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THE EFFECT OF TELPAS IN THE RECLASSIFICATION OF  
LONG-TERM ENGLISH LEARNERS

by

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DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of

The University of Houston-Clear Lake

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements

For the Degree

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

in Educational Leadership

THE UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON-CLEAR LAKE

MAY, 2024

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## **Dedication**

This dissertation is dedicated to my wonderful family, who taught me to embrace my dreams and to be relentless in working toward the goals I want to attain. To my amazing parents, who have always made decisions seeking the best for our family. Thirty years ago, they sacrificed the comfort of their home country to pursue *el sueño Americano*, I am proud to honor their sacrifice by earning a doctoral degree. To my sisters, Jazhel and Judith, for their continuous encouragement throughout this doctoral journey. To my nieces, Valerie, Camila, and Eliana, and to my nephew Ezekiel, who are the joy of my life. I hope this dissertation can be an example of how hard work and determination can help you achieve all your dreams. Dream Big! The world is yours to conquer. Most importantly, to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, I give you honor and glory. In moments of weakness and uncertainty, I was able to rely on my faith as I am always reminded that with You, ALL things are possible.

## **Acknowledgements**

This dissertation would not have been possible without the steadfast encouragement and priceless direction provided by my dissertation committee. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to Dr. Amanda Smith, my quantitative methodologist, for her continuous encouragement and motivation to “push for success”. Her words kept me focused on the goal, driving me not to relent. Similarly, I express my appreciation to Dr. Jane McIntosh Cooper, my qualitative methodologist, for generously sharing her expertise and offering constructive feedback. Her positive remarks served as the spark to propel my work forward.

To my dissertation chairs, Dr. Judith Márquez and Dr. Laurie Weaver, our paths intersected over two decades ago during my undergraduate studies, marking the beginning of a transformative journey. Through your mentorship, I embarked on my educational pursuit at UHCL as a beneficiary of Project New Horizons, a grant that enabled me to pursue a Bachelor’s degree in Bilingual Education. The opportunities provided through Project New Horizons changed the trajectory of my life, for which I am eternally grateful. Now, as I near the completion of my doctoral journey, I am privileged to have both of you on my dissertation committee, thus completing the circle of support and mentorship that began years ago.

The doctoral journey was enriched by each member of the UHCL Pearland Cohort 5. I am honored to be part of outstanding group of educational leaders that share the passion to impact the lives of students in our area. Thank you to Dr. Janie Jimenez and Dr. Veronica Garza, who embarked on this incredible journey alongside me. I vividly recall our initial meeting at Starbucks and our shared aspiration to become "doctoras". Here we are, realizing our dream. We made it! Your friendship and unwavering support

have meant the world to me. To Dr. Rogelio Cardona, your guidance was indispensable in this endeavor. I am deeply grateful for your consistent check-ins and encouragement, which provided the motivation needed to see it through to the end. To Dr. Claudia Castillo, my trusted accountability partner, our journey was filled with both tears and laughter as we pursued our goal. Thank you for being there every step of the way.

I am grateful for the integral role the University of Houston-Clear Lake (UHCL) has played throughout my educational journey. As an undergraduate student aspiring to become a teacher, this esteemed institution paved the way for my academic pursuits in education. Later, as a graduate student pursuing a Master's degree in Educational Leadership, the university equipped me with the knowledge and skills essential for the leadership positions I've had the privilege to hold. For the past four years, I've been immersed once again in doctoral studies at UHCL, and graduation is now on the horizon.

I take great pride in achieving all three of my degrees at UHCL. Go Hawks!

ABSTRACT

THE EFFECT OF TELPAS IN THE RECLASSIFICATION OF  
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The purpose of the study was to examine the effect of the Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS) on the reclassification of long-term English Learners (LTELs). Through a mixed-methods approach, the research design consisted of a quantitative and qualitative section. The quantitative component of this study utilized archival data, including test scores and student demographic data from a purposeful sample of high school students in grades 9-11 who are identified as English learners (ELs) with more than six years in U.S. schools. The data were analyzed by the researcher using frequencies, percentages, Pearson's Product Moment Correlations ( $r$ ), and linear regression. The descriptive statistics revealed that of the 30 students that attained Meets or Masters on the STAAR English I or II End of Course (EOC), 0% met

the reclassification status based on the student's less than Advanced High proficiency levels on TELPAS. The quantitative findings also revealed a statistically significant relationship between TELPAS reading and STAAR English I or II EOC and that TELPAS reading scores effectively predict STAAR reading achievement. The qualitative component of the study purposefully selected students identified as LTELs to participate in the interviews. The participants' responses were analyzed using a constant comparative approach and an inductive coding process.

Eight themes emerged from the qualitative analysis of this study: (a) student perceptions of the TELPAS, (b) student self-efficacy on language proficiency, (c) student perceptions of STAAR EOC and TELPAS, (d) attitudes towards TELPAS, (e) student experiences learning English, (f) student perceptions of program effectiveness, and (g) student self-efficacy on TELPAS readiness. This study highlights significant implications for ESL teachers, curriculum and instruction departments, campus administrators, and policymakers in identifying effective teaching practices and programming to improve performance on TELPAS and increase the number of LTELs meeting reclassification.



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## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

The population of English Learners (ELs) is increasing in U.S. public schools, comprising 10.3% of the student population, which amounts to around five million students (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2023). Texas now leads the nation in the number of ELs served in language support programs and general education programs, with the highest percentage of ELs at 20.1 (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2023; Texas Education Agency, 2023c). It is estimated that Texas serves about one in five of the nation's ELs (Texas Education Agency, 2023a).

ELs have been identified as limited English proficiency or LEP students (Texas Education Code §29, 1981). According to the Office of English Language Acquisition

(2020), over 4.8 million ELs are enrolled in schools, representing an overall increase of 28% nationwide since 2001. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) places the responsibility on each school district to provide ELs with a language support program that will reinforce their language acquisition and their attainment of academic skills and ensure the effectiveness of the language program (ESSA, 2015). State education agencies mandate that school districts annually monitor the English language acquisition of each student identified as an EL. In conjunction, the language support program and yearly language monitoring are designed to ensure ELs are making progress toward reclassification status.

Recently, Texas Senate Bill 2066 replaced the term Limited English Proficient (LEP) with Emergent Bilingual (EB) in the Texas Education Code (TEC Chapter 29.055 subchapter b). Despite this designation's evolution, the term EL will be used throughout

this study to align its content with the existing literature. Other literature or policy texts can include older designations such as English Language learners (ELL).

As part of the current accountability systems, federal mandates require state education agencies to measure ELs' academic performance and English language acquisition through annual participation in achievement testing and English language proficiency assessments (ESSA, 2015; NCLB, 2001). The results of the assessments are reviewed at the end of the school year to determine whether an EL student has met established academic and linguistic targets to be reclassified as a fluent English speaker (FES) (Robinson, 2011; Thompson, 2015). The outcome of meeting the reclassification standard is two-fold. As a result of being reclassified, the LEP designation is replaced with a non-LEP designation. In addition, the instructional placement changes as the student exits from the language support program (Gándara & Rumberger, 2009). The reclassification criteria aim to identify ELs ready to participate in mainstream courses with no further language support (Matta & Soland, 2018).

Within the EL population, there is a subgroup of students that has yet to achieve reclassification status and has participated in a language support program for more than six years. This subgroup, commonly referred to as long-term English learners (LTELs), has reached a plateau in their acquisition of English language skills and often has academic gaps (Olson, 2010). Despite the time participating in a language support program, they have yet to meet reclassification criteria. There is a critical need for ELs to be reclassified before entering secondary grade levels, as the likelihood of reaching reclassification decreases significantly once they reach secondary school (Thompson, 2017). Not meeting the targeted language proficiency levels may negatively impact academic engagement in LTELs (Clark-Gareca et al., 2019).

## **Research Problem**

Long-term English Learners (LTELs) are students who have been identified as LEP for more than six years in U.S. schools and who have yet to meet the targeted academic and linguistic criteria for reclassification (Flores et al., 2015). Although an official definition of LTELs has yet to be established, there is a consistent application of six or more years of participation in a language program as an identifier for these students (ESSA, 2015). Because of the accepted number of years used to classify as a LTEL, these students are typically enrolled in secondary schools serving sixth through twelfth grade. An estimated 60% of ELs in secondary grades are LTELs (Grantmakers in Education, 2013). Most LTELs have been enrolled in a language support program since elementary school and have not yet met reclassification criteria (Olson, 2010). Reclassification criteria consist of measures of English proficiency, academic achievement, and teacher input (Texas Education Agency, 2022b). Reclassification and exit are high stakes for students transitioning into secondary grade levels (Carroll &

Bailey, 2016). In Texas, the Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System

(TELPAS) is used to measure English language proficiency, and the State of Texas

Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) measures academic achievement. The performance results of these assessments are used to make EL reclassification decisions. The question left unanswered is whether TELPAS reading performance predicts student performance on STAAR, leading to the reclassification of LTELs.

Brooks (2015) questions the definition of English proficient by alluding to the fact that students from an English-speaking home background are automatically given English proficient status. In contrast, students with home languages other than English reported

on the Home Language Survey (HLS) must demonstrate established literacy levels to gain the same status (Brooks, 2015). Although the HLS is established to identify the language support needs of ELs, it is essential to acknowledge the inherent impact of the LTEL designation on the instructional placement of these students and the limitations to access to rigorous coursework (Estrada & Wang, 2018; Shin, 2020).

Maintaining the EL designation is based on lower language proficiency ratings and needing to meet achievement test standards (Olsen, 2010; Thompson, 2015). However, ELs are often classified as LTELs because of the reclassification process, not because of their English language ability (Brooks, 2018; Thompson, 2015). If an assessment inaccurately reflects a student's English abilities, this may lead to erroneous instructional placement (Wolf et al., 2008). In his study, Clark-Gareca (2019) poses the question of whether students from a monolingual background identified as non-LEP would meet the criteria for reclassification on these assessments. Reclassification criteria for students in Texas high schools include achievement of STAAR English I or 2 EOC and advanced high performance on TELPAS performance.

A significant challenge LTELs face is the limited opportunity to engage in rigorous learning compared to their peers (Callahan, 2016). Consequently, examining the effects of failing to meet the required proficiency levels on LTELs is essential (ClarkGareca et al., 2019). As ELs achieve reclassification status, they will increase access to more rigorous academic options that benefit their learning. A student's LEP identification at the secondary level can be a barrier to a more rigorous curriculum and college readiness (Linquanti, 2015).

Another challenge for these students is participating in the TELPAS assessment to evaluate listening, speaking, and reading through an online platform. Throughout the implementation of the TELPAS, there have been changes in the test format. In 2004, the



Texas Observation Protocol (TOP) used holistic ratings to assess listening, speaking, and writing, and the Reading Proficiency Test in English (RPTE), which became known as TELPAS, was administered to assess reading (TEA, 2022c). In 2008, the TELPAS reading assessment was redesigned to be administered online (TEA, 2022c). Ten years later, in 2018, the listening and speaking domains were also assessed through an online platform (TEA, 2022c).

Messick (1986) correctly predicted the reliance on technology in education and the workplace, including performance assessment. He argued that validity is an inductive summary that requires the consideration of empirical evidence and potential consequences derived from the interpretation of test scores (Messick, 1986). The TELPAS has utilized several sources to gather evidence of validity, including content validity, response processes, internal structure, and consequences of testing (TEA, 2022c). Since the new reading standards and the listening and speaking assessment redesign were implemented in 2018, more data must be analyzed to determine long-term trends (TEA, 2022c). TELPAS is a high-stakes assessment utilized to measure English language proficiency and to make EL reclassification decisions (Collier & Huang, 2019).

Although evidence of the validity of the TELPAS has been continuously measured (TEA, 2022c), TELPAS needs to be critically reviewed, and its impact on the large population of ELs in Texas should be examined (Collier & Huang, 2019). Due to the many changes to TELPAS, Collier and Huang (2019) suggested conducting a rigorous analysis of its reliability practices and a study of consequential validity.

In summary, the EL population across the U. S. has grown from 8.1% in 2001 to 9.6% in 2017 (Office of English Language Acquisition, 2020). As a result, the percentage of ELs in sixth through twelfth grade who have been enrolled in schools in the United

States for six years or more is significant (Flores et al., 2015; Menken & Klein, 2009). Because of the impact the TELPAS results have on the educational plan of ELs, it is critical to examine this assessment program. This study contributes to the literature by examining the effect of the TELPAS in reclassifying LTELs.

### **Significance of the Study**

There is a growing body of literature regarding the increasing number of ELs in schools in the U.S. Furthermore, there is a focus on the implications of instructional programming to meet ELs' linguistic and academic needs. However, more research must be done on LTELs (Flores et al., 2015) and the assessment tool used in the reclassification process (Menken et al., 2012). Reclassification policies can impact EL outcomes (Lee & Soland, 2022). Due to the increase of LTELs in secondary grades, there is a need to expand the field of research to examine the impact of language proficiency assessments, such as TELPAS, on the reclassification process of older and longer-term ELs. This study explored the correlations between TELPAS reading performance and academic achievement and highlighted the LTELs' perceptions of TELPAS.

### **Research Purpose and Questions**

The study aimed to examine the effect of the TELPAS in reclassifying LTELs. The leading questions for this study are:

1. To what degree do LTEL students who achieve Meets or Masters levels on STAAR English EOC meet EL reclassification criteria?
2. Is there a statistically significant relationship between performance on STAAR English EOC and TELPAS reading?
3. Do TELPAS reading scores predict achievement on STAAR English EOC?
4. What are the perceptions of LTELs of TELPAS?
5. What are the perceptions of LTELs regarding how their language support

program prepared them for TELPAS?

### **Definition of Key Terms**

*English Learner (EL):* The Texas Education Code 29 defines an English Learner as a student who is learning English who has a primary language other than English (Texas Education Code §29, Subchapter BB)

*Limited English Proficient (LEP):* Students identified as ELs due to their limited English language skills based on performance on language assessments (Texas Education Code §29, Subchapter BB).

*Long-term English Learner:* ELs served in a language support program for six years or more (Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015).

*Reclassification Criteria:* The criteria set by the state to redesignate ELs as proficient in English (Texas Education Agency, 2022b)

*State of Texas Assessment of Academic Skills or STAAR:* ELs must participate in the state-standardized assessment, which measures mastery of academic grade-level expectations (Texas Education Agency, 2022b).

*Student achievement:* Growth in knowledge in a specific content area as measured through standardized or non-standardized assessments. (Johnson & Hull, 2014).

*Language Proficiency:* This is designated through proficiency levels such as beginning, intermediate, advanced, or advanced high in listening, speaking, reading, and writing on TELPAS (Texas Education Agency, 2022a).

*Texas English Language Proficiency Accountability System, or TELPAS:* A statewide standardized assessment that measures ELs' proficiency levels in listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Texas Education Agency, 2022a).

## **Conclusion**

This chapter discussed the importance of examining the effect of the TELPAS on the reclassification of LTELs. It included a synopsis of the research problem and explained why the study was significant. In addition, it specified the research purpose and listed the research questions along with the key terms relevant to the study. The next chapter presents a review of the literature.

## CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Throughout the literature focusing on long-term English Learners (LTELs), several factors correlate to LTEL status. Menken et al. (2012) identify high mobility, frequent absenteeism, and transnationalism as potential factors for LTEL status. In addition, weak language support programs and the switching of language programs in elementary grades can impact the progress of ELs (Menken & Kleyn, 2009). In some instances, ELs are placed in and out of different types of bilingual and English as a Second Language (ESL) programs, putting ELs at a disadvantage by receiving inconsistent program support (Menken & Kleyn, 2009). Menken and Kleyn (2009) define the cause of this programming inconsistency as being due to EL students transferring from one school to another or due to the availability of bilingual or ESL programs within the school.

There are compelling arguments regarding the positive and negative impacts of the EL label. EL classification allows students to access language support to meet their needs and makes schools responsible for providing language support programs to improve student outcomes. Umansky (2016) states that EL services benefit students by creating a learning environment that fosters student learning and growth. On the other hand, Umansky (2016) also claims that the EL classification can be a hindrance to students due to unintended consequences such as isolation from English-speaking peers, the substitution of English language development courses instead of mainstream academic courses, and limited access to advanced classes due to EL course tracking.

For an EL student to be reclassified as non-EL, the student must meet established reclassification criteria. According to the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), states must establish standardized criteria for EL reclassification across all school districts

(Bond, 2019). Reclassification is a critical milestone in an EL's education as it concludes a set of services and treatments, yielding access to mainstream education. (Umansky & Reardon, 2014; Umansky 2016; Uysal, 2022) A vital component of the reclassification process is the English language proficiency assessments that measure an EL's linguistic progress in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. These are high-stakes evaluations as they play a critical role in determining whether a student is proficient in English or remains an EL. As such, the English proficiency language assessment can be a systemic barrier to reclassification (Siordia & Kim, 2021). The purpose of this study was to examine the effect of the TELPAS in reclassifying LTELs. The literature review focused on (a) mandates supporting EL education, (b) bilingual and ESL programs, (c) reclassification policy, (d) LTELs, and (e) TELPAS.

