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Middle School General Education Teachers' Instruction of English Language Learners

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Walden University

College of Education

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Lakisha Mitchelle Nelson

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Walden University
2020

Abstract

Middle School General Education Teachers' Instruction of English Language Learners

by

Lakisha Mitchelle Nelson

EdS, Walden University, 2018

MA, Arkansas State University 2015

BS, Nicholls State University 2001

Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

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November 2020

Abstract

In a southeastern state, Grade 7 and 8 middle school general education teachers were not implementing cultural and individual instructional strategies consistently to support the academic achievement of the growing population of English language learners (ELLs). The purpose and key research questions of this qualitative study were designed to (a) identify what cultural relevant instructional strategies Grades 7 and 8 middle school general education teachers implement, (b) identify what individual relevant instructional strategies, and (c) understand what perceptions teachers have regarding strategies to facilitate consistent implementation of cultural and individual instruction to support ELLs. The conceptual frameworks guiding this study were sociocultural and self-efficacy theories. The nine participants were middle school (i.e., Grade 7 and 8) general education teachers from a school district in a southeastern state. Data were gathered through semistructured interviews, which were transcribed and analyzed for emerging themes. The identified themes included teachers' beliefs in their abilities to provide consistent instruction to support ELLs, use of varied individual instructional strategies to support ELLs, use of varied cultural instructional strategies to support the needs of ELLs, and their want of preparation and relevant professional development to instruct ELLs. A position paper was created for presentation to district leadership outlining a course of action intended to increase teachers' knowledge, skills, and perceived ability for supporting ELLs. The project study findings have implications for positive social change, including identifying areas where professional development and focused instruction on the cultural and individual needs of ELLs increase teachers' knowledge, skills, consistency, and perceived ability to support ELLs in the local school district.

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Dedication

The completion of this doctoral study is dedicated to my savior and family. God has paved the way for me to be successful this season. The love of my life, Gregory, has been my rock throughout this process, offering unwavering words of encouragement. My daughters, Sasha and Breyana, have been my driving force behind every accomplishment. I am grateful that both have been by my side for all academic and professional pursuits. Because of each of you, I can fulfill my dreams. Thank you for always being there for me. I am forever appreciative. Finally, I thank my father and mother for instilling the value of education and ingraining a firm belief that "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13, KJV).

Acknowledgments

I would like to convey my gratitude to several individuals for their guidance and support through this doctoral process. First, I express my utmost sincerity to my committee chair, Dr. Michelle McCraney, for your perspective, insight, and feedback, and help in this journey. I am forever grateful for the opportunity to work under your tutelage. I would also like to thank Dr. Ruby Burgess. I appreciate you for sharing wisdom and knowledge as you guided me towards success. Finally, to my loved ones, Gregory, Sasha, Breyana, Mitchell Jr., and Angelique, I am grateful for the countless acts of love and patience during my pursuit of higher education. Thank you for always being there for me. I am forever appreciative.

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Section 1: The Problem

Changes in demographics have increased the number of culturally and linguistically diverse learners. English language learners (ELLs), a heterogeneous and complex group of students with diverse educational needs, backgrounds, and abilities, are among the fastest-growing subgroup in U.S. public schools (McFarland et al., 2018; National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2019). ELLs represented approximately 9.5% of the K-12 student population in 2016 compared to 8.1% in 2000 (Soto, Hooker, & Batalova, 2015). Projections have indicated that by the year 2025, ELLs will account for 25% of students in public schools (Musu-Gillette et al., 2017). The number of ELLs has exceeded the number of teachers certified to educate the subgroup (National Assessment of Educational Progress [NAEP], 2017), leaving general education teachers responsible for educating ELLs and non-ELLs (González, 2016). Increases in the ELL population have correlated to changes in educational policies on how general education teachers deliver instruction for culturally and linguistically diverse learners.

Recognizing that there is an increasing number of ELLs, federal administrators mandated policies requiring teachers to accommodate culturally and linguistically diverse learners. ELL students' demographic shifts changed the dynamics of classrooms when public school educators experienced an increase in school accountability pressure under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (Spees, Potochnick, & Perreira, 2016). In 2015, President Obama signed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), replacing No Child Left Behind. As the nation's primary education law, the ESSA represents a commitment to provide an equal opportunity for all students, regardless of race, ethnicity, disability,

English proficiency, or income (Darrow, 2016). Within the ESSA is a mandate requiring

leaders of school districts to staff each classroom with a teacher suitable to meet the

needs of the student population (Fuller, Hollingworth, & Pendola, 2017). However, the

extent that teachers have met the needs of ELLs has varied. Schools with a higher

concentration of integrating ELLs have been more responsive to the needs of the students

(Spees et al., 2016). In contrast, researchers have found that ELLs families settle in rural

areas, particularly in the South, and attend integrated schools that may be less responsive

to ELLs' needs (Spees et al., 2016). Despite federal efforts to ensure an equitable

education for ELLs, results from national testing indicated a risk of literacy achievement

for ELLs.

Results from the NAEP assessment have reflected the literacy risk for ELLs. In

2017, only 5% of ELLs in eighth grade scored at or above the proficient level in reading

(NAEP, 2017). Comparably, results from the 2015 NAEP assessment indicated that only

4% of ELLs in eighth grade scored at or above the proficient level in reading (NAEP,

2015). In 2011, data from NAEP showed that 1% of eighth-grade ELLs scored at or

above the proficient level in reading (NAEP, 2011). The data trends from NAEP (see

Figure 1) have piqued concerns when considering ELLs as the fastest growing population

in U.S. schools.
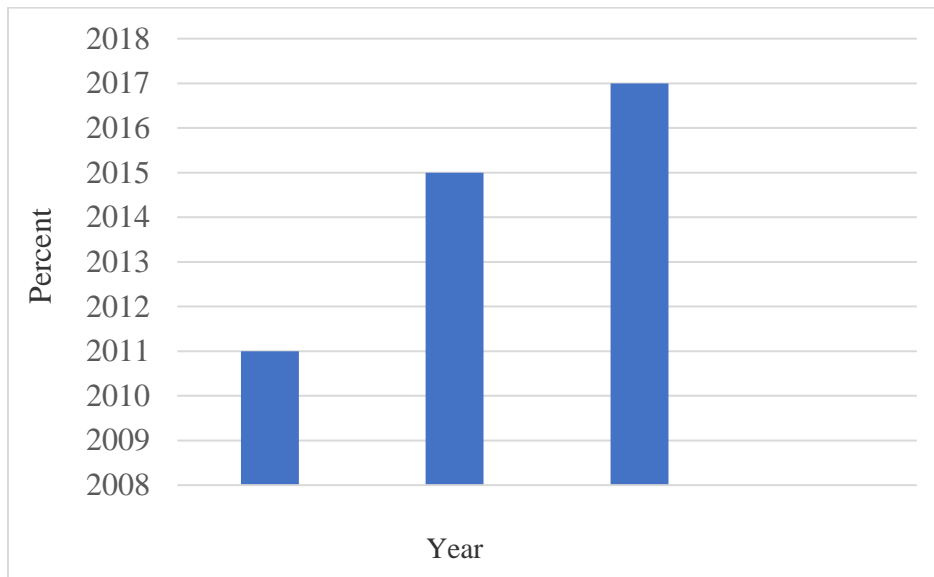
Figure 1. National Assessment of Educational Progress results. Data trends of the percent of English Language Learners in eighth grade scoring at or above proficient level in reading

Some have hypothesized that low achievement of ELLs correlated to the disadvantage of inadequate exposure to the English vocabulary (Carnoy, & García, 2017; Spees et al., 2016). In contrast, some have felt that the low achievement of ELLs correlates to the absence of teachers who possess the knowledge and skills to address the needs of ELLs (Spees et al., 2016). Though the causes of low achievement results have been debatable, data indicate a need to understand the instructional practices of general education teachers of ELLs.

The Local Problem

The problem in a middle school in a district in a southeastern state was that seventh- and eighth-grade general education teachers of ELLs were not consistently implementing cultural and individual instructional strategies to support ELLs academic achievement. When students from various cultural or linguistics groups joined the

mainstream classroom, teachers struggled to implement instructional practices to meet the needs of each student. General education teachers are often ill-equipped to teach Common Core State Standards English Language Arts (CCSS ELA) to English learners (Guofang, Hinojosa, Wexler, Bian, & Matinez, 2017; Irby et al., 2018; Johnson & Wells, 2017; Szpara, 2017). According to the master teacher of the study site, general education teachers in the local setting became worried with their knowledge on how to teach and address the standards to prepare ELLs for mastery of the high-stakes CCSS ELA testing. Notes from a faculty meeting also indicated that three of every four teachers ask how to adjust instructional strategies to meet the need of ELLs. Addressing the concerns teachers of ELLs encountered when providing CCSS ELA instruction is an essential component in ensuring that teachers are preparing ELLs to gain the skills for mastering assessments.

In addition to teachers feeling a need for improvement, recent developments in teaching English have heightened the requirement for investigating the impact of effective instructional tactics on instructing reading to the students. In the past, Louisiana educators relied on the use of the Louisiana Comprehensive Curriculum (LCC) for instructional practices before the implementation of CCSS ELA. But seventh- and eighth-grade ELLs in the local setting often possessed minimal success in mastering the LCC. District data from the assessments associated with the 2009-2010 implementation of the LCC indicated that less than 45% of ELLs in the local setting met or exceeded English language proficiency requirements. Thus, in 2010, the state department of education for the study district eliminated the LCC and authorized implementation of the CCSS. With the change in the curriculum of the study district came a shift in standards and

instructional practices. The CCSS ELA standards were more rigorous than the LCC objectives (Louisiana Department of Education [LDOE], 2018b). The standards encompassed the citation of textual evidence from the complex text when reading and writing. But a detailed instructional pedagogy to aid teachers in supporting ELLs was not in the CCSS (Daniel & Pray, 2017; Thomason, Brown, & Ward). Therefore, teachers struggled to implement culturally consistently and individualized instructional strategies to support ELLs achievement of the standards.
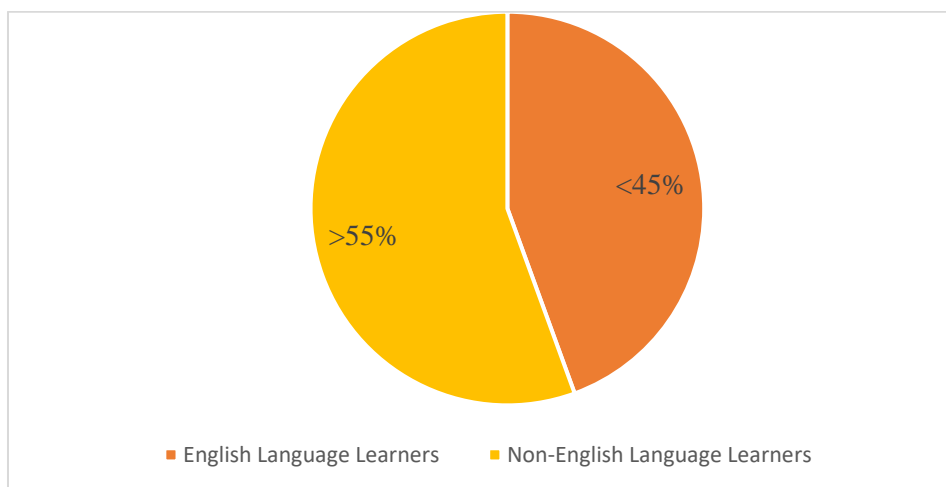
Figure 2. 2009-2010 district data. Percent of students meeting or exceeding English language proficiency requirements.

In response to a need for instructional strategies, the LDOE released an ELA document to support educators who taught ELLs to provide strategies for teachers to help students to reach their maximum potential (LDOE, 2018b). Developing deep approaches to instruction is important for ELLs to develop mastery in language requirements and forms of language (i.e., vocabulary, grammar, and content vocabulary). Intended to be a supplement to content standards, the use of ELL document provided support to teachers in the design of instruction based on the students' English proficiency and guidance and

knowledge in the progression of language acquisition (LDOE, 2018b). However, the

instructional approach local teachers used may contribute to the local problem.

Observational data indicated that general education teachers of ELLs made four

instructional changes during the 25-minute response to intervention period without

examining data to determine the impact on student learning. Minutes from a faculty

meeting also indicated that the problem of inconsistent instructional practices occurred at

the study site. Based on notes from a faculty meeting, general education teachers retaught

the Tier I English vocabulary and structures in the same manner presented during regular

instruction. The evidence from the faculty meeting indicated a need to investigate how

teachers in the local setting implemented cultural and individual context in instructional

practices for ELLs.

Some ELLs have struggled because of limited access to instruction tailored to

their needs. For some ELLs, the structure of language at home and school vary, and as a

result, ELLs may have a difficult time trying to decipher the variances of the native

language and the secondary language causing difficulties in learning vocabulary,

comprehension, and written composition of English (Echevarria, Frey, & Fisher, 2015).

The challenge with language and literacy has placed ELLs at a disadvantage in meeting

the mandates of the CCSS ELA, especially in the study site. In the local setting, ELLs did

not meet the academic goals for the 2018 school year. According to the 2018

accountability data, Louisiana Educational Assessments results suggested that

approximately 70% of ELLs in the local district did not meet or exceed the requirements

for obtaining English language proficiency (LDOE, 2018a). Gaining clarity in

understanding how teachers of ELLs in the local setting provided individual and cultural

instructional strategies may play a role in helping ELLs meet proficiency requirements of

the CCSS ELA.

Teachers who possess clarity in the use of instructional strategies exert more

overall effectiveness in developing thinking skills, specifically in meeting the needs of

linguistically and culturally diverse students (Rizzuto, 2017). Affirming an ELL's native

language in the classroom may impact the literacy development for the student.

Opportunities can become available for teachers to meet the instructional goals and

implement constructs for pedagogical purposes where students can engage in disciplinary

learning and language development (Moore, Schleppegrell, & Palincsar, n.d.). Some

research has emphasized that teachers learn of evidence-based interventions to support

the needs of ELLs (Dussling, 2018). Further, though access to educational supports has

existed for ELLs, there has been a substantial lack of research regarding how general

education teachers use cultural and individual instructional strategies at the middle school

level to support ELLs in developing academic proficiency of CCSS ELA.

Rationale

Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level

School leaders of the study site reported that ELLs in seventh- and eighth-grade

general education classrooms were not achieving proficiency in the CCSS ELA.

According to the assistant superintendent, locally, the ELLs' state test scores were not

reflecting significant gains in progress (see Table 1). Researchers have reported that

CCSS ELA mandated high expectations for all students, which has been challenging for

ELLs (Johnson & Wells, 2017; Rizzuto, 2017). To have equal access to the CCSS ELA

curriculum, strategic implementation of instructional strategies to meet the needs of ELLs

should occur. To assist students in overcoming the challenges, leaders of the local school

district have emphasized the need to understand instructional practices general education

teachers provide for ELLs. Teachers who have implemented instructional strategies with

a focus on cultural and individual needs of ELLs can identify trends in what components

of the ELA curriculum to target for specific students. Teachers must make the core

curriculum comprehensible to aid ELLs in becoming proficient in English (Echevarria et

al., 2015).

Table 1

Common Core Standards English Language Arts Proficiency Percentages

Academic Year	% of Mastery or Above (ELLs)
2016-2017	11%
2017-2018	11%
2018-2019	13%

Note. This table demonstrates the changes in proficiency percentages for ELLs in scoring
mastery or above from 2016-2019 on the CCSS ELA assessment.

Additionally, some general education teachers of ELLs in the local study site have

faced a challenge with the implementation of instructional strategies to meet the diverse

needs of ELLs. A challenge for general education teachers of ELLs whose native

language is English is the identification of appropriate linguistic features for explicit

language instruction (Ernst-Slavit & Wenger, 2016). Leaders in local study site were

considering the development of instructional guidelines for general education teachers

based on best practices for ELLs to assist general education teachers of ELLs. The instructional guidelines targeted the delivery of strategies aligned with the cultural and individual needs of ELLs. Providing teachers with instructional strategies on how to meet the needs of ELLs may aid in increasing the success of ELLs on standardized assessments.

Evidence of the Problem from Professional Literature

The continual growth of ELLs in U.S. public schools has presented challenges. School leaders immerse ELLs into educational settings where the predominant languages of teacher and student may be authentically different (Spees et al., 2016). Additionally, the actions of school leaders may not benefit ELLs. Most general education teachers are English-native speakers and often struggle with deciphering the academic content for ELLs and feel unprepared to teach ELLs because of inexperience with providing instruction for the rapidly growing subgroup (Ernst-Slavit & Wenger, 2016). However, one expectation for general education teachers of ELLs is to adhere to legal policies despite challenges with language barriers. Based on the legal mandates of ESSA, general education teachers must provide content-based instruction and implement instructional strategies at high cognitive levels (Darrow, 2016; Ernst-Slavit & Wenger, 2016). A challenge may arise as some teachers aim to achieve the goal of the ESSA. Inconsistent language instructional strategies occur, which contribute to ELLs having difficulty increasing their academic knowledge in general education classrooms (Ernst-Slavit & Wenger, 2016). Teacher knowledge regarding ELLs is vital to creating a viable education, as student success depends on teachers' skills (Doran, 2017).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate middle school seventh- and eighth-grade general education teachers' implementation of cultural and individual instructional strategies to support the academic achievement of ELLs in a southeastern state. The intent of the study was to understand the perceptions of general education teachers in providing cultural and individual instructional strategies to cultivate ELLs' academic growth. By focusing on the perceptions of general education teachers in providing instruction for ELLs, findings from this study may lead to instructional reforms addressing patterns and trends that contribute to the knowledge of instructional strategies for teachers of ELLs in implementing the CCSS ELA.

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Definition of Terms

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Common Core State Standards: Refers to the skills students should know and be able to complete at the end of each grade level and created to ensure students graduate from high school college and career ready (CCSS Initiative, 2019).

Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts (CCSS ELA): Refers to skills students should know and be able to complete in the study of literacy in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects (CCSS Initiative, 2019).

English language learner: A student whose first language is not English and speaks a language other than English at home and does not demonstrate the adequate mastery of English to excel in the classroom (McFarland et al., 2018; Spees et al., 2016).

