language acquisition and helped prepare them to work with English-language learners in mainstream classrooms" (Chang, 2015, p. 23)

Beliefs in dual language teaching practices have had other influences linked to the processes that have taken place over the last decades. The English-only trend became increasingly prevalent in the previous decade of the twentieth century (Garrity, Aquino-Sterling, & Salcedo-Potter, 2019). By pushing for stringent language policies, notably in states like "California, Arizona, and Massachusetts, 1,4 million students, 82% of whom were native Spanish speakers", were effectively excluded from bilingual education (Garrity et al., 2019, p. 309). Garrity et al. (2019) indicate Amendments to the legislation, along with the current criteria for Head Start Performance Standards and recently published findings and policy suggestions,

reflect a profound change in public opinion regarding how early childhood services can better support DLLs. Since dual language education (DLE) is expanding in the U.S, language analysts should also interact not only through a state- or district-level language policy (Bernstein et al., 2018). Still, they must also investigate the policymaking of teachers at the classroom level, considering their language beliefs (Bernstein et al., 2018).

Regarding bilingualism, Garrity et al. (2016) investigated students' beliefs about bilingualism, bilingual education, and dual-language development. The participants were 97 undergraduate students from the Child and Family Development (CFD) department in the university enrolled in the Infant/Toddler and Preschool lab classes. The sample reflected a significant Latino, Spanish-speaking population, and sixteen of the students (25%) had lived in another country (Garrity et al., 2016). Further investigation in bilingualism beliefs among educators and teachers is vital to address issues among educational and instructional practices to the DLL population (Chang, 2015; Garrity et al., 2016; Sawyer et al., 2016).

### ***Early Education Programs Beliefs***

Early Educational Programs (EEP) has an essential role in language development. Baker (2018) demonstrated that teacher's beliefs about bilingualism and diversity in the languages are an asset to the view of the DLL children and their families, particularly in the knowledge which serves as a resource to the community. In the EEP classrooms, the use of a first language, or primary language that is spoken at home, could be of benefit for the children's vocabulary and literacy skill growth. Raikes et al. (2019) indicated an analysis of 1961 DLL Educare children across 16 sites in the nation; findings display that all the groups of DLL children demonstrated growth in the language skills in L1 and L2. However, the students exposed to the instruction of both English and Spanish at the same time, have significantly higher scores in their auditory

comprehension (Raikes et al., 2019). The Early Education Program (EEP) could have a positive impact on the social-emotional and language skills in the DLL as well as the English-only (EO) children from a low-socio economical background (Yazejian, Bryant, Freel, & Burchinal, 2015). The examination of the needs of the DLL in the early childhood education (ECE) and early education and care (EEC) programs across the nation it has become a crucial part of the instructional process and the preparation of the educators in the early and elementary grades (Castro, 2019; Yazejian et al., 2015).

The growing participation of younger, linguistically diverse Hispanics in early childhood education programs, and notably Head Start, has resulted in a deliberate emphasis on identifying the components of ECE that become essential for the advancement of young DLLs via their involvement in ECE development programs (White, Fernandez, & Greenfield, 2019). White et al. (2019) provide evidence that several elements of the reliability of educator-child relationships within the learning environment, including positive interactions and a safe and supportive atmosphere, are essential to all students, irrespective of the learning-language level. Effective instruction within DLL early learning programs will develop a strong foundation in the learning process and the development of new language resources.

Efficient teaching for ELs starts with a detailed evaluation of the abilities and needs of the students (Ortiz & Fránquiz, 2019). Furthermore, language evidence is vital for preparing lessons and activities to meet curriculum requirements and for choosing scaffolds for learners with different levels of linguistic skills (Ortiz & Fránquiz, 2019). Auxiliary learning activities and experiences are required to satisfy and address the needs of DLLs in an efficient manner (White et al., 2019). White et al. (2019) beliefs that usually, research on this subject have not

investigated the accuracy of such language exchanges, since they emerge in different languages, which is a gap in literature needing further study.

### ***School Readiness Beliefs***

Young dual language learner's preparation, academic achievement, and school success have become a concern among educators and scholars in the nation (Landry et al., 2019; Piker & Kimmel, 2018). Due to the limitations DLLs encounter in specific developmental fields as a comparison with unilingual students, there has been a growing interest in school readiness for DLLs (Ramírez, López, & Ferron, 2019). Distinguishing between the attributes of teachers and the progress of DLL involves a structure that incorporates learning theories throughout the context, as well as cultural group theories (Ramírez et al., 2019). Ramírez et al. (2019) indicated that there is a significant effect on the learners' English literacy and math skills, and indeed the Spanish language and literacy skills as a result of teachers having admitted having undergone additional mentoring on how to instruct DLLs. However, the lack of understanding, pre-service preparation, and professional development can influence the teacher's beliefs and interfere in the process of adding instructional practices and individual support (Landry et al., 2019).

Piker and Kimmel (2018) emphasized the importance of school readiness in young DLL, especially in teacher's beliefs about what all the students should know. Therefore, there is an expectation from the young students to know or understand certain concepts when they enter kindergarten (Bassok, Latham & Rorem, 2016), and in the transition process to upper grades. Kindergarten children within the ELL population, the achievement gap is evident compared to monolingual English-speaking peers as it is unsure if educators consider the home language of young students "when identifying the skill and characteristics needed to be ready for kindergarten and school success" (Piker & Kimmel, 2018, p. 1369). In another study based on a

pre- and post-test experiment of pre-service students, students answered the questionnaire to analyze and examine the effect of the mixture of service-based learning and curriculum (Guo, 2018). Guo (2018) found that in the time of the service-learning, there was a significant difference among the two groups, especially in "listening and speaking, communication strategies, and teaching practice skills (p. 32).

### **School Readiness of Students in Elementary School**

The need for ELL students in school readiness is becoming increasingly relevant, as ELL students are a growing segment of the U.S. school population (Gottfried, 2017). School readiness encompasses various areas, including social and emotional skills, motor development, and physical fitness, pre-academic abilities, discipline, concentration, and motivation (Limlingan, Mcwayne, Sanders, & López, 2019). It is essential to start at an early age the school readiness of students who learn the second language, using the assistance of educators for the active development of their learning, language, and social skills. DLLs in the U.S., also called second-language sequential learners, if they first make regular contact with their second language during pre-school (Limlingan et al., 2019).

Therefore, educators have become increasingly aware that “the general elements of high-quality early childhood education programs” will serve as the basis for all young children to learn (Limlingan et al., 2019). The background of the classroom language involves both the instructional language and the peer representation of DLLs in the classroom, and both influences may have a significant effect on their learning in both English and Spanish (Garcia, 2018). The use of integrated language programs promotes the closure of language and literacy gaps, leading to language growth, school readiness, and achievement (Garcia, 2018; Gottfried, 2017; Limlingan et al., 2019). Randomized control trials (RCT) evidence shows that using both English



and Spanish results in comparable English language development and more significant Spanish development compared to monolingual English instruction (Garcia, 2018). Many successful pre-kindergarten alternatives compared to others in promoting school readiness, thus to evaluate the appropriate pre-kindergarten match for young children, it is crucial for policy decision focus on evidence that examines the efficacy of these diverse pathways in education (Gottfried, 2017).

Moreover, because of variations in cultural norms, associated values, and an appropriate method of care for preschoolers, immigrant families who have specific experiences linked to early childcare and education, or may engage with pre-schools in different contexts, affect the degree to which pre-schools influence school readiness skills for children (Lee, Han, Waldfogel, & Brooks-Gunn, 2018). School enrollment, especially early childhood services, is of great benefit in cognitive and language development, creating a solid foundation for higher-grade progress in the education field. While immigrant children tend to learn a different primary language or a combination of English and another language in their formative years, pre-school programs support immigrant children themselves, and their parents familiarize themselves with the United States educational setting (Lee et al., 2018).

Nguyen, Jenkins & Whitaker (2018) consider that curriculum choice is a critical factor in the streamlining of experiences of students in early education programs. In bilingual education, content, and language-integrated learning (CLIL) is a conventional pedagogy, which means that learning the foreign language via acquiring the content of the subject (Oattes, Fukkink, Oostdam, Graaff, & Wilschut, 2020). Research shows that academic-focused educational activities or substitutes are more effective in improving children's literacy and math skills than frequently utilized the whole-child school curriculum itself (Nguyen et al., 2018). Nevertheless, language instruction policies and procedures worldwide adapt to cultural and linguistic diversity in a wide

variety of ways, resulting in varying accessibility to bilingual and multilingual educational formats (Serafini, Rozell, & Winsler, 2020). At fifth grade level, two-way immersion (TWI) models promoting the home culture and language and integrating language majority and minority learners identified with the accelerated acquisition of English, which facilitated the connection between TWI programs and higher GPAs (Serafini et al., 2020). The future success of such immersion or bilingual programs is dependent on the method of implementation. Educators build on language philosophies to understand, debate, and enforce language policies, and to open or close ways for diverse language strategies and development in students (Henderson & Palmer, 2015).

### ***Second Language Development***

In their research about second language acquisition, Maier, Bohlmann & Palacios (2016) and Skibbe et al. (2019) studied the self-regulation and cross-language associations in language acquisition, development, and achievement, and the development of literacy. Maier et al. (2016) focused on the development of dual language acquisition, especially in the vocabulary skills of preschoolers. The study described vocabulary development in L1 and L2 of 177 young DLL children and how vocabulary language skills relate to one another, demonstrating that DLL preschoolers improved their vocabulary in both languages. Furthermore, Skibbe et al. (2019) focused on how trajectories of self-regulation development predict the way literacy and language skills develop from preschool through to second grade. Skibbe et al. (2019) assessed 315 children twice per year for four years on indicators of decoding, reading comprehension, phonological awareness, and vocabulary to find that “children who demonstrated self-regulation earlier had higher language and literacy skills throughout preschool and second grade” (Skibbe et al., 2019, p. 244).

Maier et al. (2016) described young DLL children's vocabulary development in both English and Spanish simultaneously, and how vocabulary skills in each language relate to one another, during a contextual shift that places greater emphasis on the acquisition of academic English language skills. Overall, limited cross-language associations were found, and relatively limited language abilities of children within the sample (Maier et al., 2016). As evidenced by vocabulary scores substantially below national norms for monolingual speakers in both English and Spanish across all time points, it could be below that critical threshold, inhibiting a positive cross-language correlation (Maier et al., 2016).

In a later study, Goodrich, Lonigan, and Farver (2017) evaluated the effectiveness of an intervention that utilized an experimental curriculum and two professional development models for the development of English and Spanish early literacy skills among language minority (LM) children. They evaluated whether LM child proficiency in one language moderated the effect of the intervention on early literacy skills in the other language, as well as whether an intervention was differentially effective for LM compared with monolingual English-speaking children. Five hundred twenty-six Spanish-speaking LM children and 447 monolingual English-speaking children enrolled in 26 preschool centers in Los Angeles participated in this study. The intervention implemented in this study had only a modest impact on English oral language skills with the inclusion in the analysis of monolingual, and LM children. They did not have significant effects on the English and Spanish oral language skills of LM children (Goodrich et al., 2017). Goodrich et al. (2017) understands that young language minority children might need more intensive language instruction than monolingual children. The foundational reasoning is as they often enter preschool with lower levels of proficiency in each language than the monolingual children.

### ***Language and Literacy Development***

Many researchers have studied language and literacy development, and instruction of DLLs in their primary school years and development of language comprehension (Hindman & Wasik, 2015; Gjicali, Astuto, & Lipnevich, 2019; Jacoby & Lesaux, 2017). Gjicali et al. (2019) examined the relationship between language comprehension and numeracy skills in a longitudinal sample of ethnic and racial minorities (Black = 86%; Latino 14%) children from low-income communities. Results indicated strong correlations between language and numeracy skill, independent of age and sex, and the components of language comprehension showed to positively predict numeracy (Gjicali et al., p.14). Furthermore, Jacoby and Lesaux (2017) measured the frequency and duration of language and literacy lessons in classes that enrolled large numbers of Latino DLLs. Jacoby and Lesaux (2017) also investigated children's opportunities to participate in high-quality language and literacy experiences as part of their everyday instructional experience. Results provide information that is useful to inform the design of policy and practice-based interventions that might improve the characteristics of the language and literacy environments that serve Latino DLL children (Jacoby & Lesaux, 2017).

The rapid growth among dual language learners (DLLs) in the U.S. over the past decades has raised questions about the capacity of early care and education programs to adequately address the learning goals and characteristics of this heterogeneous population (Buysse, Peisner-Feinberg, Páez, Hammer, & Knowles, 2014). Buysse et al. (2014) describe the results of a systematic review of empirical literature evaluating the effects of early education interventions on the development and learning of DLL children birth through 5 years of age. Literacy development, achievement, and readiness are essential to the process of language acquisition and comprehension at a young age (Hindman & Wasik, 2015; Jacoby & Lesaux). Jacoby and Lesaux

(2017) measured the frequency and duration of language and literacy lessons in classes that enrolled large numbers of Latino DLLs, investigated children's opportunities to participate in high-quality language and literacy experiences as a part of their everyday instructional experience. The key finding suggests that when language and literacy lessons occurred in these classes, it was most frequently delivered in a whole group and featured an instructional style that was characterized by the teacher directing the children to answer basic questions with a one- or two-word response (Jacoby & Lesaux, 2017). Jacoby and Lesaux (2018) revealed opportunities to participate in extended discourse were relatively limited for children in these Head Start classes; only 13% of lessons led to extended discourse, and two classes had no instances of extended discourse across three full days of observation.