### **History and Federal Mandates Shaping EL Education**

Implementing bilingual and ESL education in the United States has consistently been commensurate with the attitudes toward immigrants and language diversity. Throughout history, bilingual education has experienced pendulum shifts depending on politics, the economy, and the size of the immigrant population (Gándara & Escamilla, 2016). The attitudes toward and perceptions of bilingual and ESL education are fundamental in implementing language programs, causing positive or adverse effects on ELs' pedagogical efforts and achievement. Bilingual education programs are designed to provide native-language instruction to teach academic skills through comprehensible input while supporting the acquisition of English to ELs (TEC Chapter 29.055 subchapter

b). ESL education is the delivery of content instruction in English using second language acquisition strategies and linguistic support to ELs by an ESL-certified teacher (TEC Chapter 29.055 subchapter b).

Since early American history, potential controversy over language policy has existed because of the changing political, social, and economic forces (Ovando, 2003). Due to historical immigration to the United States, language diversity has been considerable (Crawford, 1989). However, the nation's founders did not adopt an official language for the U.S. (Crawford, 1989). In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, settlers established communities in which they promoted their language, religion, and culture while participating in life in America (Ovando, 2003). For example, the increasing number of German schools that provided bilingual education to German-immigrant children from the late 1800s to 1900s supported the practice of native language instruction (Baker et al., 2016). During this era, it was common for parents to demand that their children receive instruction in their native language (De La Trinidad, 2015). Schools often represented the language of their communities, as native language instruction or bilingualism was widely accepted (De La Trinidad, 2015).

As the country engaged in World War I against Germany, a shift from a laissezfaire approach to schooling resulted in an English-only movement across the states. Attitudes toward multilingual education began to change as assimilation into American society was emphasized through a sink-or-swim approach to language (Ovando, 2003). An example of this shift was seen in the state of Nebraska, which prohibited teaching foreign languages in elementary school. This stance led to the Supreme Court *Meyer vs.*

*Nebraska* in 1923, which declared Nebraska's practice unconstitutional based on the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment (Ovando, 2003). Even though this court case affirmed that the prohibition of multilingual education was unconstitutional, this ruling had little effect on education systems (Baker et al., 2016; Gándara & Escamilla, 2016). The political mindset shifted toward linguistic and cultural assimilation, threatening these schools' instructional

programming. With the start of World War I, a push for English-only instruction began and ended multilingual education (Baker et al., 2016).

No meaningful legislation existed until the pivotal Bilingual Education Act (BEA) of 1967, which influenced state and local education agencies to develop programs targeting ELs' learning and language development (Petrzela, 2010). The BEA was an acceptance from the federal government, as it had a role to play in the education of English learners (Baker et al., 2016). This mandate did not prescribe the implementation of bilingual programs; however, it supported language learning by allocating \$7.5 million among states to institutionalize programs to improve English language acquisition (Baker et al., 2016; Gándara & Escamilla, 2016; Petrzela, 2010). The BEA failed to guide the design and goals of bilingual education (Garcia & Sung, 2018). However, it is recognized as significant legislation, triggering language policy changes and launching bilingual and ESL programs nationwide (Gándara & Escamilla, 2016).

In 1974, the landmark U.S. Supreme Court case of *Lau vs. Nichols* ushered in a more intentional approach to bilingual education. In this lawsuit, a group of Chinese parents challenged the San Francisco school system, alleging that it failed to provide their Chinese American children with quality instruction (Garcia & Sung, 2018; Polanco & Luft de Baker, 2018). The families argued that the students who received English-only education did not benefit from the educational program. The Supreme Court ruling of this case affirmed that access to curriculum equated to comprehensible instruction, and failure to provide meaningful participation violated the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Gándara & Escamilla, 2016). This court decision led to the Lau Remedies, guidelines that steered the creation of bilingual and ESL education, claiming that such programs were needed to transition ELs into English. However, the guidelines should have proposed specific program goals (Polanco & Luft de Baker, 2018). The ruling of this case upheld the



premise that ELs faced linguistic challenges that required support to ensure equitable access to the general curriculum.

That same year, the Equal Educational Opportunities Act (EEOA) was passed by Congress, delineating that school systems must address the language barriers that negatively impact ELs' participation in the instructional program (Gándara & Escamilla, 2016). Despite the rulings and legislation supporting bilingual and ESL education, these needed more specificity in the design of language programs. This lack of clarity led to the Fifth Circuit Appeals case *Castañeda vs. Pickard* in 1981, whose ruling provided a more detailed definition of the programs. It stated that (a) the program should be designed based on educational theory, (b) funds for personnel and resources should be allocated, and (c) appropriate effectiveness is not reached if students are not making academic gains along with increasing English proficiency (*Castañeda vs. Pickard*, 1981). Transitional bilingual education and ESL programs flourished during this time (De La Trinidad, 2015). Transitional programs operate under the ideology that a student's first language is a resource to develop the second language to access content area instruction (Gándara & Escamilla, 2016; Polanco & Luft de Baker, 2018).

However, the pendulum shifted away from bilingual and ESL education in the late 1990s as states like California, Massachusetts, and Arizona began implementing

English-only and English immersion programs (De La Trinidad, 2015; Garcia & Sung, 2018). Negative attitudes toward minority languages began to take root as state propositions such as California's Proposition 227 and Arizona's Proposition 203 were passed, which reversed bilingual language policy in favor of English-only approaches

(De La Trinidad, 2015). At the national level, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 ensured all students met grade-level academic performance standards by the end of third grade. NCLB also emphasized the acquisition of the English language and

linked student testing performance in English to school systems' accountability (Baker et al., 2016; Polanco & Luft de Baker, 2018). The NCLB Act allowed school systems to choose bilingual or English-only programs. However, the school system was accountable for demonstrating student academic achievement and growth in English proficiency after enrolling in a U.S. system for three years or more (Baker et al., 2016).

While this wave of negative attitudes towards multilingualism raged in the political arena and impacted school systems throughout, dual language immersion programs were surging in the background due to states' local decision-making authority (Gorter & Cenoz, 2018). Dual language immersion programs focused on developing biliteracy and bilingualism in EL education, promoting an additive approach to language acquisition (Alvaer, 2019). Through grant programs, dual language programs were funded as early as 1994 under the *Elementary and Secondary Act* (ESEA) (Polanco & Luft de Baker, 2018). In 2005, ESSA required state and local educational systems to provide ELs with a quality instructional program that supports the needs of all learners (Baker et al., 2016). It required states to ensure programs met all learners' needs, including ELs' linguistic needs (Baker et al., 2016). ESSA relinquished authority to individual school systems to determine the language support program that best fits their student population (Gorter & Cenoz, 2018). As a result of documented linguistic, cognitive, and academic benefits, the number of dual language programs has increased in the last two decades in the U.S. (Arteagiotia & Yen, 2020; Steele et al., 2018). In 2019, Texas passed House Bill 3, which encouraged the expansion of dual language programs in Texas by providing monetary funds through the Bilingual Education Allotment (Texas House Bill 3).

Historically, language policies around bilingual and ESL education have been influenced by dominant ideologies and political discourse (Stephens & Johnson, 2014).

As we study the history of bilingual and ESL education, it is crucial to understand how this continuous pendulum shift of attitudes toward bilingualism has impacted language programs and instructional methods. The following section will describe the different program models and their respective language policies.

### **History and Mandates of EL Education in Texas**

The state of Texas has experienced different governmental leadership throughout its history. Education in schools was impacted by the state's origins and the transitions in governmental leadership. Blanton (2004) conveys the history of bilingual education and the legal aspects and policy surrounding it. Originally a colony of Spain and subsequently a state of Mexico, Spanish was mandated in public and state affairs (Blanton, 2004). In the 1820s, Stephen F. Austin and Anglo settlers came to Texas when Spanish was the language in schools. As Texas became a republic in 1836, public schools were difficult to establish because of the political turmoil surrounding the new republic's independence. However, Sam Houston, President of Texas, endorsed English as the official language and tolerance for other languages present in the community (Blanton, 2004).

Mirabeau Lamar, the second president of Texas, introduced two legislative bills to establish the legal and financial blueprints to support public education. However, the creation of public education did not address the issue of designating an instructional language for schools in Texas (Blanton, 2004). In 1845, Texas was annexed by the U.S. The school law of 1854 placed the burden on states to finance and supervise public education, but no language mandate was instituted. This language policy was sustained in Texas until after the Civil War in 1865 during the Reconstruction.

In 1871, the Reconstruction school law did not specify the language of school instruction (Blanton, 2004). Jacob C. DeGress, Superintendent of Schools, along with the State Board of Education, allowed teachers to instruct in Spanish, German, and French in

public schools for no more than two hours of the school day. The rest of the day was to be instructed in English. This effort supported the tradition of bilingualism in Texas. Despite efforts from an English-only instruction movement in the 1880s, bilingualism continued as ethnically diverse communities exercised local governance (Blanton, 2004). Controversy arose as parochial or private schools often instructed in a language other than English for most of the day. The community's ability to establish its schools based on home language created an inconsistent approach to bilingual education across the state. Progressive reforms of the 1880s and 1890s required teachers to be certified in English and the delivery of English-only curriculum and instruction (Blanton, 2004). In 1893, the first law stipulated that English would be used exclusively for instruction; however, the law only became enforceable in 1910.

Another factor that impacted bilingual education was the segregation of schools, supported by the Texas Constitution of 1876. Schools were able to segregate schools for black and white students. Based on this law, schools for students of Mexican descent were also established. In 1930, an important case known as *Del Rio ISD v. Salvatierra* was reviewed by Texas courts. The Del Rio ISD school board would open a new facility to be designated as a Mexican school. Jesus Salvatierra and other parents filed a suit against the school board, arguing that their children were being denied the same benefits as other White children served at a different school. The school district argued that segregation was needed to teach English to the students. Despite an initial ruling favoring Salvatierra, it was reversed by the Texas District Court of Civil Appeals, thus legalizing the segregation of children of Mexican descent (Blanton, 2004). This was the educational practice until the ruling of the landmark case of *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954, which charged the states with the responsibility of equal educational opportunities for all students.

The federal government passed the Bilingual Education Act in 1967. As a result, Texas passed legislation known as the Texas Bilingual Statute of 1969, legitimizing bilingual education across the state through grade six on a voluntary basis (Blanton, 2004). However, through the Bilingual Education and Training Act of 1973, the state mandated that bilingual education be afforded to students through a transitional approach, providing native language instruction and transferring content skills into English. Furthermore, in 1978, the State Board of Education established guidelines shaping bilingual education across the state, which allotted funding for bilingual education programs for students identified as limited English speakers based on test scores (Blanton, 2004). Senate Bill 477 was signed into law, which strengthened the guidelines for the state bilingual program (TEA, 2023b). In 2007, the Senate Bill 1871 identified bilingual and ESL programs as the two allowable special language programs, along with the four models for bilingual programs and two models for ESL (TEA, 2023b).

### **Bilingual and ESL Programs**

The designation of EL status dictates a student's placement in a language support program. The process begins at the initial time of student enrollment in U.S. schools. To identify potential ELs needing linguistic support, the parent completes a questionnaire, known as the home language survey, stating the language used mainly by the student and primarily in the home. If the home language survey reveals any language other than English, the student must be evaluated through a language assessment process to determine the level of English fluency. A student who demonstrates fluent English proficiency is classified as a non-English Learner. The student will be identified as EL if the student is a limited English speaker or non-English speaker. If the student is identified as EL, the student continues to receive linguistic support through the language program until the student meets the reclassification criteria.

Throughout their school enrollment, ELs may participate in different language program models. Bilingual and ESL programs provide the support ELs need to master the content area knowledge and skills while acquiring language proficiency (Umansky, 2016). Each program model has established language policies impacting student academic outcomes, ultimately affecting reclassification (Clark-Gareca et al., 2019). Language support programs grounded in second language research can positively impact student learning (Johnson, 2020).

In Texas, Chapter 29 of the Texas Education Code provides comprehensive guidance on developing and implementing language support programs for ELs (TEC Chapter 29.051 subchapter b). Chapter 29 allows school districts to select from four approved bilingual program models to support ELs with bilingual instruction and two approved English as Second Language (ESL) models to support ELs through content-based and pull-out programs. Second language research continuously investigating what program model best serves the needs of ELs. Table 2.1 lists the different program models allowed by Chapter 29 and describes the instructional goals for each program (TEC Chapter 29.051 subchapter b).

**Table 2.1***Bilingual and ESL Education Programs in Texas*

Program Type	Program Description
Dual Language Immersion One Way	A program model in which ELs attain full proficiency in academic skills with the goal of developing bilingualism and biliteracy in English and primary language.
Dual Language Immersion Two Way	A program model in which EL students, integrated with non-EL students, attain academic skills with the goal of developing bilingualism and biliteracy in English and another language.
Transitional Early-Exit	A bilingual program model in which ELs receive firstlanguage support to acquire academic skills while developing English with the goal of transitioning into English-only instruction within two to five years.
Transition Late-Exit	A bilingual program model in which ELs receive firstlanguage support to acquire academic skills while developing English with the goal of transitioning into English-only instruction within six to seven years.
ESL Content-Based	An English acquisition program that provides English instruction to ELs in reading, language arts, math, science, and social studies by an ESL-certified teacher.
ESL Pullout	An English acquisition program that provides English instruction to ELs in reading and language arts by an ESL-certified teacher.

Once students are identified as EL, they are enrolled through a language program model to support their English acquisition and content area knowledge and skills. The selection of the language program is based on the student's point of entry into the school system, the student's language needs, and the programs offered by the school. Each

program model has different approaches and goals in supporting the EL's language proficiency, yielding different language acquisition outcomes.

In bilingual education, transitional bilingual education (TBE) supports the language policy that the first language is a resource for learning content area skills and developing English skills. The two TBE models are early-exit and late-exit programs, which focus on providing academic content in the first language while developing English skills with the goal of transitioning students to mainstream classes. The other bilingual programs allowed are the one-way and two-way dual language immersion programs. The language policies of these program models promote bilingualism, biliteracy, and cross-cultural awareness. Dual language immersion ensures students develop fluency in English and the partner language. Studies on the benefits of dual language programs have found positive effects on the reclassification rates of EL students (Steele et al., 2018).

In a large-scale study regarding dual language programs, Watzinger-Tharp, Rubio, and Tharp (2018) examined the attainment of language proficiency of dual language program participants. The study focused on the proficiency gains over time and the development of the two modes of communication: interpretive (listening/reading) and interpersonal (listening/speaking). The authors conducted a meta-analysis of quantitative data from two separate studies, a cross-sectional study of 73 schools and a longitudinal study of 25 schools, using the ACTFL Assessment of Proficiency Towards Performance in Languages (AAPPL) results. For the cross-sectional study, the sample of participants included dual language students in a Chinese, French, or Spanish dual language program in grade 3-6 across 73 schools in Utah. The data for the cross-sectional study were analyzed through descriptive statistics, including language and grade-level assessment scores. The longitudinal study included two grade-level cohorts from 25 campuses for



students participating in Spanish, French, and Chinese dual language programs.

Language growth was measured through proficiency assessments in listening and reading while students were in fourth and sixth grade and reading in third and fifth grade. The longitudinal study relied on ordinary least squares regression to calculate language growth from the assessments taken in 2013 and 2015.

Students demonstrated acquisition of the partner language at Intermediate levels in listening, reading, and speaking. However, results also revealed that based on the analysis, more explicit instruction on interpersonal skills (speaking) is needed to develop language skills to exceed the intermediate levels of language proficiency. Implications of these studies suggest that a consistent instructional focus on the target language resulted in significant language attainment by providing a highly structured instructional model for reading and ample opportunities to interact in the target language. The authors concluded that growth language proficiency results from an intentional practice of a balanced approach focused on the different modes of communication (Watzinger-Tharp et al., 2018).

Texas has approved two models to support ESL education: content-based ESL and pull-out ESL. In content-based ESL, students are enrolled in a classroom with ESL-certified teachers throughout the day who provide accommodated instruction through second language strategies. In the ESL pull-out, the students are enrolled in classrooms with a certified English Language Arts and ESL teacher to provide support for second language acquisition. At the same time, the student attends general education classes for the remainder of the content areas.

As each language program strives to provide the support ELs need to succeed, a definitive determination has yet to be made on what specific program is best suited to ensure the reclassification of ELs (Umanksy & Reardon, 2014). In a 2014, longitudinal

study on a large suburban school district in California, Umansky and Reardon explored the time it takes a student to reclassify, depending on the program. The school district offered four language programs to support ELs: English immersion, transitional bilingual, maintenance bilingual, and dual language. The study intended to examine the reclassification patterns based on the different instructional models. (Umansky & Reardon, 2014).

When analyzing the design of dual language immersion programs, Umansky and Reardon (2014) noted that this type of program could benefit students because the language of instruction matches the language of assessment. Furthermore, ELs are part of an inclusive environment with English-speaking peers, which may lead to more opportunities to engage in discourse. On the other hand, based on competing hypotheses, the researchers also theorized that English immersion programs might lead to higher reclassification rates in early grades because of the focus on English acquisition (Umansky & Reardon, 2014).

The researchers examined data spanning 12 years, including nine cohorts of Latino ELs entering kindergarten in a school district in California. The results of this study showed that 38% of entering kindergarten students were reclassified as non-EL by the end of elementary school. Because EL students participating in a language program for six years or more become LTELs, 60% of ELs became LTELs in this school district. However, 62% of the students reclassified by the end of the eighth grade, and 75% of the students reclassified at the end of the eleventh grade. The patterns in the data in this study demonstrated that 25% of Latino ELs remained classified as EL through twelfth grade.

