

Clarifying Questions to Create a Hypothesis: Exploring Considerations for English Learners

When developing a hypothesis to help guide intervention planning and selection of intensification strategies, teams should consider the intervention design, fidelity of intervention implementation, and the learner’s needs. This resource is a companion to NCI’s [Clarifying Questions to Create a Hypothesis to Guide Intervention Changes: Question Bank](#) and provides additional questions for teams to consider for students who are English learners (ELs). Teams may use these questions when considering a student’s progress monitoring data, intervention fidelity data collected using the [Student Intervention Implementation Log](#), and informal diagnostic data. As noted in [Implementing Data-Based Individualization for English Learners](#), when a team develops a hypothesis to guide intervention planning, it is important to reflect on how to use a student’s cultural and linguistic assets to strengthen learning and engagement (Sacco et al. 2021).

Questions to Explore

- What does the student’s home language survey tell you about the primary language spoken at home, the primary language spoken by the student, and the language the student first acquired?
- What is the student’s current level of language development in their native language and English?
- What do the student’s English language proficiency scores explain about the student’s language needs and responsiveness to intervention?
- How long has the student been in the United States (if relevant)?
- Has the student’s formal education been interrupted? If yes, what were the circumstances and how might that affect the student’s responsiveness to intervention?
- Are there cultural or linguistic assets or funds of knowledge that can be used to strengthen the student’s engagement and success in the intervention?
- Are there additional factors related to the student’s out-of-school experiences, such as the way they arrived in the United States, that may impact their progress?
- What additional English language services does the student currently receive?
- What additional English language services has the student received in the past?



- Were language development strategies embedded within the intervention?
- Were language development strategies used consistently by teachers across settings?
- Are similar language-scaffolding strategies, including core instruction, used across instructional contexts?
- Does the progress monitoring tool have evidence for reliability and validity with ELs?
- If progress monitoring or supplemental assessment was conducted in both English and the student's native language, were there differences in student responsiveness between languages?
- How did the student's response to the intervention compare to the response of their true peers?

Who Are True Peers?

True peers are defined as students who have the same or similar levels of language proficiency, acculturation, and educational backgrounds (Brown & Doolittle, 2008; Esparza Brown & Sandford, 2011). True peer comparisons are conducted using achievement data scores based on the following three true peer qualities: native language proficiency, English language proficiency level, and time in current school or academic program.

Where Can I Learn More?

- The National Center on Intensive Intervention's (NCII's) brief [*Implementing Data-Based Individualization for English Learners*](#) provides an overview of delivering intensive intervention to ELs through the data-based individualization process that accounts for their unique academic, social, behavioral, linguistic, and cultural experiences, assets, and needs.
- The majority of the questions in NCII's [*Clarifying Questions to Create a Hypothesis to Guide Intervention Changes: Question Bank*](#) are aligned with the Taxonomy of Intervention Intensity dimensions. NCII's [*Taxonomy of Intervention Intensity: Considerations for English Learners*](#) presents additional considerations for each dimension to support ELs with intensive intervention needs.
- The [*Five Questions to Consider When Reviewing Assessment Data for English Learners*](#) document explores in depth assessment questions with additional resources.
- [*Chapter 1 of English Learner Tool Kit for state and local education agencies*](#) includes information about the home language survey and examples of potential surveys that can be used to gather information related to a child's language history and home language experiences.



- As of 2023, 36 of 50 states and the District of Columbia use the WIDA ACCESS Test as the tool for assessing English language proficiency. The [WIDA English Language Development Standards Framework, 2020 Edition: Kindergarten—Grade 12](#) and [ACCESS for ELLs Interpretive Guide for Score Reports: Grades K–12 SPRING 2023](#) can help educators interpret these scores to inform their understanding of the student’s current language development.
- NCII’s [Student Summary Form](#), which is part of a collection of [tools to support data teams](#), captures information about the student’s language history, English language services, information from parents and families, and data from language assessments, along with additional data to support student-level problem solving.
- This brief, [Effective Practices for English Learners: Assessment and Data-Based Decision-Making](#) (Series 1, Brief 2, 2015) from the [Multitiered System of Supports for English Learners](#) model demonstration projects, gives an overview of considerations for data collection (screening and progress monitoring) and decision making for ELs through experiences from three model demonstration projects.
- [Meeting the Needs of English Learners With and Without Disabilities: English Learners With Significant Learning Difficulties and Disabilities: Recommendations for Practice](#) (Series 2, Brief 3, 2021) includes an in-action example from two of the [Multitiered System of Supports for English Learners](#) model demonstration projects. This example (see page 7) focuses on the use of the EL Oral Narrative Scale and ways to integrate it when interpreting progress monitoring data. This brief also provides practical examples of language considerations for data-based decision making with sample prompts to use during data meetings.

References

- Brown, J., & Doolittle, J. (2008). A cultural, linguistic, and ecological framework for response to intervention with English language learners. *Teaching Exceptional Children, 40*(5), 66–72.
- Esparza Brown, J. E., & Sanford, A. (2011, March). *RTI for English learners: Appropriately using screening and progress monitoring tools to improve instructional outcomes*. National Center on Response to Intervention.
- Sacco, D. M., Hoover, J. J., & Spies, T. (2021). *Implementing data-based individualization for English learners*. National Center on Intensive Intervention at American Institutes for Research. https://intensiveintervention.org/sites/default/files/EL_DBI_Brief.pdf



This resource was produced under U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, Award No. H326Q210001. Celia Rosenquist serves as the project officer. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the positions or policies of the U.S. Department of Education. No official endorsement by the U.S. Department of Education of any product, commodity, service or enterprise mentioned in this document is intended or should be inferred.