Moreover, Hindman and Wasik (2015) examined the English and Spanish vocabulary skills that young Dual Language Learners (DLLs) bring to Head Start, as well as their vocabulary learning over the year. Participants came from a recent cohort of the Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey. Results show that, for both Spanish and English vocabulary, child and family factors play a role in fundamental skills and end-of-year skills, especially the prevalence of each language in the household.

### ***Self-regulation Development***

The development of self-regulation skills in early childhood DLLs, higher elementary grades, is a critical subject for study and consideration. Self-regulation skills serve as a bridge for DLLs to be better academically effective when assessed than numeracy and literacy skills (Guirguis & Antigua, 2017). Regulatory skills are essential as they are linked to academic success and are sources of school readiness and career progress. These skills play a significant role in pre-school classrooms and post-school years (Guirguis & Antigua, 2017). Self-evaluation

and feedback are factors that can help in the student's self-regulation process. Research thus shows that most elementary school children still lack the necessary metacognitive skills to accurately determine their performance (Loon & Roebbers, 2017). Whereas young learners will need specific feedback, traditional classroom setting educators typically do not have the resources and time to provide their students' detailed feedback (Loon & Roebbers, 2017).

Self-regulation is a multifaceted framework connected to several significant childhood development outcomes (Guirguis & Antigua, 2017; Lonigan, Allan, Goodrich, Farrington, & Phillips, 2015). Self-regulation is aligned with growth across several areas, including aspects of cognitive function including inhibitory control, linked to children's reading and math abilities simultaneously, and longitudinally with elementary school (Lonigan et al., 2015). Results revealed that in Head Start, bilingual children displayed superior inhibitory control over DLLs with limited English skills and faster growth across kindergarten (1.5 years) than English-monolingual students, even surpassing in mathematics (Choi, Jeon, & Lippard, 2018). However, executive functional skills seemed to be irrelevant to the bilingual classification of preschoolers, and therefore to their "English vocabulary and letter-word abilities" (Palermo, Mikulski, & Conejo, 2016). Nevertheless, the degree to which self-regulation affects the language and academic skills of Spanish and English-speaking children is uncertain due to a lack of evidence (Palermo et al., 2016).

Consequently, educational support is necessary for the proper functioning of students at the elementary level, considering the different variables relating to DLLs. Many reports address executive functioning, a paragliding term for a collection of cognitive skills of a higher order than aid track and manage thoughts and behavior (White & Greenfield, 2016). White & Greenfield (2016) found a representative sample of disadvantaged bilingual Latino preschoolers

showed an innate strength in cognitive skills that form the basis for learning, support the concept of promoting both Spanish and English in DLL demographics, and offering them with sufficient opportunities to improve both languages. Learning to read relies upon social, emotional, linguistic, and text-specific processes and how they work together and converge with literacy instruction to promote skill growth (Connor et al., 2016). Conclusions explain the complementary and relational effects of learning to read on other essential linguistic, self-regulatory, and cognitive functions and how skills acquired can impact middle childhood development (Connor et al., 2016). Concerning enhancing second-language skills, one solution may be to raise awareness among educational authorities of the learning needs of DLL children with poor effortful control and to extend the pedagogical curriculum of kindergarten and primary school teachers to serve better these children (Keller, Troesch, Loher, & Grob, 2016).

Young kids make impressive strides in controlling thoughts, emotions, and actions over the first five years of life by use language as a communicative instrument (Hanno & Surrain, 2019). As young learners develop, self-regulatory skills will provide opportunities for language learning. Language promotes mental structure and portrayal of self-regulation in terms of direct relationships, while self-regulation enables learners to focus on communication-learning opportunities (Hanno & Surrain, 2019). Timmons, Pelletier & Corter (2015), in the classroom, examined self-regulation actions of children in social, academic, and play interactions in the whole community, small group, and play contexts. Results revealed that students reacted substantially more frequently in small group and play settings to opportunities for self-regulation. Likewise, students demonstrated the highest involvement, as did educators employed in early year settings, classroom groups, play, and transition scenarios, which sets the stage for children's interaction and self-regulating opportunities (Timmons et al., 2015).

In line with other theories of developmental systems, dynamic skill theory is an approach to developmental perspectives that examine various elements of the children's development and aims to explain the relational nature of evolving abilities, enabling the type of interaction to evolve (Bohlmann, Maier, & Palacios, 2015). There are significant variations in language skills and self-regulation among young kids as they reach formal education, hence the executive functions of children, enveloping inhibitory control, working memory, and concentration are vital for their self-regulation (Bohlmann et al., 2015; Lier & Deater-Deckard, 2015). As the transition to formal education takes place, children should learn how to control their emotions and actions in a new and sophisticated social setting, which tends to increase the intensity of social contact with peers and teachers with age (Lier & Deater-Deckard, 2015).

Given social and emotional learning abilities, emotion awareness seeks to identify and make these feelings clear to the feelings that the learners display throughout their learning experiences (Arguedas, Daradoumis, & Xhafa, 2016). Students become aware of their feelings and become more aware of their condition, which may lead them to change their behavior (Arguedas et al., 2016). Evidence included when students are aware of their emotions and are driven by different teaching techniques to enhance their learning output in connection “to motivation, engagement, and self-regulation” (Arguedas et al., 2016). Another study indicated that children with fewer clear viewpoints, combining academic and social reactions, performed the lowest across all academic measurements (Timmons et al., 2015). Notably, emotion control is quite poor at an early age (Arguedas et al., 2016); therefore, both the educators involved in the teaching-learning process and the early education services must comply with the curriculum and social standards for the effective functioning of the educational system and provide support for DLLs.



## Summary

In recent decades, the conduction of studies is accessible to analyze the needs of professional development and acquisition of knowledge in bilingual education at the elementary level because of the increase in the dual language learner population in classrooms (Kelly, 2015; Zein, 2016). Given this rise in the bilingual population, data from studies suggest the beliefs, knowledge, and perspective of instruction towards this population, from educators. Studies indicate that despite existing empirical evidence to the contrary, beliefs continue to be that the primary language to instruct is the English language (Garrity et al., 2016). There have been critical studies and analyses in the DLL population. Ultimately, results not always understood per the assessment of appropriate DLL-specific quality interventions for the educator, which can facilitate their development (White et al., 2019). Nevertheless, there are still areas in which it has not been possible to establish a connection in the learning process of literacy and its development. Hence, it is vital to study the academic and social needs of Hispanic Dual Language Learners to analyze their achievement and readiness during the elementary school years. In addition, evaluating the development of the vocabulary and comprehension of two languages and the intervention using a curriculum that develops literacy skills as part of their second language acquisition.

## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODS**

### **Overview**

This investigation was a qualitative study using a case study design with an embedded approach and various assumptions to review the literature, synthesize and analyze the information to describe the participants' perspective of the investigated phenomenon. Conduction of qualitative research is to understand the contexts or settings in which participants in a study address a problem or issue, explore a problem rather than rely on results from other research studies and the need for a sophisticated and detailed understanding of the issue (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This embedded case study will describe the educator's perspectives of the academic and social needs of the Hispanic elementary dual language learners using multiple sources of data collection to provide an in-depth understanding. Therefore, this qualitative inquiry will collect data from in-depth interviews, focus groups, and analysis of documents (Yin, 2018). The first portion of the chapter will provide information about the processes to be used in this case study, including specifics of the design and why an embedded case study will be used to investigate the phenomenon. The research questions are presented in alignment with the focus, problem, and purpose of the study. The setting is described and as well as the participants, including the sample size, type, and selection procedures. The philosophical assumptions and paradigms are identified based on the experiences and observations of the researcher. In the second portion of the chapter, the researcher also identifies and explains methods of data collection such as interviews, focus groups, and analysis of documents. Explanation of the analysis of data collected by supporting alienation for each method of data collection. Provided are the processes to maintain the trustworthiness of the study. Finally, in the last part of the

chapter, the relevant ethical considerations are highlighted, concluding with a summary of the relevant information regarding the process of the intended case study.

### **Design**

A qualitative research method will be used to study the phenomenon. This qualitative study will evaluate and interpret how I construct meaning by analyzing the interviews, and documents acquired in the data collection process (Patton, 2015). Moreover, the process of research involves considering different methods, techniques, and instruments for the construction of analytical knowledge, which means a commitment to the quality of the type of experience produced. To investigate the phenomenon of the educator's perspectives of the academic and social needs of Hispanic elementary dual language learners, a case study design is the most appropriate research method for this investigation. A case study is the study of particularity and complexity of a single case to understand its activity within relevant circumstances (Stake, 1995). Thus, for the case study is necessary to establish processes to follow to comply with parameters set by the theorists. Yin (2018) indicated that the investigation of the case study is distinctive considering the definition of the case that will be studied, the collection of relevant data and that the researcher intends to do with the collected data. It is necessary to consider the strengths and limitations when carrying out the case study. A case study is relevant as is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores "a real-life case or multiple cases over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 96).

For research using a case study design, the researcher must understand the significant components and processes to follow when creating the foundation of the study. The research method in the case study provides direction to the researcher and helps to stay on the right path

in the research process (Yin, 2018). When establishing the method, previous work should be needed to develop and identify the research question(s) because of their importance in the definition of the case. Another essential component in the case study is the proposition, which is in line with the method to be followed. According to Yin (2018) propositions, "help to identify the relevant information to be collected about the individuals" (p. 29). This process will help in the focus and identification of the problem and the phenomenon intended to be studied. Data analysis will determine patterns, explanations, analysis, and cross-case synthesis (Yin, 2018). This process helps to validate and interpret findings of the case study through the data analysis process as the criteria, and logical link of the prepositions and research questions are defined.

The case study is appropriate for the research of the perspectives of the academic and social needs of Hispanic elementary Dual language learners among the educators in a primary school in the southcentral region of the United States. The descriptive framework will highlight the important topics according to the data collected. A study conducted by educators of the art of teaching English language learners (ELL) determined related topics for each grade, promoting understanding and inquiry information for diverse student groups (Lee et al., 2008). Therefore, the researcher in the case study will describe and explain the perspective of educators regarding the academic and social needs of students immersed in learning two languages at the same time. In this way, the researcher will be able to indicate which or what subjects are relevant to the learning process of Hispanic students in elementary school, which can contribute to implementation and contributions as support or barriers in the intended organization through investigation. Thus, the case study is the best fit for the intended investigation since it will describe the educators' perspective of the phenomenon while providing an in-depth understanding of the real context (Yin, 2014).

### **Research Questions**

Central Question: What are educators' perspectives on the academic and social needs of dual language learners?

Sub-question 1: What are educators' perspectives of the literacy skill needs of dual language learners?

Sub-question 2: What are educators' perspectives of the second language acquisition needs of dual language learners?

Sub-question 3: What are educators' perspectives of the social development needs of dual language learners?

### **Setting**

The setting of the case study will be in the Northwestern School District in an urban area in a southern state. The target population of this study is elementary educators from three urban elementary schools in the Northwestern School District (NSD), a pseudonym is used for the school district and the schools to protect the privacy of the participants. In the NSD, there is more than two percent of children, ages five to seventeen, who speak languages other than English at home. The district has a 1.7% foreign-born population, with 37 percent born in Latin America (Census profile: Northwestern School District, LA, 2016).

The proposed schools were chosen because it has a high percentage of Hispanic students compared to the other schools in the school district. The population of Hispanics, although in the last census in the district only 1.7% is reflected, there has been an increase in schools, especially elementary schools. The proposal of these schools has a foundation by its concentration of most elementary Hispanic students by its geographical area in the city. The percentage of students of Latino / Hispanic origin is 3% within E elementary school (E elementary & middle school, n.d.).

E elementary school has a high percentage of poverty, with 91% of the school population (E elementary & middle school, n.d.). The organizational structure of the school in terms of leadership, it is composed of the school principal, the assistant principal/curriculum coordinator, discipline coordinator, faculty, and staff. There are 406 students enrolled in fifth and sixth grades.

The second school, W elementary school student total enrollment, is 382, with 93% economically disadvantaged students and three percent Latino / Hispanic origin of the school population (W Elementary School, n.d.). The organizational structure of the school in terms of leadership, it is composed of the school principal, the assistant principal, discipline coordinator, faculty, and staff that serves students in third and fourth grades.