The research study concluded that most ELs take a long time to meet reclassification criteria. The authors argue that the language policies of each program have a direct effect on reclassification. Based on the results, English immersion programs

reclassify ELs at higher rates than bilingual programs in elementary school. However, the reclassification of ELs who participated in bilingual programs surpassed those of English immersion by the end of middle school. The study results suggest that the ELs participating in two-language bilingual education programs benefit both linguistically and academically, which leads to more substantial outcomes. Dual language students outperformed English immersion students on the academic English language arts section of the reclassification criteria by the end of fifth grade. In addition, ELs in a maintenance bilingual program outperformed students in English immersion by the end of sixth grade.

In reviewing the studies above, it can be concluded that even though language programs vary in design and goals, they offer ELs varying degrees of linguistic support needed to develop language. Despite the language acquisition and content mastery support received through language programs, some LTELs struggle to meet assessment requirements to achieve reclassification. The following section will explore the challenges faced by LTELs and the repercussions of maintaining this designation.

### **Long Term ELs**

According to recent data analysis, more than 72,500 ELs who started first grade in 2014-15 became LTEL (Cashiola & Potter, 2021). This indicates that 67% of students in secondary education have an LTEL. LTELs face greater cognitive and linguistic demands as they continue into secondary schools (Calderon & Minaya-Rowe, 2010). ELs who remain in language services for prolonged periods are labeled LTELs (Thompson, 2017). Despite the lack of a standard definition of LTELs, emerging research utilizes ELs' participation in a language program for five years or more as the identifier for this group of students (Clark-Gareca et al., 2019).

In a study in California, Shin (2020) implemented longitudinal analysis to examine LTEL performance data to determine the barriers that challenged these students

to meet reclassification criteria before entering grade six. The quantitative study sampled 19,717 students enrolled in kindergarten to sixth grade. The participants selected had identified Spanish as their home language. The study divided the sample population into three comparison groups selected based on initial classification: initially fluent English speakers, on-track ELs, and LTELs. In this study, the data were collected from ELs starting in kindergarten until they reached sixth grade. LTELs are classified as ELs for six years or more. The study used regression models to compare academic achievement and linguistic development among the three comparison groups (Shin, 2020).

In the study, Shin (2020) utilized descriptive statistics to examine the students' initial proficiency assessment scores as baseline data, then analyzed the correlation between those scores to the students' performance levels on state English Language Arts assessment and an English language development test administered in elementary grades. In addition, the study explored if the different variables, such as gender, free-reduced lunch status, special education, and parent educational attainment, were factors with an adverse effect on meeting reclassification.

The study's results indicated that students with a low English proficiency level at the kindergarten grade level were likelier to fail to meet the language proficiency criteria to be reclassified in later grades. It is important to note that the study found that male students are more likely than female students to become LTELs. In addition, the data results also supported the idea that EL students served by special education were likely to be LTELs. Because of limited participation, the study could not yield results based on parent education attainment. Based on the study's results, the author claims that the LTELs' underperformance compared to the other comparison groups indicates an evident need for additional instructional and linguistic support. However, one limitation of this

study is that it did not include information on the language program services received by ELs, which can impact student achievement and language development (Shin, 2020).

In a recent qualitative study, Kibler et al. (2017) used a multiple-case approach to examine the interactions of six LTELs in sixth grade based on classroom observations and interviews. The participants in the study entered the school in kindergarten and were enrolled in the ESL program. The study focused on studying the verbal interactions of ELs with the different content area teachers and peers, which the authors argue have a direct effect on literacy and language development. The researchers conducted a crosscase analysis to examine the interactions of the LTELs in multiple sixth-grade classrooms composed of ELs, fluent bilingual students, and English monolingual students (Kibler, 2017).

Different themes emerged from the qualitative data collected through the observations. The data yielded that engagement in task-focused topics was limited. It also revealed resistance among ELs to participating in academic interactions, as the students rarely joined conversations and worked individually. The academic interactions were less frequent and needed more dialogic engagement. The conversations were typically monologic, regardless of whether they were teacher-initiated or student-initiated. Nontask-focused interactions between ELs and their peers were mostly related to social topics. Some interactions were loosely tied to academics but did not address the academic task directly. The researchers noted some exceptions in the case study by individual students, but overall, the findings were consistent. The teacher's involvement in the interactions played a significant role in the ELs' participation, ranging from productive to confusing when no feedback was offered. (Kibler et al., 2017).

Kibler (2017) observed how limited opportunities for students to engage in academic interactions hurt ELs' performance on standardized language assessment, a

limitation to meeting reclassification criteria. The study concluded that designing instructional strategies as collaborative work and setting expectations for interaction should be considered to support academic dialogue, which increases language acquisition among ELs. Based on the student experiences, Kibler argues that the term LTEL is detrimental because language is a construct describing a complex and non-linear process. The label of LTEL fails to explain the strengths and needs of these students (Kibler et al., 2017).

To further research, Kim (2017) conducted a study to investigate LTELs' perceptions throughout their school experience and examine the strategies they employed when facing adversity. The qualitative study was conducted in a Texas school district using purposeful sampling of 11 students identified as LEP who had attended U.S. schools for more than seven years and had attended at least one year of high school. The data were collected through individual, semi-structured interviews. Through the comparative method of data analysis, several themes emerged for LTELs, including learning motivation, active learning, postsecondary aspirations, sense of accomplishment in English proficiency, limited opportunity to learn, challenges in learning English, minimal services in secondary school, and substandard learning environment. Kim (2017) claimed that the data indicated that the language support programs offered did not provide adequate opportunities for LTELs to learn content and language skills, resulting in the need for reading intervention programs and placement in lower-level courses.

When serving ELs, one cannot ignore the ethnic diversity in this population, as their cultural background plays an integral part in their development. In another qualitative study in New York, Flores et al. (2015) explored LTELs' self-identity, the negative attitudes caused by this label, and its impact on their school performance. The authors gathered qualitative data from a previous mixed-methods study about biliteracy,

including 9th and 10th-grade EL participants who received language support services for over six years. The research examined data from interviews, writing artifacts, and classroom observations to explore the LTELs' self-perception based on EL status (Flores et al., 2015).

Based on interview data, participants conveyed pride in expressing their identity based on their ethnic and family backgrounds. However, a disconnect was evident regarding their ability to speak their home language, Spanish. The interview data also implied that ELs could not develop their academic identity based on their struggles with schoolwork. The study results showed that LTELs experienced positive interactions at school related to socialization. However, students reported a sense of struggle to engage in academic tasks due to a need to understand the content and vocabulary. In addition, the study also reported negative responses and a rejection of LTEL status by EL students (Flores et al., 2015).

The implications of this study suggest that culturally responsive education is vital in helping ELs develop language. The authors encourage school systems to move away from an English-only construct to determine success and embrace the benefit of cognitive flexibility through bilingualism. They claim that it is important to provide programs grounded on educational theory and language strategies to promote cognitive flexibility and for educators to understand how self-identity plays a role in a student's academic journey (Flores et al., 2015).

In 2015, Thompson conducted a study to explore the characteristics of LTELs and the potential impact of the LTEL label on students' educational trajectories. Through a case study conducted in California, the researcher analyzed LTELs' course assignments, access to English-speaking peers, course complexity, and teacher and student goals. The study also analyzed longitudinal data using student demographics and district database

testing information. For the qualitative portion of the study, 15 students were interviewed and shadowed for observational data.

The author claims that prolonged classification has implications for the learning experiences of LTELs, as this designation carries negative connotations such as low literacy skills and academic deficits (Thompson, 2015). Through cross-case analysis, it was found that there are significant differences among LTELs, such as achievement scores, course rigor, and available postsecondary options. Also, it found that secondary level courses designed for EL students only provided stigmatizing experiences for students. Thompson (2015) acknowledged the need for innovative programming that can support the needs of LTELs without the stigma accompanying the LTEL label. In addition, the study's findings advise that the LTEL label does not limit the educators' perspective on ELs' ability to succeed academically.

As portrayed in the studies above, LTELs' ability to meet reclassification criteria has been impacted by their language proficiency, as demonstrated in individual standardized language assessments. The studies suggest implementing second language acquisition strategies as instructional methods to support ELs' language development. A conclusion from all the above studies is that the LTEL population is diverse based on family background, school experiences, and individual personalities, which should be considered when designing instruction to support ELs on the path to reclassification. The following section will examine the impact of reclassification on the trajectory of LTELs.

### **Reclassification**

Upon EL designation, this population of students is served in bilingual and ESL programs to support their content learning and second language acquisition until they meet reclassification criteria from LEP status. Since NCLB was passed in 2001, reclassification requires that students meet academic achievement and language



proficiency. Furthermore, in 2015, ESSA required states to develop standardized state reclassification criteria.

Despite federal mandates to evaluate the language proficiency of ELs annually, there are no national standardized criteria for reclassification. States implement English language proficiency assessments (ELPA) to measure the four language domains of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. At the end of the school year, a review of EL performance on the ELPA will determine if a student must continue with LEP identification and program services or can exit from LEP status. Inherently, reclassified students can access the general curriculum without linguistic support.

Reclassification can impact student outcomes because the designation determines the instructional setting for the student (Robinson, 2011). As a result of EL status, these students are provided with access to an instructional accommodation to help them comprehend academic content as they increase their language proficiency. However, delayed reclassification can affect an ELs' educational path due to limited access to the general curriculum, the need for instructional interventions, and stigmatization (Callahan & Shriver, 2016).

In 2020, Chin conducted a study investigating the effect of EL reclassification on student achievement and noncognitive outcomes. The study was conducted in the Wake County Public School System in North Carolina. The data studied included student performance on the state Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State (ACCESS) and data from a district student survey measuring student perspectives on their educational journey. To reclassify as a non-EL, students must meet cut scores on the ACCESS to be considered English proficient. The study examined longitudinal data of EL-classified students in third-grade cohorts from 2008-2009 to 2017-2018.

The study utilized a regression discontinuity design to analyze the student scores on ACCESS and the threshold scores set for reclassification. According to the study, reclassification significantly impacted achievement (Chin, 2020). The result of the RD model suggested that gains were made in upper elementary and middle school each year after being reclassified. Regarding noncognitive outcomes, the study reported an increase in ELs' out-of-school engagement, positive family support, short-term negative impact on rigorous work, and negative impact on peer relationships. Chin (2020) suggested that policymakers review the reclassification thresholds to allow an increase in the number of students to be reclassified, considering the positive and negative implications such change may have on ELs in the long term.

A contrasting study examined the effect of EL classification on student outcomes (Reyes & Hwang, 2021). The study argued that despite the findings in previous studies reporting positive effects of timely reclassification, reclassification could also result in adverse and null effects on ELs (Reyes & Hwang, 2021). It emphasized that context plays a critical role in the impact of reclassification because of unobservable differences such as motivation, cognitive abilities, educational programs, and parental expectations (Reyes & Hwang, 2021). The study focused on how language classification in middle school impacted performance on high school-level English and math achievement and how language classification affected behavioral outcomes such as attendance and suspensions. The Reyes and Hwang (2021) study was conducted in a school district in California, which followed 16,144 students in three eighth-grade cohorts until each cohort reached ninth, 10<sup>th</sup>, or 11<sup>th</sup> grade, respectively. The participants had to be classified as EL by the end of their sixth-grade year to be selected for the study. The selection process was followed by examining the performance of two controlled groups. One group of students remained classified as EL, while another was reclassified as English

proficient. The researchers conducted regression discontinuity (RD) models to estimate the effect of language classification and ordinary least square models (OLS) to examine the relationship between language classification and student outcomes.

The OLS tests demonstrated positive results for students who achieved reclassification by the end of middle school in both achievement and behavioral outcomes compared to those who remained EL. The results from these tests also revealed that reclassified students also increased enrollment in rigorous math courses more than EL students. In addition, reclassified students positively affected student outcomes compared to ELs in higher achievement scores and better behavioral outcomes (Reyes & Hwang, 2021). These results are consistent with previous studies. However, the RD models demonstrate that the relationships between reclassification and outcomes are based on unaccounted factors that only emphasize the differences between ELs and reclassified students (Reyes & Hwang, 2021). The differences in outcomes are based on selection bias. The researchers concluded that not considering factors such as motivation, cognitive abilities, and educational programs can lead studies to yield null and adverse outcomes. The authors recommended that school districts consider any unintended consequences based on the language classification policies on the education of ELs.

In another study regarding EL reclassification status, Johnson (2020) examined English learner reclassification's impact on high school graduation and college enrollment. This study addressed English learners' underperformance based on lower graduation rates and attendance at 4-year colleges. The researcher examined the causal effects of the reclassification of ELs using a regression discontinuity (RD) method through causal-comparative design. The population of this study included 12,998 students identified as ELs in a large urban school district in California. The subjects were EL students in K-11 who participated in the California English Language Development Test

(CELDT). The researcher studied their performance CELDT data and correlated student data from the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) for college entrance information.

Results of Johnson's study indicated that the initial EL classification had no statistical significance in correlation to a student's graduation and college enrollment. However, the researcher found that EL reclassification after fifth grade significantly impacted students' on-time graduation. Based on the results, reclassification at the end of eighth grade yields more substantial outcomes in high school grades. Conversely, LTELs in secondary grade levels exhibited difficulty in the English language and literacy. Johnson (2020) claimed that ELs would benefit from earlier reclassification. The author argues that instructional practices that incorporate linguistic accommodations aligning with the language levels of ELs are critical for students to make educational gains (Johnson, 2020).

In 2017, Cimpian et al. studied the variance in reclassification criteria from state to state and its significance on ELs' academic outcomes as individual states adopted state criteria for ELs. The authors used descriptive statistics to analyze ELPA scores from two states in this quantitative research. The authors intended to explore the effects of reclassification criteria on student standardized test achievement and graduation (Cimpian et al., 2017).

Each state had established different models for the reclassification criteria in this study. One state had multiple avenues to reach reclassification, while the other relied on assessment scores. This difference certainly played a significant role in the rate of reclassification. Another area the research explored was the services received by ELs for language support. The authors noted a high degree of divergence in the programs provided to ELs across districts and states. English learner outcomes depended on the language support available in EL programs (Cimpian et al., 2017).

Based on the results of this study, Cimpian et al. (2017) claimed that there is a misalignment across state programs that directly affects reclassification rates. Because the differences in language programs offered to ELs and the instructional strategies used to teach ELs varied within each state, the data did not provide consistent reclassification rates. In addition, the effects of reclassification proved inconclusive due to the wide range of negative and positive outcomes for students after reclassification. Therefore, the researchers of this study recommended that states reevaluate their reclassification policies and review instructional practices to serve ELs better as they transition into general instruction (Cimpian et al., 2017).

Carlson and Knowles (2016) conducted a study examining the causal effects of reclassification on ELs at the end of tenth grade, considered a critical juncture in a student's path to postsecondary education. The study, which was conducted in Wisconsin, aimed to estimate the effect of EL reclassification on ACT scores and postsecondary enrollment. In Wisconsin, students identified as EL can be reclassified as non-EL based on the student's performance on ACCESS, the state's ELPA. The study examined data from student demographics, ACCESS scores, college entrance exam scores, high school graduation status, reclassification time measure, and postsecondary enrollment.

Carlson and Knowles used the regression discontinuity framework in this study to analyze the data for every student identified as EL from 2006-2007 through 2012-2013, available through the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. The study's results indicated that scoring above the reclassification threshold positively affected performance on the ACT composite score, postsecondary enrollment, and high school graduation for tenth-grade students (Carlson & Knowles, 2016). However, the study noted that other factors might also influence student performance. The study was repeated with ninth and eleventh-grade students but yielded different results.

Carroll and Bailey (2016) examined the different reclassification models and rules that directly impact student classification in decision-making. The study explained the four models applied to English language proficiency assessments for reclassification purposes. The four models explored included the conjunctive, the compensatory, the mixed, and the complementary. The conjunctive model establishes that all indicators must meet performance standards. The overall score is inconsequential. The compensatory model allows for uneven indicators by accepting the overall score, although one or more scores fall below the performance standard. The mixed model combines two models and requires overall high performance on standards and at or above the level of all proficiency domains. Lastly, the complementary model only needs one of two indicators to be at the performance standard, which allows several pathways to determine proficiency.

In the study, Carroll and Bailey (2016) collected ELPA data from the State Department of Education from annual testing of 14,513 EL students and 1,049 students identified as non-EL. The testing data consisted of results from the ELPA, which measured proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing, and the standardsbased achievement assessment (SBAA), which measured academic performance. Through descriptive statistics, the results yielded a sizeable number of students who would not be reclassified based on language proficiency. This outcome occurred despite high levels of achievement based on the conjunctive model used for reclassification criteria implemented by the state involved in the study. Carroll and Bailey (2016) argued that non-proficient classifications based on a single performance indicator oppose best practices of using multiple data points when making high-stakes decisions.

As portrayed in the above studies, reclassification can positively impact ELs' learning trajectory. Therefore, it is critical to examine whether high-stakes assessments

act as barriers to reclassification. Quality instruction on academic and language skills is vital for ELs' success in state assessments. The following section will examine TELPAS as an assessment instrument to measure English language acquisition.

### **TELPAS**

In Texas, the Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment is administered to students classified as ELs to measure the attainment of the English language each year.

The TELPAS measures a student's English proficiency level in the four domain areas of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. TELPAS proficiency scores are one factor in determining whether the student continues to be classified as EL for the upcoming school year or will meet reclassification status. As of the spring TELPAS administration in 2022, the blueprint of the TELPAS is designed with multiple-choice questions, constructed responses in online assessments, and holistic ratings for writing. The language domain score of the online assessment in listening, speaking, and reading is determined by providing a proficiency level rating.