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA): Legislation that represents the nation's commitment to an equal education opportunity for all students, excludes factors of race,

ethnic background, disability, English proficiency, and income (Darrow, 2016). ESSA is

a federal education policy that replaces the implementation of No Child Left Behind

(Spees et al., 2016).

Louisiana Comprehensive Curriculum: The document provides an explicit context

and instructional design for students to gain knowledge of a discipline of at specified

grade ("Education's Next Horizon," 2013).

National Assessment of Education Progress: A common measure of student

achievement in mathematics, reading, science, and other subjects which provides direct

comparison data among states and participating districts (NCES, 2018).

No Child Left Behind: A federal law that provides a guideline of mandates for

schools in the United States to ensure all students who attend a public school receive an

equal opportunity education (Darrow, 2016).

Significance of the Study

This study was significant because it may lead to an improvement in instruction

for teachers of ELLs. Data from school and district observations indicated that seventh-

and eighth grade ELL teachers in the district may lack the knowledge of specific

instructional strategies to apply to meet the mandates of the CCSS. The insights gained

from the study will benefit ELA teachers, building-level administrators, and school

district leaders at the local setting by providing information on how to assist teachers of

ELLs. The influx of ELLs in education systems results in teachers questioning how to

provide optimal instruction for ELLs (Kioh & Helphenstine, 2017). Evaluating the

problem with instructional practices of general education teachers, particularly with a

focus on addressing the cultural and individual needs of ELLs and teachers' perceptions of their ability to instruct ELLs, could change how teachers in the local educational setting implement CCSS ELA instruction within the district. Educators learn of instructional practices to enhance their professional skills and the content literacy of ELLs (Zhang, 2017), such as maintaining consistency in providing instruction. A teacher could learn of a way to instruct ELLs who do not score at or above the proficiency level in reading.

This study can impact social change as teachers implement the core curricula and develop instructional strategies to reflect the best interest of students. For the broader context, leaders of schools with similar demographics may use the findings to investigate the teacher understanding of instructional methods to improve the support of ELLs with CCSS ELA. Positive social change includes educating ELLs to become independent thinkers and develop college and career readiness.

Research Questions

Researchers must ground questions in research and link the questions to the purpose of the study (Doody, 2016). Research questions aid in conveying what the research aims to answer (Thomas, 2017). I sought to understand the perceptions of middle school seventh- and eighth-grade general education teachers regarding the instruction of ELLs in the individual and cultural contexts; therefore, the following research questions (RQs) guided this study:

RQ1: What cultural relevant instructional strategies do middle school seventh- and eighth-grade general education teachers in a southern state implement to support the academic achievement of ELLs?

RQ2: What individual relevant instructional strategies do middle school seventh- and eighth-grade general education teachers in a southern state implement to support the academic achievement of ELLs?

RQ3: What are the perceptions of middle school seventh- and eighth-grade general education teachers in a southern state regarding strategies to facilitate consistent implementation of cultural and individual instructional strategies for ELLs?

Review of the Literature

The search for the literature review consisted of identifying a conceptual framework that correlated to general education teachers' implementation of cultural and individual instructional strategies to support the academic achievement of ELLs. Research topics for this study included teacher perceptions and ELLs, teachers' perceptions of preparation and self-efficacy, preparing teachers for diversity, and instructional needs and practices for ELLs. For instance, cultural instruction is a method for increasing student achievement and reducing achievement gaps (Byrd, 2016). A student's background may play a role in the level of academic success. Having an awareness of the distinctions among the students enhances the ability of general education teachers to address the individual needs of the students (Mendoza, 2018).

Sources to support the literature review came from databases within the Walden University Library. The use of databases, such as ERIC, Education Research Complete,

Education Source, ProQuest Central, and Sage Journals, contributed to the generation of knowledge on the study topic that is in the literature review. The limitation for the range of search consisted of literature within the last 5 years. However, to explain how seminal works assisted in describing the research that encompassed the body of knowledge on the study topic, the citation of sources extended beyond the 5-year range, 2016-2021. The sources that are older than 5 years provided insight and relevancy on the study topic. The following terms aided in the research: *English language learners, ELL, teacher's perceptions of delivering instruction for ELLs, instructional practices for ELLs, Common Core State Standards, CCSS, achievement gap, teacher preparedness, diverse learners, theory and practice, language acquisition, and limited English proficiency* and *self-efficacy*. The combination of Boolean phrases and the use of databases from the Walden University Library played a role in providing access to literature that allows for saturation of information for the conceptual framework and literature review.

Conceptual Framework

The basis of for the conceptual framework of this study was the sociocultural theory proposed by Lev Vygotsky (1978) to address the needs of cultural and individual needs of diverse students and the self-efficacy theory by Albert Bandura (1977) to address the perceptions of teachers in providing instruction to ELLs. The comparison of Vygotsky's and Bandura's theories provided a lens for analyzing and interpreting the data for this study. ELLs possess varying needs; therefore, the instructional practices of general education teachers should also vary (Echevarria et al., 2015). Sometimes the instruction general education teachers provide is directed toward a whole group of

students rather than individual students and their specific developmental level (Roberson, 2017), which correlates to a teacher's perception of being equipped also impacts the instruction for ELLs (Rizzuto, 2017). Because of the need to address students' individual needs, general education teachers should focus on the developmental levels of individual students (Roberson, 2017). If teachers provide ELLs with the appropriate cultural and individual instruction to address the students' needs, an increase in the academic success of ELLs could occur.

One tenet of the sociocultural theory is an emphasis on proving scaffolding instruction to address the individual needs of students. Vygotsky (1978) defined the zone of proximal development (ZPD) as the distance between a student's developmental level and their potential development with help from an adult or peers (p. 86). It is important for learning to incorporate social and interactive nature and an opportunity for fluid growth, and Vygotsky's ZPD provides the appropriate level and support to help teachers provide individual instruction to students (Roberson, 2017). General education teachers who provide instruction for students within the student's ZPD may advance individual learning of content. Thus, Vygotsky's ZPD can be a foundation for individual instruction by general education teachers of ELLs. With the information on a student's ZPD, general education teachers can design specific instructional practices in which ELLs can internalize concepts of second language literacy.

Another element of the sociocultural theory is the emphasis on the interdependence of social and individual processes in the construction of knowledge (Vygotsky, 1978). The sociocultural theory assumes that the fundamental role of social

interaction in the development of cognition (Vygotsky, 1978). Hence, culturally relevant instruction is important as culture impacts the cognitive development of students. The consideration of general education teachers' application of instruction through the lens of sociocultural theory can be important, especially when providing instruction for ELLs. For instance, Vygotsky stressed the importance culture plays in development, so it important to recognize and integrate students' cultural background in instruction (Lucas, Villegas, & Freedson-González, 2008). The environment in which a student grows up influences how the student thinks and what the student thinks about (Lucas et al., 2008). Through social interaction that embeds ELLs' cultural background, ELLs can acquire the skills and knowledge for academic success. For example, language develops from the social interactions that individuals encounter. Language is one method adults use to transmit information to children and a universal aspect of developing culturally organized individuals (Vygotsky, 1978). The learning a student gains could come from social interaction that provided cultural instruction. The teacher provides verbal instructions and models the behavior for the child (Vygotsky, 1978). Through collaborative dialogue, the child seeks to understand the actions or instructions provided by the teacher then internalizes the information, using the information to regulate their performance (Vygotsky, 1978).

Several researchers have emphasized that theories relevant to behavior and cognition support the need to provide individual instructional practices to students (Brown, Schiller, Park, & Benedict, 2017; Reis, Gentry, & Park, 1995). For example, Olson, Matuchniak, Chung, Stumpf, and Farkas (2017) asserted that tools play a role in

decreasing the level between what a student can perform alone and what a student cannot do; Vygotsky noted this as the ZPD. Additionally, when general education teachers of ELLs use scaffolding as an instructional strategy consistently, ELLs achieve more success academically than students whose teachers do not consistently implement scaffolding (Lucero, 2014). Through scaffolding or providing instruction in the students' ZPD, general education teachers of ELLs could assist students in grasping the literacy skills needed to be successful on state assessments. ELLs comprehension of content increases when general education teachers use scaffolding as an instructional strategy to meet the individual needs of students (Banse, Palacios, Merritt, & Rimm-Kaufman, 2017). Sociocultural theory can aid teachers in understanding the possibilities for teaching ELLs. Teachers who have developed sociocultural consciousness understand the impact of an individual's culture on their ability to learn.

Bandura's (1977) theory of self-efficacy also aligned with this study because it applied to the perceptions of general education teachers in providing instruction for ELLs. Self-efficacy can play a role in the ability of an individual to approach challenges. A teacher's sense of self-efficacy is the judgment of the teacher's ability to bring about desired learning and outcomes (Bruggink, Goei, & Koot, 2016). ELLs instructed by teachers in the general education setting perform poorly because of the general education teacher's application of ineffective instructional strategies (Li & Peters, 2016). But it is important to provide ELLs with instruction practices that account for the student's cultural background and individual needs (Vygotsky, 1978); therefore, exploring how general education teachers feel about providing cultural and individual instruction for

ELLs could play a role in helping teachers maintain consistency with their instructional practices.

How an individual perceives actions play a role in the individual's self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977). The level of sense of self-efficacy impacts the extent individuals work toward the successful completion of a task. When individuals possess the level of self-efficacy needed to complete a task, individuals have more motivation to learn the skills to complete a task (Bandura, 1977). Individuals with a sense of high self-efficacy perform better on the job and see challenges as a task to master (Bandura, 1977). High self-efficacy of general education teachers can manifest into success for ELLs. For example, Korkmaz and Unsal (2016) conducted a survey of 350 teachers to gain knowledge of the teachers' self-efficacy on providing instruction for ELLs. Results indicated that teachers whose self-efficacy is high feel more competent in providing instruction that addresses the needs of ELLs (Korkmaz & Unsal, 2016).

Additionally, Bandura (1977) noted four tenets that individuals develop that affect self-efficacy: (a) mastery experiences, (b) vicarious experiences, (c) verbal persuasion, and (d) emotional states. Mastery experience is one of the most effective ways to gain a high sense of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977; Korkmaz & Unsal, 2016).). As an individual has confidence in their ability to accomplish a task, mastery can occur. Vicarious experiences occur when individuals begin to believe in their ability to perform on their perception of seeing someone master a task (Bandura, 1977). By engaging with high-effective colleagues, general education teachers of ELLs may gain an opportunity to develop consistent instructional practices. Verbal persuasion embeds the strengthening of

an individual's belief in their ability to accomplish a task (Bandura, 1977). Discussing

instructional practices for ELLs with colleagues could increase self-efficacy. The final

tenet of the self-efficacy theory, emotional state, relates to the influence of emotions on

one's feelings to succeed. Negativity about providing instruction for ELLs could

influence the extent of general education teachers to prepare for consistent instruction.

Based on the impact the roles of the tenets play on general education teachers, general

education teachers need knowledge of how to maintain consistency in providing

instruction for ELLs.

Teachers' Perceptions of Preparation and Self-Efficacy

A teacher's sense of preparedness correlates with the teacher's self-efficacy of

teaching (Bandura, 1977). Examining the correlation between teacher perceptions of

preparation and self-efficacy can provide information on how to improve instruction for

ELLs. The extent of a teacher's level of self-efficacy is influential in determining actions

and behaviors (Hansen-Thomas, Grosso Richins, Kakkar, & Okeyo, 2016; Korkmaz &

Unsal, 2016). Specifically, general education teachers who believe in their ability to

assist all students equally have a higher sense of self-efficacy in preparing for diverse

learners (Yoo, 2016). Researchers have supported understanding the perceptions of

general education teachers on providing instruction for linguistically diverse students

with a conclusion that as a teacher's sense of self-efficacy occurs, student achievement

may increase (Korkmaz & Unsal, 2016). Barr, Eslami, Joshi, Slattery, and Hammer

(2016) conducted a study on the perceptions of general education teachers about ELLs. A

slightly negative correlation exists between teachers' self-rating and level of knowledge

(r = -.278). Teachers' perceptions of preparation may be predicators of teachers' self-efficacy in maintain consistency in providing cultural and individual instruction for ELLs.

Teacher Perceptions and English Language Learners

Teacher perceptions of instructing ELLs impacts the delivery of instruction and the extent students are successful academically (Rizzuto, 2017). General education teachers that implement instruction that centers around the individual and cultural needs of the student are aware of the impact on academic growth. However, early-career teachers of ELLs perceive embedding instructional practices that center around the cultural and individual needs of ELLs as irrelevant (Rizzuto, 2017). Therefore, ensuring general education teachers of ELLs delivery of instruction can increase achievement for all students. Rizzuto revealed in the study on teacher perceptions that some teachers choose to use instructional approaches that do not acknowledge the impact of one's race despite having positive perceptions of diverse learners. Aronson and Laughter (2016) suggested that multicultural education positively impacts a teacher's perception of teaching culturally diverse students. Mellon, Straubhaar, Balderas, Ariail, and Portes (2018) emphasized that access to cultural, instructional practices aids in minimizing the prejudice some teachers convey towards ELLs. The findings indicated that perceptions of ELLs vary. Hence, understanding how teachers prepare for diverse learners was essential as inconsistency in instructional practices may occur because of inconsistent teacher perceptions of ELLs.

Teachers' Preparedness for Diverse Learners

Gutentag, Horenczyk, and Tatar (2018) explained that the increasingly culturally diverse nature of the U.S. poses a challenge for teachers working with a diverse student body. Teachers face the challenge of needing new and different instructional practices, including the competencies, and understanding to meet the individual and cultural needs of ELLs (Heineke et al., 2019). However, some general education teachers of ELL may be unsure of how to instruct students with different socio-cultural and ethnic backgrounds from their own. The beliefs of teachers and experiences can guide their instructional decisions.

General education teachers who do not receive pedagogy in second language acquisition lack consistency in providing instructional strategies that support the needs of the culturally diverse students (Bruggink et al., 2016). In contrast, general education teachers that share common knowledge of cultural backgrounds with the ELLs maintain more consistency in providing for the students' needs (Wong, Indiatsi, & Wong, 2016). As a result, general education teachers who work with ELLs should receive appropriate instructional guidance, such as knowledge in second language acquisition and culturally responsive teaching, to provide appropriate instructional practices that support the needs of ELLs (Russell, 2017; Yoo, 2016).

One purpose of providing general education teachers with instructional guidance is to introduce and engage teachers with theories of education about which practices promote success for ELLs. Language acquisition assists students in making connections between the classroom and the world (Feryok, 2017). The role of general education

teachers is to provide high-quality conceptual knowledge which can assist students in making meaning of the content (Feryok, 2017). Using instructional strategies for language acquisition, ELLs can gain access to tools for academic growth. The ZPD shapes the social mechanism aiding teachers in providing instruction and students' social interactions (Feryok, 2017; Safa & Rozati, 2017). The impact of providing instruction in a student's ZPD may create a need for general education teachers of ELL to learn of instructional practices for scaffolding.

Educating teachers on instructional practices for ELLs increases the self-confidence of teachers. Teachers with positive self-confidence in their ability to provide instruction for ELLs possess the ability to address the needs of culturally diverse students (Li & Peters, 2016; Truebridge, 2016). An improvement in the academic achievement of ELLs may occur when teachers feel confident in providing instructional practices for culturally diverse students. Teacher preparation can play a role in a teacher's ability to instruct diverse learners and ensure that ELLs receive an equal and high-quality education.

Due to an increasing influx of ELLs entering U.S. schools with varying levels of educational, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds, general education teachers of ELLs should possess knowledge on instructional strategies that aid in addressing the needs of the students. The National Staff Development Council Content Standards Applied to ELLs address aspects of teacher knowledge. One of these standards is that teachers understand the cultural backgrounds of the students (Brown et al., 2017). Being thoughtful and purposeful about the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of ELLs will help

teachers address factors that may contribute to the academic challenges ELLs face (Brown et at., 2017).

Teachers should identify practices that create success in teaching ELLs, including collaborating with the families of ELLs to gain knowledge of the varying cultures and learn of ways to overcome challenges (Wille et al., 2019). Wille et al. (2019) suggested general education teachers implement the following practices to instruct ELLs: (a) acknowledge the individual academic and linguistic needs of ELLs; (b) use native languages of families along with English to reinforce development of the second language; and (c) provide instruction that combines language and content learning. Applying practices based on sociocultural factors that influence language acquisition, incorporating students' native language during instruction, and affirming students' cultural backgrounds can enable ELLs to construct the meaning of content. With the application of sociocultural factors, teachers further the development of ELLs (Lachance, Honigsfeld, & Harrell, 2019). Cultural and individual instructional practices assist teachers in meeting the needs of ELLs.

Teacher knowledge of instructional practices has played a role in helping to meet the needs of diverse students. The knowledge of general education teachers correlates to the achievement of academic goals for ELLs (Master, Loeb, Whitney, & Wyckoff, 2016). Therefore, general teachers in the U.S. must prepare to provide instruction for the diverse population. Because ELLs possess their traditions, languages, and values, teachers must develop an understanding of cultural diversity and implement specific practices that increase the academic achievement of diverse students (Diaz-Rico, 2017). Teachers

should design specialized instruction tailored to the unique cultural and individual needs of the ELLs (Brown et al., 2017; Diaz-Rico, 2017).

Instructional Practices for English Language Learners

The individual needs of students should dictate how teachers provide instruction for the linguistically diverse group (Snow & Matthews, 2016). Some ELLs know little about the English language; as a result, general education teachers should know how to strengthen the linguistic skills of the students (Lachance et al., 2019). Because ELLs come to school with different academic needs, general education teachers need to have consistency in implementing instructional strategies to teach content and English literacy. When a general education teacher lacks consistency in providing instructional practices for ELLs, an impact on the ability of the teacher to instruct ELLs may occur (NAEP, 2017). As a result, learning of the specific instructional strategies for ELLs may assist general education teachers in maintain consistency when teaching.

Researchers have recommended specific instructional strategies to support the literacy development of ELLs (Lachance et al., 2019). Instructional practices such as usage of students' knowledge and scaffolding aid in addressing the cultural and individual needs of ELLs (Merritt, Palacios, Banse, Rimm-Kaufman, & Leis, 2017). When teachers scaffold the instructional practice to address the student's individual needs, an increase in academic achievement may occur. Contextualization of instructional practices to a student's cultural backgrounds and making connections with student's personal experiences benefit student learning and success in academic performance (Wille et al., 2019). The increase can occur as teachers instruct ELLs without bias.