The third school, L elementary school has a total student enrollment of 785 students from Pre-K (ages 3-4) to second grade (L Elementary School, n.d.). There is 2.5 percent of Latino / Hispanic origin students, and 90% of students economically disadvantage (L Elementary School, n.d.). The school is divided into two sites, from Pre-K to Kindergarten, and first to second grade, having a principal, an assistant principal, faculty, and staff for each. However, it is considered one school for the district's organizational purpose.

### **Participants**

Participants were 11 elementary female educators, including teachers and former administrators from three urban elementary schools from a school district in the northcentral region of the United States. The elementary educator had at least one to three dual language learners in their classroom. The teachers had at least one year of teaching experience working with dual language learners and were certified at the elementary level from the state as a high-quality teacher. Purposive sampling will be used to select the dual language learner educators in

the elementary schools. This NSD has 6,168 total students, with the racial/ethnic demographics being 58% African American, 37% Caucasian, 2% Hispanic, 2% Two or more races, 1% American Indian/Alaska Native, 1% Asian, and <1% Hawaiian Native/Pacific Islanders (Schools, G. 2020). There are 17 schools within the NSD from preK-12 grades. The gender demographics are 52% male and 48% female.

Participants demographic information was gathered through the recruitment letter and individual interviews (see Table 1).

Table 1

*Participant Demographics*

Pseudonym	Age	Sex	Ethnic/ Race Identity	Highest Degree	Years Teaching	Current Level
Public Elementary School						
Betty	50-65	F	Caucasian	Bachelors	10-15	Third-Fourth
Mary	50-65	F	Caucasian	Masters	20-25	Third-Fourth
Patricia	40-55	F	Caucasian	Bachelors	10-15	Third-Fourth
Kyra	30-45	F	African-			
			American	Bachelors	10-15	Third-Fourth
Sharon	40-55	F	African-			
			American	Bachelors	10-15	Fifth-Sixth
Dorothy	50-65	F	African-			
			American	Doctorate	25-30	Fifth-Sixth
Jennifer	30-45	F	African-			
			American	Bachelors	5-10	Fifth
Amy	30-45	F	Caucasian	Masters	5-10	Fifth
Emma	25-35	F	Caucasian	Masters	1-5	Fifth
Valeria	30-45	F	Hispanic	Bachelors	1-5	Fifth

Zoe	30-45	F	Caucasian	Masters	10-15	Second
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### **Procedures**

There are numerous procedures to investigate the phenomenon in this study. First, the school district's approval was requested and received before IRB final approval. A formal research proposal was submitted to be approved by the IRB committee. There was no contact with the participants or collect data until after the IRB approval was receive (Appendix A). I used a purposeful sampling method to elicits the participants. Prior permission (Appendix B) was requested and obtained by the school district superintendent (Appendix C). Once the schools agree to participate, a request to contact educators and permission was in place to disseminate information. A recruitment letter (Appendix D) explaining the study, the participants' rights, and the consent form (Appendix E) were sent to the participants. After receiving the letters, signed by the participants, a purposeful sample method was used to select the participants, 11 educators from three elementary schools within the same district. The consent form contained demographic data and was used to determine eligibility; only the educational demographic background was used for this process. The overall demographic information was used as part of the data collection and trustworthiness of the case study. A recruitment follow-up letter (Appendix F) was sent to the participants one week after the first letter was issued, prior to the individual interview. The data collection process included interviews, focus groups, and documents, in a short-term process of the second semester of the school year 2020-2021, from August to October.

Data collection procedures were done during the Fall semester of the school year 2020-2021. The data collection time were 10 weeks. This process consisted of interviewing educators at a convenient time, using their planning period during school hours or after school during the



school days. There were twenty questions (Appendix G) regarding the experience, observations, instructional processes, and perspective of the academic and social needs of elementary Hispanic DLLs. Furthermore, focus groups were used to gather data within the participants. There were three small focus groups within 3-5 participants. There were ten questions (Appendix H) regarding their perspective of the phenomenon of the case study, moderated by the researcher. The focus group(s) took place after school using a web-based video calling computer program due the pandemic restrictions. A permission letter was sent along with the consent letter, to audio record the interviews and focus group sessions. As the last process of data collection, documents were gathered by the researcher as available during the proposed period in the school. These documents are from primary and secondary sources. Once all the data was collected, I reported the findings.

### **The Researcher's Role**

My experience obtained in the years of teaching working directly or indirectly with dual language learners has shaped the focus of this study. Being bilingual, speaking Spanish as my primary language, and English as my second language has allowed me to contribute to the educational process of various school sites within different school districts. I am currently an Inclusion/Exceptional Teacher of 5th grade at an elementary/middle school. Although my work is not directly with the school's DLL population, I provide language assistance when needed, especially in translation and interpretation. These essential services provide a different perspective on the DLL population's academic and social needs, with a direct connection to the educational process and home environment of the students. Accordingly, the philosophical assumption that I intend to use is ontological, which can provide the nature of reality as seen from different perspectives in this multi-site case study. The ontological assumption enables an

understanding of the realities of educators and their perspectives on the academic and social needs of their students. An axiological assumption will be used as it admits the value-laden nature of the study and actively report their values and biases as well as the value-laden nature of information gathered from the field (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

This study will not involve my current place of employment, teachers I know, or students I know. As the researcher, I chose a case study to describe the perspective of the educators towards the phenomenon and obtain an in-depth understanding of their experiences and perspectives of the academic and social needs of the Hispanic dual language learners in elementary school. My role in this case study is to serve as the investigator of the phenomenon, collect data to analyze, and highlight the findings of data gathered during the study. As mentioned, I will use ontological and axiological assumptions to assist in bracketing my bias that DLL students are falling behind due to inconsistent, or insufficient, curricula. I will be the interviewer during the interviews and will later transcribe the raw recorded data. My role implies that I will maintain the security of the data collected, as well as recording in audio and video. Another implication is that during the data collection and analysis process, the information must remain anonymous for the protection of the participants. Therefore, as a researcher, I will create a computerized database using a pseudonym for each participant to analyze, interpret, create coding, and develop themes to report the findings.

Finally, it is my responsibility as a researcher to keep the data safe, establish a framework of respect with the participants and protect the privacy of the data collected, being a good steward of the information entrusted to me. As a disciple and follower of Jesus Christ, my call is to follow His footsteps and love our neighbor. The purpose of God in my life has shaped

my vision as an individual and as a professional, understanding that I must serve in all possible areas to be of benefit to others who are in need.

### **Data Collection**

The process of data collection will be using interviews, focus groups, and documents Yin (2009). The multiple data collection in this case study is necessary to get a description and deep understanding of the intended investigation of the phenomenon. Creswell & Poth (2018) indicated that multiple forms in a case study research would “provide the in-depth case picture” (p. 104). Therefore, these data collection processes are necessary to analyze, define, specify, and understand the issues to arise, codify, and report the findings obtained after the investigation of the phenomenon.

### **Interviews**

The interview process will include interviews with individuals who have experienced the phenomenon, which will offer relevant sources of data such as their perspectives, descriptions, and experiences (Yin, 2014). Interviews conducted with the participants, with the schools' approval of participation of the educators in the study in their real-life context, either classrooms or school offices. The use of interviews is to describe the educators' perspective of the investigated phenomenon. The questions in the interview are intended for the participants, which include teachers, curriculum coordinators, assistant principals, and school principals. The interviews are going to be audio recorded since these provide a more accurate rendition of the interview compared with the notes (Yin, 2014). The open-ended questions are as follows:

Interview questions:

1. Please, introduce yourself to me and provide some background information.

2. Please briefly describe your career experiences as an educator.
3. What is your experience working with dual language learners?
4. What challenges do you experience working with this population?
5. How did you address these challenges? Explain.
6. Describe your pre-service preparation to work with, or teach, dual language learners.
7. What resources do you use to learn or acquire teaching strategies?
8. What are the academic needs of dual language learners in the elementary stage?
9. Please describe the process of identifying the academic needs of dual language learners.
10. What is your view of the instruction of literacy skills to the dual language learners as part of their learning needs?
11. How do you select your instructional strategies and methods?
12. What is your perspective on the student's second language acquisition in the classroom setting?
13. What activities do you use or implement to help the dual language learners comprehend their second language?
14. What is your perspective on bilingual student language development?
15. What challenges do you face in implementing bilingual language development?
16. What is your viewpoint on the social development and interaction of the dual language learners?

17. Please describe your relationship with your dual language learner students.
18. Please identify and explain the support you provide to your dual language learners.
19. Please summarize the social needs of dual language learners.
20. Please summarize the academic needs of dual language learners.

Questions one and two are knowledge questions (Patton, 2015), designed to inquire foundational information about the participant regarding their current work. These questions intend to establish a parameter of the knowledge of the participant regarding their position in the place where the proposed research. The questions ask about the participants feeling level (Patton, 2015), regarding their opinion and what they think about their place of work as part of the foundational questions to make the connection between the participants and me.

Questions three through seven provides the participant an opportunity to share their experiences concerning the interaction with dual language students, their current or previous relationships, as well as some knowledge related to their current position in school or past experiences. The educational experiences could shape the learning needs of educators. The learning needs of the teachers and educators are unique and how they function regarding their students' learning, their theory, practice, and their pedagogic thinking (Hadar & Brody, 2016; Hoover, 2018). These questions will provide information that can be used in the observation process when the observer is present or has been present eliciting behaviors, experiences, and actions, or activities that the participants used or experienced (Patton, 2015).

Questions eight and nine are the first questions that are directly about the participants' perspective of the phenomenon presented in the study. The perspective of educators and teachers regarding the teaching of the second language in English as a second language, dual language,

and bilingualism could influence both students and teaching processes (Chang, 2015; Garrity et al., 2016). Question ten will elicit the participant to describe their method of identification of the learning needs of the dual language learners. Question eleven portends to obtain higher thinking of the participant about the instructional strategies or methods, which are part of their foundational knowledge in their current position and their interaction with the dual language learners. The instructional strategy methods in the second language acquisition elicit the DLL students to understand and create the connection within L1 and L2, referring to both Spanish and English (Baker, 2018; Castro et al., 2017; Raikes et al., 2018). The SLA theory framework of Cummins (1976) establishes the connection between teaching practices of literacy and metalinguistic skills in bilingual development.

Questions twelve through sixteen are structured so that the participants can clearly identify what I intend to ask and thus avoid issues (Patton, 2015). By establishing the instructional strategies or methods, the participants can provide an in-depth perception and description regarding second language acquisition, bilingual language development (Cummins & Swain, 2014), and social development and interaction of the dual language learners (Vygotsky, 1978). Questions seventeen through nineteen put the participant in a position of human relations and interaction with their students, obtaining information from the sociocultural side. The social interaction between the students and the educators is a vital part of their educational growth, as well as the interaction with their peers and school environment (Cummins, 1976, 2008; Cummins & Swain, 2014; Guo, 2018). Finally, question number twenty is a single question (Patton, 2015), designed to allow the participant to add valuable insight into the learning needs of the dual language learners.

## Focus Groups

Teachers were asked to participate in a focus group with other individuals in a small group and answer ten questions regarding their perspective about areas of academic and social needs of the Hispanic DLL in elementary school. The focused groups were three groups from 3-5 participants in each session and were audio-recorded. The open-ended questions for the focus groups are as follow:

1. Please introduce yourself to the group and add something your peers may not know about you.
2. What is the role of literacy skills in second language acquisition among the dual language learners?
3. What is the influence of literacy skills in the academic achievement of dual language learners?
4. What is the influence of the literacy skills in the social interaction of the dual language learners?
5. What strategies do you use with the dual language learners to improve social interaction with peers?
6. How do you develop literacy skills in an early school age for the DLL?
7. What is the impact of early education programs in school achievement and readiness of the DLL?
8. Based on your observations, what other areas of needs can you discuss for the proper early educational development of the DLL?

9. What could you emphasize in the school curriculum to help the dual language learners improve their performance?

10. How would you describe what is required to enhance student success in their second language learning to build literacy skills, understanding the English language, and social interaction?

The questions in the focus groups highlight diverse perspectives of the study participants as part of the data collection, being homogeneous (Patton, 2015) in this case study of the educators' perspectives. Question one is a question of knowledge (Patton, 2015), developed to find out more information, the participant's general details, and to promote shared trust. Question two prompt participants to express their views on the role of second-language acquisition within the educational system, particularly in the kindergarten to the fifth-grade range. Knowledge about the theories of second language acquisition and methods of learning another language are becoming even more critical in today's society (Kumar & Nazneen, 2016). Interpersonal skills are among the foundational factors that influence the nature of the interaction a child understands in his or her environment with people (Aličković, 2019). Moreover, previous research has shown that in school-aged children and adolescents, competence in a native language is associated with improved cognitive development and literacy skills (Chung et al., 2019). Therefore, questions three through six invite the participants to discuss the influence of literacy skills and strategies used to develop both the academic and social aspects of language development for dual language learners.