The student can receive a proficiency level rating of beginning, intermediate, advanced, or advanced high in each of the four domains. The proficiency rating is based on a raw score, the number of items answered correctly, and the scale scores. Because the different difficulty levels in the items may differ across test forms, the raw scores are converted to scale scores. The scale scores allow fair comparison of student performance across grades and test administrations. In 2018, cut scores were established in the four TELPAS proficiency levels based on raw and scale scores. The scale scores are consistent yearly, while changes in the raw scores may be necessary. The holistically rated writing domain is provided by reviewing a writing collection rated by a certified TELPAS rater (Texas Education Agency, 2022a).

The TELPAS report card provides the TELPAS composite score and the proficiency ratings for each domain. Each proficiency level is assigned a domain score: beginning = 1, intermediate = 2, advanced = 3, and advanced high = 4. The composite score is determined by multiplying each domain score by a weight of .25 and subsequently summing them.

To facilitate score interpretations and comparisons, the TELPAS implements scaling as a statistical procedure and standard score metric. It utilizes the Rasch partialcredit model (RPCM) to place TELPAS test items on the same scale across administrations. In addition, the TELPAS also implements another statistical process that considers differences in difficulty across test forms: equating. Equating is accomplished by calculating the RPCM.

### **Summary of Findings**

Current research shows that effective programming and targeted instruction are crucial to meeting the needs of ELs (Brooks, 2018). With intentional linguistic support, LTELs have opportunities to meet reclassification criteria, limiting equitable access to an adequate education (Umansky, 2016). Implementing targeted services grounded on research-based approaches to the day-to-day instruction of ELs helps develop academic language (Umansky, 2016). Providing inconsistent bilingual or ESL programs with varying language support can lead to adverse outcomes for ELs (Menken et al., 2012).

Being identified as LTEL significantly impacts a student's school performance, limiting access to rigorous coursework in higher grade levels. The label of LTELs carries a negative connotation and implies academic deficits (Brooks, 2018; Thompson, 2017). The term also affects a student's self-identity, which adversely affects a student's sense of efficacy (Flores et al., 2015). For secondary-level campuses, school leaders and teachers



should understand that LTELs have specific language requirements that need to be met through targeted instruction (Menken et al., 2012).

### **Theoretical Framework**

To conceptualize the relationship between LTELs and TELPAS in the context of reclassification, this study drew on a social capital theory as a framework of analysis. For Coleman (1988), social capital is a social structure that facilitates access to resources helpful for youth and children. School success depends on continuous access to unobstructed opportunities to build social relationships with institutional agents, who provide the resources, support, and privileges for advancement (Stanton-Salazar, 2011). Increased access to social capital produces higher levels of achievement. Therefore, this study aimed to use the framework to examine if the TELPAS and the reclassification criteria are an institutional resource or a barrier to ELs' social capital.

This study contributes to a large body of research regarding LTELs; however, it aims to add to the limited research on the impact of the TELPAS on the reclassification process. This is particularly important as decreased EL reclassifications directly impact student educational pathways and school programming.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter reviewed relevant literature to deepen the understanding of the effects of the reclassification of LTELs. In Chapter III, the methodological aspects of this dissertation are detailed, including the operationalization of theoretical constructs, research purpose and questions, research design, population and sampling selection, data collection procedures, data analysis techniques, privacy and ethical considerations, and the research design limitations for this study.

## CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the study was to examine the effect of the Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS) on the reclassification of long-term English Learners (LTELs). The quantitative component of this study utilized a purposeful sample of high school students in grades 9-11 who are identified as English learners (ELs) with more than six years in U.S. schools to address research questions one, two, and three. The qualitative component of the study purposefully selected students identified as LTELs to participate in the interviews. The quantitative part of this study was analyzed using frequencies, percentages, Pearson's Product Moment Correlations ( $r$ ), and linear regression. An inductive coding process was utilized to analyze the qualitative component of the study. This chapter presents an overview of the research problem, operationalization of theoretical constructs, research purpose, and questions, research design, population and sampling selection, instrumentation used, data collection procedures, data analysis, privacy and ethical considerations, and the research design limitations of the study.

### **Overview of the Research Problem**

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, more than 20.0% of the population speaks a home language other than English (U.S. Census, 2010). Consequently, this growth in language diversity has impacted public schools and resulted in the increased enrollment of linguistically diverse students. As of 2017, the national number of ELs in the U.S. was over 4.8 million, indicating 9.6% of the general student population (Office of English Language Acquisition, 2020). From 2001 to 2017, 43 states reported an increase in their EL population (Office of English Language Acquisition, 2020). Continuing a

growing trend, Texas added approximately 351,559 EL students in 2017 (Office of English Language Acquisition, 2020). According to the Texas Education Agency, the state currently serves 20% of the students identified as EL in the U.S., approximately one million ELs in Texas (Sugarman & Geary, 2018). ELs in Texas lead the dropout rate over other student groups and score lower on state-standardized assessments in all subjects (Texas Education Agency, 2023b).

Within this growing population, an existing subgroup of ELs warrants attention (Flores et al., 2015). LTELs are students identified as LEP for six or more years who still need to meet reclassification status as determined by the state-established reclassification criteria. Reclassification criteria are based on the LEP students' standardized test achievement, standardized English language development, and teacher input. According to Thompson (2017), content area assessments are challenging for LTELs to master to meet reclassification criteria. Research suggests a significant disparity in academic achievement between ELs and non-EL peers (Echevarria et al., 2008). LTELs have limited academic and literacy skills in English (Brooks, 2018). The increasing number of EL students who do not meet reclassification status necessitates an examination of the TELPAS test to determine whether it serves as a barrier or an institutional resource for achievement.

### **Operationalization of Theoretical Constructs**

Three constructs guided this study: (a) student achievement, (b) language proficiency, and (c) EL reclassification. Student achievement is students' academic performance on the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) (Texas Education Agency, 2022b). Student achievement was measured with the participating students' scores on the STAAR English EOC, as it is part of the EL reclassification criteria. Language proficiency is the degree of competency in a language. Language

proficiency was measured through the participant's performance on the TELPAS, the language proficiency assessment used to measure an EL's progress in English language acquisition. TELPAS is one element in the reclassification criteria established to redesignate ELs and fluent English speakers. Furthermore, the study analyzed archival data for identified ELs in grades 9-11 to examine the relationship between achievement data and TELPAS data in meeting reclassification criteria.

Reclassification status is the criteria the state sets to redesignate ELs as proficient in English (Texas Education Agency, 2022b). According to reclassification criteria established by the Texas Education Agency, ELs in grades 9-11 must attain passing standards in STAAR English EOC with no linguistic accommodations, advanced high levels of proficiency in all listening, speaking, reading, and writing on TELPAS, and subjective teacher evaluation that documents readiness for general education without the need for language support. Students in grade 11 who do not participate in STAAR English EOC must perform at the 40<sup>th</sup> or above percentile on a norm-referenced reading and language arts assessment. Reclassification status will be measured by the frequencies and percentages of students meeting the reclassification criteria.

### **Research Purpose and Questions**

The study aimed to examine the effect of the TELPAS on the reclassification of LTELs. The leading questions for this study were:

1. To what degree do LTEL students who achieve Meets or Masters levels on STAAR English EOC meet EL reclassification criteria?
2. Is there a statistically significant relationship between performance on STAAR English EOC and TELPAS reading?
3. Do TELPAS reading scores predict achievement on STAAR English EOC?
4. What are the perceptions of LTELs of TELPAS?

5. What are the perceptions of LTELs regarding how their language support program prepared them for TELPAS?

### **Research Design**

The researcher used the sequential mixed-methods design (QUAN→qual) for the study. The design consisted of two phases: first, a quantitative phase, and second, a qualitative phase. Furthermore, the researcher collected quantitative data first, followed by qualitative data to evaluate and explain the quantitative data. Triangulation of the quantitative and qualitative data helped refine and explain the quantitative data. The research design aimed to select existing groups in an educational setting. The study participants were 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>-grade students identified as ELs from a large suburban school district in the southeast region of Texas. The quantitative component of this study included a purposeful sample of high school students in grades 9-11 who were identified as ELs with more than six years in U.S. schools. Archival data were used to run the analysis, including STAAR English EOC scores and TELPAS scores of the participants. The qualitative component of the study utilized a purposeful sample of students identified as LTELs to participate in the semi-structured interviews. For the qualitative analysis, interviews were conducted to examine the students' perception of the TELPAS to extract common experiences in their participation in TELPAS to meet the goal of reclassification. Quantitative data were analyzed through descriptive analysis, Pearson's product-moment correlation ( $r$ ), and linear regression analysis, while qualitative data were analyzed using inductive coding.

### **Population and Sample**

The population of this study consisted of a large suburban school district in southeast Texas. According to the Texas Academic Performance Report (TAPR) 2021-

2022, the school district has a total population of 6,480 students served by seven campuses (one high school, one middle school, and five elementary schools). Table 3.1 displays the school district's student demographic data and demonstrates how it compares to the student demographic data in the State of Texas. The district percentage rate of EL students is 17.1%, 4.6 percentage points below the state average of 21.7%. The district Hispanic student percentage is 46.8%, while the state percentage is 52.7%.

**Table 3. 1***State and District Student Demographic Data*

Characteristic	District		State	
	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)
Female	3,131	48.3	2,650,563	48.8
Male	3,349	51.7	2,776,807	51.2
African American	846	13.1	694,302	12.8
Hispanic	3,033	46.8	2,860,754	52.7
White	2,364	36.5	1,427,241	26.3
American Indian	20	0.3	18,028	0.3
Asian	23	0.4	261,788	4.8
Pacific Islander	1	0.0	8,477	0.2
Two or More Races	193	3.0	156,780	2.9
Economically Disadvantaged	3,515	54.2	3,289,420	60.6
English Learners	1,110	17.1	1,175,333	21.7
At-Risk	3,373	52.1	2,901,015	53.5
Special Education	760	11.7	635,097	11.7
Total	6,480	100	5,427,370	100

A purposeful sample of high school students (9<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> grade) identified as ELs with more than six years of enrollment in U.S. schools in the participating district were selected for this study. The school district only has one high school serving all 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade students. The student information reported on the TAPR 2021- 2022 is that the district serves 6,480 students, with the high school serving 1,894 students. The high school campus has a principal, an associate principal, an academic dean, and four

assistant principals. Table 3.2 presents the high school enrollment data per grade level and the percentage of LEP students at each grade level. The data indicates an overall LEP percentage of 11.6%.

**Table 3.2**

*Student and LEP Enrollment for the Secondary Campuses*

	Student Enrollment	LEP Enrollment	LEP Percentage (%)
Grade 9	529	82	15.6
Grade 10	528	51	10.0
Grade 11	442	25	0.60
Grade 12	395	10	0.30
High School Totals	1,894	168	11.6

Overall, the district serves 860 students in the bilingual and ESL programs. The secondary campuses serve 47.0% of the district’s LEP population. The high school currently serves 22.0% of the district’s LEP population. Ninety-five percent of the LEP population at the high school are identified as LTELs. The students have been identified as LEP for over six years, and most have been served in the Bilingual or ESL program throughout their educational journey. Table 3.3 presents the number of identified LEP students who participated in the TELPAS in Spring 2022 in the school district and the state. Based on the data, the school district falls six points below the state in number of LEP served with 13.6% compared to the state’s percentage of 19.7%.



**Table 3.3***Bilingual ESL Program Information*

	District Count	District Percentage (%)	State Count	State Percentage (%)
Students in Bilingual/ESL Education	860	13.6%	1,066,099	19.7%
Teachers serving Bilingual/ ESL Education	32.4	7.9%	23,092.5	6.4%

**Participation Selection**

For the qualitative part of this study, the researcher used a purposeful sample of at least 9 participants. The selection criteria included students with LEP classification, enrollment for more than six years in US schools, high school enrollment, and ESL program participation. In addition, the participants were purposefully selected to have attained Meets or Masters performance on the English I or English II STAAR end-ofcourse exam (EOC). To ensure varied perspectives in the analysis, participants were selected based on demographic variables, including gender, age, and grade levels. The students were selected based on archival and demographic data available through the district’s student information system. The archival data used in the selection criteria included an advanced high rating on TELPAS reading performance and approached level on STAAR EOC as achievement data. Prior to the interviews, the researcher contacted the parents of selected students via letter explaining the research study's purpose, sharing the confidentiality measures that would be followed, and the interview process. The letters were provided in English and Spanish to meet the needs of Spanish-speaking

families. After securing parent consent and student assent forms, the researcher established appointments for students to participate in face-to-face interviews. The students selected to participate in the interview provided a range of language acquisition experiences and program participation experiences, as students may have participated in different programs based on the schools attended. However, the most common language program at the secondary level is ESL.

### **Instrumentation**

#### **State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) End-of-Course**

According to the Texas Education Agency, all grades 3-8 and high school students must participate in STAAR Assessments. The state assessment is based on the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), the standards designed to serve as the state-mandated curriculum. The STAAR assessment system consists of assessments in reading and mathematics for grades 3-8, writing for grades 4 and 7, science for grades 5 and 8, and social studies for grade 8. In addition, all students in high school are required to participate in STAAR End-of-Course (EOC) assessments in English I, English II, Algebra I, Biology, and U.S. History. This study utilized the English I and II EOC administered in spring 2022.

The STAAR measures a student's mastery of the TEKS in different subjects at designated grade levels. The STAAR addresses the readiness standards included in the TEKS, which are essential for current grade-level success and preparedness for the next grade level. Students' performance on grade-level expectations is reported using the following designations: did not meet grade level, Approaches grade level, Meets grade level, and Masters grade level. STAAR assessment addresses readiness and supporting standards included in the TEKS.

Each grade level has an identified set of knowledge and skills eligible to be assessed and emphasized, called readiness standards. The readiness standards are essential to success in the current grade level, are necessary for preparedness for the next grade level, and address deep and broad ideas. The remaining knowledge and skills are considered supporting standards addressing narrowly defined ideas. Also, the supporting standards reinforce previous grade-level skills or introduce the following grade-level skills. The Texas Education Agency determines passing standards. The reliability of the STAAR test is estimated using statistical measures in areas such as internal consistency, classical standard error of measurement, conditional standard error of measurement, and classification accuracy.

The STAAR English I and English II End-of-Course assessments are administered at the high school level. The English EOC assessments address reading and writing TEKS. They are segmented into six categories: understanding across genres, understanding and analysis of literary texts, understanding, and analysis of informational texts, composition, revision, and editing. Based on 2022 STAAR EOC assessment blueprints, 60%-70% of the reading test address the readiness standards, while 30%-40% of the test addresses the supporting standards. The base test for the English I EOC included an informational composition, two revising selections, two editing selections, two single passages, and one paired selection with 52 multiple-choice items and one composition rating. The base test for the English II EOC included one persuasive composition, two revising selections, two editing selections, two single selections, and one paired selection with 52 multiple-choice items and one composition rating.

The genres assessed through the reading selections are fiction, literary nonfiction, poetry, drama, informational and argumentative texts. Moreover, the test also includes fiction, informational, argumentative, and correspondence for the writing text selections.

Reliability coefficients for the STAAR English I and English II EOC tests showed high internal consistency ( $\alpha = 0.93$ ). Stratified Alpha Reliability was computed for objectives involving essay questions, while KR-20 reliability was calculated for all others.

### **Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS)**

Every year, kindergarten through grade 12 ELs must participate in the TELPAS. The TELPAS process includes evaluating students served in bilingual and ESL programs and students whose parents have been denied language services. The TELPAS meets state accountability requirements and the federal requirements of ESSA, which requires states to report the yearly progress of ELs in their English language acquisition. The TELPAS is aligned with the English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS), an integral part of TEKS instruction that applies to all academic content areas. This study utilized the TELPAS proficiency ratings from the spring 2022 administration.

The TELPAS measures English language acquisition in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. EL performance on the TELPAS is reported using four proficiency levels: beginner, intermediate, advanced, and advanced high. The students receive a proficiency level for each domain. The proficiency ratings for each domain are converted to a domain score of one for beginner, two for intermediate, three for advanced, and four for advanced high to calculate an overall composite rating for each student. Each domain score is multiplied by the weight of .25 and then summed to obtain the TELPAS composite score. The composite score is utilized to determine if an EL made the required increase of one proficiency level as a yearly progress measure for accountability purposes.

The TELPAS uses a holistic rating process to assess writing in kindergarten through grade 12 and listening, speaking, and reading for grades kindergarten and first. Teachers are trained to determine proficiency ratings following a state rubric for holistic

ratings. These ratings are based on classroom performance, observations, and written work. In addition, ELs in grades 2-12 participate in a multiple-choice test through an online assessment program to measure each student's listening, speaking, and reading proficiency.

The reliability of the TELPAS was estimated using internal consistency, classical standard error of measurement, conditional standard error of measurement, and classification accuracy. The composite score reliability estimates of TELPAS are analyzed annually to evaluate the impact of the reliability of the reading, listening, speaking, and writing domains on the TELPAS composite reliability estimates. The composite score reliability estimates were calculated using a stratified alpha approach. The internal consistency values of listening, speaking, and reading on the categorical scale were estimated based on their internal consistency values on a continuous scale (Texas Education Agency, 2022c).