Specifically, teachers must embed students' backgrounds to avoid prejudice perspectives

of ELLs and increase the extent ELLs obtain success in mastering the content (Diaz-Rico,

2017). The practices of general education teachers of ELLs may influence the

effectiveness of instruction in meeting the academic needs of students.

Implications

Through the implementation of cultural and individual instruction, student

academic success may improve. The implications of this study may encourage teachers to

self-monitor the use of instructional practices for ELLs. A possible project based on the

findings of the data collection and analysis could include the development of an

instructional plan with general education teachers that includes strategies for meeting the

cultural and individual needs of ELLs. Another project based on the findings of the data

collection and analysis could include a professional learning session to assist general

education teachers in implementing researched based cultural and individual instructional

practices for ELLs. General education teachers could gain access to resources and

knowledge to support the instruction of ELLs. The identification of barriers that may

limit the implementation of cultural and individual instruction, which could influence the

achievement of ELL, is another possible outcome.

Summary

In summary, a responsibility of some general education teachers is to ensure the

academic success of all students. Implementing cultural and individual instructional

practices for ELLs allows the teacher to accommodate the diverse educational needs of

the students (Bronkhorst & Akkerman, 2016; Byrd, 2016). ELLs can better understand

the content when teachers have an awareness of the learning trajectories in the different

social practices and experiences students possess when working on content in curricular

domains (Silseth & Erstad, 2018). Moreover, an increase in academic achievement from

implementing cultural and individual instruction for ELLs may stem from the

development of an instructional practice plan for general education teachers.

Section 2 contains a description of the research design. An explanation justifying

the selection of the chosen research design and why other designs would be less effective,

as well as the process for selecting participants, are also in Section 2. Additionally, the

description of data collection methods and analysis procedures are in Section 2 of the

project study.

Section 2: The Methodology

Research Design and Approach

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate middle school seventh- and eighth-grade general education teachers' implementation of cultural and individual instructional strategies to support the academic achievement of ELLs in a southeastern state. A qualitative research design is applicable for studying how individuals, groups, and phenomena in the natural setting contextual and to reflect the meaning individuals derive from their experiences (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Qualitative research is a mechanism that aids researchers in conveying an individual's experience and subjective interpretations of personal events (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2010; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). A case study design in which an analysis of real-life events occurring in the natural setting was the basis for this study, as qualitative research occurs in the natural setting to explore themes within the research (Park & Park, 2016). A qualitative method was used to research any cultural and individual instructional strategies seventh- and eighth-grade teachers of ELLs use in the general education classroom. This section contains a discussion of the research design, participants, data collection, and data analysis procedures.

Qualitative researchers seek to study research problems by gathering information from multiple sources and understanding the behaviors and views of the participants involved in the study (Creswell, 2012). The use of a qualitative case study allowed the investigation of general education teachers' instructional strategies and the extent to which the implementation of the instructional practices address the cultural and

individual needs of the ELLs. The following RQs supported the qualitative case study: (a) What cultural relevant instructional strategies do middle school seventh- and eighth-grade general education teachers in a southern state implement to support the academic achievement of ELLs?, (b) What individual relevant instructional strategies do middle school seventh- and eighth-grade general education teachers in a southern state implement to support the academic achievement of ELLs?, and (c) What are the perceptions of middle school seventh- and eighth-grade general education teachers in a southern state regarding strategies to facilitate consistent implementation of cultural and individual instructional strategies for ELLs?

Further, case studies allow qualitative researchers to focus on individuals within the group while collecting data (Lodico et al., 2010). A case study provided an opportunity to gain a detailed understanding of the instructional practices general education teachers use to address the needs of ELLs that could result in increases in the academic achievement of ELLs on standardized assessments. The qualitative methodology involved conducting one-on-one and semi-structured interviews with guiding questions, and the population consisted of nine general education teachers of ELLs during the data collection process.

Upon reviewing other research designs, a case study design guided this research due to the nature of investigating the perspectives and experiences of human subjects. Conversely, researchers employ quantitative designs to generate numerical statistics. Quantitative research aligns with a focus on relationships between two or more variables (Lodico et al., 2010). The purpose of this study research was to understand the complex

processes of how reality exists and unfolds concerning the participants' experiences

(Maxwell, 2013; Yin, 2017). Therefore, the use of a quantitative design did not align with

this project study. The use of inferential and descriptive statistics would not provide the

type of data that qualitative data could indicate on the understanding of the instructional

strategies general education teachers implement to address the cultural and individual

needs of ELLs and their perception to facilitate consistent implementation of cultural and

individual instructional strategies for ELLs.

Ethnography, phenomenological research, and grounded theory approaches also

comprise qualitative research. The use of ethnography approaches centers around

deriving cultural meaning of groups (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). This study did not lend itself

to studying cultural groups to derive meaning within their setting; therefore, ethnography

did not align with the criteria for examining the problem with the project study.

Moreover, phenomenological research and grounded theory designs did not address the

RQs. Phenomenological research centers around a focus of participants in an examination

of understanding shared experiences (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). A goal of using grounded

theory is to generate theories from data and employ inductive processes that remain close

to data through a constant comparative method (Creswell, 2012). The purpose of this

study was to investigate how general education teachers implement cultural and

individual instructional strategies consistently to address the needs of ELLs. Hence,

misalignment to the purpose of the study and RQs would be created with the use of the

use of ethnography, phenomenological research, and grounded theory. Upon reviewing

the components of other research designs, the case study approach was the appropriate

selection that aligns with the qualitative design of this study.

<div align="center">**Participants**</div>

Criteria for Selecting Participants

The purpose of this qualitative study was to obtain an in-depth understanding of

the implementation of cultural and individual instructional strategies middle school

seventh- and eighth-grade general education teachers use to support the academic

achievement of ELLs. The study site had an increasing number of ELLs. At the rural

school, general education teachers possessed the responsibility of educating ELLs to the

same extent as non-ELLs. One criterion for selecting participants was to choose

individuals that have knowledge that related to the purpose of the study (Ravitch & Carl,

2016). I selected the participants for this study purposefully. Purposeful sampling allows

researchers to deliberately select participants that will assist in obtaining the information

needed to answer RQs (Lodico et al., 2010; Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Justification on the Number of Participants

For this study, the participants I intended to select were 10 seventh- and eighth-

grade middle school general education teachers who provided instruction to at least ELL.

The selection of participants centered around the availability, commitment to the study,

and knowledge of the individual about the study topic. The justification for the number of

participants related to the consideration of sample size to meaning saturation in which no

further insights derive (Hennink, Kaiser, & Marconi, 2017). Generally, by the ninth

interview, meaning saturation occurs. I planned to select the 10 individuals who could

provide knowledge about the practices they use to instruct ELLs to increase the

likelihood of obtaining the information for the study; however, only nine agreed to

participate in the study. But having a relatively low number of participants provided an

opportunity to devote more time to the analyzation of data.

Gaining Access to Participants

Before beginning data collection, I sought approval from Walden University's

Institutional Review Board (IRB), which was granted (approval # 03-05-20-0632552).

Gaining access to the potential participants occurred with ease as I was a former teacher

of the study site. However, I still presented a letter of introduction to the local assistant

superintendent and principal of the study site requesting permission to conduct research

at the middle school. After obtaining permission to conduct the study, I gained access to

participants using the following steps: (a) sent an initial e-mail explaining the research

and (b) sent a confirmation e-mail to participate. Teachers who volunteered to participate

in this study received a letter of informed consent. The letter was accessible electronically

by e-mail. I scheduled personal interviews of teachers following the receipt of approval,

permission, and informed consent forms.

Establishing a Researcher-Participant Working Relationship

The relationship between me and the participants correlated to the quality and

trustworthiness of the study. To increase the likelihood of obtaining valid and reliable

output, the researcher must establish a good rapport with the participants (Ravitch &

Carl, 2016). After receiving permission to conduct this study, I met with potential

participants individually to introduce myself, communicated the purpose, explained the

rationale for asking the individuals to participate, and assured the involvement was voluntary. Conveying the process of the study helped build the trust that encouraged more open interviews (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Additionally, potential participants received information on expectations, including demands of their time, what participation would entail, potential risks, data storing procedures as well as how I will disseminate information and potential benefits to the field of education (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). I conveyed the expectations through the explanation of an informed consent form as well as providing contact information to develop lines of open communication for the participants to state additional concerns and questions. Developing a working relationship can increase the validity and trustworthiness of the research.

Protection of Participants' Rights

Specific measures occurred to maintain the protection of individuals' rights in this study. Because participants agree to speak openly, researchers must ensure confidentiality and protection from harm (Walden University Center for Research Quality, n.d.). All participants received information on informed consent and agreed to security measures after they elected to participate in the study. The requirement for consent extended throughout the study (Thomas, 2017). Each participant received clarity on the nature of the research, risks, and the right to withdraw or refuse to answer questions at any time.

To limit potential risks with confidentiality, each participant received a pseudonym as a replacement for their name. In place of the participants' names, the pseudonym appeared on all documents. Only the potential participants and I gained knowledge of aliases. Additionally, qualitative interviews occurred separately for each

participant to ensure confidentiality. All interviews occurred via telephone. I conducted

the interviews by phone in a private area in my home using earbuds to ensure that

participants had no concern about others hearing the interview. I reviewed the consent

form with each participant individually before beginning the interview.

Researchers should not cause harm to participants and have the welfare of

participants in mind (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Obtaining approval from the IRB occurred

to maintain the dignity, rights, and safety of human subjects. IRB approval conveyed that

risks to potential participants were minimal (Walden University Center for Research

Quality, n.d.). Further, to avoid exploitation of and revealing information about

participants that could jeopardize an individual's identity, security measures to protect

confidential information occurred. Data were kept secure by replacing the names of each

participant with a pseudonym, using the pseudonym on all documents, securing

nonidentifiable data in a locked filing cabinet in my home to which I have sole access,

and storing audio recordings and identifiable data on my personal password protected

computer in my home. Upon approval from the IRB and before data collection, written

consent on codes of conduct and reassurance of the confidentiality of the participants in

the research occurred to maintain ethical obligations. Records for the study will be kept

for 5 years. All records will be destroyed after the 5-year period.

Data Collection

Justification for Data Collection

Qualitative research involves verbal descriptions of characteristics and case

studies and includes research techniques such as guided interviews, observation, and

document review as source data (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Based on the topic, the primary

source for this qualitative case study was the use of semistructured interviews of nine

general education teachers of ELLs. Semistructured interviews are a standard qualitative,

data collection method that allows the researcher to delve into how individuals'

experiences and perspectives relate to other study participants and develop holistic

descriptions of perspectives (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The use of semistructured interviews

allowed for focused exploration of participant perceptions on providing consistent

instructional practices that address the cultural and individual needs of ELLs. The source

of data collection aided in addressing the data desired for the project study as well as the

use of the elements of self-efficacy and sociocultural theories (see Table 2).

Table 2

Alignment of Interview Questions to Research Questions and Elements of Self-Efficacy and Sociocultural Theory

	Interview Question	Research Question or Element
1.	What is your experience in working with English Language Learners?	RQ1 (Qualitative): What cultural relevant instructional strategies do middle school seventh- and eighth-grade general education teachers in a southern state implement to support the academic achievement of ELLs? "Self-efficacy" (Bandura, 1977)
2.	What are your perceptions of working with English Language Learners?	"Self-efficacy" (Bandura, 1977)
3.	What instructional strategies have worked well with English Language Learners?	RQ1 (Qualitative): What cultural relevant instructional strategies do middle school seventh- and eighth-grade general education teachers in a southern state implement to support the academic achievement of ELLs?
4.	What cultural relevant instructional strategies do you implement when instructing English Language Learners?	RQ1(Qualitative): What cultural relevant instructional strategies do middle school seventh- and eighth-grade general education teachers in a southern state implement to support the academic achievement of ELLs? "Mind in society" (Vygotsky, 1978)
5.	Explain the importance of implementing instructional practices the address the cultural needs of ELLs.	RQ1 (Qualitative): What cultural relevant instructional strategies do middle school seventh- and eighth-grade general education teachers in a southern state implement to support the academic achievement of ELLs? "Mind in society" (Vygotsky, 1978)
6.	What individual relevant instructional strategies do you implement when providing Instruction for English Language Learners?	RQ2(Qualitative): What individual relevant instructional strategies do middle school seventh- and eighth-grade general education teachers in a southern state implement to support the academic achievement of ELLs? "Mind in society" (Vygotsky, 1978)
7.	Explain the importance of implementing instructional practices the address the individual needs of ELLs.	RQ2(Qualitative): What individual relevant instructional strategies do middle school seventh- and eighth-grade general education teachers in a southern state implement to support the academic achievement of ELLs? "Mind in society" (Vygotsky, 1978)
8.	What are your perceptions on facilitating consistent implementation of cultural instructional strategies for ELLs?	RQ3(Qualitative): What are the perceptions of middle school seventh- and eighth-grade general education teachers in a southern state regarding strategies to facilitate consistent implementation of cultural and individual instructional strategies for ELLs? "Self-efficacy" (Bandura, 1977)

(table continues)

	Interview Question	Research Question or Element
9.	What are your perceptions on facilitating consistent implementation of individual instructional strategies for ELLs?	RQ3 (Qualitative): What are the perceptions of middle school seventh- and eighth-grade general education teachers in a southern state regarding strategies to facilitate consistent implementation of cultural and individual instructional strategies for ELLs? "Self-efficacy" (Bandura, 1977)
10.	What assistance have you had that has been beneficial for implementing consistent instructional practices for English Language Learners?	RQ3(Qualitative): What are the perceptions of middle school seventh- and eighth-grade general education teachers in a southern state regarding strategies to facilitate consistent implementation of cultural and individual instructional strategies for ELLs? "Self-efficacy" (Bandura, 1977)
11.	Would you like to have more help with implementing consistent instructional practices when working with English Language Learners?	RQ3 (Qualitative): What are the perceptions of middle school seventh- and eighth-grade general education teachers in a southern state regarding strategies to facilitate consistent implementation of cultural and individual instructional strategies for ELLs? "Self-efficacy" (Bandura, 1977)
12.	What did I not ask that you want to discuss?	"Self-efficacy" (Bandura, 1977)

I gained access to participants by seeking permission from the local superintendent and principal of the study site, sending an email to explain the study, and confirming participation. I invited middle school seventh- and eighth-grade general education teachers of ELLs from the study site to participate in semi-structured interviews on the implementation of instructional practices to address the cultural and individual needs of the selected groups of students. General education teachers were sampled purposively to achieve a diverse group in terms of age, race, and gender. Participants that matched the criteria received a letter containing information about the researcher, the purpose of the study, risks, benefits. and link to informed consent form. The researcher checked daily for consent forms and schedule interviews.

The use of semi-structured interviews with guiding questions served as a guide to gain an understanding of the participant practices. As the researcher, I produced the guiding interview questions (see Appendix B). The interviews occurred via phone using earbuds and included biographical questions. Conducting the interviews in a designated location and use of earbuds increased the likelihood of the maintaining confidentiality and allowed participants to express perceptions without fear of colleagues and administrators overhearing the interview. The duration for each interview was between 30-45 minutes with informed consent by the participant, which included permission to audio record the interview. Real-time recording and transcription of interviews provided more reliable data (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The use of audio recordings of the interview occurred as a method for transcribing the interviews. Following each interview, I asked participants to analyze their data individually. Participants' analyses provided insight into

the interpretation of the perception of general education teachers on the implementation

of instructional practices for ELLs. Data collected occurred over a three-month period

which included one interview and one follow-up meeting with each participant.

Finally, I used a reflective journal to keep track of data. I documented elements

that signified key content from the interview. The goal of using reflective journals was to

document the essence of each interview. The reflective journals, along with the audio

recordings of the interview, were examined to determine emerging codes and themes to

denote during data analysis. Each participant received a notice of the emergent themes

and was asked to provide feedback via a second meeting, telephone, e-mail, or no

response once the data was coded and analyzed, and themes began to emerge.

Participants received their personal pseudonym so each could pay close attention to their

contributions to the data. Documentation of the feedback occurred for the accuracy of

results. Records for the study will be kept for five years on a password protected

computer.

Role of the Researcher

I am a previous teacher of the local site in which the study occurred. I possessed

no professional role at the study site. Of the nine potential general education teachers

participating in this study, one teacher was a previous colleague in which I worked with

for three years. A professional relationship existed with the colleague through the sharing

of resources and behavioral strategies. Hence, my role as a researcher did not affect data

collection. I aimed to approach the role of a researcher as one with as little bias as

possible. To better identify the essence of the participants' experiences, my role as a

researcher consisted of documenting and reflecting on my past experiences and biases relating to the topic of study.

Data Analysis

Data analysis occurred, beginning with the initial interview. I transcribed data following each interview in narrative form. Rubin and Rubin (2012) recommended that qualitative researchers explore data by transcribing and summarizing each interview, coding relevant concepts and themes, sorting similar excerpts into a single data file, summarizing the results of coding, integrating the codes to develop the big picture, explaining the emergent themes, and implementing strategies to determine the extent that results generalize beyond the study. Using Rubin and Rubin's steps for qualitative analysis, I reviewed the transcriptions holistically to identify segments of the data that represented trends. After transcription of each interview, a pseudonym was written on each interview sheet and secured envelope to adhere to guidelines for protecting the identity of participants. I created a Google document for use as an electronic journal for recording data and synthesizing my thoughts and commented on the emergence of themes. The files on the Google documents were password protected.

To facilitate retrieval of what the participants indicate about the questions, qualitative researchers must mark on the transcript a word or phrase that represents the theme (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Coding occurred to identify themes, patterns, and insights within the transcribed data using QSR NVivo coding software to identify commonalities emerging from the data. In vivo coding uses a word or phrase from a section of data and assigns a label to it (Saldaña, 2016). Once all data was complete, I used a color-coded

system to indicate similar phrases and words that appeared in the transcripts and evidence on the use of cultural and individual instructional practices that addressed the needs of ELLs. Based on the findings that emerged within the color-coded system, I developed files to categorize data and summarize the results. I used inductive analysis to determine the accuracy of the findings of the study. Researchers should integrate the findings to develop an overall idea (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). I reread the transcripts and reviewed the codes to determine the extent of similarity in the interviews. Codes were recategorized, and themes were identified based on the emergence of new codes.