Questions seven through ten are designed to generate discussion as a focus group, clarifying their own and other participants' perspectives (Patton, 2015) in the early educational programs, early development, and school curriculum. The early education program provides the



needed language foundation and positively impacts the DLL population (Castro, 2019; Yazejian et al., 2015). Accordingly, teachers' perception of bilingual education and language diversity is advantageous to DLL children and parents (Baker, 2018). The ten focused questions, sharing their experiences, will seek the reactions (Patton, 2015) to the phenomenon being studied in this case. As a result, question ten is the final question, providing participants the opportunity to describe and share their final thoughts regarding literacy skills, language acquisition, and development among the dual language learners.

Three focus groups, one for each school site, were created. Teachers from various grades and subjects were present in each group, offering valuable insight into the dual language students. The focus groups are listed in the order in which they were conducted (*see Table 2*).

**Table 2**

*Participants in Focus Groups*

School Site	Teachers	Grades	DLL Experience	Years
1	Betty, Mary, Patricia, Kyra	3 <sup>rd</sup> - 4 <sup>th</sup>	Yes	1-5
2	Dorothy, Amy, Sharon, Jennifer	5 <sup>th</sup>	Yes	1-8
3	Emma, Valeria, Zoe	2 <sup>nd</sup> - 5 <sup>th</sup>	Yes	2-10

## Document Analysis

The use of document analysis is significant to the study because it helps to substantiate and increase evidence from other sources (Yin, 2014). The documents to be used as part of the

data collection are internal and external documents and field notes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Documents will be school letters, teacher's documents such as assignment, academic or educational letters, school curriculum, lesson plans and researchers' journal will be used with the permission of the participants to obtain the documents. These documents will provide a greater understanding of the school and educational environment at the school that intends to conduct the study. Field notes are going to be descriptive and reflective. The purpose of the documentation is to provide more evidence of the data collected from the phenomenon being study. For example, the journal or diary will help keep track of additional information or data while the researcher is gathering the data. The academic or educational letters, school curriculum, and the lesson plans will serve as an essential aspect of the organizational documents to be analyzed to identify the contextual information (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018).

### **Data Analysis**

The appropriate steps for data analysis in this instrumental case study are embedded analysis, within case patterns with an interpretational analysis, and cross-case synthesis. The combination of procedures will provide the opportunity of analyzing and evaluating the collected data using different processes of analysis. Yin (2018) emphasizes analytical procedures as part of the searching of themes, patterns, or concepts that describe the phenomenon and guide the case study. The embedded design will serve as an essential device for maintaining the focus of the case study (Yin, 2014). Likewise, the use of holistic data collection strategies as part of the data analysis and collection about the embedded subunit(s) (Yin, 2014). Then, data will be organized by aggregating the text or visual data into small categories of information, seeking evidence for the code different databases used in the study, and then assigning a label to the code. First, the list of codes will be short (5-6), then the final code list will have no more than 25 categories of

information. Then, a classification of codes into five themes for the written narrative. The process of coding is central to qualitative research and involves making sense of the text collected from interviews, observations, and documents (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

### **Within-Case Patterns and Interpretational Analysis**

The within-case patterns and interpretational analysis are vital processes for data analysis. Yin (2018) indicated that within-case patterns would determine the individual's pattern prior to the relationship across the case studies (Yin, 2018, p. 196). Further, interpretational analysis to scrutinize the case study data to find constructs, themes, and patterns to describe and explain the studied phenomenon through the interviews and documents, in the data collection process (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

### ***Interpreting the Data***

Interpretation in qualitative research involves abstracting out beyond the codes and themes to the broader meaning of the data. It is a process that begins with the development of the codes, the formation of topics from the codes, and the organization of themes into larger units of abstraction to make sense of the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The process of organizing and interpreting data will best fit this case study by providing an in-depth understanding of the data collected.

### **Cross-Case Synthesis**

Identify within case patterns to determine whether the participants' perspective followed different perceptions or beliefs. After having a tentative conclusion about these within-case patterns, the analysis will proceed to examine whether there appeared to be replicative relationships across the case studies (Yin, 2014).

### **Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness transmits credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability in the process of data collection in the investigation. In qualitative analysis, the process of data collection and analysis requires that the researcher maintain a high standard regarding the aspects that influence confidence in the process. Following Patton (2015), qualitative analysis desire outcome is for data to be logical and coherent while identifying patterns and themes, “answering the primary question framing the study, and presenting substantively significant findings” (p. 658).

### **Credibility**

To increase the credibility of the data analysis in the research process, the responsibility of the researcher is to provide valuable and analytical insights. Demonstration of the credibility of findings in this investigation by the depth of the analysis, the examination of the findings at the beginning, and the continuous work of analyzing the data in comparison with the findings so that they are validated (Patton, 2015). The participants (educators) will review and verify the data to judge the accuracy of the data in which they are going to be involved in the process to increase the credibility of the data. This process increases the efficiency and reliability of the data since it consists of taking data, analysis interpretations, and conclusions back to the participants, and they can judge the process (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Data triangulation consists of data resources (Patton, 2015). Triangulation applies as multiple methods of data collection about the phenomenon can enhance the validity of the case study findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Data triangulation helps to strengthen the construct validity of the case study (Yin, 2014).

### **Dependability & Confirmability**

In the process of data collection, it is crucial to convey with the dependability and confirmability as part of the trustworthiness of the investigation. Dependability and confirmability are the best fit for this case study. Documents are used in the research process, covering the sources and methods of recording raw data, data reduction, and analysis products, among other means (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2007). The use of an audit trail in qualitative research will allow the researcher to retrace the process by which the researcher arrived at their final findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

### **Transferability & Applicability**

Transferability will provide to the readers the opportunity to transfer the information into the context, environment, and setting. The purposeful sampling strategies increase the probability that the findings will apply to other cases and represent the phenomenon being studied by providing a full description of the participants and research process (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2007).

### **Ethical Considerations**

To maintain confidentiality, a letter (Appendix B) was sent to the school principal with detailed information about the process and the use of pseudonyms to protect the identity of the participants. Furthermore, interviews were audio recorded with the participant's approval before the interview; if there are no consents, the addition of the use of notes in the data collection process is vital. An axiological assumption was used as it admits the value-laden nature of the study and actively report their values and biases as well as the value-laden nature of information gathered from the field as well as the as it provides different perspectives and realities of the

issue (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The data was collected and stored in a password-protected file and a physical safe storage room.

Moreover, to maintain confidentiality, a letter was sent to participants with detailed information about the process and the use of pseudonyms to protect their identity while being interviewed and recorded. To avoid any situation with the participants and the school district, the use of the school district ethics code manual to follow the established procedures and regulations.

### **Summary**

In summary, this case study aims to describe the perceptions of educators, based on their experiences and observations, of the academic and social needs of students who are learning two languages, Spanish, and English. The study 's focus is on the perception of elementary-level educators, in this case teachers and school administrators such as curriculum coordinators, assistant principals, and school principals who will be selected for this research. Through data collection including interviews, focus groups and documentation, the aim is to analyze the information hoping to identify important results that relate to the education field.

The case study provides valuable information regarding the Dual Language Learner's (DLL's) population among three elementary schools located in the north-central area of Louisiana. The study's purpose of analyzing the educator's perspective on academic and social needs will explain the function of the DLL's literacy skills, and how this function determines their achievement and preparation during early school years. A case study is ideally adapted because it explains the educators' perspective on the phenomenon and offers an in-depth interpretation of their interactions and perspectives on the academic and social needs of Hispanic DLLs in elementary school. As part of the triangulation process, the participants involved in the

data collection process will provide relevant information to increase the validity of the study.

Finally, the information from the interviews, focus groups and documentation can be identified and represented through analysis of the data collected, the areas of need in this population's educational processes.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS**

### **Overview**

The purpose of this case study was to describe the educators' perspective of the academic and social needs of Hispanic elementary dual language learners at a school district in the northwestern area of a southern state. Participants' demographics, educational backgrounds, results, and a summary are included in the findings. Participants in this study were elementary school educators with experience working with dual language learners. This section presents data in both narrative and tables to correspond to each theme and research question. Theme development with sub-themes that emerged from the data and answers to the research question and sub-research questions are all included in the results section. Finally, the reader is presented with a conclusion of the chapter's content in the summary section.

### **Participants**

Eleven participants were interviewed in this case study from three separate schools in a small school district in Louisiana's northwestern region. All the participants were women between the ages of twenty-five to sixty with a range of five to twenty-five years of experience working in the public-school system, some also had private school teaching experience. The teachers were Black, White, and Hispanic, with a mixed ethnic history. Five of the participants from two different schools taught fifth grade, and four of the participants from the same school taught either third or fourth grade. One of the participants taught second grade, and one participant from the same school taught kindergarten. All participants had at least one year of experience working with dual language learners or currently teach students in that demographic. Many participants have teaching experience that range from pre-kindergarten to sixth grade, including Hispanic population. Before arranging their face-to-face interviews or online meetings



using the Zoom application because of limitations due to Covid-19, each participant was first required to complete an emailed consent letter to collect demographic details for participation purposes.

**Amy**

Amy is a Caucasian female teacher, aged between thirty to forty-five. Her teaching career started between five and ten years ago, her primary experience being at the elementary school level. Amy is currently teaching fifth grade. She has taught common core classes and has had experience working with dual language learners, predominantly Spanish and Arabic, from various countries and languages.

**Betty**

Betty is a Caucasian female teacher between the ages of fifty and fifty-five. Actively, in the exceptional student department of mild-moderate with math context in third and fourth grade. She is an inclusion teacher with over ten years of experience within the public school. Betty has more than ten years of home-schooling experience that has driven her to complete her special education bachelor's degree with an emphasis on mathematics. She has taught in previous schools and church ministries being involved with the Hispanic community and dual language learners.

**Dorothy**

Dorothy is an African American female teacher between the ages of fifty and sixty-five, with twenty-five to thirty years of teaching experience. Her education experience extends from pre-school teaching, elementary grades, and the role of administrative leadership within the same school district. Dorothy's involvement as an inclusion instructor contributes to students, like dual language learners, with other teachers.

**Emma**

Emma is a Caucasian female educator, aged between twenty-five and thirty-five. She has been teaching in the public school system for the last one or five years. She taught third and fourth grades in her first years of experience and currently teaches fifth grade. She discussed her passion for children and how her ministry experience has influenced her teaching career, in the interview. She also mentioned the beautiful relationship she has established with her DLLs. Her experience with dual language learners has been limited, but she has a few students in her classroom at the moment of the interview, leading her to participate in the case study.

**Jennifer**

Jennifer is an African American teacher, aged between thirty and forty-five. In the public school system, she has five to ten years of teaching experience in elementary schools. She was teaching fifth graders a common core class at the time of the interview. As she had formal courses in her undergraduate program at university, Amy has a basic knowledge of the Spanish language. Her experience engaging with dual language learners began at the start of her career as an educator who is currently involved with them in the classroom setting. Jennifer stated in the interview that as part of a university course, she was able to spend six months in a Hispanic country. She had a life-changing experience during this period, where she was immersed in the culture and language. This is an opportunity for her to broaden her perspectives in terms of other cultures.

**Kyra**

Kyra is a female African American educator aged between forty to fifty. She has over ten years of teaching experience, which includes common core subjects and inclusion. She was teaching third and fourth grade at the time of the interview. The participant did not provide any

further details.

### **Mary**

Mary is a middle-aged Caucasian female, between the ages of fifty and sixty-five, born and lived in another southern state. Her teaching experience varies from multiple subject areas in her twenty to twenty-five years of private and public-school system experience, including university experience. With some access to the Spanish language, Mary's family has a Hispanic background. She has had diverse groups of dual language learners from various grades during her teaching career. She taught elective classes in the third and fourth grades.

### **Patricia**

Patricia is a female Caucasian teacher aged between thirty-five and forty-five. Her teaching experience is over ten years of between seven and eight years of experience working directly with second language learners and dual language learners in English. In another southern state, she is an ESL certified teacher, currently teaching a common core class in third grade. She shared in the interview that her prior experience with DLLs had helped her understand the real needs of her students. Her compassion for this community is distinct in a way with which she can identify in her personal life.

### **Valeria**

Valeria is a Hispanic woman who is between the ages of thirty and forty-five. Her teaching experience began with students in kindergarten and shifted in the previous school year to upper grades. She began teaching within the last five years. She currently teaches fifth grade in an elective course, which also helps second-language Hispanic students who are newcomers. Valeria had prior experience working with dual language learners. She has experience teaching English as a second language, as well as Spanish expertise and a Hispanic heritage, which she

brought to her job as a public-school teacher. Valeria shared her previous experience prior to teaching, describing how, when she first arrived in the United States, she was faced with a variety of circumstances in which she felt hopeless due to her lack of language proficiency. These experiences inspired her to pursue her studies, become proficient in her second language, and assist those in the school district who are in similar circumstances.

### **Sharon**

Sharon is an African American teacher between the ages of forty and fifty-five, with experience in elementary school for the last ten to fifteen years. She has taught common core classes and the experience of head start teaching. Sharon is currently teaching an elective class in grades five and six. Her interaction with dual language learners fluctuated throughout her educational experiences, indicating that she had served at different grade levels with this population.