### **Data Collection Procedures**

#### **Quantitative**

The procedures for this study included approval from the Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects (CPHS) from the University of Houston-Clear Lake (UHCL) and from the institutional review board (IRB) of the school district in which the study took place. Using the Texas Education Agency's (TEA) TAPR, student performance data were downloaded and merged into an SPSS database for further analysis. In addition, the district's TELPAS report was analyzed to review matched students' language proficiency levels. Furthermore, the SPSS database was also utilized to examine student achievement data collected from the district student management system.

Data collected has been stored in two locations: the researcher's computer hard drives and a memory stick. All data has been secured with a password-protected folder on the researcher's computer, and the memory stick is kept in a locked file cabinet. The data will be maintained confidentially for five years following the conclusion of the research before it is destroyed.

### **Qualitative**

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a purposeful sample of participants to collect data for the qualitative component of this study. The interview protocol can be seen in Appendix A. The purposeful sample included students selected through several criteria, including LEP classification, enrollment of more than six years in US schools, middle or high school enrollment, and participation in the bilingual/ESL program. Furthermore, the participants were purposefully selected to ensure demographic variety, including gender, age, and grade level. Before the interviews, parental consent letters and student assent outlining the study details were issued to parents and students. In addition to stating the purpose of the study, the parental consent form and student assent form explained that the participation in the study was voluntary, participation could be revoked at any point in the process, the expected time frame for the interview, and that the identity of the participants would remain confidential. To protect the confidentiality of the participants, pseudonyms were used instead of actual student names. The parent consent letter was provided in English and Spanish, as the student's home language is Spanish. Appendix B contains the parental consent letter in English, Appendix C includes the parent consent letter in Spanish, and Appendix D contains the student assent form.

Interviews were conducted outside of instructional hours at a time convenient to participants. The interviews were conducted in person in a conference room on a school

campus. Before the interview, the participants received an email calendar invite with the interview date and time. During the interview, the presenter provided a PowerPoint presentation to project each interview question to support the participant. Each interview was recorded through the Voice Memo application. In addition to Voice Memos, the researcher utilized the Otter application to record an interview audio file. The researcher transcribed the audio recording into a Word Document. The data collected for the qualitative part of the study will be secured in a password-protected folder on the researcher's computer and a memory stick, which will always be kept in a locked file cabinet. The data will be securely maintained for five years following the conclusion of the research before it is destroyed.

## **Data Analysis**

### **Quantitative**

After data collection, the researcher examined archival data, including test scores and student demographic data (age, gender, grade, LEP status, year in U.S. Schools, STAAR, and TELPAS). The data were downloaded, viewed in an Excel spreadsheet, and merged into IBM SPSS. To answer research question one, a descriptive analysis was utilized to examine achievement scores in relation to meeting reclassification status. The categorical variables were analyzed using percentages and frequencies, including achievement scores on STAAR English EOC, designated supports for STAAR English EOC, and reclassification status. The number of students attaining Meets or Masters grade levels was used to measure achievement scores. To answer research question two,

Pearson's product-moment correlation ( $r$ ) was conducted to determine whether a statistically significant relationship existed between STAAR reading EOC and the TELPAS reading domain. The STAAR reading EOC and TELPAS reading data were collected as scale scores for each student participant in the study. The variables were

continuous in measurement. To answer research question three, a linear regression analysis was conducted to test the contribution of TELPAS reading scores in predicting achievement on STAAR English EOC. The independent variable was the TELPAS reading scale scores, and the dependent variable was the STAAR English EOC scale scores, both of which were continuous in measurement. A significance value of 0.05 was used for all questions in this study.

### **Qualitative**

To answer qualitative research questions four and five, the researcher conducted interviews with a purposeful sample of participants. Qualitative data collected from interview transcripts were analyzed from coding to categorizing concepts (Lichtman, 2013). To examine the participants' responses, the researcher examined different segments of the individual interviews to identify patterns and themes through the coding process to create categories (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). The researcher used a constant comparative method to establish keywords and short phrases as codes to analyze and interpret patterns within the data. In addition, A data display was created in Excel to visualize patterns and relationships within the responses. The emerging themes and categories were compared against response data across the participants' responses. Through a grounded theory approach, conclusions were drawn from these findings.

### **Qualitative Validity**

The researcher enhanced the validity of the qualitative part of the study by taking several action steps throughout the study. Before conducting the interviews, the research questions were peer-reviewed to ensure the questions' validity and relevance to the study. In addition, member-checking was also conducted to allow the participants to review their interview transcripts and confirm their responses for accuracy and validity. Furthermore, an experienced educator reviewed the thematic analysis to limit researcher



bias and add validity. Additionally, triangulation was used across participants by interviewing students of different ages at different grade levels in the ESL programs to strengthen the study's validity. In addition, the researcher collaborated with the dissertation committee of experts, providing guidance and constructive feedback to ensure the study's validity.

### **Privacy and Ethical Considerations**

The procedures for this study included approval from the UHCL CPHS and the school district institutional review board (IRB). The TEA's TAPR was downloaded and merged into an SPSS database for further analysis. Parent consent letters and student assent forms were collected from voluntary participants before conducting interviews. The letters provided the parents and the participants an explanation of the research study, a statement describing participation as voluntary and the ability to revoke permission at any time, and an explanation of the protections each participant was afforded to protect their identity. In addition, the parent consent letters were provided to the participants' parents in English (see Appendix B) and Spanish (see Appendix C) to facilitate a complete understanding of the research study and its procedures. Students also completed an assent form to document their voluntary participation (see Appendix D). To ensure confidentiality, pseudonyms were utilized to reference interviewees during the qualitative component of the study. The researcher remained neutral and objective during the interviews to not impose personal beliefs upon the participants.

Data collected was stored in the researcher's password-protected computer hard drive and a memory stick. All quantitative and qualitative data has been secured in a password-protected folder on the researcher's computer, and the memory stick will be maintained in a locked file cabinet. The data will be kept securely for five years following the conclusion of the research before it is destroyed.

### **Research Design Limitations**

The research design consisted of several limitations. The external limitations in this study could affect the generalizations of the findings to larger populations. First, the study included only one school district in Texas, which only has one middle school and one high school campus. Second, the sample size of the number of students participating in the interview process is negligible. In addition, during the qualitative data collection, some eligible students declined the invitation to participate in the study, and a few failed to appear at the interview time despite initial agreement and opportunities to reschedule. As a result, this decreased the number of participants in the study to seven. For these reasons, caution was considered when making broad generalizations. Third, the findings of the qualitative analysis depended on the honesty of the participants in the study. Because the participants were students ages 16-18, responses to interview questions may be limited in depth of content as students in this age group may struggle to provide detailed responses. Another limitation to be considered was the level of honesty. It is assumed that the participants in the study were truthful in their responses. However, because the interview was conducted by a researcher who is an educator, the students may have felt the need to respond in favor of the educational program. These internal limitations of the study can question the validity of the results.

### **Conclusion**

The study aimed to examine the factors that prevent LTELs from meeting reclassification status. This chapter identified the need to further explore the relationships among the constructs. The quantitative and qualitative findings were essential to the study to better understand the effect of TELPAS in the reclassification process for ELs. In Chapter IV, student demographics, achievement, and interview data were analyzed and discussed further.

## CHAPTER IV:

### RESULTS

The study aimed to examine the effect of TELPAS on the reclassification of long-term English learners (ELs). This chapter presents the quantitative and qualitative data analysis results to address each research question that guided this study. This study consisted of a quantitative analysis of student demographic data. The qualitative data analyzed were from semi-structured one-on-one interviews with seven students identified as long-term ELs using an inductive coding process to identify emerging themes. This chapter describes the participant demographics, quantitative data analysis for research questions one, two, and three, and qualitative analysis for research questions four and five. The chapter will conclude with a summary of the findings from the study and a conclusion.

#### **Participants**

For the qualitative part of this study, the purposeful sample of seven participants consisted of high school students identified as ELs who have participated in language support programs over six years. The participants are currently served through the English as a Second Language (ESL) program. During the fall semester of 2023, the researcher contacted the participants' parents by phone, soliciting an interview with their child. The conversation with the parents provided information on the student's voluntary participation in the study, an explanation of the purpose of the interview, and an overview of the interview process.

After obtaining verbal parental consent, the researcher met with the students on their campus to explain the purpose of the interview and solicit their voluntary participation. Students were directed to secure written consent from their parents and to provide written assent to the researcher before being interviewed. Each student received

an email invitation to participate in an interview. Upon arrival at the interview, an explanation of the use of recording devices to ensure the accuracy of their responses and confidentiality was discussed. Seven students participated in the study.

**Participant: Aidee**

Aidee (pseudonym) is a Hispanic 16-year-old eleventh-grade female student. She reported that she prefers to communicate in English despite her home language being Spanish. When asked about her parents, Aidee shared that they spoke average English. She is a first-generation American. She has been in a language support program for 12 years since Pre-Kindergarten. She was in an elementary school bilingual early exit program and entered an English as a Second Language (ESL) program in sixth grade.

According to Aidee, she enjoys school. She shared that she is part of the school's drill team. About her school experience, she stated, "I just feel like it's a good opportunity, you know, because not everybody gets an opportunity to go to school and learn."

**Participant: Belen**

Belen (pseudonym) is a Hispanic 17-year-old twelfth-grade female student. The language that is spoken mainly at home is Spanish. As stated by Belen, her father speaks English, while her mother speaks Spanish. Belen transferred as an ESL student from another school in Texas during her sixth-grade year. She was served in a bilingual program in elementary grades and through the ESL program in secondary grades. Regarding school experience, when asked about what she felt was challenging about school, she commented, "I struggle a lot in math." Still, overall, she was looking forward to school activities like "homecoming and prom."

**Participant: Chaisee**

Chaisee (pseudonym) is an 18-year-old female student from Thailand. She is in twelfth grade and has been enrolled in US schools since 2016. She has been identified as an EL and served in the ESL program since her initial enrollment in fifth grade.

Regarding her home language, Chaisee shared, “I speak Thai with my mom, but I also have to speak English with my stepdad.” She further explained that her mother, “Sometimes she was still like struggling to stay some, say some other word because she have like really strong accent. And especially when [she] was getting nervous. You cannot understand what [she] said.” Although Thai is mainly used at home, Chaisee stated that English is her preferred language. Regarding her school experience, Chaisee stated,

One day, I will feel really good about school, and there's sometimes I find it so annoying because, like, I don't know, like, sometimes some of the teachers go into school with a really moody mood. Whenever I want to ask them something, I got afraid to not to ask them and then sometimes I wouldn't ask at all.

**Participant: David**

David (pseudonym) is a 16-year-old Hispanic male student who is an eleventh grade student. When asked about his home language, David stated that Spanish was mostly spoken at home but preferred to speak English. When asked if his parents spoke English, he replied, “No, not at all.” David recalled being enrolled in US schools since pre-kindergarten. He has been identified as an EL since 2011. About his experience in school, he answered, “Some of the teachers are really strict. And the work it is not fun.”

He did add that what he mostly enjoyed about school was his “friends.”

**Participant: Elizabeth**

Elizabeth (pseudonym) is a 17-year-old Hispanic female twelfth-grade student who stated that Spanish was mostly spoken at home. The student transferred as an EL student in 2022 and served in the ESL program. Elizabeth says her parents do not speak English, but “little by little, they're getting better.” Elizabeth added that she preferred to speak English. She explained,

Mostly because me and my siblings like to talk with each other. And then at the same time, I could teach my parents new, new words in English and so they could understand this so we could all like have a family communication.

Concerning her school experience, Elizabeth shared, “What I like best about school is being able to learn something new every day, something that I haven't been taught yet.”

**Participant: Fernanda**

Fernanda (pseudonym) is a 17-year-old Hispanic female student in eleventh grade. She was identified as an EL in second grade and served through the ESL program.

Although Spanish is mainly spoken at home, Fernanda revealed, “I just speak English. Most of the time at home and is better for me. Because sometimes I don't understand Spanish all the time, but I know it. My English is better.” She added about her parents, “They speak Spanish to me most of the time. Like, I'll speak [to] them in English, but they'll respond in Spanish because that's how they do.” Fernanda mentioned that participating in extracurricular activities like floral design classes was what she mostly enjoyed about school. She added, “I got to do things in floral design. By now, we're making mums. So, we're making ribbons, which is cool.”

**Participant: Guang**

Guang (pseudonym) is an Asian student originally from China. Guang is a twelfth-grade student who came to the US in seventh grade and has participated in the ESL program for the last six years. Guang stated that Chinese was spoken at home. He explained that neither of his parents spoke English. However, he said, “I prefer to speak more English so I can make get used to it more quick more year so I can adopt the life here.” About Guang’s experience in school, he expressed that he had “really kind teachers and my friends always helped” him when he struggled initially. Guang also shared an observation about his campus, “We have all we want for teaching [and] for learning and those materials is really good. And the environment here it's really good.” Table 4.1 provides a demographic breakdown for all the participating students. Based on Public Education Information System (PEIMS) data, 77% of participating students identified as Hispanic (n=5), and 20% were identified as Asian (n=2). Two female participants were in eleventh grade, age 16 and age 17, respectively. Three female participants were in twelfth grade, two of the students were age 17, and one student was age 18. One male participant was in eleventh grade, aged 16, while the other male participant was in 12th grade, aged 17. Based on student demographic data, 100% of the participants have enrolled in language support programs for at least six years.

**Table 4.1***Demographics for Interview Participants*

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Categories	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
1.		
Ethnicity		
Hispanic	5	71.4%
Non-Hispanic	2	28.5%
2.		
Race		
American Indian	1	14.3
Asian	2	28.5
White	4	57.1
3.		
Gender		
Female	5	71.4%
Male	2	28.5%
4.		
Grade Level		
11 <sup>th</sup> grade	3	42.8%
12 <sup>th</sup> grade	4	57.1%
Total	7	

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Another aspect considered as EL reclassification criteria is the student's performance on TELPAS in each of the four domains. The four language skills are assessed by domain: reading, listening, speaking, and writing. Students receive a



beginner, intermediate, advanced, or advanced high proficiency rating for each domain. Table 4.2 indicates TELPAS proficiency levels attained by the students who participated in the study in 2022. Notably, none of the students met the required advanced high level in all four domains needed for the reclassification criteria, which affected their eligibility for reclassification.

**Table 4.2**

*TELPAS Proficiency Levels for Interview Participants*

TELPAS Domain	TELPAS 2022 Proficiency				Total
	Beginner	Intermediate	Advanced	Advanced High	
	Frequency (n)	Frequency (n)	Frequency (n)	Frequency (n)	
TELPAS Reading	1	1	2	3	7
TELPAS Listening	0	1	3	3	7
TELPAS Speaking	0	1	5	1	7
TELPAS Writing	0	0	2	5	7

**Research Question One**

Research question one, To what degree do LTELs who achieve Meets or Masters levels on STAAR English End-of-Course (EOC) meet reclassification criteria? was answered by conducting descriptive statistics using percentage and frequency distribution

calculated from student performance on STAAR English I or English II EOC and student performance on all four domains of TELPAS listening, speaking, reading, and writing. For students to meet EL reclassification, they must attain Approaches, Meets, or Masters level on TELPAS and receive an advanced high level in all four domains of TELPAS. All students included in this analysis achieved Meets or Masters in the STAAR English I or II EOC. However, only 26.7% (n=8) of the students achieved advanced high on TELPAS reading. The two highest-scoring domains were listening (53.3%, n=16) and writing (53.3%, n=16). The lowest-scoring domain was speaking (16.7%, n=5). Table 4.3 displays the percentages and frequencies of students who achieved at Meets and Masters level in STAAR English I and II EOC and the frequencies and percentage of those students who achieved advanced high on the TELPAS reading, listening, speaking, and writing domains. Based on the results of both assessments, 0% of students met reclassification criteria and continue with LEP designation.

**Table 4.3**

*RQ 1 Descriptive Statistics for a Large Suburban High School in Southeast Texas*

Reclassification Criteria	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Meets or Masters	30	100
TELPAS Reading Advanced High	8	26.7
TELPAS Listening Advanced High	16	53.3
TELPAS Speaking Advanced High	5	16.7
TELPAS Writing Advanced High	16	53.3

### **Research Question Two**

Research question two, *Is there a statistically significant relationship between performance on STAAR English EOC and TELPAS reading?* was measured using Pearson's product-moment correlations ( $r$ ) between STAAR English EOC and TELPAS reading exams. The variables used in this analysis were TELPAS reading scale scores and STAAR scale scores. The findings of Pearson's  $r$  suggested that a statistically significant positive relationship existed between these two assessments,  $r(95) = .583, p < .001, r^2 = .340$ . The correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) was calculated to be .583, which indicates a strong positive relationship between the variables. In addition, the  $p$ -value associated with the correlation coefficient was less than .001, indicating a strong statistical significance. The coefficient of determination ( $r^2$ ) is also .340, suggesting that 34% of the variability of one assessment correlates to the variability of the other assessment. Hence, if the scale score of STAAR EOC increased, so did the TELPAS reading scale score.

### **Research Question Three**

Research question three, *Do TELPAS reading scores predict achievement on STAAR English EOC?* was answered by conducting a simple linear regression to determine if TELPAS reading scores predict student achievement on STAAR English EOC. The findings, as shown in Table 4.4, indicated that TELPAS reading scale scores effectively predict achievement on STAAR English EOC,  $F(1, 93) = 47.902, p < .001, r^2 = .340$ . This is evidenced by a significant  $F$ -value of 47.902 and a  $p$ -value of  $<.001$ . The  $r$ -squared value of .340 indicates that approximately 34% of the variance in STAAR achievement measured in scale scores can be attributed to the performance on TELPAS reading scale scores. Moreover, the prediction equation derived from the analysis provides a model for predicting STAAR English EOC scores based on TELPAS scale scores.