The use of member checking provided accuracy to the study data. Each participant received a copy of transcribed data to review during a second scheduled interview to confirm findings and to ensure trust and confidentiality was maintained. The interview data was divided into groups by RQ. A further division of responses occurred based on the nature of the response content. The use of the QSR NVivo software provided organization, coding, and categorization of the qualitive data. Each participant received a summary of the findings from the interview. Participants reviewed the findings for accuracy and fair representation in the responses. Based on the feedback from participants and review of data for accuracy, the findings were written in narrative form to provide the readers with the perspectives of middle school seventh- and eighth-grade general education teachers on the implementation of instructional practices to meet the cultural and individual needs of ELLs.

Evidence of Quality and Trustworthiness

In qualitative research, trustworthiness encompasses aspects of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Ravitch and Carl (2016) asserted that the lenses that shape the reliability of qualitative research involve that of the researcher and research participants. In the following paragraphs, I discuss the steps I took to ensure the quality and trustworthiness of the data.

Credibility. Credibility relates to the internal validity of a study as the researcher communicates the discoveries (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I established credibility by implementing member checking. Each participant received a copy of the transcribed data to assess the accuracy of their statements. I used the feedback from participants to ascertain the extent of understanding the response of the participants.

Transferability. Transferability refers to how qualitative studies apply to the broader context. Research audiences can make comparisons to other contextual factors instead of replicating the design and finding (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). To ensure transferability, I detailed descriptions of the data, which includes a full description of the topic of study. By providing a full description of the phenomenon, readers could compare the data within the study with data that emerges in their experiences.

Dependability. Dependability relates to the stability of the data. The researcher has a reasoned argument for how the collection of data happens, and the data is consistent with the argument (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The data must answer the RQs, aligned methods of data collection, and a well-articulated rationale for the choice of sequencing method within the study (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I clearly stated the logic for selecting

participants and problem of the study and avoided careless errors in conceptualizing the study, collecting data, interpreting findings, and reporting results. To avoid careless errors, I conducted a code-recode procedure on the data throughout the data analysis process and reevaluated the data one week later to determine dependability.

Confirmability. Confirmability is the aspect of acknowledging that biases and prejudice play a role in the interpretation of data (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Researchers can establish the finding on the participant's responses and not the bias of personal endeavors to ensure confirmability. I sought out thought partners around issues on subjectivity and positionality. Thought partners can help a researcher make methodological choices to acknowledge and approach researcher bias.

Finally, ongoing reflexivity during data collection and analysis served as a method to ensure the trustworthiness of the study design. Assumptions on the perceptions of the participants may arise during the study. I endeavored to represent the general education teachers of ELLs their experiences as transparently as possible.

Procedures for Discrepant Cases

Contradictions in the data lead to unexpected findings or discrepant cases. The analysis of discrepant cases aids in the identification of the degree sources of data support the interpretation of the researcher (Lodico et al., 2010). Validity concerns in qualitative research may arise due to discrepant cases. As the researcher, I observed for interviews that differed from the other interviews. An examination of the individual interview results occurred to support accuracy. There was one instance of a discrepant case identified through the participant interviews. In this case, the response from the one participant to

one of the interview questions differed significantly from the other participant responses. I verified the accuracy of discrepancies with the participants and received clarification of the discrepancy through the process of member checking. To maintain the trustworthiness of the study, I reviewed elements of the data that contradict patterns from data analysis and noted discrepant cases in the research findings. From the analysis of discrepant data, implications for future research in the subject of the study emerged in addition to strengthening the validity of the study.

Data Analysis Results

This qualitative study aimed to investigate middle school seventh- and eighth-grade general education teachers' implementation of cultural and individual instructional strategies to support ELLs' academic achievement. During this study, I explored teacher's perceptions of instructing ELLs, varied cultural and individual instructional strategies, and professional development as a support to assist general education teachers of ELLs in maintaining consistency when instructing ELLs. Data for this project study was generated via individual semistructured participant interviews; a total of 31 teachers invited to participate, and nine teachers responded. The interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed using NVivo software, and labeled with the pseudonym assigned to the participant. Following the transcriptions, data were analyzed to identify themes, patterns, and trends. Coding was used to aid in capturing the main ideas and generate themes based on commonalities (Clark & Veale, 2018). There was one instance of a discrepant case identified through the participant interviews. In this case, the response from the one participant to one of the interview questions differed significantly from the other

participant responses. I verified the accuracy of discrepancies with the participants and

received clarification of the discrepancy through the process of member checking, The

themes identified from the data were aligned with the framework of sociocultural theory,

as proposed by Vygotsky (1978) and self-efficacy theory, as described by Bandura

(1977).

The project study findings were guided by the purpose of the project study and the

RQs posed. The results were related to the sociocultural theory as proposed by Vygotsky

(1978) and self-efficacy theory, as described by Bandura (1977). The findings are

presented and organized by the themes which emerged from the data analysis. A

discussion of the relationship of the findings to the RQs is included in this section.

RQ1-What cultural relevant instructional strategies do middle school seventh- and

eighth-grade general education teachers in a southern state implement to support

the academic achievement of ELLs?

RQ2-What individual relevant instructional strategies do middle school seventh-

and eighth-grade general education teachers in a southern state implement to

support the academic achievement of ELLs?

RQ3- What are the perceptions of middle school seventh- and eighth-grade

education teachers in a southern state regarding strategies to facilitate consistent

implementation of cultural and individual instructional strategies for ELLs?

According to Vygotsky (1978), the sociocultural theory is an emphasis on

addressing the individual needs of students by providing scaffolding of instruction within

the students' ZPD and the idea that social interaction through means of cultural exchange

impacts an individual's cognitive development. Also, Bandura (1977) asserted that the self-efficacy theory pursues a measurement of the extent of an individual's ability to complete tasks. The findings of this project study are organized by the themes emerging from the data analysis:

1. Teachers' belief in their ability to provide consistent instruction.

2. Teachers use varied individual instructional strategies to meet the needs of ELLs.

3. Teachers use varied cultural instructional strategies to meet the needs of ELLs.

4. General education teachers want preparation and relevant professional development to instruct ELLs.

Table 3

Alignment of Themes to Research Questions

Theme	Research question
Teachers' belief in their ability to provide consistent instruction	RQ3 (Qualitative): What are the perceptions of middle school seventh- and eighth-grade general education teachers in a southern state regarding strategies to facilitate consistent implementation of cultural and individual instructional strategies for ELLs? "Self-efficacy" (Bandura, 1977)
Teachers use varied individual instructional strategies to support the ELLs.	RQ2(Qualitative): What individual relevant instructional strategies do middle school seventh- and eighth-grade general education teachers in a southern state implement to support the academic achievement of ELLs? "Mind in society" (Vygotsky, 1978)
Teachers use varied cultural instructional strategies to support the needs of ELLs.	RQ1 (Qualitative): What cultural relevant instructional strategies do middle school seventh- and eighth-grade general education teachers in a southern state implement to support the academic achievement of ELLs?
General education teachers want preparation and relevant professional development to instruct ELLs	RQ3 (Qualitative): What are the perceptions of middle school seventh- and eighth-grade general education teachers in a southern state regarding strategies to facilitate consistent implementation of cultural and individual instructional strategies for ELLs?

Theme 1: Teachers' Belief in Their Ability to Provide Consistent Instruction in General Education

The findings of teachers' belief in their ability to provide consistent instruction in general education align with the self-efficacy theory in that teachers perceived that maintaining consistent instructional practices stemmed from experience. The teachers felt that their level of self-efficacy did affect their ability to provide consistent instruction of individual and cultural strategies. The data revealed that teachers identified the number of years in education as a determinant for facilitating the consistent implementation of cultural and individual instructional strategies for ELLs.

Some of the participants who believe they can provide consistent instruction for ELLs in the general education stated the level of preparedness in engaging with diverse learners over the years provides them with the knowledge to maintain consistent instruction. Teachers who reported to believe in there is an ability to facilitate consistent individual instruction reported to have over five years of teaching experience and make personal efforts to research information which influences the way they interact with ELLs in the general education classroom. As Participant 6 stated, "Some teachers are more well equipped. They have more strategies at their fingertips that they can use."

Many of the participants communicated a lack of confidence regarding the facilitation of consistent instructional strategies for ELLs is occurring across the district. The participants conveyed the lack of confidence was related to the difficulty in

supporting ELLs holistically. When Participant 3 was asked to elaborate on whether consistent practices are not occurring, the participant stated,

> We feel like we try to expose them to as much of the curriculum with the supports we possibly can, but until the child learns English, we cannot say they have the same advantage as the other students. We are primarily an English-speaking district, and that is what we teach to the masses. I do not see anything consistent across the district. I would say that classroom to classroom that varies from child to child.

Participants 9 expressed, "I would hope or think that my colleagues along with myself would be doing the exact same thing in terms of being able to get across the importance of diversifying the less for differentiated instruction that we meet the needs of the ELLs." Participant 1 stated, "I find it very difficult. I think the issue is with all the other things we have going on. There is just not a lot of time built into the lesson time. Consistency is hard." Participant 6 reported, "It is not consistent. There is not one consistent thing that we do across the board. There is not a district policy that says every teacher needs to do this with these kids every day."

The participants also shared similar perceptions and attitudes about the importance of providing consistent instruction while teaching ELLs. Participants stated that ELLs entering their school should be provided with consistent individualized and culturally relevant instructional strategies to increase the likelihood of student success. Participant 2 responded, "It is necessary so that students learn the proper information to

progress in their education." Participant 7 stated, "You have to be consistent so they can be successful and continue to be successful." Participant 4 shared,

It needs to be consistent because that is going to be the best way for them to learn. It is important that not just you be consistent in how you are working with a student, but for their other teachers too. Because if it is something that is working for them, the student is going to get the best information they can out of all their subjects.

All participants agreed that providing consistent instructional strategies is crucial for increasing the academic success for ELLs. The participants' strategy on how to implement successful individualized and culturally relevant instructional strategies for ELLs varied.

The findings regarding perceptions of middle school seventh- and eighth-grade general education teachers relate to Research Question 3. How the group of participants perceive their ability to facilitate consistent implementation of cultural and individual instructional strategies for ELLs was clearly answered in the interview process. Most participants expressed that there was a relation between district policies, time, and student outcomes and the ability to facilitate consistent instructional strategies for ELLs.

Theme 2: Teachers Use Varied Individual Instructional Strategies to Support English Language Learners

The data stemming from the teacher participant interviews regarding the implementation of individual instructional strategies to support ELLs showed that they believed that differentiated instruction for individuals was needed as they work with

ELLs. The findings regarding individual instructional strategies were in alignment with the sociocultural theory. The participants communicated that students must be taught within the educational parameters in which the student is capable of learning. Participants generally seemed to implement individualized instruction by accommodating for the ELLs based on how long the student has been an ELL. Participant 5 stated:

> If they're coming brand new to the United States from their home country, I think they need a little more support than someone that has been in the United States from their home country for maybe a year or two and are acclimated a little more to the language. I think that they might not need as much support as those that have not been here that long.

Participant 9 asserted:

> The type of individual instructional strategies depends on the ability of the student. I identify the students reading and math levels. Then I assign an activity that he or she can do at their level. Also, I give them a choice on their finished product. When I give students an opportunity to pick from various ways their project can be completed, more students are willing to finish the assignment.

Furthermore, Participant 8 stated that students each learn at a different stage, and one might catch on to one part of the language sooner than the other and then vice versa later in the year. You get to see where they are struggling and get to work with them on their own. Participant 2 stated, "Different students are on different levels, so they need different attention. There are different programs I allow these students to work on. It's mainly the tiered work for individual students when they don't speak English at all." The

participants shared similar thoughts and perceptions about the need to facilitate individual

instructional strategies, which included providing ELLs with the same rights and

privileges as non-ELLs, allowing ELLs to learn at their own pace, and pairing ELLs with

peers that may assist in helping the ELLs advance in second language literacy. Each

participant contributed their experience in supporting ELLs in the general education

classroom. The participants felt the using individualized instructional strategies is critical

for increasing academic achievement for all students, including ELLs. The participants

reiterated that they felt ELLs are great kids to work with, and the students want to learn

and can learn when measures are taken to meet their needs.

The use of translator apps and websites, peer tutoring, small group instruction,

and bilingual versions of content material seemed to be the preferred methods of

implementing individual relevant instructional strategies for ELLs. Participants 2, 3, 4, 6,

and 7 agreed that using an app or website that translates benefits the ELLs individually

by allowing more communication between the students and teacher, which may lead to a

better understanding of content material. The participants discussed the positive aspects

of implementing individualized instructional strategies for ELLs. Participant 8 stated,

"During RTI time, I work on selecting recognition, word and letter recognition. I

checkpoint more on the one to one and work on that aspect to bring them to the next

level." Participants 2, 3, 5, 6, and 8 use small groups that include working with a peer

who speaks the ELLs' native language to help guide ELLs with understanding content-

related skills. Participant 3 stated, "The best thing for me has been the peer help. There

are so many students in our demographics who are just coming to us who speak very little

English, whereas some who were bought to the country many years ago are well-versed in the English language. I find that peer tutoring and working together helps." Participant 6 also reported the importance of peer tutoring, allowing students to gain another perspective on the material being taught. Participant 5 said the importance and benefits of small group time would enable ELLs to grasp a better understanding of instructions and clear up any misconceptions. All participants expressed a need for teachers to be consistent in providing individualized instruction for ELLs. There was a consensus among the participants that the small groups and peer tutoring were avenues for supporting ELLs' individual needs.

The participants expressed that there are bilingual resources designed to assist teachers of ELLs with implementing individualized instruction. Participants revealed that the bilingual resources could be used to assist the ELLs in following along in their native language while the teacher presents instruction in English. Participant 7 stated, "Spanish students had worksheets that were actually in Spanish, and they could connect with the lesson." Participants 1 and 3 reported that the use of the Spanish version of their text has helped ELLs understand the broader topics. All participants agreed that implementing individualized instruction is necessary for ELLs to progress academically. Implementing individualized instruction for ELLs will support their academic needs; however, the participants felt that more guidance on specific strategies to implement is vital in advancing ELLs academically.

The findings from this category correlated to Research Question 2. It helped to identify and understand the individual instructional strategies middle school seventh- and

eighth-grade general education teachers in a southern state implement to support ELLs'

academic achievement. No discrepancies were revealed regarding this theme.

Theme 3: Teachers Use Varied Cultural Instructional Strategies to Support the

Needs of English Language Learners

The data from the teacher participant interviews about implementing cultural

instructional strategies revealed that participants believe that embedding cultural

instructional strategies is important in diversifying learning for ELLs. The findings

regarding cultural instructional strategies were in alignment with the sociocultural theory.

The participants conveyed that presenting instruction that relates to the students creates a

more inclusive learning environment. Participants revealed that cultural instructional

strategies could be implemented by including stories that relate to various nationalities,

which aligns with the need to integrate students' cultural background in instruction as

stressed by Lucas et al. (2008). Participant 8 stated:

As far as culture, I like to ask them to share their family's culture. Usually, when

their peers show an interest in something that they never experienced, it motivates them

to share more. It teaches them that it is important that we have diversity. They are more

confident in themselves and realize they are not different. It is not just us teaching them,

but them teaching us, which makes them a lot more comfortable with learning.

Participant 1 shared:

The inclusion part is the most important. Because the more they can interact with

the other students, the faster they can learn the language. I would read about

children going to school in different countries and made sure to touch on the ones

that represented the students we had first.

Regarding the implementation of cultural instructional strategies, Participant 9 stated, "I

implement projects in which ELLs can research a famous person from their culture.

Sometimes the students learn information that they did not know about their culture. I

find that they open like a rose because there is some stuff they never knew about their

race. They end up loving a project they thought they would hate."

Some participants generally wanted to support ELLs through cultural instructional

strategies but believed that avenues exist that impede cultural instruction from

transpiring. A source of frustration for participants is little avenues exist to deviate from

the prescribed curriculum. The participants felt the expectation is to teach the Tier I

curriculum as dictated by the district. Participate 6 asserted, "The curriculum is so set.

There's not whole lot you can do." Participant 2 also mentioned that the curriculum is

mainly spelled out on what can and cannot be changed. Participant 3 communicated, "In

my classroom due to the demand, time, and strength of the curriculum we have to teach,

there's not a lot of time. We are very structured. We have a Tier I, so we are not allowed

to deviate." The findings of the implementation of cultural instructional strategies related

to Research Question 1. Most of the participants expressed that embedding cultural

instruction is important for ELLs to progress in their education. The information shared

by the participants did not reveal any discrepancies with this theme.

Theme 4: General Education Teachers Want Preparation and Relevant Professional Development to Instruct English Language Learners

The data gathered from the participant interviews regarding the ability to facilitate consistent instructional strategies and the preparation they have received to support ELLs academically, via professional development, aligned with the self-efficacy theory in that preparation and professional development play a role in their ability to provide individualized and culturally relevant instruction to ELLs. The interviews revealed convincing ideas that schools should be institutions of opportunity for all students. The data from this category also aligned to Research Question 3. It helped to identify and understand how general education teacher perceptions of preparation and professional development impact their ability to facilitate consistent individual and cultural strategies for ELLs.

The participants expressed that there are curriculum facilitators to prepare teachers of ELLs with providing individualized and culturally relevant instruction; however, the participants felt that preparation needs to include more experiences and guidance about how to meet the needs of ELLs successfully. When asked about the type of assistance that has been beneficial in implementing consistent practices for ELLs, Participant 7 stated, "None. A lady would come in once a year to talk about it quickly, 20, 30 minutes of our time to go over our rubric. They do not tell us too much to do with them. Participant 5 replied, "I think there could be more strategies to show you how they can be implemented than just trying to figure out something on your own." Participant 8 noted, "It's just the normal Response to Intervention (RTI) time that I have chosen to take

resources offline and use." Participant 1stated, "Mainly technology and videos. You can get a Spanish version of a lesson. It would be nice to have a human come in and help bridge the gap a little more than just having us look at our ELL forms." Participant 4 responded:

> We have been given minimal. I have used my cell phone app before. Currently, I tend to use Google classroom because I teach online. They have a way to change the language for the course to other native languages so that the student can learn, and they have that ability. I will show them how to use that when we first start at the beginning of the year. They have that option too, not necessarily dual language, but it will change it to their native language to learn what they are trying to teach. I think that it is important they have the resources to learn to the best of their ability.