### **Zoe**

Zoe is a White woman who is between the ages of thirty and forty-five. Her ten to fifteen years of teaching experience has enabled her to be involved with the Hispanic community, based on the needs of the multiple school districts, private and public schools. Presently, with a background in pre-school and kindergarten, she is teaching second grade. She has more than twelve years of experience working with DLLs and ELLs, including service in church ministries and communities. She shared her love for this population. Her passion for missions and Christ-like lifestyle have led her to have a heavy heart for Hispanic students.

## **Results**

The analysis process was divided into steps to develop themes from the data using embedded analysis, within-case patterns with an interpretational analysis, and cross-case

synthesis (Yin, 2018). First, I organized the interviews to identify the main categories per school to be later cross-analyzed. Then, I coded the data sentence by sentence for each interview, and I created a color-coded chart to categorize the codes. Later, I created a second chart according to the axial and outlier codes. The axial codes were used to identify the central themes for the phenomenon of the teacher's experiences with the academic and social needs of Hispanic elementary DLLs.

### **Theme Development**

Through the developed themes in this section, the reader will obtain an in-depth description and understanding of areas of need among the DLL population in elementary schools. During the coding process, a percentage was assigned to the transcribed educators' answers based on the frequency of the codes (See Table 3). Combined categories were used to classify the codes reflecting the educators' perspective of the needs to develop four main themes: (a) fill language literacy gaps, (b) establish a reliable relationship, (c) instructional resources, and (d) support students' academic career.

**Table 3**

*Theme Development*

Thematic Codes	Code Frequency
Language literacy gaps	25%
Social interaction and communication	20%
Cultural and linguistic background	14%
Instructional material, computer programs, translations	23%

Follow-up students, motivation, and support 16%

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*Note:* Main themes of educator's perspective based on coding frequencies

### ***Theme 1: Fill Language Literacy Gap***

During the individual interviews and focus groups, the participants were asked to describe the process of literacy skills instruction to the DLLs and identified students' academic needs. The educators mentioned that it is vital to create a foundation in the DLLs' literacy skills in specific areas such as reading comprehension, writing skills, phonics, and academic vocabulary. While each participant described the literacy skills instruction process and identification, it is essential to note that the instruction was given in English with no translated curriculum available. Subthemes were developed to demonstrate the learning needs areas to address language literacy gaps and language growth, as seen in Table 4.

**Table 4**

#### *Theme 1 Fill Language Literacy Gap*

Subtheme 1	Subtheme 2	Subtheme 3
Meaningful Instruction	Instructional Strategies	Building Academic Vocabulary

Language literacy skills foundation creates a difference in language understanding. DLLs' learning gaps affect their language development; therefore, they are less confident in expressing themselves in the educational setting. According to Zoe, "they need more literacy than they need anything at the beginning and more vocabulary." Therefore, there is a need to teach the foundation to embed literacy skills. Amy, one of the fifth grader's teachers, shared how reading

and writing foundations help comprehend the language and be able to translate to their native language by "learning how the letter combination actually makes a different sound," referring to phonemic awareness.

Language exposure leads students to be successful in school. One of the main challenges that today's education faces is the lack of literacy skills before the students start school. As a fifth-grade teacher, Emma expressed concern that students may not have a strong foundation from pre-K and kindergarten; she said, "I still have kids who can't read, and it is like they cannot do anything independently." According to the participants, DLLs are not receiving a foundation in either their native language, Spanish, or their second language because of the lack of language comprehension.

**Meaningful Instruction.** The educators discussed the importance of meaningful instruction for DLLs in the classroom. Although instruction is given, most DLLs are not "paying attention" not because they are uninterested but because their educational journey lacks significance. Due to a lack of L2 understanding, most DLLs do not participate in the teaching process. Amy said students could "have conflicts" when instruction is provided in their native countries using a different technique. Amy explained, "Reading is a major issue, and expressing their thoughts and through words, is their major, major hurdle." One of Amy's experiences happened with a student from Honduras; when doing math, she was able to read and understand the process, but she "noticed they used a different strategy in school."

Teachers could use the previous information to build up their skills to involve students. Some teachers observed "no motivation" in their DLLs in the classroom, as stated by Dorothy, Mary, Kyra, and Patricia. One of the third and fourth-grade teachers, Patricia, shared her experience working with DLLs. She mentioned that her students were not motivated since they

received the same instruction as the regular students with minimal differentiation. Patricia collaborates with another teacher, and while being in the same classroom, she has observed DLLs sitting in front of a computer while instruction is being held. She said, “The instruction is totally lacking.” The school she works at uses the program Learn Zillion, “which is basically a one size fits all program, and we all know that the dual language students are not one size fits all,” Patricia stated. In her experience, she mentioned that she had asked other teachers what the students do while instruction is being held. Their response is, “they are just sitting there on Starfall,” which is a website that offers an essential foundation for students who struggle to read.

In the interviews, the teachers stated that it would be best to provide instruction while also providing accommodations, or, as Betty expressed it, “looking for better ways to help them.” Even though Betty is not bilingual, she searches for ways to provide instruction in Spanish. One of the accommodations she makes is to allow students to “hear versions of the novel in Spanish so that they could understand the storyline of whatever novel they were studying.” As students “learn” from a computer, they are not actively engaged in their learning process, and as a result, they are not obtaining the literacy foundation needed to succeed in class. According to the participant’s point of view, the students are not receiving meaningful instruction that motivates them to acquire knowledge or “is helpful to help them transition to English language learners,” Patricia concluded.

**Instructional Strategies.** Some instructional strategies emerged from the discussions as part of delivering instruction and filling the literacy gap, such as intentional small groups and modeling, in the classroom and virtual learning. According to the educators, small groups are an intentional time for DLLs to learn while still being engaged and integrated with the class with their peers. The teachers mentioned the need to do small groups at least twice a week. As part of



their vocabulary acquisition, the participants discussed the importance of having regular small group time. "I try to do my reading small group several times a week," Valeria, a fifth-grade teacher, explains, "so that they get more of those literacy skills." She went on to say that her virtual teaching role allows her to spend more time with her students in small groups. "Yes, we can work in small groups, yes, we can work daily, it's what our curriculum requires, but then we can leave and record it," Valeria agreed.

Furthermore, as the conversation about small group teaching advanced during the interviews, other teachers could expand on their points of view. Betty claims that working with the instructor in a small group setting is more effective. For example, she explained how she would bring a whiteboard as part of her teaching materials, write the main idea and details for their lesson, "try to reintroduce them, model it on the board, and help them" while doing small group. In her fifth-grade common core class, Emma provides the beginning of the year tests to use as baseline data to know where her students are and including "all language learners." However, Emma expressed her concern, "if they are struggling with vocabulary or comprehension or writing, what is it that they need?" Emma describes vocabulary as "basic academic vocabulary knowledge" that allows DLLs to follow instructions and learn more effectively. As a teacher of upper elementary students, she struggles to identify the needs of the DLLs students, so her alternative is to "do small groups to help them improve," affirming the need to use other educational strategies to improve the DLLs literacy skills. On the other hand, Patricia mentioned the use of response to intervention (RTI), a leveled small group instructional time with all students divided into low, medium, or high level, "reading and teaching skills on their level." RTI is not being implemented this year in the virtual setting, as they do not have "homerooms," Patricia said.

As noted by other educators, virtual learning can be helpful when students understand and can access computer software. As we move toward more online learning, most schools provide computers to students; however, some teachers recognize that face-to-face instruction can be more efficient. Betty, as part of her strategies, "tried to build some scaffolding." She continues explaining the scaffolding process, "Repeat, model, put in a different language than they might understand better...and go through it with them again, help them write their story, do a model of what was expected and then help them to complete." The students can identify the details visually and audibly when we as educators model the instruction. "There are certain things you need to prepare for the visual learner, old fashioned terms...you need to prepare for the auditory learner, as well as the kinesthetic learner," Dorothy explained. When discussing face-to-face and virtual instruction, she proceeds to share her viewpoint, saying that "this year is a prime example of emphasizing visual and auditory." Since they can associate new information in L2 with previous knowledge in L1, the DLL population has an excellent opportunity to improve their listening, speaking, writing, and reading skills.

**Building Academic Vocabulary.** After examining the literacy gap among the DLL based on the codes, the sub-theme *Building Academic Vocabulary* was developed. Academic vocabulary occurs because of a child's exposure to the language. One of the most significant challenges for educators in filling literacy gaps is a deficiency of basic academic vocabulary and phonics distinction. Zoe expressed, "They need more literacy than they need anything at the beginning and more vocabulary." According to her observations, about 90% of the areas that she worked with her pre-K ESL students "were letter sounds and vocabulary in Spanish and English," as Zoe does not always know her Spanish words to help them.

On the other hand, Emma claims that while working with fifth graders at a different school, she was able to notice a difference in their academic vocabulary comprehension. “They speak so much better; they know the academic vocabulary; it blows my mind,” she said. Emma then compares her current school to her previous one, stating that she used to have a daily target but could not achieve it because her students were unable to comprehend and complete the assigned task.

As more teachers feel challenged by the lack of academic vocabulary their DLLs students have, their willingness to find ways to build the vocabulary. Jennifer’s strategy is to print index cards with the vocabulary words in the students’ native language. Jennifer said, “I’m trying to translate something, just making it to where that it’s feasible and accessible for them to where they don’t feel left out.” Many students struggle to interact and communicate; therefore, they look for other ways to expand their vocabulary and participate in their class. “All they care about is building up their language as quickly as possible so they can communicate and interact,” Amy claims. “As teachers, we don’t want to leave them behind,” Valeria believes. The teacher is responsible for helping students build their vocabulary in the classroom to feel more integrated.

### ***Theme 2: Establish a Reliable Relationship***

Communication among all stakeholders, including administration, teachers, students, parents, and the school community, is crucial to students' academic success. When it comes to building relationships, one of the most important characteristics is trust and communication. Students prefer to interact more with available teachers and form bonds with them based on their interests and dislikes. The educators who participated in the study stated that communication

with DLL and parents is difficult due to a lack of comprehension due to the language barrier (see table 5).

**Table 5**

*Theme 2 Establish a Reliable Relationship*

Subtheme 1	Subtheme 2
Communication Barriers	Communication with Parents

**Communication Barriers.** Communication is the cornerstone of a successful educational interaction process. Jennifer conveyed her frustration by saying, “I am not able to communicate, I am not able to understand, I am just not able to be an effective teacher due to a communication barrier.” As language or communication barriers grew again in the interviews, the teachers explained that they used a peer or the same student to translate for them in the classroom. “Of course, one of the biggest challenges is not being able to speak the language and trying to find ways to communicate,” Betty said; therefore, “we had a little boy who could translate for us.”

The peer pair teaching method tends to be a resource for teachers in the classrooms to bridge the communication gap caused by the educators’ lack of Spanish language skills. Mary said, “some of them cannot speak any English,” so last school year, the students were grouped within homerooms, and “they had somebody that could speak English, but also spoke Spanish with them.” During this time, Mary made sure that the students were seated with someone they could talk to and that she was available if they had any questions. On the other hand, some teachers stated that pairing students does not always work, mainly when the students are shy or lack social skills. Students may be unable to completely immerse themselves in their social

environment due to a lack of literacy skills and social interaction skills. Emma discussed the literacy skills foundation that her DLLs need to support them with their social interactions. Emma said, “they have a hard time talking to a partner, they have a hard time communicating with you, they do not get social cues.”

Social interaction is vital in the process of acquiring language and developing social skills. During the interviews, the teachers expressed their concern about the different language levels of their Hispanic students. Based on her observations, Zoe said that “one of my Hispanic students who are super bright, really bright, super smart, it just clicks in his little brain, he gets it. Well, his social interaction with the rest of my kids is different from other two Hispanic kids who struggle a bit more.” Zoe explained that in their social interaction in the classroom, as they do activities such as reading in groups, there is a difference as they do not have the confidence to establish a conversation with their peers. She continues by saying, “the other two are less likely to express themselves, and they are less confident in expressing themselves.”

The situation, as Betty, shared is that they become socially isolated, and her frustration is that “right now, there is not a whole lot. I mean, it’s none; as far as I can tell, we don’t have anything addressing their particular needs at this point.” DLLs are struggling to communicate with their peers, and it is becoming more difficult to develop social skills in their early education stage. Mary said, “it’s not liked our kids hold a conversation very well, they don’t greet people, they don’t ask questions, and it’s hard to understand their words.” There is a language barrier, and it is challenging to build a trusting relationship between teachers and students.

**Communication with Parents.** Parental involvement in a student’s education is critical for their growth, achievement, and social interactions. Teachers agree that it is essential to establish a positive relationship with the students’ parents. Amy, in her experience, shares,

“some parents are extremely supportive and some feel like that while the students are at school, they are yours, so you to deal with kind of mentality, and so that has been a struggle sometimes.” When it comes to the responsibility perspective that parents have for their children’s teachers, it is important to note that the significant factor for DLL parents is a general lack of language ability.