The prediction equation is as follows (see Table 4.5):

*STAAR English EOC Scores*

$$= -1224.909 + 3.30 * (\text{TELPAS scale scores})$$

The equation suggests that STAAR EOC scores are expected to increase by 3.30 units for every one-unit increase in TELPAS reading scale scores, implying there is a linear relationship between TELPAS reading scale scores and STAAR EOC achievement,  $t=6.921, p<.001$ .

**Table 4.4**

*RQ 3 Linear Regression Results*

	N	M	SD	F-value	df	p-value	r <sup>2</sup>
STAAR EOC	95	3771.49	390.380	47.902	1	< .001*	.340
Scale Scores							
TELPAS Reading	95	1513.78	68.962				
Scale Scores							

\*Statistically Significant ( $p < .05$ )

**Table 4.5**

*RQ 3 Linear Regression Coefficient Results*

	Unstandardized	Standardized		
	Coefficients	Coefficients	t-value	p-value

Std.

	B	Error	Beta		
Constant	-1224.09	722.65		-1.695	.09
TELPAS Reading Scale Score	3.301	.477	.583	6.921	<.001*

\*Statistically significant ( $p < .05$ )

#### Research Question Four

Research question four, *What are the perceptions of LTELs of TELPAS?* was answered using an inductive coding process. To capture a more in-depth understanding of the effects TELPAS has on student reclassification, seven participants identified as long-term ELs (LTELs) from a high school in a large suburban school district in southeast Texas were interviewed. The qualitative analysis for this research question included five major themes: (a) student perceptions of the TELPAS, (b) student self-efficacy on language proficiency, (c) student perceptions of STAAR EOC and TELPAS, and (d) attitudes towards TELPAS. Each of the emerging themes will be explored in the following sections.

#### Student Perceptions of the TELPAS

To understand the students' perception of the TELPAS, the researcher questioned the students about their understanding of the purpose of the TELPAS. When participants were asked, "As an English Learner, you are asked to take TELPAS each year. What do you think is the purpose of TELPAS?" Six out of seven students suggested that the purpose of TELPAS is to measure their English language skills. Aidee responded, "I think the purpose of TELPAS would be just to see how much you progress each year. I

mean, that's nobody really told me so I'm just assuming that's what it is.” Similarly, Elizabeth stated:

I believe the purpose of the TELPAS is to see the progress I've made throughout the years. I've been taking it to see if I've gotten any better at English or like speaking and reading and all that, that they test us on. So, like an improvement test.

Relatedly, Fernanda commented, “I think the purpose is just like how many things you know in English, like how good you are in English. And like, if you're like, needs to be like struggling or need some help.” Likewise, Guang shared:

I think it's to test your skill. How much you've learned in this year. [It] is like by each year, how much you've learned better than last year. So, then teachers and other people can know where you're at and they can make more contact [reach] with your like recent level is more easier for them and for us.

However, David stated, “Probably to help me with English. I'm not sure.” This student alluded to the idea that TELPAS was related to English but could not verbalize the purpose of the assessment.

In analyzing the participants' responses regarding the purpose of the TELPAS, most students demonstrated an awareness of the intent of the assessment by providing a partial answer. The students accurately expressed that the TELPAS measures the English skills they have attained each year. However, an underlying motif emerging from the data is the student's lack of knowledge on how TELPAS is part of the criteria to determine if the student can be reclassified as a non-English learner.

### **Student Awareness of Language Proficiency Scores**

Language proficiency encompasses the development of the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing, which shape an individual's ability to have

effective communication in various contexts. Each year, ELs participating in TELPAS receive a score report stating the results on each of the assessed language domains: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and a composite score. The TELPAS scores allow students to understand their current level of proficiency and set goals to attain a level of proficiency that will lead to the reclassification of their EL status.

The students were asked, “In TELPAS, you receive ratings in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Do you know your TELPAS scores from last year?” Six students stated they did not know what they scored on the TELPAS the previous spring semester. Aidee expressed, “No, I just know that I didn't pass. That's all I know.” Similarly, Belen stated, “No, I do not.” When asked if anyone had spoken to her about the TELPAS scores, she specified, “I haven't had a like a conversation about TELPAS scores.” She then added, “I feel like they fail us. They fail us, like let us down, you know.” When asked to define whom she was referring to, she explained, “The school.”

Fernanda also stated, “No, I don't.” Comparably, David shared, “I did not check.” Elizabeth asserted, “I do not. Do not know that.” The common theme among most participants is a lack of awareness of their English language levels, according to the TELPAS scores.

By contrast, two of the participants expressed some level of awareness. Guang stated, “I noted [knew] from my English teacher, but I don't remember.” Meanwhile, Chaisee shared, “I think it was advanced high, but then there was two of them, two of the section[s] that I got advanced.” Despite initially stating that she did not know her results, Elizabeth did elaborate by adding, “I believe it is like an average grade.”

To inquire more thoroughly about the students' awareness of their language proficiency scores, the following question was posed to the students, “Does someone talk to you about your TELPAS scores?” Aidee simply replied, “No.” Like Aidee, David

also stated, “No.” Likewise, student Belen commented, “No. I haven't had a like a conversation about TELPAS scores.” Comparably, Chaisee expressed, “No, not yet. Since last year, nobody have ever talked to me about the TELPAS.” Fernanda elaborated, “No, I'm really good at it. So, I don't think they need to talk to me about it.” Only Guang provided an affirmative answer, stating, “Yeah, my English teacher, Miss Romo (pseudonym).”

Despite the impact of TELPAS on the student’s course programming, six of the seven students were unaware of their assessment results. TELPAS is an assessment administered yearly to measure a student’s attainment of English skills. TELPAS scores serve as an indicator to demonstrate the progress made from one year to the next. The participants could not recall their results on any of the domains. In addition, only one of the seven participants recalled anyone talking to the students about their results and implications. A consistent pattern across multiple student responses is a lack of awareness of their current language acquisition.

### **Student Self-Efficacy of Language Proficiency**

The researcher probed the students on their ability in English language skills. In pursuit of a deeper understanding of the student’s self-efficacy, the participants in the study were asked their opinion about their overall progress in their language proficiency. Language proficiency encompasses the four language domains: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. When asked, “How do you feel about the progress you have made in learning English?” six out of seven students reported they felt that they had made favorable progress in improving their English skills. Aidee stated, “I feel happy. I've improved so much, and I've progressed a lot.” Comparably, Belen said, I feel it's been it's been good. I feel like I've been confident.” Chaisee similarly responded, “I am proud of



myself. I learned a lot. Like I made really big progress into learning is came from somewhere that I didn't know anything to where I am speaking pretty good.”

In the same way, Elizabeth affirmed, “I feel pretty confident. Like I've gotten very far with it.” Guang, like other students, commented, “I think my progress is really easy,” regarding the progress they considered in their attainment of English.

Likewise, Fernanda expressed,

I think it's a big progress. I know how to like spell words. Like a lot of my family members come to me when they need a word in English. And I'll spell them for it. Like my brother has a learning disability. He comes to me a lot.

Unlike most students, David stated, “I think I am almost failing. I still struggle sometimes. But I'm almost there. I'm almost at the level of someone that speaks English as their first language.” David was the only participant who made the comparison to a native language speaker.

The participants were also asked to identify the language skills they felt most confident in and which they deemed their biggest struggle. English language proficiency involves the student’s development of expressive and receptive skills. Listening and reading are considered receptive skills because they consist of taking and interpreting information. On the other hand, speaking and writing are expressive skills as they involve producing and conveying information. Five of seven students reported strengths in their receptive skills, while two described stronger expressive skills in writing.

When asked what language skill she was most confident in, Aidee replied, “I would say, like me, listening to English would probably be where I'm most confident because I'm quiet. I'm just listening to it. It helps me to pronounce words.” Whereas the language skills she struggles most with are speaking and reading. She stated,

I still get my words confused and I don't know how to pronounce them and reading because I don't know how to read words that are like, like bigger words. They're like more harder to understand and read. So, I think reading and speaking.”

Similarly, Elizabeth shared that listening was an area of strength. She responded, “Out of those four, I think I would believe it's listening because I'm a good listener.” When asked to identify the area in which she struggles the most, like Aidee, Elizabeth stated she struggled with speaking due to issues with pronunciation and clarity. She specified,

My biggest struggle is speaking because sometimes my words get all mixed up. Like I have the confidence of having it in my head, and I could like say [it] perfectly. But the moment I start speaking it, my words get all muffled up. And sometimes I can't even do the tests correctly.

Unlike the other students, Belen expressed that listening was a challenge. She stated, “I feel like it's listening because there are some words that I just, I don't understand. When an adult is speaking to me and using big words, I will not understand.” However, according to Belen, her strongest language skills were in writing. She added, “But, I feel most confident in, I think, writing because I can think about the words.” She can take the time to pause and think as she is producing writing.

Guang expressed a similar view of his writing skills. To explain writing as an area of strength, Guang stated,

I think it is writing. Yeah. Because I used to write a lot. Well, when I am in China, so to have a lot of English lessons and writing is really important part of it. And I can write [it] down. I can write down things after I think a lot. But if you are speaking, you don't have that much time to think about it. So, I can take my

time to writing some beautiful sentences I want to prepare to express to like to express my ideas.

He did identify reading as the most challenging skill to develop as it takes stamina and deep understanding.

He explained,

Because reading is really long-term thing, and you need to know different words. So many words, and some words in some cases, these have different meanings. In some situations, you need to use other tense, and it's really long. And the reading in high school and just long articles we need to read some statements we need to understand it to and understand the answer some questions. So, this now is hardest part still.

Both David and Fernanda identified reading as their most robust language skill but identified writing as their most challenging area needing development. David stated, "I don't know how to word how to word the sentences correctly. Like I'm still struggling on it." Fernanda indicated writing was difficult without the use of aids,

I forget how to spell them. Basically, if I just don't know a word, I just look them up on Google. See how it's write about. Or if I don't know how to pronounce it. I don't know. Like, sometimes I have trouble like, thinking of the word... So, like very difficult for like writing without like, no, no, like, help stuff.

Chaisee was the only student who referred to her TELPAS scores to explain her strengths and areas that needed improvement. She commented, "[In] listening and speaking, I got those an advanced high, but then in the reading and writing part, [score] was advanced." She further explained, "The writing part. That one is the one difficult, and we have they have like so many rules about commas and all the punctuation and all that stuff. That one was hard. I can never get it passed."

As indicated by the participants' responses, there does not seem to be a single area where the students feel confident or where they struggle. Instead, each participant's strengths and weaknesses seem to be unique. One consistent observation from their comments is that most participants feel their language proficiency has improved, alluding to the students' self-efficacy.

### **Attitudes towards TELPAS**

To examine the students' attitudes toward TELPAS, the participants were asked, "How do you feel about participating in TELPAS each year?" Six out of seven students shared apprehensive feelings toward this assessment. Only one student alluded to a more positive experience with the exam.

Aidee had a strong opinion on the TELPAS by sharing about getting a ticket or hallpass to take the TELPAS test without understanding its impact on her educational journey.

She elucidated,

I feel like them not telling us what's the purpose of it and taking each year and now it's just like clicking random things. I feel like it's pointless at some point. Like yes, I know. It has some meaning, which they haven't told us yet. I mean, I'm like about to be senior and I still don't know like the meaning of TELPAS.

They write us a ticket each year. So, I just feel like if they don't tell us, there's no reason for us to take it. And if it doesn't make any impact in our lives.

Chaisee understood the impact one TELPAS score has on her education path.

She expressed her frustration with the process by stating,

I find it annoying and sometimes it would get like really frustrating because like I'll take this thing. Same forever. And then the data you had to advance high on all four sections. It is not only this one section. If you have advanced highs on this

one section, and then the rest of them was advanced, we have to take it all over again. So, it was really frustrating and so annoying.

Four participants negatively perceived the TELPAS based on their continuous participation from year to year. Belen shared, “I feel like it's I feel like it's a waste of time. Because we do it each year. And we like try our best and we try to do everything that they tell us to do.”

David has a similar sentiment. He replied, “It's kind of annoying. I feel like most of the questions I already know them. I just I just have to put the same thing each year.” Likewise, Elizabeth shared,

I'll be honest; it's a struggle. Because, like, it's every year is like, most of the time. It's like, they test us on the same things. But sometimes, like I already know those answers and sometimes I don't want to do them. It's like kind of annoying, like being tested on the same thing over and over and over.

Similarly, Fernanda commented, “Not great because I like I already know a lot of English and basically just it's something meaningless to me, because I already know a lot of stuff in English. It is not important.”

By contrast, Guang expressed a more favorable understanding of his participation in TELPAS. He stated,

In the beginning I was so struggled with it because I don't know we have a test for that and it's really hard and it's really long. And but after about one to two years, I can stay longer here, and I know lots and I learned a lot. So yeah, it's getting easier and easier.

Formulated from the perspectives shared by the participants, an emerging theme is dissatisfaction with the TELPAS. The students expressed adverse sentiments toward the assessment. Based on their comments, the participants need to find value in what this

assessment provides them as ELs, and it is mainly perceived as a hindrance by the participants.

### **Student Perception of the STAAR EOC and TELPAS**

An equally significant aspect of ELs achievement is STAAR English EOC. The STAAR English encompasses assessing reading skills. To scrutinize the participants' understanding of the TELPAS reading domain more extensively, the researcher asked, "Do you feel there is a difference between the STAAR English EOC and TELPAS reading?" Five of the seven participants expressed that STAAR English EOC and TELPAS reading were similar. Aidee noted, "I've never really thought about this question. But if you look at it deeply, it's kind of the same thing. It's just you to have to speak into it. But I think the rest will be similar."

Belen's observations were based on the format of the TELPAS reading assessment. She described,

It was it was the paragraphs for the TELPAS. It was the reading [of] the paragraphs that they gave us. I feel like it was, like I didn't understand anything for the TELPAS. I didn't remember anything that I read it for every paragraph. Chaisee remarked on the differences in the assessments based on the other language domains tested. She commented,

There's not really much of a difference. Just at the STAAR English EOC, you don't have to speak, like speak on it. But on TELPAS, you have to speak right [and] listening. Reading with TELPAS is only like reading and in one section that you have to write.

David and Elizabeth only commented that they observed no differences between the two assessments, whereas Fernanda and Guang remarked on how the assessments diverged.

David stated, "It's almost the same thing. It's really just like text and questions."

In contrast, Fernanda alluded to the length and rigor of the assessment, English STAAR is more like paragraphs of like stories, and TELPAS is more like like a child-kind. Like they'll show you pictures. They like [to] give you a little short story you read about, while in STAAR they'll give you like, longer, longer paragraphs, like basically a book.

Guang similarly stated, "I think it's (STAAR English EOC) a little bit harder than the TELPAS. Yeah, because it's will more scoring you for the college, like it's where we use in the future. But TELPAS is like testing where your skills are right now."

Considering the participants' input, limited connections were made between the STAAR English EOC and the TELPAS reading assessment. Regarding the differences between the assessments, the students focused on format and length. Most of the participants could not explain how these assessments are similar and how they differ. A commonality emerging from this data is the limited understanding of the expectations of TELPAS.

#### **Research Question Five**

Research question four, *What are the perceptions of LTELs regarding how their language support program prepared them for TELPAS?* was addressed through inductive thematic coding of semi-structured interviews conducted with LTELs currently enrolled at a high school within a large, suburban school district in southeast Texas. The interview responses indicated three emerging themes: (a) student experiences learning English, (b) student perceptions of program effectiveness, and (c) student self-efficacy on TELPAS readiness. The first theme provided perspective based on the students' personal experiences in developing English skills. The next theme, program effectiveness, addressed the students' experience in the ESL program concerning their language acquisition. The following central theme focused on how the students felt the program prepared them for the TELPAS. The question intended to analyze the students'

perception of the language support program. These emerging themes will be discussed in the following sections.

### **Student Experience Learning English**

The participants were asked a series of questions to understand their journey in acquiring English. It is important to note the experience was unique to each student. The first question was, “What memories do you have about learning English at school?” Guang remembered learning English “mostly with my teachers and speaking with my friends.” Likewise, Aidee shared,

I think it was like elementary or, I think, like third grade. We would talk in Spanish most of the time but then, like our teacher would tell us to talk in English so we can practice. But that was the only time where I really practice or like learned English, just like changing the language.

For Chaisee, learning English was a challenge. She commented,

It was hard because I didn't know any English. So, I was, like, confused. And then most of the kids would come at me like, come on, like come to talk to me. And I was like, I don't know what he's saying. So, at that time, I was so confused. And so [I] get like, super nervous. And [I was] frustrated because I didn't know any English. I was like, it was hard.

Elizabeth also had a challenging experience learning English. She stated, “One of the memories I have about learning in school is how hard it was for me to sometimes say the words and like communicate with other people and students and teachers. But yeah, it was pretty difficult.”

Fernanda and David described a more natural acquisition of English. Fernanda remarked, “[I] never really learned English. I just knew English. No, I mean, I don't



remember much because I had to move schools.” David remembered learning English in pre-kindergarten. He recalled, “It was I was already learning about it like in pre-K.”