Furthermore, participants 2 and 3 communicated the use of translators to help ELLs.

One participant, though in the agreement of having to go on their own and search the internet for instructional strategies to use with ELLs, was discrepant in their thoughts about the assistance received to facilitate consistent individual and cultural instructional strategies. The teacher conveyed that more than minimal assistance had been given. The participant felt that planning period meetings, staff development days, observing of exemplary teachers, and common planning meetings were times that were instrumental in gaining ideas for hands-on examples and modeling on how to implement instructional practices for ELLs consistently. Regarding assistance, Participant 9 stated, "We reviewed

the standards and discussed what methods would be used to ensure the 50% to 75% of the students could competently demonstrate their understanding of the content."

The participants stated that there needs to be more information is given and professional development on how to support ELLs, both individually and culturally. Most participants felt they had not received sufficient preparation and professional development to help ELLs reach their full potential. Overall, the participants discussed their knowledge of receiving assistance and desire to gain support to implement consistent facilitation of instructional strategies.

Alignment of Themes to the Research Questions

The findings provided an understanding of participants' perceptions of supporting ELLs and strategies to implement individual and cultural instruction. According to the findings in this study, as teachers received guidance on how to employ varied instructional practices, their level of self-efficacy improved in the learning environment. Provisions from school leaders for successful implementation of individual and culturally relevant instructional strategies will lead to creating strategies that will support the academic needs of ELLs. In this section, I will present how the themes align with the RQs.

Findings for Research Question 1

Research Question 1 pertained to the following question: What cultural relevant instructional strategies do middle school seventh- and eighth-grade general education teachers in a southern state implement to support the academic achievement of ELLs? Questions 1 through 5 from the interview protocol were used to answer RQ1. The intent

of the RQ1 was to elicit responses that linked teacher implementation of cultural instruction to their consistency in supporting ELLs. Cultural instruction allowed teachers to academically prepare all students, including ELLs, with experiencing social constructs that transmit development for culturally organized individuals. Teachers understood that ELLs learn best when instructional strategies match their education needs. ELLs enroll in schools with varied experiences, languages, and cultural needs. To support ELLs, school leaders must assist teachers in adjusting their instruction. Theme 3 aligned with RQ 1 because teachers used varied cultural instructional strategies to support ELLs.

The participants shared in-depth information about their perceptions of cultural instruction when working with ELLs. The participants believed that supporting ELLs includes having an awareness of the backgrounds of the students and integrating cultural learning into instruction to diversify education. There were two areas that the teachers saw as vital to providing cultural instruction. The teachers were understanding of different nationalities and embedding time into the prescribed curriculum. Many participants stated that the implementation of inclusive cultural instruction could be achieved using various avenues. The participants stated that infusing cultural literature and activities that allow students to learn of other backgrounds will enable ELLs to feel a sense of belonging, which leads to the students wanting to learn despite the difficulties they may encounter. Many participants reported that embedding ELLs' cultural backgrounds into instruction allow them to gain access to integrated instruction in which all students can learn the importance of diversity, and individuals from your diverse background contribute to society.

The data stemming from the participant interview regarding culturally relevant instruction also showed that teachers believe time constraints should be adjusted to allow for embedment of cultural strategies for learning. The participants expressed that non-deviation from the mandated curricula impacts their ability to provide cultural aspects of instruction consistently. This data also aligned with Research Question 3 because the participants note the aspect that hinders their ability to provide consistent cultural instruction.

Findings for Research Question 2

Research Question 2 pertained to the following question: What individual relevant instructional strategies do middle school seventh- and eighth-grade general education teachers in a southern state implement to support the academic achievement of ELLs? Questions 6 through 7 from the interview protocol were used to answer RQ2. The intent of the RQ2 was to elicit responses that linked teacher implementation of individualized instruction to their consistency in supporting ELLs. Themes 2 connected with Research Question 2, establishing that teachers use varied individualized instructional strategies to support ELLs' academic needs. Individualized instruction allowed teachers to academically prepare all students, including ELLs, to experience academic success according to their proximal development zones. Teachers expressed that ELLs learn better when classroom instruction was representative of the students' educational needs. ELLs must have an equitable opportunity to gain access to the same general education academic curricula as non-ELLs. Teachers in the general education classrooms used a

variety of strategies that were relevant to assisting ELLs with understanding the curriculum standards.

The participants shared in-depth information about their goal to assist the ELLs as best as possible. The participants believed that supporting ELLs includes an awareness of the students' specific academic needs. The participants' areas as vital to providing individualized instruction were teacher experience, individualized assistance from peers, and bilingual resources. The number of years of teaching experience in educating ELLs was communicated as the main factor for providing individualized instruction. Most participants expressed the use of peer tutors and small group practices to assist ELLs. Participants reported that they either have access to resources located within the curriculum or resources obtained, which impacts their ability to provide consistent individual instruction.

Findings for Research Question 3

Research Question 3 pertained to the following question: What are the perceptions of middle school seventh- and eighth-grade general education teachers in a southern state regarding strategies to facilitate consistent implementation of cultural and individual instructional strategies for ELLs? Questions 8 through 11 from the interview protocol were used to answer RQ3. The intent of the RQ3 was to elicit responses that linked teacher perceptions of their ability to provide consistency in supporting ELLs. Themes 1 and 4 aligned with Research Question 3, establishing that teachers want preparation and relevant professional development to support ELLs' academic needs. Preparation assists in providing teachers knowledge of approaches that will inform

teachers how to adjust instruction to improve ELLs' academic outcomes. Professional development provides teachers with time to learn of ways that facilitate consistency in teaching methods.

The data gathered from the participants regarding their ability to facilitate consistent cultural and individualized instruction and assistance they have received to support ELLs academically aligned with Research Question 3. The interviews revealed that the participants' ability to facilitate consistent instruction was influenced by their perceptions of assistance received. Most participants expressed that they have not received correspondence or participated in inadequate training from district leaders on how to instruct the ELL population effectively. The participants stressed that there needs to be more directives and professional development on how to help ELLs succeed in the general education classroom.

There was a discrepant case in the findings for Research Question 3. One of the teacher participants strongly felt that assistance was provided for supporting ELLs academically. The participant believed that school leaders aided through meeting and professional opportunities. The case was noted as discrepant in the study findings.

Interpretation of the Findings

The purpose of this qualitative study was to further understand middle school seventh- and eighth-grade general education teachers' implementation of cultural and individual instructional strategies to support the academic achievement of ELLs. In this section, I interpret the findings as they relate to the larger body of literature and discuss the conceptual framework that guided this study. I also explain the relation of the results

to what the participants needed to support ELLs' consistent implementation of instructional strategies.

Relationship of Findings to the Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework that guided this study was Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural learning theory and Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theory. This conceptual framework was used to investigate strategies teachers use to implement individual and cultural instruction and teachers' perceptions of facilitating consistent instruction in a general education classroom of ELLs. The conceptual framework comprised the need for teachers to incorporate individual instruction to assist ELLs in becoming successful in an inclusive learning environment. ELLs' general education teachers stated the need to provide individual instruction to help ELLs receive an equitable education and increase the likelihood of student success. The teachers communicated that it would be beneficial to receive guidelines and training on how to support ELLs individually and culturally. The participants in this study welcomed opportunities to gain knowledge and experience in implementing consistent strategies to enhance their instructional methods.

The sociocultural theory encompasses an emphasis on providing instruction between an individual's actual and potential levels of development under adult guidance or in collaboration with peers (Vygotsky, 1978). According to Vygotsky, students also internalize information through social interaction. As revealed in the works of Vygotsky, general education teachers must consider scaffolding instruction based on the students' actual and potential learning levels. In the study, the general education teachers

communicated that ELLs could learn the content when allowed to master foundational skills and build upon the newly acquired knowledge.

According to Bandura (1977), one's sense of self-efficacy impacts their ability to bring about desired outcomes. Bandura noted four aspects of self-efficacy: mastery experience, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and emotional states with mastery experience as the most impactful on an individual's ability to succeed with a task. Bandura emphasized that individuals who have a high sense of self-efficacy have more motivation to learn a task. The participants' perceived that their ability to make consistent progress in providing individual and cultural instruction aligns with mastering an understanding of what specifically must be implemented to achieve optimal instructional results. Participants expressed that some form of training was provided by the district. However, they wanted to learn of how to consistently implement strategies to aid in maximizing their instruction for ELLs.

Relationship to Findings in Literature

In this section, I will relate the themes originated from the participants' responses to the prior literature discussed in Section 1. The themes are teachers' belief in their ability to provide consistent instruction (Theme 1), teachers use varied instructional strategies to meet the individual needs of ELLs (Theme 2), teachers use varied cultural instructional strategies to meet the needs of ELLs (Theme 3), and general education teachers want preparation and relevant professional development to instruct ELLs (Theme 4). Theme 1 and 4 and Theme 2 and 3 are discussed together, respectively.

Themes 1 and 4. Rizzuto (2017) asserted that teachers who have clarity in using instructional strategies possess more effectiveness in meeting the needs of linguistically and culturally diverse students making the teachers' perceptions on the facilitation of consistent instructional strategies vital for which aligns with Theme 1. The level of self-efficacy plays a role in the teacher's ability to master the task (Korkmaz & Unsal, 2016). In this study, the participants' perception of their level of expertise related to the challenges faced. According to Heineke et al. (2019), teachers face a challenge acquiring competencies and understanding to meet ELLs' cultural and individual needs (Theme 4). The participants in this study believed that there was a need to receive directives and training on specific strategies to meet ELLs' academic needs. According to the participants, receiving guidelines would help general education teachers become knowledgeable about instructional practices that can be used to help students master standards across subject areas. Furthermore, the researchers added that teacher self-confidence in their ability on preparedness for diverse learners impacts how instruction is provided. Wong et al. (2016) stated that teachers who receive guidance in second language acquisition provide more consistency for students' needs; therefore, it is crucial to ensure appropriate instructional guidance for teachers that support the needs of ELLs.

Themes 2 and 3. Echevarria et al. (2015) asserted the importance of general education teachers providing varied instruction, which makes individual and cultural strategies vital for ELL instruction (Theme 2 and 3). According to Byrd (2016), cultural instruction increases academic growth for ELLs (Theme 3). The participants in this study felt that is was crucial to adjust instruction to provide ELLs with an opportunity of

learning that was equivalent to the instruction provided to non-ELLs (Theme 2 and 3). The participants structured their practices to provide students with the individual instructional time, peer learning opportunities, and bilingual assistance (Theme 2 and 3). General education teachers should focus on the developmental levels of the students (Roberson, 2017). Furthermore, teachers impact ELLs' development with the application of sociocultural strategies (Lachance et al., 2019). Participants in the study agreed that providing individual and cultural instruction is a meaningful way to reach the anticipated outcome.

The participants used a variety of individual and cultural strategies to assist with academic growth for ELLs. Some of the strategies used included providing individual and cultural instruction during the response to intervention time and small grouping. The findings as they related to Theme 2 and 3 were like the kinds of strategies reported in previous research. Lucas et al. (2008) and Feryok (2017) stated that making connections between classroom instruction and students' background is a way to assist students in making meaning of content. Brown et al. (2017) and Diaz-Rico (2017) noted that teachers must implement specific practices relative to ELLs' cultural and individual needs. During the response to intervention and small grouping instruction, participants in the study acknowledged ELLs' unique academic needs and implemented student-specific strategies to support learning. Above all, researchers emphasized that general education teachers accommodate the diverse educational needs of ELLs.

Project Deliverable

The purpose of this study was to understand middle school seventh- and eighth-grade seventh- and eighth-grade general education teachers' implementation of cultural and individual instructional strategies to support the academic achievement of ELLs. The research uncovered several themes regarding the instructional strategies general education teachers use to support ELLs and the perception of the ability to facilitate consistent instructional practices for ELLs. The themes included teachers' belief in their ability to provide consistent instruction in general education, teachers use varied individual instructional strategies to support the ELLs, teachers use varied cultural instructional strategies to support the ELLs, and general education teachers want preparation and relevant professional development to instruct ELLs.

There were two aspects of project deliverable envisioned for this study: policy recommendation paper and professional training. The findings of this study revealed that middle school seventh- and eighth-grade seventh- and eighth-grade general education teachers felt a need for more guidelines to support culturally and linguistically diverse students. Also shown in the findings, the teachers conveyed a lack of professional development regarding the preparation to address ELLs' diverse needs. Based on the information collected during the project study, a position paper describing the findings and recommending suggestions for change for the local school leaders was considered most appropriate. Based on the research outcomes and scholarly literature, the position paper will outline the local problem, explain the research findings, support the research

findings through peer-reviewed literature, and provide suggestions for change within the local school district.

Conclusion

The participants in this qualitative project study were nine middle school seventh- and eighth-grade seventh- and eighth-grade general education teachers of ELLs. The teacher shared their experience, perceptions, and knowledge about implementing individual and culturally relevant instructional strategies to support ELLs in a general education setting. A detailed narrative discussion of the findings delineated themes that resulted from the participants' interviews. Small grouping and peer tutoring were the most used methods of individual instruction. Embedding literature aspects into teaching was most noted for cultural instruction. The participants communicated that there was a need for preparation and training to provide instruction that would improve ELLs' academic performance in the general education setting. In Section 3, I will discuss the project for this study, the rationale for the project, the literature review, project description and goals, project evaluation plan, and project implications for social change.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

A position paper to the local school leaders was the proposed project based on this qualitative study. I wrote a position paper to the local school leaders explaining the findings and presenting suggestions for change. Within the position paper, I conveyed the local problem, summarized the research findings, presented evidence from literature and research to support the findings, and outlined recommendations for change based on the evidence and reviewed literature.

The data I obtained from the individual interviews revealed the middle school seventh- and eighth-grade general education teachers' perception of preparedness in supporting ELLs' academic needs. Teachers' perceptions of their ability to instruct ELLs stemmed from the preparation and guidance received from the local school leaders. The teachers also shared that the support ELLs individually and culturally impacts the students' ability to achieve; however, the professional development in this area was inadequate. They received minimal guidance during professional sessions regarding the diverse needs of students from different cultural backgrounds or instruction on how to use effective ELL instructional strategies that promote second language literacy. Finally, the teachers conveyed that they would appreciate receiving guidelines from the school leaders in the local school district to enhance their instructional practices to maintain consistency in supporting ELLs. The findings aligned with sociocultural theory because they represented teachers' needs to implement strategies based on students' levels of understanding and infusion of cultural elements. The teachers embedding strategies based

on their perceptions and personal experiences also aligned with the self-efficacy theory about the teachers' perceptions impacting their ability to facilitate consistent instructional strategies. After analyzing the data, I concluded a need to provide district and school leaders of the study site with recommendations for a course of action to help middle school seventh- and eighth-grade general education teachers of ELLs gain a deeper understanding of the needs of ELLs as well as provide teachers with the necessary instructional strategies to maintain consistent cultural and individual instruction to promote the academic achievement.

Rationale

The rationale for developing this position paper centered around the personal interviews with middle school seventh- and eighth-grade general education teachers in which participants revealed their cultural and instructional strategies and perceptions about their ability to support ELLs with consistent cultural and individual instructional strategies. Data based on RQ 3 indicated that experiences teachers had in their careers impact the use of instructional strategies implemented in the general education classroom. Additionally, most teachers conveyed that formal guidelines were needed to detail how to support this population's needs and that professional development opportunities in this area were warranted. The introduction of cultural and individual strategies for this population of students occurred in short segments while attending sessions offered by the local school on rubrics. As the overall goal for the project is to share knowledge and disseminate information, the best project for this study is a position paper.

After analyzing the data, I concluded that there was a need for a position paper to help teachers gain guidance on how to support ELLs. This position paper can benefit the district and school leaders of the study site by providing a detailed account of the research findings and recommendation of an approach for action using professional development to improve the broader issue. The use of professional development may impact teachers and students at the local study site; however, a position paper can impact teacher preparation initiatives and instructional guidance by school leaders and promote the use of centralized discussion with novice teachers on how to support ELLs consistently. The creation of a position paper provided an avenue to increase the likelihood that teachers' professional needs will be met in the short and long terms.

Further, to address needs of middle school seventh- and eighth-grade general education teachers of ELLs to facilitate consistent learning endeavors and to close the achievement disparities between this population of students and their non-ELLs peers, teachers must receive guidance and preparation. Sense of preparedness correlates with self-efficacy, and individuals with a high sense of self-efficacy are better prepared to accomplish tasks (Bandura, 1977). Teachers can expect to have ELLs in their classrooms at some point during their teaching career and implement policies and learn practices about ELLs (Faltis & Valdés, 2016). It is imperative to provide guidelines about the instructional strategies and knowledge teachers need to gain a high level of self-efficacy to instruct the growing diverse population of students.

In the position paper, I address the issues of teachers' perceptions of providing consistent instruction, individual and cultural instructional strategies for ELLs, and

teacher preparation and professional development as revealed by the research findings. I cite research corresponding to the areas of concern to assist school and district leaders in understanding the implication of the results. Within the position paper, I provide the study site recommendations of strategies and actions to school and district leaders to address the concerns revealed in the data analysis.

<div align="center">**Review of the Literature**</div>

In this doctoral project study, I aimed to investigate the instructional strategies implemented by middle school seventh and eighth-grade general education teachers to support ELLs' academic needs and teachers' perceptions of their ability to instruct ELLs with consistent practices. A position paper was developed from the findings. Additionally, I conducted an intensive literature review focused on the sociocultural theory by Lev Vygotsky (1978) and self-efficacy theory by Albert Bandura (1977), teacher perceptions of preparation and self-efficacy, teacher perceptions and ELLs, teacher preparedness for diverse learners, and instructional practices for ELLs. To conduct this literature review successfully, I located and accessed peer-reviewed research and scholarly articles through the Walden University Library via searches in the ERIC, Sage Journals, Education Source, and ProQuest Central databases. The keywords searched were *position paper*, *policy paper*, *position paper in educational research*, *white paper*, *guidelines for instructing English language learners*, *second language acquisition*, *consistent instruction*, *professional training*, *facilitating consistent instruction*, *cultural instruction*, *individualized instruction*, and *impact of leadership on teachers' perceived self-efficacy*. The peer-reviewed and scholarly articles were published in the last 5 years

except for sources that provide insight on theories. The combination of Boolean phrases

and the use of databases from the Walden University Library played a role in providing

access to literature that allowed for saturation of information relevant to the data analysis

findings of the project study. To establish the structure for this project, the review of

literature included a discussion of position papers and the relation of this genre in

addressing the interconnecting themes presented in this study.