A critical issue is that students have been tasked with providing interpretation for their parents and teachers, despite their lack of linguistic preparation in both languages. According to educators, most non-English speaking parents want to communicate with the teachers but don’t know-how, so their children act as interpreters. Often, the students would translate for the parents and their teachers to communicate effectively. One of Emma’s significant challenges “would be communicating with the parents.” Emma’s students had to design a PowerPoint outlining their areas of growth and improvement for a virtual parent-teacher conference. A DLL student “had to use a translator for some of it because she had to translate her whole presentation in Spanish for her parents,” Emma stated. Hence, educators emphasize the importance of establishing a relationship between parents and teachers, especially for the benefit of students.

### ***Theme 3: Instructional Resources***

The theme *Instructional Resources* developed from educators' concerns about the lack of Spanish language resources available for use and implementation in classrooms to teach the DLL population in their schools. The educators voiced their perspectives, indicating that more Spanish language resources, both virtual and physical, are needed in their school district and the availability of a facilitator or educational resources teacher to assist DLLs (see Table 6).

**Table 6***Theme 3 Instructional Resources*

Subtheme 1	Subtheme 2	Subtheme 3
		Educational
Language Resources	Online/Virtual Resources	Resource
		Teacher

**Language Resources.** As part of the language resources, the teachers mentioned that it becomes difficult to find resources for the DLLs when they are also struggling with the curriculum. Kyra, a fourth-grade common core teacher, has "been trying to get used to the new curriculum," making the process of finding language resources difficult. Kyra said, "addressing anything outside of the class is not an opportunity." When teachers are limited of resources, finding new materials or resources to fulfill the DLL's needs is daunting as they do not have the time to search for and implement them. Betty said, "we'd barely have enough books for everybody to have one, and we're reading out of a novel or whatever... anytime we had a novel, I would always double-check to see if with having a Spanish copy of it." Betty shared her discomfort when discussing the resources available to students, stating that it is difficult enough because of the language barrier.

As educators continue to express their concerns about a lack of Spanish language tools, they have stated that they are essentially using what they can and have, despite not having training in teaching DLLs or ELLs, as they have also said. Additionally, Jenifer "feels like in order to get those ESL students or dual language students on that same level, we have to take whatever resources we have available to us." Educators accept that it is a complex process when

there are no resources available in the classroom, despite their differing perspectives on the language resources required to solve the issue.

**Online, Virtual and Computer-Based Resources.** This school year has been a challenge for most educators due to the use of innovative interactive programs and technology to teach our students. Some educators, such as Valeria, believe that virtual tools are a better tool for assisting DLLs in their learning. Valeria said, "It is probably better for those in EL or even the gifted talented, the two extremes because things are recorded, and then we have more resources for them." Her fifth-grade English language learners are receiving instruction virtually. She explained that she could offer more support to her students by searching the internet and recording lessons for later study. Contrary, Zoe said, "my experience with virtual learning is that my kids are coming back, and they're bombing the next test because they're not watching any of the videos that we posted or doing any of the work that we asked them to do." Zoe's classroom experience illustrates her struggle to balance both her regular students' and DLLs' needs. During the interviews, the educators realized that providing online or computer-based programs to the DLLs within the classroom would be more effective than teaching the students virtually.

The use of online and computed programs is beneficial for the student's language development. The situation is that the educators participating in the study mentioned the lack of online resources or computer-based programs in Spanish or translation. Patricia said that "we don't have a reading program because they got rid of our old one and have not given us our new one yet." At the time of the interview, Patricia was upset as she was having difficulties providing reading resources to her students. Betty had four students in the classroom last year, one of whom was a non-English student who would be "doing Starfall or BrainPOP or something in



another translation that would give him the English Spanish kind of translation" during English instruction time.

On the other hand, Betty has no idea whether the program offers translation to the students, and her main concern was that the student was working on the computer without the teacher's assistance. As more educators shared their perspectives on the topic, it became clear that some educators are comfortable using computer-based systems because they understand them, while others find them challenging. Overall, educators recognize that DLLs need other online and computer-based programs to aid in developing and improving their second language acquisition.

**Educational Resource Teacher.** A translator and interpreter in schools is a critical issue to be discussed and solutions found. According to the teachers, the school district's language resource instructor provides services to the DLLs students once a week for half an hour. Some teachers claim these services are not offered regularly. According to her observations, Mary indicates she "has not seemed him this school year," referring to the language resource teacher. However, Mary is unsure if it is because of the school district procedures changes due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The language resource teacher comes to school and works with the Spanish-speaking students "mostly one on one." The teacher provides a folder with translated documents, "especially math terms, so they could figure out what it was... they were learning as they go", Mary said. One concern is that teachers claim they have no idea when language resource teachers will arrive or what instructional strategies or materials the language resource teacher will use for DLLs. Betty's viewpoint regarding the language resource teacher assigned to her school, she said, "As far as the ELL, I would like to see more cohesion... I know we have

someone who comes in and pulls those students to work with them, but I have no clue what they do.”

Educators lack basic information to assist their DLLs in the classroom, such as their services, when they receive them, and what educational strategies their resource teacher implements. Due to the lack of a translator or interpreter at the school, teachers ask other students or the same student to interpret conversations as they search for alternatives to assist the DLLs. Mary shared that the parents of a student with behavioral problems “would go to the office, but they don’t speak a lick of English,” so the same student would interpret the conversation. Mary said, “the student did all the translation for months, but who knows if she was giving the right story because she was the person with the problem. She should have never been the translator.”

The use of the same student as the interpreter may affect and cause the facts to be distorted. Having a translator or interpreter in the school will help with this problem; Jennifer said, “I feel like if we could get communication together either there in our teachers and students and an interpreter, however, it will be more beneficial to the student to have someone that they can actually speak to.” She acknowledges that the school requires an interpreter, so they are inclined to use the same student or another student in the same grade level to translate the activities, instructions, and other content. Jennifer mentioned that “it is a struggle for us and then we have to try to translate with Google Translate, or we have to wait for the translator to come to try to get some help.”

#### ***Theme 4: Support Students’ Academic Career***

The theme *Support Students’ Academic Career* describes areas of need in the school community for the DLL population and ways for stakeholders to participate in their educational

process. The subthemes (*see Table 7*) reflect the teachers' perspectives on the areas in which they lack the expertise as educators but are eager to develop appropriate training and knowledge.

**Table 7**

*Theme 4 Support Students' Academic Career*

Subtheme 1	Subtheme 2	Subtheme 3
Cultural Awareness	Early	Teacher
	Education	Educational
	Programs	Trainings

**Cultural Awareness.** Developing cultural, linguistic, and social norms knowledge and awareness is vital for educators to support their students. In this case, both educators and students lack this foundation, according to the data. In this situation, students struggle with cultural assimilation due to their concurrent exposure to Spanish and English and their parents' culture at home and school culture. Dorothy said, "they go home and speak Spanish, but when they come to school, they are required to speak English...they have a cultural shock." Students' cultural assimilation occurs regularly, and they can fail to comprehend their surroundings at times. Amy shared, "you know, and sometimes they get lost in translation when you're talking a bit; the accents are different." She used the phrase "get lost in translation" to describe how they might feel lost in the process because they must assimilate a lot of information simultaneously.

Jennifer's previous experience with the Hispanic community in their original country help her creates cultural awareness. While being in the university, Jennifer participated in a semester exchange in Venezuela and learned basic Spanish language communication skills. In

her interview, she shared her viewpoint, “being able to see someone they’re comfortable with and say, I can relate to this person, I think that will be just a bonus for the ESL students.”

Teachers recognize that by adequately preparing to work with DLLs, they will be that “someone” in their student’s educational process. Betty, in her interview, expressed her desire to learn the Spanish language and invest more time learning socio-economic and cultural differences. Most educators voiced their willingness to learn about their students’ cultures and share that knowledge with other students to make their DLL students feel comfortable and confident.

**Early Education Programs.** The *Early Education Programs* sub-theme was established as early education programs, and follow-up was a discussion topic during the individual interviews and focus groups. Teachers continued to mention that early literacy skills, language comprehension, and social interaction development would aid the DLL population. “If you can get it built-in, in pre-K and kindergarten,” Zoe said, referring to their reading, writing, math, and social studies areas, as well as basic skills including “letter sounds, digraphs, and blends.” “If I can do those things, then the possibilities are endless for the kid,” Zoe believes the teacher should be able to know the distinct letter sounds, digraphs, and blends in both languages. Jenifer also recognizes that “starting from the beginning of kindergarten, first grade” will be helpful. “Just having someone who can follow them through their academic career, who can assist them in not falling behind, or not getting the same education as everybody else,” she said.

Educators recognize that for the DLLs to be effective in their academic endeavors, they need holistic support. Patricia said, “there is a need for consistency” as the DLLs are learning two languages, and “we have no support for the second language, translator tools, that would be a computer program translating something, or that gentleman that comes to tutor.” Jennifer

claims that “many students are left behind because they’re not able to understand what they’re doing, workwise,” due to a lack of support and advice in the DLLs’ academics. Due to the current student’s case, Jennifer concluded, “they are just pushed down to the next grade, and they still don’t know exactly what’s going on.” According to the data, supporting early education programs should be a priority not just for educators but also for those in administrative roles. Dorothy, a former school administrator, says that “money has been continuously cut from education, especially from early childhood,” which is a problem because the need is most significant in the early educational stages of children. They are “the ones who need most.”

**Teacher Educational Trainings.** Teacher Educational Trainings is a sub-theme that describes a teacher’s willingness to receive professional development to interact with DLLs. According to their responses, some of the educators have received pre-service training, including college classes or individual courses. Jenifer, Patricia, and Valeria are the educators who completed pre-service training in college or through personal classes. Furthermore, none of the participants said that their school or district had provided any professional development. “I haven’t had any real training at the workplace, or the internship, or at the school, or whatever,” Jenifer said. According to the educators in this case study, teachers are underprepared to provide proper support and instruction to the DLL population. Professional development can provide teachers with essential information to help them meet DLLs’ academic and social needs.

### **Research Question Responses**

The research question responses provide a description of the educators’ perspective on the phenomenon of working with DLL in the K-6 schools in the northwest area of a southern state. The purpose of the questions was to guide the study’s data collection and analysis to understand the educator’s perspective of the academic and social needs of Hispanic elementary

DLLs.

### ***Central Research Question***

What are educators' perspectives on the academic and social needs of dual language learners? Access to early education programs, cultural awareness, and additional language resources integrating visual with spoken and written by building a connection with prior knowledge are all academic and social needs of dual language learners. Reading and writing skills serve as a foundation for understanding, interpreting, and translating, reducing the language barrier and language gap. "Understanding the language is different than understanding the instructions; we need to help them make a connection," Amy emphasized. Understanding and developing communication are important factors in influencing their lives; "we need to use culture as an opportunity to teach," Dorothy stated.

### ***Sub Question One***

What are educators' perspectives of the literacy skill needs of dual language learners? Literacy skills provide a foundation for reading, writing, speaking, and listening, allowing DLLs to develop critical skills that enable these students to engage in their education actively. As DLLs progress through the upper elementary and higher grades, literacy skills become an increasingly essential educational aspect of DLL academic achievement, the building blocks of which are literacy skills such as phonological awareness, academic vocabulary, letter knowledge, and language comprehension. "Literacy skills are correlated with their achievement level...the better their literacy skills are, the higher their achievement level is, and negatively, we're not providing those skills," Emma said.

### ***Sub Question Two***

What are educators' perspectives of the second language acquisition needs of dual

language learners? The school district's DLL population has increased, meaning a higher need to provide an environment where DLLs can improve their English language acquisition to establish relationships with their peers and teachers and to enable learning which is primarily in English. DLLs, according to educators, need more early bilingual programs and support in second language acquisition to create a meaningful learning environment. Educators believe the immediate need is to enable language understanding; as Mary said, "we want the DLLs to understand the world around them." Most educators believe that there is a need for more language reinforcement in the classroom. However, educators feel challenged because they do not fully understand the DLLs' cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

### ***Sub Question Three***

What are educators' perspectives of the social development needs of dual language learners? Due to a language barrier between DLLs and teachers, communication and social interaction are limited. Building a relationship with DLL students, educators agree, is critical for their social skills development and peer interactions. "All they care about is building up their vocabulary as soon as possible so they can communicate and interact," Amy said, as DLLs want to improve their English and communicate more effectively. Educators see the language barrier as an opportunity for professional development and acquiring knowledge, allowing their students to be more involved in their school and social environments.

### **Summary**

In conclusion, chapter four outlines the data analysis process defining the emerging themes that resulted from the case study participants' interviews and focus groups. Each participant responded based on their current and previous experiences as educators working with dual language learners, resulting in a detailed description of Hispanic elementary DLLs'

academic and social needs. To conclude the data analysis procedure in this chapter, responses to the central research question and sub-questions were presented.