In Belen’s experience, she expressed how the support from home facilitated her learning English. She depicted,

I lived with my grandma for most of, like some years, when I was like in elementary school. And she had she had some stepdaughters and they will speak to me in English. So, I feel like it wasn't very hard to learn it in school.

To explore in more detail, a follow-up question was asked, “What did you find difficult?” Six of the seven students’ responses addressed the technical part of speaking English as the challenge. Belen found learning “big words” difficult. David, Elizabeth, and Fernanda identified English pronunciation as a challenge. Fernanda stated her struggle was, “The Rs and S [sounds] like it's difficult to pronounce them.” Guang found learning about grammar hard. He explained, “You need to know what grammar you're going to use. Different words have different tense so really be careful with that.”

Aidee’s response addressed the emotional part of being an EL. She described her experience during the transition between elementary and middle school, which did not have bilingual teachers on staff. She commented, “I would be scared. I was like, how am I going to talk to my teachers? I don't know English. I would panic.” Similarly, Chaisee’s response also alluded to an emotional aspect, “Learning new language when I was at that age, came into a new country without knowing anything, that was really hard.”

When asked, “What did you enjoy about learning English?” Guang replied that he enjoyed understanding English as it “make[s] me feel more confident when I begin to speak to others.” Other participants concurred, expressing their appreciation for “the ability to communicate with others,” “communicating in the language,” and finding it “easy to communicate with other people, students and teachers.”

Shaped by the viewpoints shared by the participants, a common thread revealed that all the participants experienced challenges in their learning of English. For certain participants, the difficulty lay in the technical aspects of language learning, while for others, the challenge was emotional in nature. Nonetheless, all the participants also appreciated the ability to engage and communicate with others in English.

### **Student Perspective on Program Effectiveness**

ESL is the language support program that ensures that students are provided intense instruction in the acquisition of English to support the learning of content-area instruction. To thoroughly analyze the participants' perspectives on the effectiveness of the language support program in enhancing their English skills, they were queried with the following questions in the study, “How do you feel about your participation in the ESL program? Do you feel it helped you in your goals for learning English?” Out of the seven participants, six of them provided an affirmative response.

Fernanda expressed, “I think I’ve felt good participating. Now I know a lot more. And I know like a lot of things like slang and big words.” Comparably, Chaisee commented,

It helped me learning English more than if I would just being at the regular like how other people. With this one is helped more because then you get to see how much progress I have made over the year.

Elizabeth also noted, “I believe they helped me a lot because, well, I’ve learned English pretty well now.”

Like the other participants, Belen concurred with the support received by the ESL program. She stated, “I think it did help me a lot.” On the contrary, Aidee felt that the ESL program did not help her reach her goal of learning English. She stated, “No, I don't think so. I don't feel so. No.”

Grounded in the participants' responses, the converging idea is that most participants feel that the ESL program has contributed to their acquisition of English. Most of the participants indicated that the ESL program was beneficial for them. They credited their progress to the language program's support, leading to a general sense of satisfaction.

### **Student Perception of TELPAS Readiness**

Each spring semester, TELPAS is administered to all ELs in Texas. Through the assessment, ELs are provided the opportunity to demonstrate their progress in the acquisition of language. To explore the participants' perception of TELPAS readiness, the researcher asked, "Do you think your classes prepare you to take the TELPAS? How so?" Four participants provided explicit examples of how they believed the school prepared them for the TELPAS. Elizabeth could connect instructional activities from the classroom to her performance on the TELPAS. She stated,

They test us on how to write essays. My English classes have they every class gives like a group communication like being able to talk and then standing up in front of the class like present. That's the speaking part. The reading just silently reading to ourselves and understanding and writing essays.

Likewise, Belen recalled, "I think they do in some way[s] because, like in every class, they give us a prompt. I feel like that was something to do with the TELPAS. Guang concurred, "Yes, they do. They like teach you how to writing essays and make you be a faster reader to read the articles. So, it will take at less time to take on the test." Chaisee provided a mixed response. She stated, "I think in English somewhat. But then they don't really. Go and do like how you going to speak or like how you learn like this on the TELPAS section."

On the contrary, three participants expressed that they did not feel the program prepared them for the TELPAS. Aidee stated,

No, not at all. Because they don't even tell us we're gonna take it. They just give you a paper, like, you're gonna take this like tomorrow, like, you know, just be aware of and go to this classroom at this certain time. So, your classes don't even tell you about it.

Similarly, David could not connect the instruction presented during English class to the TELPAS exam. He shared, “Because most of it isn't really like learning English as their subjects. So, I don't really learn more English in class.” Like David, Fernanda does not connect the regular instruction to the demands of the TELPAS assessment. Therefore, she does not feel prepared. She explained, “They don't. They don't prepare me. Like, all they do is just like teach me the regular stuff. And then they'll come to me and give me like a letter saying I have to go to do [take] TELPAS.”

To conclude, the English language acquisition experience has shown to be unique to individual participants. From the interview responses, the participants are satisfied with the ESL program, as most expressed satisfaction with their progress. However, there is a mixed response in how they feel in their readiness to participate in TELPAS.

### **Summary of Findings**

This chapter presented the results of the quantitative analysis of the TELPAS assessment. The results of the descriptive analysis revealed that out of 30 students who received Meets and Masters level on STAAR English EOC, zero students were able to meet the reclassification criteria on TELPAS. Moreover, after conducting Pearson's product-moment correlation ( $r$ ), the analysis suggested that a statistically significant positive relationship existed between these two assessments  $r = .585, p < .001, r^2 = .585$ . The analysis revealed that as the score of STAAR EOC increased, so did the TELPAS

reading. Furthermore, a linear regression analysis indicated that TELPAS reading scale scores are an effective predictor of STAAR achievement,  $t = 6.921$ ,  $p < .001$ . Despite the number of students not meeting reclassification criteria, the quantitative analysis revealed a strong correlation between the TELPAS assessment and academic achievement on STAAR.

In addition, the study aimed to assess participants' views on TELPAS, their self-efficacy in English language skills, and the participants' attitudes toward TELPAS through semi-structured interviews. It also intended to analyze their opinions on the support they received for acquiring English through their involvement in the ESL program and the participants' sentiments on their readiness for the TELPAS.

The qualitative analysis demonstrated the participants had partial knowledge of the purpose of TELPAS. They were able to discuss that TELPAS was an instrument used to measure their progress in English, but no participant was able to state how TELPAS performance is utilized in the reclassification process. Additionally, the participants' responses demonstrated a lack of awareness regarding their TELPAS scores. Three students revealed little to no knowledge of their current TELPAS performance levels. However, in analyzing their responses, the participants indicated that their perception of their English proficiency was linked to their ability to communicate in English through listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The participants' responses also suggested a negative attitude towards the TELPAS and a lack of understanding of the assessment's expectations for the learner.

Though responses are limited, the participants affirm that the ESL program has helped them. The participants could not provide elaborate responses on how the ESL program directly impacts their language proficiency. Nevertheless, the participants in the

study reported an overall positive experience with the ESL program and its impact on their progress in English acquisition.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter presented the results of this study's quantitative and qualitative data analysis. The participants' interviews revealed the following emerging themes: student perceptions of the TELPAS, student self-efficacy on language proficiency, student perceptions of STAAR EOC and TELPAS, attitudes towards TELPAS, student perception of program effectiveness, and student perception of TELPAS readiness. In the next chapter, a comparison of this study's findings to prior studies documented in the research literature will be conducted. Additionally, the implications of this study's results will be discussed with considerations toward recommendations to support LTELs in their pursuit to achieve reclassification status. Opportunities for further research will also be addressed.

CHAPTER V:  
SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of the Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS) on English learners (ELs) reclassification. Despite the impact this assessment has on their educational journey, the attitudes and perspectives of long-term English learners (LTELs) towards this assessment has not been documented in research literature. For this reason, the study focused on examining the TELPAS through a quantitative and qualitative approach. This chapter presents a discussion of the findings, connections to theoretical framework, along with the implications of these findings, and future research recommendations.

**Summary**

The research questions examined the effect of the TELPAS in reclassifying LTELs. The following questions guided this study:

1. To what degree do LTEL students who achieve Meets or Masters levels on STAAR English EOC meet EL reclassification criteria?
2. Is there a statistically significant relationship between performance on STAAR English EOC and TELPAS reading?
3. Do TELPAS reading scores predict achievement on STAAR English EOC?
4. What are the perceptions of LTELs of TELPAS?
5. What are the perceptions of LTELs regarding how their language support program prepared them for TELPAS?

Three constructs guided this study: (a) student achievement, (b) language proficiency, and (c) EL reclassification. For the purpose of this study, student achievement was measured using STAAR English EOC scores. TELPAS proficiency levels were used as indicators for language proficiency. EL reclassification was based on

the criteria set by the Texas Education Agency (TEA), which consists of measures of English proficiency, academic achievement, and teacher input (Texas Education Agency, 2022b)

Research question one measured the degree of student achievement on STAAR English EOC in comparison to the number of LTELs that meet reclassification criteria. The question was answered by conducting descriptive statistics using percentage and frequency distribution calculated from student performance on STAAR English I or English II EOC and student performance on all four domains of TELPAS listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The results of the quantitative analysis revealed that 30 LTELs achieved Meets or Masters levels in the STAAR English EOC during the spring 2022 administration. From this group of 30 LTELs, no participant received a proficiency level of advanced high on all domains of TELPAS. Therefore, no participant met the criteria to be reclassified as non-EL. This is a significant finding as these participants are considered high-achieving in English reading and writing based on the STAAR assessment, but cannot attain the required levels of English language proficiency to exit from the ESL program.

Research question two examined the relationship between performance on the STAAR English EOC and TELPAS reading. The correlation between these two assessments was measured using Pearson's  $r$ . The quantitative analysis demonstrated a statistically significant positive correlation exists between STAAR English EOC and TELPAS reading. As the score on the STAAR EOC increased, so did the TELPAS reading score. These results are significant as this implies that language proficiency plays a role in academic achievement. Moreover, the positive correlation strengthens the validity of the TELPAS as it indicates that the development of English language skills is critical to academic performance.



Research question three probed if the TELPAS reading score was a predictor of achievement on the STAAR English EOC, which was answered by conducting a simple linear regression. The quantitative analysis indicated that TELPAS reading scale scores are an effective predictor of achievement on STAAR English EOC. These results are important as they have educational implications for ELs. TELPAS reading scores are often used to determine the need for intervention to improve English proficiency and academic performance. The practice of using TELPAS scores to determine the need for additional student support has the potential to alter student schedules and limit access to other types of electives or classes. The findings for this question validate the practice, as students with lower performance on TELPAS reading will benefit from additional support to meet academic and language goals.

Research question four studied the perceptions of LTELs of TELPAS using semistructured interviews that were analyzed using inductive coding. The results from the qualitative analysis revealed several emerging themes. Based on the analysis, the participants lacked knowledge of how TELPAS plays a role in reclassification criteria and demonstrated a lack of awareness of current TELPAS proficiency levels. Moreover, the participants' responses also revealed an overall negative attitude towards TELPAS and a lack of understanding of the expectations of TELPAS. Despite these findings, another theme that emerged was the participants' positive self-efficacy, as most felt their language proficiency had improved through the years.

Research question five was designed to examine the perceptions of LTELs on the effectiveness of the language support program in preparing for the TELPAS. The research question was answered using an inductive coding process based on semistructured interviews with seven LTELs from the participating high school campus. Responses were organized into three major themes: challenges in English acquisition,

perception of program effectiveness, and TELPAS readiness. A few participants struggled with the technical aspects of language learning, while for others, the challenge was emotional in nature. Despite the challenges, the participants opined the ESL program improved their learning of English. They expressed satisfaction with the progress they have made in their attainment of English. However, when asked about TELPAS readiness, the participants presented mixed responses. Some of the participants expressed they were prepared for the TELPAS based on the instructional practices provided in their classes, whereas other participants were not able to make connections between classroom practices and the TELPAS.

### **Connections to Theoretical Framework**

Anchored on the theoretical framework of social capital theory, this study aimed to explore the relationship between LTELs and the TELPAS. In alignment with the theoretical perspective, the social structure that ensures continuous access to resources is the basis of social capital (Coleman, 1988). Social capital has been correlated to educational achievement (Rogošić & Baranović, 2019). The results of this research study bridge the gap between theory and findings. Based on the quantitative results, the TELPAS is a reliable assessment that has a statistically significant correlation to student achievement on STAAR English EOC. The TELPAS reading also serves as a strong predictor of success on STAAR English EOC. Therefore, the TELPAS can serve as a resource to help ELs monitor their progress toward English acquisition and the goal of reclassification.

However, based on the distribution and frequency analysis, the TELPAS criteria set at Advanced High in all domains of TELPAS has impeded the reclassification of LTELs. In addition, the qualitative data of this research study revealed that the experience of LTELs during the acquisition of English throughout the years and the

participants' personal experience with the TELPAS assessment has limited their access to social capital. The emerging themes of lack of experience with TELPAS reclassification criteria, lack of awareness of TELPAS proficiency levels, and negative attitudes towards TELPAS have obstructed the students' advancement.

An educational organization can be a form of social capital, as the school system serves as a path to achieve personal goals (Rogošić & Baranović, 2019). Despite the satisfaction the students expressed about the ESL program, the participants' responses demonstrated a negative perspective on how the program impacted their readiness for the TELPAS. As a result, the school system negatively contributed to the LTEL's limitations in building their social capital. Belen stated, "I feel like they fail us. They fail us, like let us down, you know." These words should resonate with educators of LTELs. As an educational community that serves this population, we have a direct influence on their successful attainment of English as they strive for reclassification. Educators support

LTELs' social capital by providing adequate resources and language development support to meet reclassification criteria. If, as educators of ELs, we do not strategize to understand the specific needs of LTELs, implement appropriate instructional initiatives, and allocate the necessary resources, we become the barrier to LTELs' success. This will result in lower levels of attainment on TELPAS, and as a result, a decrease in LTELs' social capital will occur.

### **Implications**

As a result of this study's examination of the correlation between the TELPAS and LTEL reclassification, implications for curriculum and instruction departments, campus administrators, and ESL teachers are warranted. The findings of the study could assist the ESL teacher by identifying practices that can have a positive impact on TELPAS performance and reclassification of LTELs. In addition, the outcomes of this

research study can help campus administrators with ways to impact LTEL performance through analyzing data, setting campus goals for TELPAS improvement, designating ESL campus lead teachers to guide instruction, ensuring ESL classrooms have the necessary resources to support EL instruction, and strategically planning the testing environment as it can impact the student performance on TELPAS. Moreover, conclusions drawn from the research could guide curriculum and instruction departments in the development of a robust ESL program that will provide systematic, targeted, and focused instruction and instructional resources to help LTELs meet reclassification criteria. Lastly, the findings of this study can be used by policymakers to acknowledge the perceptions LTELs have of the TELPAS and guide districts in improving programming and school systems to better support LTELs.

### **Implications for the ESL Teacher**

Results of the research study indicated that the participants lacked awareness of the purpose of the TELPAS regarding reclassification and current TELPAS proficiency levels. Through implementing TELPAS data talks, ESL teachers and their EL students can review the assessment's purpose and current proficiency levels. This will allow LTELs to develop an understanding of the role the TELPAS has in their journey as EL students. In addition, ESL teachers can help LTELs develop goals for each domain to demonstrate growth and potentially meet the reclassification criteria. This can be followed by guiding the student in selecting action steps to meet their goals and determining data points to measure progress.

To provide LTELs with a language-rich environment, ESL teachers should use sheltered instruction practices to align with content standards for second language acquisition support, as it is essential to ensure a higher rate of successful outcomes for these students (Short et al., 2012). Sheltered instruction is the most common approach to

bilingual and ESL education (Stephens & Johnson, 2014). Research shows that ELs who do not receive linguistically accommodated instruction will demonstrate limited language development and academic achievement progress. Sheltered instruction is an instructional approach that can ensure that the instruction meets LTELs' linguistic needs as they gain content knowledge (Short, 2013). This practice can significantly impact how ELs access content information and result in academic gains (Echevarria, 2008). Teachers of LTELs need to be well-trained in the approach, and the implementation of sheltered instructional strategies must be monitored for fidelity to ensure effectiveness (Short, 2013).

Furthermore, ESL teachers need to help students make connections between classroom instructional practices and TELPAS. The study results indicated some participants were not confident in their readiness for the TELPAS. Therefore, students need to associate class activities that promote engagement in academic discussion and writing responses or essays as opportunities to develop their English. For some LTELs, these connections need to be explained. The skills practiced in the classroom are designed to develop their English language acquisition, and subsequently, these instructional practices should transfer to the TELPAS.

### **Implications for Campus Administration**

As instructional leaders, school administrators play a critical role in influencing the rigor of the instruction provided to ELs. The process should begin with an analysis of student performance on TELPAS to establish campus goals to help LTELs make one year's growth in their acquisition of English and meet reclassification criteria. The data analysis will help identify the specific needs of the LTEL population. To impact student growth in TELPAS, it is important to start with the end in mind and designate different data collection points to monitor the students' improvement and progress.

To increase teacher efficacy in their work with LTELs, it is crucial that administrators provide professional development opportunities with a focus on strategies to enhance EL instruction. Ojeda et al. (2019) concluded that “investment in the professional learning of educators is essential to broaden and deepen the skills of every adult who has contact with an English Learner” (p. 207). Teachers need ongoing training on identifying the needs of LTELs, research-based practices to offer targeted and focused instruction, and assessment methods to monitor student progress in English acquisition. Continuous professional development will maintain the needs of LTEL at the forefront of instruction.