Position Paper

A position paper was developed to recommend a change to school and district

leaders of the local study site about guidelines and professional development

opportunities as a mechanism to increase consistency in teachers' instructional practices.

Position papers serve as reports or informative narratives that convey recommendations

or positions about an issue (Golden, Katzman, Ornstein, & Sawyer, 2015; Leal et al.,

2018; Newsom & Haynes, 2018). Historically, position papers were used as government

reports due to legitimate nature (Graham, 2013). In the mid-1980s, government leaders

shifted toward focusing on educational reform, which resulted in an advancing theme of

recommendation and change in education (Coburn, Hill, & Spillane, 2016). Today,

recommendation endeavors emphasize cohesive adjustments that match professional

development (Shukla, Sudhakar, Baredar, & Mamat, 2018). Authored by officials in

government, medicine, law, education, and other domains of study, position papers are

designed to persuade the audience to follow recommendations or positions of the

presenter (Eckhardt & Poletti, 2016; Rutgers University, 2017). Serving as tools for

business and educational communication, position papers aid in demonstrating the

author's stance regarding a specific subject or need (Brown, 2017). In this case, I used the position paper to present findings of this study and data as evidence on why guidance and professional development are recommended to address the issue experienced by general education middle school teachers.

Structural advantage. Regardless of the domain or discipline, most position papers include six components: (a) an introductory aspect detailing the history and demographics of the participants and their environment; (b) the problem and how it impacts the participants; (c) evidence of the problem in the local setting and literature; (d) a review of research relating to the problem and the participants; (e) the recommendations to mitigate the issues; and (f) the implications of the suggested recommendations as they relate to the participants (Ansre, 2017; Crowley, 2015; Daniel & Sulmasy, 2015). Holistically, the components assist in organizing the author's approach to design the position paper, establishing credibility, analyzing strengths and weaknesses of the author's position, and presenting the written position paper or recommendations in a succinct and informative approach (Cox & Hodgkinson-Williams, 2015).

Relevance. School leaders depend on research to guide policymaking decisions (Babalola & Gbolahan, 2016). But the abundant amount of information presented in research papers might impede stakeholders in making decisions about issues. Readers could become exhausted by the time required to assimilate the complexity of research papers (Cairney & Oliver, 2017). Stakeholders prefer position papers because of the condensed presentation of results into a concise document (Dagenais & Ridde, 2018). As

a result, concise reports detailing the recommendations and actions based on evidence informing and supporting the findings can be used to inform readers (Rose et al., 2018). Thus, school and district leaders at the study site for this project will gain access to data in a condensed format.

Position Paper Education Related

In education, position papers have enabled discussion on emerging topics. Position papers can aid school leaders in decisions on issues such as educational practices and policies. Current education-related position papers on a range of issues are discussed. For example, Hubers (2020) presented a position paper on sustainable second-order educational change in which the school organization attempts to make a transformational change. Teachers' professional development is a vital component in second-order change (Hubers, 2020). In the position paper, Hubers reviewed characteristics of the sustainable second-order change and recommendations for methodological considerations. Hubers noted that one characteristic of sustainable change is the process of individual professional development and organizational learning and changing behavior. Collecting data about teachers' perceptions to determine why and how the educational change impacts the teachers' everyday practices was provided as a recommendation for long-term change. School leaders can use this type of position paper to determine what elements of practice can be used to promote positive outcomes that pave the way for sustainable educational change.

In another position paper, Egbert and Shahrokni (2019) argued that computer-assisted language learning teachers and professional development providers must use a

competency-based approach to make sure teachers are prepared for ELLs to master content. The authors discussed best practices in providing teachers training. Egbert and Shahrokni asserted that the approaches intend to prepare teachers with adequate knowledge and skills to facilitate learning. This type of position paper promotes the use of specific instructional strategies to enhance teacher competency and student achievement.

Professional Development for Teachers

One theme that emerged from the findings was that the general education teachers want preparation and relevant professional development to instruct ELLs. Based on data and teachers' professional needs, leaders in school districts need to provide professional development for teachers to enhance their teaching abilities (Babinski, Amendum, Knotek, Sánchez, & Malone, 2018). The leaders in the local school district must adopt changes that establish a continuous devotion to ensuring middle school seventh and eighth-grade general education teachers receive training to meet their needs in support of students for long-term change to occur. There is a need for teacher training that better prepares teachers because as the number of ELLs continues to grow, school leaders are faced with ensuring teachers are well prepared to provide instruction to all students, including those who are learning English (Feiman-Nemser, 2018). When teachers cannot count on a consistent routine, they cannot use their skills for the maximum benefit for students, including ELLs (Peercy, Ditter, & Destefano, 2017). Understanding how to support culturally and linguistically diverse students consistently has been vital in preparing teachers for instruction. Having practical professional development is an

avenue to assist teachers in building the knowledge, skills, and ability to affect practices

positively (Tait-McCutcheon & Drake, 2016). Building skills among teachers to meet

ELLs' cultural and individual needs can help teachers feel prepared and equipped to

adjust instructional practices to meet the needs of ELLs.

Targeted professional development can enhance middle school seventh and

eighth-grade general education teachers' instruction. Research has indicated that through

the inclusion of culture and language training, teacher instruction improved as noted by

the number of ELLs obtaining a proficient score on state assessments grew between 6%

to 48% (Johnson, Bolshakova, & Waldron, 2016). research on teachers' instructional

differences related to English as a second language strategies indicated that teachers who

received professional development that only included district information on the district-

adopted curriculum implement less sociocultural and individual strategies for ELLs (Irby

et al., 2018). But professional learning needs to support teachers in becoming

comfortable with ELL instructional strategies and encouraged school leaders to consider

ongoing, targeted professional learning opportunities on appropriate ELL instructional

strategies for teachers (Irby et al., 2018).

Another theme that emerged in the research was teachers' belief in their ability to

provide consistent instruction in general education. For example, Coady, Harper, and de

Jong (2016) explored how teachers' perceptions of their preparation shaped their

instructional practice for ELLs. It was noted that mainstream teachers working with ELLs

rarely implemented specific ELL practices to facilitate ELLs' English language

development. According to Coady et al., there must be teacher preparations in which

teachers develop the knowledge and skills to engage in the inclusive practice of linguistic and cultural norms of ELLs instead of mere exposure to Euro-American experiences:

> As classrooms become increasingly linguistically and culturally diverse, teacher preparation programs must ensure that teachers make conscious and informed instructional decisions based on ELLs' learning needs. Teacher candidates need to be able to make decisions for ELLs based on their understanding of why certain instructional practice might be more effective than others for ELLs. (pp.363-364)

Additionally, Okhremtchouk and Sellu (2019) conducted a study to examine teacher readiness and their perceptions on preparation to instruct ELLs. One goal of the study was to understand how exposure to ELLs in-service settings impacts teachers' belief about their self-competence to support ELLs. Findings from the study indicated that a strong association between teacher preparation and the feeling of readiness to instruct ELLs (Okhremtchouk & Sellu, 2019). The participants reported a greater self-competency in their ability to address ELLs' needs in the classroom after attending teacher training in which an opportunity existed to interact with and test their knowledge relating to supporting ELLs in practice. The findings from the study aligned with Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theory on the correlation of one's perception of their ability on their performance. Bandura noted that vicarious experiences occur when individuals believe in their ability to perform on the perception of seeing someone master a task. In this case, the participants experienced mastery of the task through training. Similarly, Villegas, SaizdeLaMora, Martin, and Mills (2018) asserted that teachers

become more amenable to instructing ELLs when they have an opportunity to test their theoretical knowledge of addressing the needs of ELLs.

Methods. Importance has existed exists for school leaders to offer relevant professional development opportunities to general education teachers to promote continued professional growth and prepare the teachers to support the needs of the students they instruct. Professional development on how to facilitate consistent instruction to meet the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students should be included in professional development opportunities. All stakeholders in education must seek the best approaches to help teachers. Through professional training, teachers could inherently gain knowledge on how to support the needs of ELLs. One approach to providing professional development to teachers is the use of professional learning communities. According to Lee (2020), professional learning communities have allowed teachers to explore and continuously improve all areas for teaching. Teachers could engage in active learning and cooperation with colleagues in professional learning communities. Lee (2020) found that engagement in professional learning communities positively impacts teachers' self-efficacy. Growth in teachers' ability to master a task could stimulate teachers' process of adapting instruction to support ELLs academically. Slack (2019) revealed that meaningful changes in teachers' mindset and practice occur when facilitators in professional learning communities possess knowledge of both language acquisition and use methods to support adult learning. Moreover, the use of professional learning communities to provide training for teachers could encourage teachers to identify additional ways to facilitate instruction consistently.

For sustainable change, school and district leaders could use another approach to provide training opportunities for teachers to witness how the change benefits their instructional practices in microteaching. According to Kusmawan (2017), "online microteaching integrates video-taped teaching strategies with expert opinions, teacher judgments, and discussion forms" (p. 43). As a multifaceted approach, online microteaching has allowed teachers to identify strengths and weaknesses based on the review of experts (Kusmawan, 2017). The benefits could increase teacher self-efficacy in providing consistent cultural and individual instruction.

Project Description

This project will be presented to school leaders in the form of a position paper (Appendix A). The research findings related to the local study site will be addressed in the position paper. The goal of this project will help local school leaders understand how middle school seventh- and eighth-grade seventh- and eighth-grade seventh- and eighth-grade general education teachers' instructional practices used to support ELLs and to understand better their perception of their ability to facilitate consistent cultural and individual strategies for ELLs. The project will help the study site's local leaders gain insight and more understanding of how to assist the general education teachers in supporting ELLs academically. Overall, the project will assist ELLs as their general education teachers will gain a deeper understanding of the students' academic needs and be better equipped with consistent strategies to effectively work with culturally and linguistically diverse students in the general education setting. My obligation to this project is to create a clearly articulated position paper and present it to the local school

and district leaders. I will contact the school and district leaders to establish a time and location to present the position paper. It will be the local school and district leaders' responsibility to provide the location, attend the presentation, and decide regarding the implementation of the recommendations in the position paper.

Based on the data, the position paper will provide recommendations to school and district leaders in each area identified as impacting teacher perceptions of their ability to facilitate consistent instruction for ELLs, including individual instructional strategies, culturally instructional strategies, and teacher preparation and professional training. A major aspect for the school and district leaders to contemplate is embedding teacher assessment in which teachers can identify their perceptions of facilitating cultural and individual instructional strategies of ELLs before the beginning of the new school year. Additionally, a recommendation that district and school leaders provide guidelines, and professional development focused on the diverse needs, and teacher support of ELLs is found in the position paper. The guidance and professional development should include input from ELL facilitators and supports to help explain the socio-cultural needs of this group of students, and detailed instructional strategies teachers can implement with ELLs. School and district leaders should revisit guidelines and professional development throughout the year using teacher assessment to identify what implementations occurred, teachers' ability to provide instruction consistently, and the outcome on the academic achievement of ELLs.

The outcomes of this project will be an increased opportunity for teachers to facilitate consistent instruction for ELLs; an increase in communication between

instructional and administrative school departments as more collaborative efforts

transpire in the approach to support teachers; an increased awareness among middle

school general education teachers on the resources available to support students from

culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds; the development of teacher assessments

that allow teachers to gain insight on their perceptions of instructing ELLs; creation of

guidelines and professional development opportunities designed to aid teachers in

understanding the sociocultural needs of ELLs; professional development provided to

teachers with strategies to support the needs of diverse students; development of

stakeholders to help assist with supporting the needs of the students; and inquiry on the

strategies used to best support ELLs and the impact on the students.

Resources, Supports, and Potential Barriers

The resources needed to implement this project successfully is the position paper.

District and school leaders will also receive the position paper at the established meeting

in which I request to present the data from the qualitative study and recommendations.

Additionally, participants will receive an electronic copy of the position paper via email

before the established meeting to keep.

The project was designed to help local school leaders understand how they can

better assist middle school seventh- and eighth-grade seventh- and eighth-grade general

education teachers in providing consistent implementation of instructional strategies to

meet ELLs' academic needs. Due to social distancing restrictions associated with the

coronavirus pandemic, one potential barrier to presenting this project is the willingness of

potential participants to meet and discuss the project outcomes. One alternative to

overcome this barrier is to acknowledge social distancing restrictions, send the position

paper electronically, and invite the participants to conduct the meeting via virtual

mechanisms such as Zoom or Google Meet. Other solutions to overcome the barrier is to

offer the participants an opportunity to meet a future date and invite the participants to

contact me with concerns or questions about the project.

Another potential barrier is the participants' availability to attend due to

restructuring of planning periods in the local school district. If sufficient time is not

designated for teachers' development of knowledge and skills, the implementation of the

recommendations in the position paper may not occur successfully. This barrier can be

overcome through flexible scheduling. The meeting can occur individually or in groups

to accommodate discrepancies in schedules.

Proposal for Implementation and Timetable

Communicating the findings from this study with the school and district leaders is

vital to promote change. I intend to present the position paper at the beginning of the

school year before the new school year. The presentation would allow school and district

leaders to develop and implement assessments for teacher perspectives during the fall

semester of school, then develop guidelines and present a professional development

opportunity during the winter semester of the school year.

<div align="center">

Project Evaluation Plan

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A position paper was selected to present the research data to the school and

district leaders of the study site and make recommendations for how the school

leadership can improve the instructional practices for middle school seventh- and eighth-

grade seventh- and eighth-grade general education teachers based on the data collected from the participants' interviews. A goal-based and outcome-based evaluation plan will be used for this project. Goals-based evaluation centers around a judgment based on the goals and objectives of a program (Caffarella & Daffron, 2013). The justification for this type of project evaluation centers around the use of themes to identify the data, genre of the project, and the desired outcome for both general education teachers and ELLs. A successful presentation of research to school and district leaders of the local study site, the leaders' consideration to use the results to implement the recommendations, and the development of an action plan to address the findings are the goals associated with this project. Several desired outcomes will be evaluated: an increase in the teachers' knowledge; skills; consistency, and perceived ability in supporting ELLs in the local school district; creation of guidelines and professional development opportunities to help teachers understand the cultural and individual needs of ELLs; and professional development opportunities that provide teachers with strategies to facilitate the implementation of consistent cultural and individual instruction.

Key stakeholders are impacted by this project. School and district leaders will be responsible for establishing the meeting time and location, participating in the meeting, and making decisions regarding the implementation of the recommendations. The middle school seventh- and eighth-grade seventh- and eighth-grade general education teachers participating in the professional development opportunities will be held accountable for implementing the strategies. ELLs will gain an increase in academic achievement in their general education classes.

The evaluation will involve formative feedback on aspects related to presenting the position paper to school and district leaders. The evaluation will involve formative feedback on aspects related to presenting the position paper to school and district leaders. The school and district leaders' engagement, including questions asked and commitment to pursue implementation of the recommendation found in the position paper, will occur to assess the project. The evaluation plan will also include a follow-up meeting with school and district leaders to obtain information on teachers' responses and feedback on the knowledge gained, findings from assessments on teachers' perception, and the impact on ELLs academic achievement to measure the effectiveness of teachers' implementation of instructional strategies offered through professional development.

Project Implications

The project revealed middle school seventh- and eighth-grade seventh- and eighth-grade general education teachers' use of cultural and individual strategies and perceptions of their ability to facilitate consistent instruction to support ELLs' academic achievement. However, data analysis indicated the need for more guidance and professional development from school and district leaders on the diverse needs of ELLs and instructional strategies to increase consistency in the implementation of instruction. Implications for social change are in this project.

The presentation of the position paper has implications for change in other school districts that extend beyond the local study site. For administrators, the execution of professional development based on the teacher's perceptions could increase communication avenue and impact ELLs' achievement. The improvement in

communication could lead to advancements in pedagogy for teachers. An increase in the teachers' knowledge, skills, consistency, and perceived ability to supporting ELLs in the local school district could occur, which could lead to an increase in the achievement of ELLs. From the rise in performance, ELLs could become informed students who would be able to positively impact social change. A short-term implication of social change could be an increased awareness of the significance of facilitating consistent instructional strategies for ELLs. The position paper could be shared with other leaders in school districts with similar demographics. In a broader context, other school districts could conduct a similar study regarding the cultural and individual strategies general education implement to support ELLs and the teachers' perception of facilitating consistent instruction for ELLs. The position paper can serve as a catalyst for other school districts across the U.S. as the project has the potential to encourage the implementation of consistent practices when supporting ELLs academically.

Conclusion

Based on the outcome of this qualitative study, the project is a position paper explaining the local problem and recommendations to the local school and district leaders based on a review of literature relevant to the research findings. In Section 3, the project was outlined to include a recommendation of the position paper, rationale for the genre, literature review, project description, barriers and potential solutions, evaluation, and implications for change. In Section 4, I will discuss project strengths and limitations, recommendations for alternative approaches, and personal growth as a scholar, practitioner, project developer, and directions for future research.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

The purpose of this project was to understand middle school seventh- and eighth-grade general education teachers' implementation of cultural and instructional strategies of ELLs as well as the teacher's perceptions of facilitating consistent strategies to support the academic achievement of ELLs. I conducted individual semistructured interviews with nine participants to collect data, analyzed and summarized the data, and completed in-depth literature reviews related to the data. Based on the findings, I decided that a position paper discussing the local problem and proposing action within the local school district was the best avenue to present the results to the local school leaders.

In Section 4, I convey the project strengths and limitations and suggest alternate ways of addressing the local problem. I reflect on my learning and growth as a scholar, practitioner, and project developer. Finally, this section addresses the importance of this study and the implication for future research.