## **CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION**

### **Overview**

The purpose of this instrumental case study (Yin, 2009) was to describe educators' perspectives on the academic and social needs of Hispanic elementary dual language learners in a southern state's northwestern region. This final chapter has four discussion sections that allowed for the interpretation of the research findings and the presentation of recommendations based on findings. The first section of the discussion, interpretation of findings, provides a summary of the educators' perceptions of the four theme findings described in chapter four. The implications for policy and practice are examined in the second section to better appreciate the relevance of decision-making in educational processes. The third section, limitations, and delimitations, describes the researchers' limitations in conducting this case study as well as the delimitations that defined the study's scope. The fourth section discusses theoretical and methodological implications, including validating past research and making new contributions to the educational field, as well as the study's theoretical framework's applicability. Future research recommendations are also made, considering the study's findings, limitations, and delimitations. Finally, the reader is given a summary of the case study content in the conclusion section.

### **Discussion**

The reality in today's educational system is described by my participants' perspectives on the needs of dual language learners. DLLs' academic and social needs are frequently misunderstood in the classroom as being the same as monolingual students. It is critical for DLLs to be introduced to their second language at a young age, to comprehend the phonetic variations between the two languages, and to have a strong foundation in literacy skills and language comprehension. Educators believe DLL literacy skills must be strengthened for them to actively

participate in their educational process and build relationships with their peers, teachers, and school community.

### **Interpretation of Findings**

The needs of DLLs within the school system are described from the educator's perspective. The acquisition of basic language skills and social interaction starts in the early stages of learning. In general, educators recognize the importance of providing resources for development and follow-up to ensure students' academic and social growth. Educators provided an insightful assessment, understanding the DLLs' needs such as foundational literacy skills, basic academic vocabulary knowledge, language resources, development of social interactions. As a result, the DLL's academic and social needs should be centered on helping to develop a foundation that connects language 1 and language 2.

### ***Summary of Thematic Findings***

In summary, there were four major themes that expressed and specified the needs of Hispanic dual language learners in elementary school, according to the perspectives of educators who participated in the study. The four main themes are: (1) fill language literacy gaps, (2) establish a reliable relationship, (3) instructional resources, and (4) support students' academic career. The following is a brief description of an interpretation of each of these findings.

**Literacy Foundation.** As part of filling the language literacy gap of DLLs, educators emphasized the need of building a strong literacy foundation for students, particularly those learning two languages. As the discussions progressed, greater emphasis was placed on providing the appropriate resources to aid in the development of literacy skills in early stages of second language acquisition. As part of narrowing the literacy gaps among DLLs, phonics, academic vocabulary, writing, and reading skills should be reinforced. Research has pointed to

the need to address language literacy gaps by developing specific literacy skills, particularly in early grades such as prekindergarten and kindergarten. For example, prekindergarten experiences are associated with early education and reading and math skills, demonstrating that promoting student achievement and readiness for ELLs strengthens their academic skills, as they are at a disadvantage when they start school (Gottfried, 2017). The reality is that most school districts with a smaller percentage of DLLs in their schools do not offer early education bilingual opportunities. In this case, the educators noted that the students were lost in their educational process, and that the DLLs were not actively engaged in the instruction due to a lack of comprehension in upper elementary grades.

As a result, offering meaningful instruction to learners will bring them into a welcome learning environment in which they could feel connected to the information presented. When teachers talked about meaningful instruction, they mentioned things like motivational strategies to utilize in the classroom, as well as differentiated instruction and accommodations for the DLLs to be integrated. According to the teachers, many of their students were disinterested because they were receiving education at the same rate as monolingual students, with no additional input.

Small groups, modeling, and scaffolding were also highlighted as instructional strategies for filling language literacy gaps. Small groups, as described by educators, are used to identify students' levels of knowledge and to assist them in comprehending the information by repeating instructions and modeling the process. It is worth noting that these teaching strategies are ideal for DLLs, who require more input in their language acquisition process. However, as the educators mentioned, they are unable to provide the additional input for their students due to limited one-on-one time with DLLs.

**Trustworthy relationships.** It is critical for DLLs' academic and social success to develop trustworthy relationships with teachers, parents, and other stakeholders involved in their educational journey. The value of educators' relationships with students and their parents was acknowledged by educators in this case study. However, most of the teachers claimed that they were unable to communicate since they did not speak the parents' native language, resulting in a linguistic barrier. Most teachers' fluent DLLs serve as interpreters for students who have low proficiency in their second language, making it more difficult for them to communicate effectively with students.

Teachers acknowledged adopting the peer pairing strategy as their major resource to facilitate communication and narrow the language barrier throughout instructional time and activities in and outside of the classroom due to a lack of resources accessible to them at school. One of the teacher's primary concerns is that many of the students with low English proficiency lack social skills and are timid, even when accompanied by their peer interpreter. As the DLLs continue to learn and acquire their second language, the communication gap between them and their peers and teachers becomes more apparent due to the school community's lack of Spanish language skills. Furthermore, educators expressed their willingness to learn the necessary language skills to build a good relationship and communication with their students, allowing DLLs to be more socially active and self-assured.

**Multimodal Learning.** Educators emphasized the need of integrating both virtual and physical language learning materials as part of the DLL's needs in the primary grades. Teachers reportedly mentioned that they are unable to access resources in the students' native language, Spanish, in their classrooms. Educators also highlighted the difficulty in providing language materials because they must adhere to the school district's curriculum. When teachers are

contemplating whether to help students understand topics or to stick to the curriculum's rhythm for the benefit of the entire class, the situation becomes more challenging, implying that DLLs and low English proficiency are left behind.

Educators expressed their dissatisfaction during individual interviews and focus groups as they continued to engage and realize that the scenario is essentially the same in different grades throughout the school district. Many teachers are frustrated by the lack of resources available to assist DLLs in achieving academic success, as they feel inadequate to address the problem. As remarked by the educators, overcoming the language barrier is stressful enough without having to deal with the additional challenge of finding reliable language resources to assist DLLs. Furthermore, as other educators have indicated, even if they do not have resources, they search both virtual and physical resources to assist their students in their classrooms. Teachers are overcoming daily challenges in the classroom by assisting DLLs with interactive virtual tools and using technology as a bridge to engage students in their learning process. As a result, the DLL population requires an educational language resource teacher who facilitates language development, social connections, and academic success for learners in both Spanish and English.

**Cultural competence.** Support Students' Academic Career (SSAC) was developed to describe the educator's perspective on how to encourage teachers, parents, administrators, and all other stakeholders involved in the DLL's educational advancement. Understanding the DLLs' culture, native language, and social background is critical as part of the need's fulfillment. DLLs and other language minority populations in the educational system must continuously adapt to their new school environment, denoting a difficult time adapting and a culture shock. Teachers recognize the lack of pre-service preparation to work with DLLs and reflect a desire to obtain

adequate training and expertise in order to incorporate their DLL students into their classrooms and social activities.

As part of providing support, educators recognized the need of early education programs that allow DLLs to acquire literacy skills, language comprehension, and social connections while also establishing a connection between their first and second languages. One of the challenges is that the school district does not provide an early program to support students in developing a good foundation in both languages and does not provide follow-up to upper elementary grades due to a lower percentage of Hispanic DLLs. As a result, according to the educator's perspective, as part of the cultural awareness and inclusion of the growing DLL population, schools must provide language resources and educational trainings.

### **Implications for Policy and Practice**

The purpose of this case study was to describe educators' perspectives on the academic and social needs of Hispanic dual language learners in elementary school. Implications for instructional practices, elementary education policy, dual language learners' social relations, and second language acquisition are discussed as a result of the findings.

#### ***Implications for Policy***

Policies are developed in the educational system to support students and provide structure to their learning processes, as well as to guide educators in their teaching practice. Educators are constantly discussing students' academic and social needs. Policies to promote teacher training opportunities for better instructional techniques and immersion strategies are necessary to appropriately meet the DLL population's limited educational and social opportunities. Educational leaders, such as school administrators and curriculum coordinators should guarantee that educators and staff have access to continuous second language acquisition trainings, cultural

awareness, and dual language learner immersion as part of policy decision-making. According to the findings, addressing this level of support for educators will create chances for growth due to a lack of preparation in specific bilingual practices in learning.

Furthermore, the findings of this case study contributed to identifying the need for several policy changes. I recommend two policy adjustments to provide standard resources in dual language literacy and convergence of instructional resources to support the academic and social needs of DLLs. The first modification requires that active learning content be integrated and provide cultural background knowledge. To facilitate dual language learners' participation in their everyday education, educators need dependable resources such as textbooks, auditory materials, internet resources, and computer programs. The second change in policy would be to equip educators and stakeholders involved in the academic and social development of dual language learners with tailored educational training. These changes would assist learners in their academic careers by providing educators with the resources they need to effectively integrate and strengthen the school and district's practices.

### ***Implications for Practice***

Educators in this case study described their ideologies regarding the academic and social needs of Hispanic elementary DLLs. Most educators believe that a student's needs are related to their understanding of their second language, in this case, English. However, because these students are DLLs rather than ELLs, most of the students are learning both languages at the same time. The main difference between these two populations is that DLLs learn both languages at the same time, whereas ELLs learn both languages at different times, with Spanish being the primary language spoken in this case study, and English being learned at school when they begin school, which can be in primary school or upper grades such as middle and high school. As a

result, most teachers had only a vague concept of how to distinguish their students in their classrooms from these two similar but distinct populations.

The findings of this case study highlight the necessity for school districts and administrators to offer professional development on matters such as identification, teaching strategies, and methodology implementation to assist DLLs in improving their academic performance. Furthermore, educators' perspectives indicate their desire in learning concerning their students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds, as well as social norms, in order to integrate and "welcome" them into their classrooms and school communities. As part of the No Child Left Behind initiative, educators find themselves in a position where they want to address the issues but do not have enough resources to integrate and educate their DLLs in the instructional process so that they can succeed in the educational journey.

### **Theoretical and Empirical Implications**

The aim of this section is to discuss the findings of the study in relation to the empirical and theoretical literature that has already been reviewed. The empirical and theoretical discussion will corroborate or confirm past research on the phenomena of this case study, educators' perspectives on the academic and social needs of Hispanic elementary dual language learners. The contribution of this study to the field of educational system will be described through the discussions.

#### ***Theoretical Implications***

To better understand the key factors that were involved in the second language acquisition and social development of dual language learners in the primary grades, concepts from two theoretical frameworks were used for this case study. The theoretical frameworks which were considered are the following: the second language acquisition theory and the social



development theory. These collaborative theories focused on the development, acquisition and learning of the language based on Krashen's (1982, 1987) five hypotheses and Vygotsky's (1978) social interaction influences in cognitive development. The five hypotheses in Krashen's SLA are: (1) the acquisition-learning distinction, (2) the natural order hypothesis, (3) the monitor hypothesis, (4) the input hypothesis, and (5) the affective filter hypothesis.

The integration of beliefs and influences helped to identify the underlying principles for research-based fields of study. The first hypothesis, the acquisition-learning distinction, entails the information employed by the brain in the act of communication to build the native language, and Krashen claims that learning is the deliberate acceptance of new knowledge received through formal instruction. Because all languages contain grammar rules, the learning process progresses from early to later phases and occurs independently of directed instruction; in the second hypothesis, the natural order, learners acquire portions of the language in a predetermined sequence. According to Krashen's third hypothesis, monitoring can help increase speech correctness to a degree, but its use should be reduced. Monitoring a student can be a disadvantage since it causes them to focus on the precision of the language rather than their fluency. Furthermore, according to Krashen's fourth hypothesis, input, learners can decode the message once they are familiar with a concept, and it becomes a comprehensible input. It is also known as a step ahead in the students existing language proficiency, which aids in language development. The fifth hypothesis, the affective filter, is a barrier that is impacted by emotional factors and inhibits learning and input from acquiring language in a section of the brain, according to Krashen. Anxiety, self-confidence, motivation, frustration and stress, and others can all contribute to the fifth hypothesis.

Dual language literacy development, second language acquisition, and social skills development all require a concurrent process of comprehending theories and implementing, as it allows educators to learn, apply, and support the instructional process. According to my findings in this case study, elementary dual language learners can benefit from incorporating it into their everyday instructional and social processes as it will establish a comprehensive foundation for learning two languages fluently. DLLs can learn two languages simultaneously, which is a cognitive development considering language learning, conceptual and perceptual skills, and analytical processes. When provided the resources to support the development of communication skills and a positive affective influence, DLLs can also communicate in both languages. Learners who are exposed to both languages in early and middle childhood become fluent and have greater language skills in upper grades, which enhances both their academic and social careers.