Another implication for campus administration is to establish campus-level support for ESL teachers. Highly qualified personnel experienced in working with LTEL students can provide classroom teachers with strategies and feedback on how to tailor instruction to engage LTELs in language-rich activities that increase their English acquisition. Campus administrators should designate campus lead teachers with expertise in sheltered instruction strategies that can help build collective efficacy among their colleagues. Teachers of LTELs would benefit from planning support and peer-coaching sessions to ensure an intentional approach to ESL instruction. This type of guidance will provide teachers with the opportunity to learn how to accommodate general instruction to meet the linguistic needs of LTELs.

An additional implication to contemplate is the availability of instructional resources teachers can use to support EL instruction. The resources should address the four domains of TELPAS, which include listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The resources can be instructional resources that provide research-based strategies, or student resources that can be implemented during classroom instruction. One important factor to consider is that TELPAS is an electronic assessment. Therefore, providing an electronic

resource that simulates the assessment would be essential for students to make connections between the classroom instructional practices and the electronic methods of assessment.

Student readiness for TELPAS is also a significant aspect of student performance. It is essential to communicate to LTELs the purpose of TELPAS and its impact on their reclassification status. Subsequently, ensuring an appropriate environment to administer the TELPAS is critical to yield better results. The size of the group, the location of the testing room, and the physical environment, such as student furniture, are essential elements to consider for an optimal testing experience. The goal is to provide a comfortable and familiar environment that can lower the students' affective filter and allow LTELs to showcase their skills during the assessment.

### **Implications for Curriculum and Instruction Department**

In 2015, Allison and Kaye noted that “a successful planning process supports an organization involving its stakeholders in reaching agreement about what end results they are trying to achieve and the means to accomplish those results” (p.17). Henceforth, strategic planning, in relation to the ESL program, should be a process led by the district's curriculum and instruction (C&I) department, as this process has a strong bearing on the direction of the program and EL student performance. The first step is to establish a common vision for the ESL program by involving stakeholders from different levels in the district, including the curriculum and instruction department, campus administration, and teachers of LTELs. Allison and Kay (2015) explain that a clear vision should inspire people, but it should be a realistic vision that people believe is attainable. All stakeholders should understand the vision, as it should drive the decisions made for the program.

Once the vision has been determined, district goals for LTEL performance on TELPAS should be established. Marzano, McNulty, and Waters (2005) explained how an effective leader ensures that all efforts are aimed at well-defined goals. The C&I department should guide the process of analyzing TELPAS data and creating measurable goals for the district. These goals should be communicated to all stakeholders and supported by the district's curriculum documents, such as district scope and sequence and instructional resources.

Subsequently, C&I should review the effectiveness of its current instructional programming in comparison to the goals established by considering the structures and systems within secondary campuses that support the academic and linguistic development of LTELs. Mokhtari (2021) argues that LTELs have been subjected to inadequate programming or substandard instruction. The programming established for this student population is not adequately designed to meet both the academic and linguistic needs of LTELs. At times, the language support program, such as ESL, is non-existent at the secondary level, or the teachers lack the preparation to address the needs of the students (Mokhtari, 2021). Teachers lack efficacy in linguistic strategies that make content comprehensible. As a result, a high number of LTELs lag academically, disengage from the learning environment, and eventually drop out. Mokhtari (2021) calls for a reform of school policies and literacy programs that can engage LTELs. Therefore, it is critical to analyze the district's current ESL secondary program and its systems to determine its effectiveness and to recommend initiatives that will impact LTEL language proficiency in relation to reclassification.

In view of the findings, another essential factor to consider is district-level instructional support and leadership. Effective leaders acknowledge that it takes a team to achieve success (Dufour & Marzano, 2011). Therefore, the C&I department should



consider forming a team of district-level ESL Specialists to support classroom teachers in the implementation of best practices for ESL instruction. The ESL specialist can lead professional development and provide instructional coaching to improve the quality of instruction for ELs. Furthermore, they can present resources and ideas that specifically meet the needs of LTELs.

It is critical that teachers understand what the students are supposed to learn to plan systematic and targeted instruction (Dufour & et al., 2013). In 2014, Dufour stated,

“clarity precedes competence” (p. 89). A comprehensive district professional development plan will be necessary to increase teacher efficacy and meet the instructional needs of LTELs. In addition, teachers of LTELs need support in understanding the connections between classroom instruction and TELPAS. Efficacy cannot be obtained without first having clear expectations of the ESL program. By not providing clear expectations, it is difficult to ensure the fidelity of the ESL program and meet TELPAS growth measures.

Considering the implications, the district administration should designate funds to support the goals for EL performance on TELPAS and to support teacher efficacy. To be committed to the educational goals of the ESL program implies that resources will be made available for teachers to implement into their daily instruction. The school district needs to allocate funds for teacher resources, instructional supplies, and any software that can support the goals of the program. Failure to earmark funds for these initiatives will result in barriers to attaining the goals for the ESL program and subsequently negatively affect the progress made by LTELs.

### **Implication for Policy Makers**

Based on the current assessment policy, the TELPAS is an annual standardized assessment used to measure the progress in English language acquisition for all ELs. It is

also used as a factor in the reclassification criteria. The TELPAS can be a resource for educators as it provides data that can be used to make instructional decisions that benefit students. However, in view of the findings of this study, policymakers must consider the impact the TELPAS and the reclassification criteria have on the LTELs' educational journeys and acknowledge the tension that these assessment policies have on LTELs. Policymakers should investigate if there is a substantial discrepancy in the number of students across the state of Texas who are academically achieving at higher levels on STAAR but are not meeting advanced high levels on all four domains of TELPAS and identify possible root causes. Policymakers should then consider whether any changes to the reclassification criteria may be necessary to allow more students to meet the goal of reclassification.

### **Future Research Recommendations**

This study contributes to the current body of research by examining TELPAS and its impact on the reclassification of LTELs. Several recommendations are suggested for future research to close the gap in the literature regarding TELPAS. Pointing toward future research, this study could be done on a larger scale across the state to determine if LTELs face similar challenges with meeting reclassification criteria for TELPAS. It would also allow us to further explore the LTELs' perspectives and attitudes towards TELPAS through student voice with a larger sample of participants. The research would enable educators to determine further implications based on the findings across the state. To further this research, exploring the ESL teacher and the principal perspective on LTELs, TELPAS, and reclassification criteria would be interesting. This research would provide more insight into determining factors affecting LTELs performance on TELPAS and meeting reclassification criteria.

## **Conclusion**

Reclassification is an important milestone for ELs as they can conclude their participation in language support programs and access general education (Uysal, 2022). Therefore, it is imperative to increase knowledge on how to address the needs of LTELs better so that they attain academic achievement and advanced high levels of language proficiency to meet the reclassification criteria. The findings of this study are intended to provide school leaders and teachers of LTELs with a better understanding of the impact TELPAS and the reclassification criteria have on LTELs and the ways they can support this population. This research could provide a significant discussion on how to increase awareness of the role of TELPAS and use it as a resource to help LTELs establish goals for improvement to attain reclassification.

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APPENDIX A:  
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. What language is spoken at home most of the time?
2. What language do you prefer to speak most of the time?
3. Do your parents speak English? How well?
4. What memories do you have about learning English at school?
  - a. What did you find difficult?
  - b. What did you enjoy?
5. How did your teachers support your learning of English?
6. Which English language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing) do you feel most confident in and why?
7. What English language skill do you feel (listening, speaking, reading, writing) is your biggest struggle and why?
8. How do you feel about the progress you have made in learning English?
9. As an English Learner, you are asked to take TELPAS each year. What do you think is the purpose of TELPAS?
10. In TELPAS, you receive ratings in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Do you know your TELPAS scores from last year?
11. Does someone talk to you about your TELPAS scores?
12. How do you feel about participating in TELPAS each year?
13. Do you think your classes prepare you to take the TELPAS? How so?
14. How was your performance on STAAR English EOC?
15. Do you feel there is a difference between the STAAR English EOC and TELPAS reading?
16. How do you feel about your participation in the ESL program? Do you feel it helped you in your goals for learning English?
17. Tell me about your overall school experience.
  - a. Do you enjoy school?



- b. What do you find challenging?
- c. As an ESL student, do you feel part of the school?
- d. What do you like best about school?

APPENDIX B:  
PARENTAL CONSENT FORM

**Title of Study:** The effect of TELPAS in the reclassification of long-term English learners

**Student Researcher:**

Ahime Ornelas, M.S.

SOE University of Houston-Clear Lake  
832-597-9751

[OrnelasA1514@uhcl.edu](mailto:OrnelasA1514@uhcl.edu)

**Faculty Sponsor:**

Judith Márquez Ed.D.

SOE University of Houston-Clear Lake  
281-283-7600

[marquez@uhcl.edu](mailto:marquez@uhcl.edu)

Your child is invited to participate in a research project. Your child's participation is entirely voluntary, and you may choose that your child not participate. If you choose for your child to participate, or if you withdraw your consent and stop your child's participation in the study, your decision will involve no penalty or loss of benefits normally available for you or your child. If you have any questions about the study, please get in touch with the Student Researcher or Faculty Sponsor listed above.

The purpose of the study will be to examine the effect of TELPAS on the reclassification of long-term English learners. A description of the procedures is as follows: Student participants will participate in an individualized recorded interview to obtain data and feedback on their perceptions of the ESL program. The interview will take about 15-20 minutes.

There are no direct benefits expected as a result of your child's participation in the project. However, research like this does help to develop a better understanding of factors

that affect reclassification status for English learners in middle school and high school students.

There are no risks expected as a result of your child's participation.

Any information obtained from this study will remain confidential. Your child's responses will not be linked to his or her name or your name in any written or verbal report of this research project. The data collected will be used for educational and publication purposes and presented in summary form. For federal audit purposes, the documentation for this research project will be maintained and safeguarded by the Student Investigator for a minimum of three years after the completion of the study. After that time, documentation may be destroyed.

**SIGNATURES:**

You are deciding to allow your child to participate in this study. Your signature below indicates that you have read the information above and decided to allow your child to participate in the study. You are free to withdraw consent for your child to participate in this study at any time by contacting the Student Researcher, Ahime Ornelas at 832-5979751 or by email at OrnelasA1514@uhcl.edu. The Faculty Sponsor Judith Marquez, Ed.D., may be contacted by phone at number 281-283-7600 or by email at Ma@uhcl.edu. You will be given a copy of this consent form for your records.

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Printed Name of Child

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Printed Name and Signature of Parent

Date

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Signature of Researcher

Date

THE UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON-CLEAR LAKE (UHCL) COMMITTEE FOR PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS HAS REVIEWED AND APPROVED THIS PROJECT. ANY QUESTIONS REGARDING YOUR RIGHTS AS A RESEARCH SUBJECT MAY BE ADDRESSED TO THE UHCL COMMITTEE FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS (281-283-3015). ALL RESEARCH PROJECTS THAT ARE CARRIED OUT BY INVESTIGATORS AT UHCL ARE GOVERNED BY REQUIREMENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY AND THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT.  
(FEDERALWIDE ASSURANCE # FWA000

APPENDIX C:

FORMULARIO DE CONSENTIMIENTO DE LOS PADRES

**Título del estudio:** Los efectos del TELPAS sobre la reclasificación de estudiantes de aprendices de inglés a largo plazo

**Estudiante Investigador:**

Ahime Ornelas, M.S.

SOE University of Houston-Clear Lake  
**832-597-9751**

[OrnelasA1514@uhcl.edu](mailto:OrnelasA1514@uhcl.edu)

**Profesor Patrocinador:**

Judith Márquez, Ed.D.

SOE University of Houston-Clear Lake  
**281-283-7600**

[marquez@uhcl.edu](mailto:marquez@uhcl.edu)

Su hijo está invitado a participar en un proyecto de investigación. La participación de su hijo es totalmente voluntaria y usted puede elegir que su hijo no participe. Si elige que su hijo participe, o si retira su consentimiento y detiene la participación de su hijo en el estudio, su decisión no implicará ninguna consecuencia o pérdida de beneficios normalmente disponibles para usted o su hijo. Si tiene alguna pregunta sobre el estudio, comuníquese con el Estudiante Investigador o el Patrocinador de la Facultad mencionado anteriormente.

El propósito del estudio será examinar los efectos del TELPAS sobre la reclasificación de estudiantes de aprendices de inglés a largo plazo. Una descripción de los procedimientos es la siguiente: Los estudiantes participantes participarán en una entrevista grabada individualizada para obtener datos y comentarios sobre sus percepciones del programa de ESL. La entrevista tomará alrededor de 15-20 minutos.

No se esperan beneficios directos como resultado de la participación de su hijo en el proyecto, sin embargo, investigaciones como esta ayudan a desarrollar una mejor comprensión de los factores que afectan la de reclasificación para los estudiantes aprendices de inglés en las escuelas secundarias y preparatorias.

No se esperan riesgos como resultado de la participación de su hijo en este estudio.

Cualquier información obtenida de este estudio permanecerá confidencial. Las respuestas de su hijo no estarán vinculadas a su nombre o su nombre en ningún informe escrito o verbal de este proyecto de investigación. Los datos recopilados se utilizarán con fines educativos y de publicación y se presentarán en forma resumida. Para fines de auditoría federal, la documentación para este proyecto de investigación será mantenida y salvaguardada por el Investigador Estudiantil durante un mínimo de tres años después de la finalización del estudio. Después de ese tiempo, la documentación puede ser destruida.

**FIRMAS:**

Usted está tomando una decisión acerca de permitir que su hijo participe en este estudio. Su firma a continuación indica que ha leído la información proporcionada anteriormente y ha decidido permitir que su hijo participe en el estudio. Usted es libre de retirar el consentimiento para que su hijo participe en este estudio en cualquier momento poniéndose en contacto con el Estudiante Investigador, Ahime Ornelas le al número de teléfono **832-597-9751** o por correo electrónico a OrnelasA1514@uhcl.edu. La patrocinadora de la facultad Judith Marquez, Ed.D., puede ser contactada al número de teléfono **281-283-7600** o por correo electrónico a marquez@uhcl.edu. Se le entregará una copia de este formulario de consentimiento para sus registros.

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Nombre impreso de su estudiante

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Nombre impreso del padre y su firma

Fecha

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Firma del investigador

Fecha

EL COMITÉ PARA LA PROTECCIÓN DE SUJETOS HUMANOS DE LA UNIVERSIDAD DE HOUSTON-CLEAR LAKE (UHCL) HA REVISADO Y APROBADO ESTE PROYECTO. CUALQUIER PREGUNTA RELACIONADA CON SUS DERECHOS COMO SUJETO DE INVESTIGACIÓN PUEDE DIRIGIRSE AL COMITÉ UHCL PARA LA PROTECCIÓN DE SUJETOS HUMANOS (281-283-3015). TODOS LOS PROYECTOS DE INVESTIGACIÓN QUE SE LLEVAN A CABO POR LOS INVESTIGADORES DE UHCL SE RIGEN POR LOS REQUISITOS DE LA UNIVERSIDAD Y EL GOBIERNO FEDERAL. (GARANTÍA FEDERAL # FWA000)

APPENDIX D:  
STUDENT ASSENT FORM

**Student Project Director:** Ahime Ornelas, M.S.  
[REDACTED], [OrnelasA1514@uhcl.edu](mailto:OrnelasA1514@uhcl.edu)

**Faculty Sponsor:** Judith Márquez-Ed.D.,  
[REDACTED] [marquez@uhcl.edu](mailto:marquez@uhcl.edu)  
School of Education-University of Houston-Clear Lake

You are being asked to help in a research project titled The Effect of TELPAS in the Reclassification of Long-term English Learners. The project is part of my doctoral dissertation at the University of Houston-Clear Lake. The study will examine the role of TELPAS on long-term English Learners meeting reclassification criteria. You will be asked to complete a questionnaire and participate in a focus group. Your help will be needed for one to two hours over two days.

You do not have to help if you do not want, and you may stop at any time, even after you have started, and it will be okay. You can let the researcher know if you want to stop or have questions. If you do want to do the project, it will help us a lot.

THE UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON-CLEAR LAKE (UHCL) COMMITTEE  
FOR PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS HAS REVIEWED AND  
APPROVED THIS PROJECT. ANY QUESTIONS REGARDING YOUR  
RIGHTS AS A RESEARCH SUBJECT MAY BE ADDRESSED TO THE  
UHCL COMMITTEE FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS (281-  
283-3015). ALL RESEARCH PROJECTS THAT ARE CARRIED OUT BY  
INVESTIGATORS AT UHCL ARE GOVERNED BY THE REQUIREMENTS  
OF THE UNIVERSITY AND THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT.



(FEDERALWIDE ASSURANCE # FWA00004068)

Please keep the first page for your information. Thank you for your assistance.

### SIGNATURES

\_\_\_\_ Yes, I agree to (allow my child to) participate in the study on the Effect of  
TELPAS in the Reclassification of Long-term English Learners.

\_\_\_\_ No, I do not wish to (allow my child to) participate in the study on The Effect of  
TELPAS in the Reclassification of Long-term English Learners.

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Printed name and Signature of parent or guardian

Date

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—

Printed name and Signature of child assenting

Date

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—

Printed name and Signature of Witness of child's assent

Date