Project Strengths

One strength of this project is the method used to collect data. I gathered information about how middle school seventh- and eighth-grade general education teachers support ELLs directly from the teachers through personal interviews. The strength is in the data being a personal account provided by the teachers instead of learning of their experience form secondary accounts. The participants were also offered an opportunity to provide feedback and review data for accuracy, which aided in giving strength to the accuracy and validity of the data. My decision to create a position paper was formed based on the information revealed by the individual teacher interviews. The

information played a role in determining the recommendations and the selection of genre for this qualitative project.

Further, social change can occur from an impact on student outcomes if the recommendations are followed for creating guidelines for instruction, providing professional development, and following up on types of strategies teachers use. Teachers can learn consistent instructional strategies and necessary knowledge to instruct culturally and linguistically diverse students by attending professional development and adhering to the guidelines established by the local school leaders. Teachers become highly effective based on their professional development (Mohammadi & Moradi, 2017). An increase in the skills and knowledge of teachers as well as consistency and perceived ability in supporting ELLs in the local school district can positively influence how teachers plan for and deliver instruction through implementation of the recommendations and actions in this position paper.

Another project strength is that leaders in other school districts could benefit from the recommendations in the position paper. The literature review in Section 3 supported that the degree of information teachers receive to complete a task impacts the teachers' level of self-efficacy and confidence. The literature also supported that teachers need professional development opportunities focused on providing consistent instruction for ELLs and ensuring teachers understand ELLs' cultural and individual needs. The project recommendations in the position paper are adaptable to elementary and secondary education and other grade levels, not only to middle school seventh- and eighth-grade general education.

Project Limitations

Although the project study can benefit school leaders, teachers, and students, there are several limitations. One limitation of this project is the small number of participants. There were 31 Grade 7 and 8 middle school general education teachers invited to participate in this study; however, only nine teachers elected to participate and were interviewed. The limited number of participants is not a large representation of the middle school seventh- and eighth-grade general education teachers, which makes the results difficult to generalize in other populations. Because the qualitative study was conducted specifically for the local study site, the results of this project study cannot be generalized on a larger scale.

Finally, since the inception of this project study, the dynamics of the traditional on-campus model to school has completely changed. With the Coronavirus pandemic, social restrictions, such as maintaining 6-feet apart, are in place to minimize the spread of infection (Hickner, 2020). The school leaders of the local study site may not perceive the implementation of professional development as feasible due to the social distancing restrictions mandated by the local, state, and the federal government.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

In lieu of a position paper, alternative approaches exist to meditate the local problem. Due to the social restrictions associated with Coronavirus, an alternative would be to design a video rendition for professional development focusing on guidelines on how to support ELLs, teachers' perceptions of providing instruction for ELLs, and the cultural and individual instructional needs of this population of students. The training

video would include ELL facilitators explaining the cultural and individual needs of

ELLs. Throughout the video, the facilitator would present segments that model cultural

and individual instructional strategies for diverse groups of students. Interactive

components would be embedded in the videos to allow teachers to practice the strategies

virtually with a colleague or individually. Discussion segments would occur following

the virtual or individual practice of instructional strategies to allow teachers an

opportunity to share their experience and perceptions of how the implementation of the

strategies would look during their instruction, concerns, and solutions to overcome

potential challenges. A follow-up evaluation would be provided electronically such as

Google Forms to gain the teachers' perspectives on how the information presented in the

training video aided in helping to implement cultural and individual instructional

strategies consistently for ELLs.

  Additionally, teachers could facilitate their professional development by

collaboratively gathering research-based evidence on strategies that could be used to

meet the academic needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students. The teachers

could conduct discussions based on the approach and develop their professional group

focused on ELLs. Based on the discussions, the teachers could present recommendations

to school leaders on adjusting practices to support ELLs.

  I defined the local problem as stakeholders, particularly middle school seventh-

and eighth-grade general education teachers, were inconsistently implementing cultural

and individual instructional strategies to support the achievement of ELLs. One

alternative definition of the problem could have been the need for a review of

instructional practices that would include an investigation of all strategies those teachers use. This definition would have focused on the types of instruction practices exclusively.

Scholarship, Project Development and Evaluation, and Leadership and Change

When I began this endeavor at Walden University, I possessed no experience in completing research of this magnitude. I now have a new insight on perseverance and reliance on constructive criticism. I have gained knowledge on the impact of self-efficacy on a teachers' ability to instruct ELLs using sociocultural aspects. Reading peer-reviewed literature about instructional strategies and the needs of teachers to facilitate consistent instruction has helped me to recognize the importance of using scholarly literature to support findings. I have learned to write using a coherent and logical structure.

As I developed this project for the doctoral study, I wanted to create a practical, deliverable project in assisting middle school seventh- and eighth-grade seventh- and eighth-grade general education teachers of ELLs. Based on the findings of the study, I concluded that change needed to occur through the recommendations of guidelines and professional development from school leaders of the study site. I learned that self-efficacy and sociocultural aspects play a role in how teachers view the instruction for diverse learners. When I first began developing this project, my level of self-efficacy was at an emotional state. Through the development of this project, my level of self-efficacy increased to a mastery level as I learned to analyze and interpret data. Additionally, I learned the importance of organizing research by questions, themes, and patterns to understand what the data indicated holistically. Finally, I will be able to use my

knowledge and skill in my growth as an educator to develop meaningful solutions to educational issues.

Working on this doctoral study has created opportunities for me to increase my capacity as a leader. The knowledge gained from this study helped me to realize the importance of being a steward of change in the local school community. As a leader, I could use the knowledge gained to equip teachers to meet the needs of ELLs and access resources to support students. Furthermore, I have learned that leaders must use data-driven practices to make instructional decisions. Overall, my learning and growth as a scholar, project developer, and practitioner at Walden University has played a role in my development of insights on how to use research to impact social change positively in local and broader constructs.

Reflection on Importance of the Work

Demographic representation in the general education setting is continuously changing in the local school district. This research was an opportunity to acknowledge the needs of teachers responsible for supporting students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Teachers possess varying degrees of knowledge, skills, perceived ability, and confidence regarding instructional practices. Therefore, school leaders must approach the change with the utmost necessity School leaders can use this position to assist in increasing knowledge, skills, and preparedness to instruct ELLs. By offering guidance and training that would help teachers provide classroom instruction that enhances learning experiences for ELLs, the consistency in instruction that middle school general education teachers of ELLs implement can result in improved

teaching and student learning methods. As educators continue to learn, they gain access to resources and strategies that positively impact their ability to facilitate the level of instruction to increase students' self-efficacy in learning.

Throughout this journey, I learned how to use research as a mechanism to provide awareness on a local issue and determine solutions to mitigate the problem. This doctoral journey has allowed me to engage in dialogue with teachers on their sense of self-efficacy and implementation of instruction. Learning about the teachers' instructional practices and perceptions of their ability to educate this growing population will help me become a better school leader. Educators, school administrators, and curriculum and instruction facilitators who read this project study can learn of effective research-based instructional strategies and competencies that general education teachers need to implement to maintain consistency in supporting ELLs' academic achievement.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

In this project, I focused on understanding how middle school seventh- and eighth-grade general education teachers perceive their ability to facilitate consistent practice to instruct ELLs and identify the cultural and individual strategies used to support ELLs academically. Using a qualitative study as the method design, the teachers conveyed their perception of self-efficacy and revealed the strategies used during instruction to support ELLs. From the data collected during the individual interviews, positive social change implications emerge. Data from the research findings revealed a need for an increase in teacher knowledge of ELLs' cultural and individual needs, guidance on how to instruct ELLs, and opportunities for in-depth professional

development to increase the teachers' self-efficacy in instructing ELLs. The potential

impact of positive social change is an increase in teachers' knowledge, skills,

consistency, and perceived ability to support ELLs in the local school district, consistent

cultural and individual instruction for ELLs, and an increase in student achievement. As

teachers' sense of self-efficacy increase through training of what ELLs need, the

teachers' ability to master the task of providing consistent instruction for ELLs will occur

at the local level. At the family level, ELLs will excel from having consistent individual

and cultural instruction in their general education instruction resulting in facets that can

be integrated into their lives at home. At the organizational level, the academic scores of

ELLs will increase. At the societal level, leaders in other school districts with similar

demographics can embed the recommendations found in the position paper into

professional opportunities for teachers encountering similar challenges in supporting

ELLs academically.

   Based on the statements of limitations of this research and interpretations,

directions for future research are provided. Future studies could follow a different

research design. Rather than qualitative, this study could be extended in search of

statistical generalizability. Additionally, a longitudinal study could be conducted later,

when the participants have completed instruction based on the recommendations in the

position paper. The research can be continued in several years. It would provide

longitudinal accounts to reveal how teachers' perceptions change over time and the role

guidance and professional development play in middle school general education teachers'

ability to instruct ELLs. Future research may include teachers' implementation of cultural and individual instruction for ELLs on the elementary and secondary levels.

Conclusion

The purpose of this doctoral study was to investigate middle school seventh- and eighth-grade general education teachers' implementation of cultural and individual instructional strategies to support the academic achievement of ELLs and the teachers' perceptions of facilitating consistent instruction for ELLs. As the number of ELLs continues to increase across the nation, importance exists for teachers to possess the skills, knowledge, ability, and confidence, to instruct this population of students. Through the qualitative study, I gained a deeper understanding of how Grade 7 and 8 middle school general education teachers perceive their ability to support ELLs and of the individual and cultural strategies implemented to instruct ELLs. The local problem was present in a school district where middle school general education teachers were not consistent in providing instruction to support ELLs. As a result, I designed this project study to identify the strategies the middle school general education teachers implement as well as the teachers' perceptions to facilitate consistent strategies to support ELLs academically.

Grounded in the sociocultural and self-efficacy theories, I used a qualitative study research design. Three RQs were used to guide the data collection. Through personal individual, semistructured interviews with middle school seventh- and eighth-grade general education teachers, data were collected and analyzed. Data was organized based on the themes derived from coding. Based on the findings, several factors impacted the

teachers' ability to facilitate the implementation of cultural and individual instruction consistently as well as the type of strategies used to support the ELLs. The result of the project was a position paper defining the data retrieved from the study and provisions of recommendations to school leader of the local district in areas regarding providing middle school seventh- and eighth-grade general education teachers with guideline and professional development on implementation consistent cultural and individual instructional strategies to support the academic achievement of ELLs. With the implementation of the recommendations in the position paper, implications of positive social change are an enhancement in the teachers' knowledge, skills, consistency, and perceived ability in supporting ELLs in the local school district.

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Appendix A: The Project

A Strategic Approach to Increase Consistency in Middle School Seventh- and Eighth-

Grade General Education Teachers' Instructional Practices for ELLs

Background

An issue is present with the implementation of consistent cultural and individual

instruction for ELLs. Middle school seventh- and eighth-grade general education teachers

in a southern state struggled to implement instructional practices to meet the needs of

various cultural or linguistics students that joined the mainstream classroom. The intent

of this position paper is to provide information to the school and district leaders of a

southern school district to achieve sustained improvement in teacher instruction for

ELLs. The focus of the paper is the identified cultural and individual instructional

strategies middle school seventh- and eighth-grade general education teachers implement,

their perceptions on facilitating consistent cultural and individual practices for ELLs, and

steps school and district leaders can take to better prepare teachers to support ELLs

academically. The need to conduct a qualitative study originated with a desire to

understand the how the teachers support ELLs.

While there is, current research examining cultural and individual instructional

practices for ELLs (Merritt et al., 2017) and, on how teachers' perceptions affect their

ability to implement instructional strategies (Korkmaz & Unsal, 2016), there is minimal

research focused on understanding teachers' perceptions on use of cultural and individual

strategies for in developing academic proficiency of ELLs. Most general education

teachers often struggle with deciphering the academic content for ELLs and feel

unprepared to teach ELLs because of inexperience with providing instruction for the rapidly growing subgroup (Ernst-Slavit & Wenger, 2016).

This project study sought to identify and understand middle school seventh- and eighth-grade general education teachers' use of cultural and individual instructional strategies and the teachers' ability to facilitate consistent instruction for ELLs. In the local setting, there was a need to better understand these aspects as related to the use of sociocultural strategies when instructing students from diverse backgrounds as well as teachers' perceptions on their ability to instruct ELLs. Also, there was a need to understand this problem, so teachers were better able to facilitate consistent instruction, and subsequently be provided professional development opportunities to gain knowledge and skills needed to support ELLs.

Several aspects on teachers use of cultural and individual strategies were identified through individual interviews with middle school seventh- and eighth-grade general education teachers. These aspects were teachers' beliefs in their abilities to provide consistent instruction to support ELLs, teachers use varied individual instructional strategies to support the ELLs, teachers use varied cultural instructional strategies to support the need of ELLs, and the need of preparation and relevant professional development to instruct ELLs. The recommendations made in this position paper stem from the analysis of the findings through interview with middle school seventh- and eighth-grade general education teachers in the local school district and a review of the literature.

Summary of Findings

The project study findings were guided by the purpose of the project study and the

research questions posed. The results were related to the sociocultural theory as proposed

by Vygotsky (1978) and self-efficacy theory, as described by Bandura (1977). The

findings are presented and organized by the research questions, including themes which

emerged from the data analysis.

Research Questions

Research Question 1-What cultural relevant instructional strategies do middle

school seventh- and eighth-grade general education teachers in a southern state

implement to support the academic achievement of ELLs? Teacher participants discussed

the use of cultural instructional strategies implemented for ELLs. The data from the

teacher participant interviews about implementing cultural instructional strategies

revealed that participants believe that embedding cultural instructional strategies is

important in diversifying learning for ELLs. The participants conveyed that presenting

instruction that relates to the students creates a more inclusive learning environment.

Participants revealed that cultural instructional strategies could be implemented by

including stories that relate to various nationalities, which aligns with the need to

integrate students' cultural background in instruction as stressed by Lucas et al. (2008).

Some participants generally wanted to support ELLs through cultural instructional

strategies but believed that avenues exist that impede cultural instruction from

transpiring. A source of frustration for some participants is little avenues exist to deviate

from the prescribed curriculum. The participants felt the expectation is to teach the Tier I curriculum as dictated by the district.

Research Question 2-What individual relevant instructional strategies do middle school seventh- and eighth-grade general education teachers in a southern state implement to support the academic achievement of ELLs? The data stemming from the teacher participant interviews regarding the implementation of individual instructional strategies to support ELLs showed that they believed that differentiated instruction for individuals is needed as they work with ELLs. The participants communicated that students must be taught within the educational parameters in which the student is capable of learning. Participants generally seemed to implement individualized instruction by accommodating for the ELLs based on how long the student has been an ELL. The use of translator apps and websites, peer tutoring, small group instruction, and bilingual versions of content material seemed to be the preferred methods of implementing individual relevant instructional strategies for ELLs. Implementing individualized instruction for ELLs will support their academic needs; however, the participants felt that more guidance on specific strategies to implement is vital in advancing ELLs academically.

Research Question 3 What are the perceptions of middle school seventh- and eighth-grade general education teachers in a southern state regarding strategies to facilitate consistent implementation of cultural and individual instructional strategies for ELLs? The teachers felt that their level of self-efficacy did affect their ability to provide consistent instruction of individual and cultural strategies. The data revealed that teachers identified the number of years in education as a determinant for facilitating the consistent

implementation of cultural and individual instructional strategies for ELLs. Some of the participants who believe they can provide consistent instruction for ELLs in the general education stated the level of preparedness in engaging with diverse learners over the years provides them with the knowledge to maintain consistent instruction. Teachers who reported to believe in there is an ability to facilitate consistent individual instruction reported to have over five years of teaching experience and make personal efforts to research information which influences the way they interact with ELLs in the general education classroom. Many of the participants communicated a lack of confidence regarding the facilitation of consistent instructional strategies for ELLs is occurring across the district. The participants conveyed the lack of confidence was related to the difficulty in supporting ELLs holistically.

All participants agreed that providing consistent instructional strategies is crucial for increasing the academic success for ELLs. The participants expressed that there are curriculum facilitators to prepare teachers of ELLs with providing individualized and culturally relevant instruction; however, the participants felt that preparation needs to include more experiences and guidance about how to meet the needs of ELLs successfully. The participants stated that there needs to be more information is given and professional development on how to support ELLs, both individually and culturally. Most participants felt they had not received sufficient preparation and professional development to help ELLs reach their full potential. Overall, the participants discussed their knowledge of receiving assistance and desire to gain support to implement consistent facilitation of instructional strategies.

Themes

Four major themes emerged from the research findings that point to
recommendations for school and district leaders to consider to better prepare middle
school seventh- and eighth-grade general education teachers to support ELLs. The themes
are teachers' belief in their ability to provide consistent instruction (Theme 1), teachers
use varied instructional strategies to meet the individual needs of ELLs (Theme 2),
teachers use varied cultural instructional strategies to meet the needs of ELLs (Theme 3),
and general education teachers want preparation and relevant professional development
to instruct ELLs (Theme 4). Theme 1 and 4 and Theme 2 and 3 are discussed together,
respectively.

Themes 1 and 4. Rizzuto (2017) asserted that teachers who have clarity in using
instructional strategies possess more effectiveness in meeting the needs of linguistically
and culturally diverse students making the teachers' perceptions on the facilitation of
consistent instructional strategies vital for which aligned with Theme 1. The level of self-
efficacy plays a role in the teacher's ability to master the task (Korkmaz & Unsal, 2016).
In this study, the participants' perception of their level of expertise related to the
challenges faced. According to Heineke et al. (2019), teachers face a challenge acquiring
competencies and understanding to meet ELLs' cultural and individual needs (Theme 4).
The participants in this study believed that there was a need to receive directives and
training on specific strategies to meet ELLs' academic needs. According to the
participants, receiving guidelines would help general education teachers become
knowledgeable about instructional practices that can be used to help students master

standards across subject areas. Furthermore, the researchers added that teacher self-confidence in their ability on preparedness for diverse learners impacts how instruction is provided. Wong et al. (2016) stated that teachers who receive guidance in second language acquisition provide more consistency for students' needs; therefore, it is crucial to ensure appropriate instructional guidance for teachers that support the needs of ELLs.