### ***Empirical Implications***

This study contributes to the existing knowledge base by presenting a detailed description of DLLs' needs in the classroom and in the school social context. DLLs are students who learn two languages at the same time during their early education developmental years, as indicated in the literature review, and the number of DLL children living in the United States is rapidly increasing (Hammer et al., 2014). Prior research has suggested educators must address the needs of this population to help improve both academic and social skills of DLLs. For example, Bialystok (2018), explained that children with any type of learning or language disability, as well as those who are socially disadvantaged, will find it difficult to succeed in school. As a result, educators must provide opportunities for DLLs to improve their understanding of their second language through developing literacy skills, basic vocabulary knowledge, and social skills,

development and interaction with their peers, teachers, and school community. Learners make decisions based on their awareness of their listeners' expectations, societal storytelling patterns, and developmental characteristics that influence their understanding of verbal language and literacy norms (Lucero, 2018). However, because the DLL population is frequently misunderstood, educators may find it difficult to acquire new resources and use new or alternative strategies in the classroom to comply with school regulations and meet the requirements of the students.

### **Limitations and Delimitations**

Limitations of the study suggest possible weaknesses that cannot be controlled. Conversely, delimitations are choices I made to limit the scope of the study, such as which grade levels participants should be teaching in order to best inform on the phenomenon. These choices I made created limits and boundaries for my study.

#### ***Limitations***

Several limitations were identified during the case study's progress. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the first limitation was access to the school premises. Educators and administrators were unable to report to the school premises for health precautions due to school district safety guidelines and procedures. Because phone calls were mostly responded to handle school concerns connected to the beginning of the school year and the installation of new school protocols due to the pandemic, I was unable to have direct contact with administrators, restricting communication to only email. I was also only able to conduct one in-person interview while conducting the remaining individual interviews and focus groups utilizing web-based programs.

The second limitation was that only women participated in the study, resulting in a lack of gender diversity and educational roles such as administrators and curriculum coordinators.

Due to a lack of communication resources and restrictions, I was unable to contact other administrators and school curriculum coordinators. One school principal consented to participate in the study, but I was unable to conduct the interview owing to changes of workplace.

The third limitation was the lack of diversity in the participating schools due to the low percentage of Hispanic population. In a school year, the average number of Hispanic students in classes or in direct contact with educators was three. In the upper grades, such as fourth and fifth grade, several teachers mentioned having more than three.

Finally, because the sample size was reduced to eleven educators who volunteered to participate, the findings of this case study may not be transferable.

### ***Delimitations***

The scope of this case study was defined by delimitations, which were the study's boundaries and the rationale for those decisions. The study methodology was established as the first delimitation. This case study was appropriate for describing the educator's perspective on the academic and social needs of Hispanic elementary dual language learners.

The number of schools participating in this case study was the second delimitation. Three schools were chosen from a total of fourteen in the district. The rationale for this decision was to include different perspectives from elementary educators from a diversity of school grades and sites, ranging from 2nd to 5th grade.

The third and final delimitation was that only educators from second through fifth grades participated. Because the purpose of my research was to present the perspectives of educators in the elementary grades, which included kindergarten through fifth grade, these early educational perspectives were not directly included in the study, though some references to these experiences

were included. Several of the educators had prior experience working with younger children in early childhood programs.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Questions about teacher experiences and interactions with DLLs, identification of instructional methodologies, preparation, and literacy skills in DLL second language acquisition, language development, and social interactions were asked in individual interviews and focus groups. Broadening this research gives educators more possibilities to learn about DLLs' language development, instructional procedures, communication, and social interactions.

The first recommendation is to broaden the research to include early education grades and school programs to identify DLLs' needs early. It is suggested that non-bilingual early education programs be compared to bilingual early education programs. The findings of this study can be used to assist instructional practices, school curriculum, and social interaction, allowing educators to collaborate.

The second recommendation is to broaden the scope of the study to include middle and high school students. Students and teachers should both participate in the study. The perspectives of students and teachers could be used to understand the teaching-learning process better, identify other areas of need, and assess how instructional practices are assisting students in achieving their present and future goals.

The third recommendation is to broaden the scope of the study by including a bigger sample size of both student population and geographic range. More schools, larger school districts, and a higher DLL population ratio would be considered. The information can help to create a more diverse range of teachers and students.

The final recommendation is to broaden the scope of the study beyond educators' perceptions of academic and social needs. To promote DLL's success as a holistic phenomenon, I would suggest conducting phenomenological studies to analyze the benefits and disadvantages of current instructional approaches and social interactions.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to expand to existing research on the academic and social needs of Hispanic dual language learners in elementary school by describing the educator's perspective, identifying practices, and social interaction strategies defined by the case study participants. Participants were questioned about their elementary school teaching experiences with dual language learners, their preparation and professional learning opportunities, and their in-depth perceptions of the students' second language acquisition and social development. Educators' perspectives provided an in-depth description of dual language learners' needs in elementary school, expressing the demand for more reliable instructional resources. To offer a vital literacy skill foundation, narrowing the language gap, and promoting social and academic success by supporting DLLs in their academic careers.

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## APPENDIX

### Appendix A: IRB Approval Letter

Date: 8-2-2021

IRB #: IRB-FY19-20-366

Title: A Case Study of the Academic and Social Needs of Hispanic Elementary Dual Language Learners

Creation Date: 5-7-2020

End Date:

Status: Approved

Principal Investigator: Erika Rivera

Review Board: Research Ethics Office

Sponsor:

Study History

Submission Type Initial Review Type Limited Decision Exempt - Limited IRB

Key Study Contacts

Member David Vacchi Role Co-Principal Investigator Contact xxxxxx@liberty.edu

Member Erika Rivera Role Principal Investigator Contact xxxxxx@liberty.edu

Member Erika Rivera Role Primary Contact Contact xxxxxx@liberty.ed

## Appendix B: Permission Request Letter

7/1/2020

Name of the Principal/District Superintendent  
School Principal/District Superintendent  
Name of the School  
Address

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Education in Leadership degree. The title of my research project is “A Case Study of the Academic and Social Needs of Hispanic Elementary Dual Language Learners” and the purpose of my research is to describe the perceptions of the educators regarding the academic and social needs of the dual-language Hispanic students.

I am writing to request your permission to conduct my research in (name of the school/district) and I would like to contact members of your staff to invite them to participate in my research study.

Participants will contact me to schedule an interview. Participants will be presented with informed consent information prior to participating. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, please provide a signed statement on official letterhead indicating your approval. A permission letter document is attached for your convenience.

Sincerely,

Erika Rivera-Castillo, Ed.S  
Doctoral Candidate  
Inclusion/Exceptional Teacher



### Appendix C: Permission Letter

7/1/2020

Name of the Principal/District Superintendent  
School Principal/District Superintendent  
Name of the School  
Address

Dear Erika Rivera-Castillo:

After careful review of your research proposal entitled A Case Study of the Academic and Social Needs of Hispanic Elementary Dual Language Learners, I have decided to grant you permission to contact our faculty/staff and invite them to participate in your study and conduct your study at (name of school district).

Check the following boxes, as applicable:

☐ The requested data WILL BE STRIPPED of all identifying information before it is provided to the researcher.

☐ The requested data WILL NOT BE STRIPPED of identifying information before it is provided to the researcher.

☐ I/We are requesting a copy of the results upon study completion and/or publication.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

[Your Title]

[Your Company/Organization]

## Appendix D: Recruitment Letter

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Education in Leadership degree. The purpose of my research is to describe the perceptions of the educators regarding the academic and social needs of the dual-language Hispanic students, and I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Participants must be an educator (school principal, assistant principal, curriculum coordinator and/or a certified teacher) within the (name of the school district) and is currently teaching, have taught or have educational experience with Hispanic dual language learners. Participants, if willing, will be asked to participate in an individual interview (30-45 minutes) and a focus group (45 minutes) with 4-5 other participants within the same school, if possible. It should take approximately 30-45 minutes to complete the procedures listed. Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential.

In order to participate, please contact me at xxx-xxx-xxx for more information or to schedule an interview.

A consent document is attached to this email. The consent document contains additional information about my research. Please sign the consent document email it back to me or return it to me at the time of the interview.

Sincerely,

Erika Rivera-Castillo, Ed.S.  
Doctoral Candidate  
Inclusion Teacher  
Phone: xxx-xxx-xxxx  
Email: xxxxxx@liberty.edu

## **Appendix E: Consent**

**Title of the Project:** A Case Study of the Academic and Social Needs of Hispanic Elementary Dual Language Learners

**Principal Investigator:** Erika Rivera-Castillo, doctoral candidate at Liberty University, and an Inclusion Teacher in the Natchitoches Parish School Board

### **Invitation to be Part of a Research Study**

You are invited to participate in a research study. In order to participate, you must be an educator (school principal, assistant principal, curriculum coordinator and/or a certified teacher) within the Natchitoches Parish School Board and is currently teaching, have taught or have educational experience with Hispanic dual language learners. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research project.

### **What is the study about and why is it being done?**

The purpose of the study is to describe the perceptions of the educators regarding the academic and social needs of the dual-language Hispanic students.

### **What will happen if you take part in this study?**

If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

1. Participate in an individual interview (30-45minutes), it will be audio recorded or both audio and video if needed using an online tool considering social distancing.
2. Participate in a focus group (45 minutes) with 4-5 other participants within the same school, if possible and will be audio recorded or both audio and video if needed using an online tool considering social distancing.

### **How could you or others benefit from this study?**

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society include a better understating of the educator's perspectives in the instructional and social needs of the Hispanic dual language learners needs and an addition of vital data/information in the educational field.

### **What risks might you experience from being in this study?**

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

### **How will personal information be protected?**

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only

the researcher will have access to the records. Data collected from you may be shared for use in future research studies or with other researchers. If data collected from you is shared, any information that could identify you, if applicable, will be removed before the data is shared.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms. Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and in a locked safe. The data may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted, and all paper records will be shredded.
- Interviews and focus groups will be audio recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer or recording device for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings. It will be used for educational purposes.
- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. While discouraged, other members of the focus group may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.

#### **Is study participation voluntary?**

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or Natchitoches Parish School Board. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

#### **What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?**

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address or phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

#### **Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?**

The researcher conducting this study is Erika Rivera-Castillo. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at [REDACTED] and/or [REDACTED]@liberty.edu. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. David Vacchi, at [REDACTED]@liberty.edu.

#### **Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?**

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu).

**Your Consent**

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the researcher using the information provided above.

*I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.*

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

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Printed Subject Name

---

Signature & Date

### **Appendix F: Recruitment Follow-up Letter**

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Education in Leadership degree. Last week an email was sent to you inviting you to participate in a research study. This follow-up email is being sent to remind you to respond if you would like to participate and have not already done so. The deadline for participation is \_\_\_\_\_.

If you choose to participate, you will be asked to participate in an individual interview and a focus group with 4-5 other participants within the same school, if possible. It should take approximately 30-45 minutes for you to complete the procedures listed. Your name and other identifying information will be requested as part of your participation, but the information will remain confidential.

To participate, contact me to schedule an interview.

A consent document attached to this email. The informed consent document contains additional information about my research. Please sign the informed consent document and email it back to me or return it to me at the time of the interview.

Sincerely,

Erika Rivera-Castillo, Ed.S.  
Doctoral Candidate  
Inclusion Teacher

### **Appendix G: Individual Interview Questions**

Interview questions:

1. Please, introduce yourself to me and provide some background information.
2. Please briefly describe your career experiences as an educator.
3. What is your experience working with dual language learners?
4. What challenges do you experience working with this population?
5. How did you address these challenges? Explain.
6. Describe your pre-service preparation to work with, or teach, dual language learners.
7. What resources do you use to learn or acquire teaching strategies?
8. What are the academic needs of dual language learners in the elementary stage?
9. Please describe the process of identifying the academic needs of dual language learners.
10. What is your view of the instruction of literacy skills to the dual language learners as part of their learning needs?
11. How do you select your instructional strategies and methods?
12. What is your perspective on the student's second language acquisition in the classroom setting?
13. What activities do you use or implement to help the dual language learners comprehend their second language?
14. What is your perspective on bilingual student language development?
15. What challenges do you face in implementing bilingual language development?
16. What is your viewpoint on the social development and interaction of the dual language learners?
17. Please describe your relationship with your dual language learner students.

18. Please identify and explain the support you provide to your dual language learners.
19. Please summarize the social needs of dual language learners.
20. Please summarize the academic needs of dual language learners.



### **Appendix H: Focus Group Questions**

1. Please introduce yourself to the group and add something your peers may not know about you.
2. What is the role of literacy skills in second language acquisition among the dual language learners?
3. What is the influence of literacy skills in the academic achievement of dual language learners?
4. What is the influence of the literacy skills in the social interaction of the dual language learners?
5. What strategies do you use with the dual language learners to improve social interaction with peers?
6. How do you develop literacy skills in an early school age for the DLL?
7. What is the impact of early education programs in school achievement and readiness of the DLL?
8. Based on your observations, what other areas of needs can you discuss for the proper early educational development of the DLL?
9. What could you emphasize in the school curriculum to help the dual language learners improve their performance?
10. How would you describe what is required to enhance student success in their second language learning to build literacy skills, understanding the English language, and social interaction?