Themes 2 and 3. Echevarria et al. (2015) asserted the importance of general education teachers providing varied instruction, which makes individual and cultural strategies vital for ELL instruction (Theme 2 and 3). According to Byrd (2016), cultural instruction increases academic growth for ELLs (Theme 3). The participants in this study felt that is was crucial to adjust instruction to provide ELLs with an opportunity of learning that was equivalent to the instruction provided to non-ELLs (Theme 2 and 3). The participants structured their practices to provide students with the individual instructional time, peer learning opportunities, and bilingual assistance (Theme 2 and 3). General education teachers should focus on the developmental levels of the students (Roberson, 2017). Furthermore, teachers impact ELLs' development with the application of sociocultural strategies (Lachance et al., 2019). Participants in the study agreed that providing individual and cultural instruction is a meaningful way to reach the anticipated outcome.

The participants used a variety of individual and cultural strategies to assist with academic growth for ELLs. Some of the strategies used included providing individual and cultural instruction during the response to intervention time and small grouping. The findings as they relate to Theme 2 and 3 were like the kinds of strategies reported in

previous research. Lucas et al. (2008) and Feryok (2017) stated that making connections between classroom instruction and students' background is a way to assist students in making meaning of content. Brown et al. (2017) and Diaz-Rico (2017) noted that teachers must implement specific practices relative to ELLs' cultural and individual needs. During the response to intervention and small grouping instruction, participants in the study acknowledged ELLs' unique academic needs and implemented student-specific strategies to support learning. Above all, researchers emphasized that general education teachers should have relevant professional development to support diverse educational needs of ELLs.

Evidence from Literature

Professional Development for Teachers

To ensure continued professional growth and to better prepare teachers to support the academic needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students, it is vital for school leaders to offer relevant professional development opportunities. Based on data and teachers' professional needs, Babinski, Amendum, Knotek, Sánchez, and Malone (2018) found that leaders in school districts need to provide professional development for teachers to enhance their teaching abilities. The leaders in the local school district must adopt changes that establish a continuous devotion to ensuring middle school seventh- and eighth-grade general education teachers receive training to meet their needs in support of students for long-term change to occur.

The need for teacher training that better prepares teachers is urgent. As ELLs continue to grow, school leaders are faced with ensuring teachers are well prepared to

provide instruction to all students, including those who are learning English (Feiman-Nemser, 2018). When teachers cannot count on a consistent routine, they cannot use their skills for the maximum benefit for students, including ELLs (Peercy, Ditter, & Destefano, 2017). Understanding how to support culturally and linguistically diverse students consistently are vital in preparing teachers for instruction. Having practical professional development is an avenue to assist teachers in building the knowledge, skills, and ability to affect practices positively (Tait-McCutcheon & Drake, 2016). Building skills among teachers to meet ELLs' cultural and individual needs can help teachers feel prepared and equipped to adjust instructional practices to meet the needs of ELLs.

In the sociocultural theory, Vygotsky's (1978) asserted the interdependence of social and individual processes in the construction of knowledge. Targeted professional development can enhance middle school seventh- and eighth-grade general education teachers' instruction. Johnson, Bolshakova, and Waldron (2016) explored the impact of culture and language professional development on teachers' teaching quality. Results from the study indicated that through the inclusion of culture and language training, teacher instruction improved as noted by the number of ELLs obtaining a proficient score on state assessments grew between 6% to 48% (Johnson et al., 2016).

Irby et al. (2018) explored teachers' instructional differences in their use of English as a Second language strategies using a randomized control study. Teachers in the treatment group participated in ongoing professional learning sessions provided by research coordinators that specialized in the second language and implemented a literacy-infused curriculum developed by researchers in place of the district curriculum. In

contrast, professional development for teachers in the control group only included district information on the district-adopted curriculum. Results indicated that teachers in the control group implemented more sociocultural and individual strategies for ELLs. Also, Irby et al. (2018) noted professional learning needs to support teachers in becoming comfortable with ELL instructional strategies and encouraged school leaders to consider ongoing, targeted professional learning opportunities on appropriate ELL instructional strategies for teachers.

Coady, Harper, and & de Jong (2016) explored how teachers' perceptions of their preparation shaped their instructional practice for ELLs. It was noted that mainstream teachers working with ELLs rarely implemented specific ELL practices to facilitate ELLs' English language development. According to Coady et al. (2016), there must be teacher preparations in which teachers develop the knowledge and skills to engage in the inclusive practice of linguistic and cultural norms of ELLs instead of mere exposure to Euro-American experiences. Coady et al. stated

> As classrooms become increasingly linguistically and culturally
>
> diverse, teacher preparation programs must ensure that teachers
>
> make conscious and informed instructional decisions based on ELLs'
>
> learning needs. Teacher candidates need to be able to make decisions for
>
> ELLs based on their understanding of why certain instructional practices
>
> might be more effective than others for ELLs (pp.363-364).

Okhremtchouk and Sellu (2019) conducted a study to examine teacher readiness and their perceptions on preparation to instruct ELLs. One goal of the study was to understand how exposure to ELLs in-service settings impacts teachers' belief about their self-competence to support ELLs. Findings from the study indicated that a strong association between teacher preparation and the feeling of readiness to instruct ELLs (Okhremtchouk & Sellu, 2019). The participants reported a greater self-competency in their ability to address ELLs' needs in the classroom after attending teacher training in which an opportunity existed to interact with and test their knowledge relating to supporting ELLs in practice. The findings from the study align with Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theory on the correlation of one's perception of their ability on their performance. Bandura noted that vicarious experiences occur when individuals believe in their ability to perform on the perception of seeing someone master a task. IN this case, the participants experienced mastery of the task through training. Similarly, Villegas, SaizdeLaMora, Martin, and Mills (2018) asserted that teachers become more amenable to instructing ELLs when they have an opportunity to test their theoretical knowledge of addressing the needs of ELLs.

Methods. Importance exists for school leaders to offer relevant professional development opportunities to general education teachers to promote continued professional growth and prepare the teachers to support the needs of the students they instruct. Professional development on how to facilitate consistent instruction to meet the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students should be included in professional development opportunities. All stakeholders in education must seek the best approaches

to help teachers. Through professional training, teachers can inherently gain knowledge on how to support the needs of ELLs.

One approach to providing professional development to teachers is the use of professional learning communities. According to Lee (2020), professional learning communities allow teachers to explore and continuously improve all areas for teaching. Teachers engage in active learning and cooperation with colleagues in professional learning communities. Lee (2020) found that engagement in professional learning communities positively impacts teachers' self-efficacy. Growth in teachers' ability to master a task can stimulate teachers' process of adapting instruction to support ELLs academically. Slack (2019) revealed that meaningful changes in teachers' mindset and practice occur when facilitators in professional learning communities possess knowledge of both language acquisition and use methods to support adult learning. Moreover, the use of professional learning communities to provide training for teachers could encourage teachers to identify additional ways to facilitate instruction consistently.

For sustainable change, school and district leaders could use another approach to provide training opportunities for teachers to witness how the change benefits their instructional practices in microteaching. According to Kusmawan (2017), "online microteaching integrates video-taped teaching strategies with expert opinions, teacher judgments, and discussion forms" (p. 43). As a multifaceted approach, online microteaching allows teachers to identify strengths and weaknesses based on the review of experts (Kusmawan, 2017). The benefits can increase teacher self-efficacy in providing consistent cultural and individual instruction.

Recommendations Connected to Evidence and Related to Audience

In reviewing the study findings, five recommendations are suggested that school and district leaders may find useful to better prepare teachers to facilitate consistent cultural and individual instruction to support the academic achievement of ELLs.

1. School and district leaders should provide professional development dedicated to culturally relevant pedagogy which includes input from ELL facilitators and supports to help explain the socio-cultural needs of this group of students.

2. The second recommendation is to provide a clearer understanding of instructional skills, resources, and strategies for ELLs.

3. The third recommendation is to provide opportunities for teacher to engage with a diversity of perspectives, experiences, and expertise through microteaching.

4. The fourth recommendation is for the school and district leaders to embed teacher assessment in which teachers can explore their perceptions and how their perceptions affect their practice of facilitating cultural and individual instructional strategies of ELLs before the beginning of the new school year.

5. The fifth recommendation is for school and district leader to revisit guidelines and professional development throughout the year using teacher assessment to identify what implementations occurred, teachers' ability to provide instruction consistently, and the outcome on the academic achievement of ELLs.

Conclusion

The purpose of this position paper is to assist local school and district leader in understanding middle school seventh- and eighth-grade general education teachers' use of cultural and instructional strategies to support ELLs, and to better understand the teachers' perceptions on facilitating consistent instruction. The intent of this position paper is to also provide information to local school and district leaders on how to better prepare teachers to meet the needs of ELLs. Recommendations are provided to school and district leaders on the aspects identified through the teacher interviews, specifically on professional development.

The intended outcomes of this project are an increased opportunity for teachers to facilitate consistent instruction for ELLs; an increase in communication between instructional and administrative school departments as more collaborative efforts transpire in the approach to support teachers; an increased awareness among middle school general education teachers on resources for students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds; the development of teacher assessments that allow teachers to gain insight on their perceptions of instructing ELLs; creation of guidelines and professional training opportunities designed to aid teachers in understanding the sociocultural needs of ELLs; professional training provided to teachers with strategies to support the needs of diverse students; development of stakeholders to help assist with supporting the needs of the students; and inquiry on the strategies used to best support ELLs and the impact on the students. The utmost outcome is increased academic success for ELLs meeting proficiency requirements on standardized assessments.

Appendix B: Interview Protocol for General Education Teachers of ELLs

Interview Questions and Procedures for

Seventh and Eighth Grade Teachers

Teacher: _____   Grade: _____

Date: _____   Time: _____

Interviewer: Lakisha Nelson

Project Study Topic: Middle School General Education Teachers' Instruction of

English Language Learners

Participant Interview Procedure:

1. Introduce myself to each participant and explain the purpose of the study.

2. Ask participants to share concerns and questions about the study.

3. Answer questions and address the concerns of participants (if applicable).

4. Inform participants that the interview will be recorded via audio.

5. Confirm participant consent to engage in the study.

6. Inform participants of the right to withdraw from the study at any time.

7. Schedule date and time of second interview to review and confirm findings

Demographics:

1. What is your age?

2. What is your ethnicity?

3. What is your gender?

4. How many years of teaching experience do you have?

5. How many years have you taught English Language Learners?

6. What general education course do teach currently?

Interview Questions:

1. What is your experience in working with English Language Learners?

2. What are your perceptions of working with English Language Learners?

3. What instructional strategies have worked well with English Language Learners?

4. What cultural relevant instructional strategies do you implement when instructing English Language Learners?

5. Explain the importance of implementing instructional practices the address the cultural needs of ELLs.

6. What individual relevant instructional strategies do you implement when providing instruction for English Language Learners?

7. Explain the importance of implementing instructional practices the address the individual needs of ELLs.

8. What are your perceptions on facilitating consistent implementation of cultural instructional strategies for ELLs?

9. What are your perceptions on facilitating consistent implementation of individual instructional strategies for ELLs?

10. What assistance have you had that has been beneficial for implementing consistent instructional practices for English Language Learners?

11. Would you like to have more help with implementing consistent instructional practices when working with English Language Learners?

12. What did I not ask that you want to discuss?

Appendix C: Sample Interview Transcript

SPEAKER	00:04	Hi, my name is Lakisha Nelson and I am a doctoral student at Walden University. I would like to begin first by thanking you for volunteering to participate in this study. In the project study on investigating, how general education participants implement instructional strategies to address the needs of English language learners and to gain some information on your perceptions about your ability to instruct English language learners.
SPEAKER	00:30	Before we begin, I would like to know that let you know that this interview will be audio recorded. I would like to confirm your consent to engage in this study. Do you consent to engage in this study?
TEACHER 6	00:43	Yes.
SPEAKER	00:45	I also want to let you know that at any time you have the right to withdraw from the study. I will schedule a second interview of about 10 to 15 minutes just so you can confirm your findings. Is that OK with you?
		Yes.
TEACHER 6		
		Do you have any questions or concerns about the study?
SPEAKER		No.
TEACHER 6		
		The first couple of questions I will ask you are demographic questions. You
SPEAKER		do not have to answer if you choose not to do so.
		OK
TEACHER 6		
SPEAKER	01:15	What is your age?
TEACHER 6		XX
SPEAKER		What is your ethnicity?
TEACHER 6		XX
SPEAKER		What is your gender?
TEACHER 6		XX
SPEAKER	01:27	How many years of teaching experience do you have?
TEACHER 6		XX
SPEAKER		How many years have you taught English language learners?
TEACHER 6	01:40	XX
SPEAKER	01:42	OK What general education courses do you currently teach?
TEACHER 6	01:48	XX
SPEAKER	01:53	OK. The next questions will be the interview questions. I will now begin. What is your experience in working with English language learners?
TEACHER 6	02:08	It depends on a verbal and type of speaking English. I have had some that speak no English at all and that is very difficult. And I have some that are very fluent in English as a second language by the time I get to me. And then that makes it easier to work with them because we use immersion and they do not want us doing a lot of translation help. When I am writing and I'm working, it makes it a lot harder for the ones that don't understand English at

all. So that has been my experience with it. The more they come in with them, you know, the easier it is to get to the child to learn.

| SPEAKER | 03:02 | You may have addressed some of this in the previous question. What are your perceptions of working with English language learners? |
| TEACHER 6 | 03:11 | They are great kids to work. They want to learn. It is scary for them because everything is a totally different experience. Especially for ones that are new to the country. The ones that have been here for a while, not so much. But if they just come here it's kind of interesting to watch because they're eager to learn. |

It is very difficult to teach them when they've got no language, English language background at all. I do not speak Spanish. Textbook Spanish would a lot easier, but I understand a little bit of Spanish that I can think of few words, but I am not fluent. And so that's part of the issue as well. The other thing is, is our district wants students to immerse themselves. And that is not always the easiest way for a child to learn English. There needs to be a back and forth and they need to have some kind of a root anchor in their own mind before they jump off into English. It is just so complicated.

| SPEAKER | 04:35 | What instructional strategies have worked well with English language learners? |
| TEACHER 6 | 04:44 | A lot of one on one with a with English. I know a lot of one on one with me working with the students. I have to do that a lot of the time. Another thing I found this year that was helpful was buddying them and having them work in pairs. |

I have one student that was so strong that he worked with my struggling English language learner and really helped help him.

They used Google Translate. They work together. I let them, buddy up. I find that helps as well. Because he could explain things to him in a way I cannot. Twelve-year-old understands to a 12 year better than a XX year old. The other thing like I said is the one on one, repeating directions and allowing even though we were not supposed to, allowing them to read parts of it in Spanish so he could understand it. You know , like I said , I kept having to anchor of and I'd let him do some of it in Spanish to let him understand where he was at and what we were trying to do, where we were trying to go. They use the Spanish English dictionary. You think using the dictionary. Mostly the one on one works.

| SPEAKER | 06:41 | What cultural relevant instructional strategies did you implement when instructing English language learners? |
| TEACHER 6 | 06:45 | Most of my ELL students have been Latino. Most have been from either Mexico or Central America. The curriculum is so set. There is not a whole lot you can do. It is just that is the way it is. They want you to follow it. |

SPEAKER	08:47	So, my next question is explain the importance of implementing instructional practices that address the cultural needs of English language learners.
TEACHER 6	09:07	It goes back to what I said. You got to reach the kids where they are at. They have got to feel comfortable learning the language. You got to feel comfortable with school. They got to feel comfortable with their friends.
	09:19	I asked my students this year where he was from. So, I think it is just that they felt that connect, that they know that you understand where they are from or where they come from. You understand our culture or appreciate their culture. I think that that goes a long way. I think you got to be able to

meet them where they are to get them where they need to be to bridge the gap. It is to connect with the parents, too because his parents did not speak English at all. I could speak for the parents, but the little bit of English. And so that the translator to talk with the parents. They had a translator there. But even so, just explaining to the translator, this is related to his parents. I am just trying to connect with them.

10:29   Parents are a huge part of ELL. They have got to feel like that that their child is being taken care of, and that is we are concerned about their child and learning.

SPEAKER   10:46   In addition to your one to one strategy that you use what your English language learners, are there any other strategies that you implement individually to provide instruction for English language learners?

TEACHER 6   11:27   I do a lot of group work because the class calls for a lot of group work. His buddy, in fact he pals with a little boy and works with him a lot in larger groups. They're set up there's a lot of audio that set into the program, into the computer parts of the program and then the reading parts of the program. There are those things set up with that program or other textbook series that be used in the past have had good Spanish, the ELL component set up.

12:43   So that is something I have been able to use with students. Then the other thing that is helpful, too that is one of the things that I did earlier. I will have one I'll have several students that speak the same thing to their Spanish speakers. Those are ones that are like this year I had a student that was very fluid. A lot of times she would help one that was not really fluid. She was the connect between me and him. Sometimes that helps if there is just another student in there that can kind of partner up and work with them and try to serve as the bridge, because like I said, I do not speak Spanish. So, it becomes more difficult.

SPEAKER   13:36   Explain the importance of implementing instructional practices that address the individual needs of English Language Learners.

TEACHER 6   13:47   It is very important, and it needs to be allowed more because of the nature of the classroom and because participants teach all 28 or 30 kids or however many they're giving us that year. It is sometimes difficult to participant. There needs to be time for individual instruction.

14:18   The way one program is set up is brilliant because you got time for working in groups and you've got time to work with individually. And there's times when I work on themselves on their own. The way that program is set up is conducive to these kids. Because you get that individual one on one and then there needs to more things in place other than just immerse them and don't speak to them in their language , make them learn , let them learn English because you're speaking good and you're teaching it . That is not an instruction. College professors will tell you that is not. You teach somebody that does not know what language, how to learn a language. But we take a verse and that is the biggest mistake. So there needs to be time set up in the curriculum to work individually with students.

15:26   The other thing is these kids need to be scheduled in classes where the class sizes is small, the teacher has the flexibility to work one on one from a management standpoint. If they need that one on one hand, when they get stuck in a class of 29 kids, they get lost.

SPEAKER   15:48   The next two questions are about your perceptions. And like I said, you may have answered them some way within the other questions, but I'm still going

to ask in case there's anything you want to add. What are your perceptions on facilitating consistent implementation of cultural instructional strategies for English language learners?

TEACHER 6	16:25	They do not right now. That is in my experience throughout. It depends on the teacher in terms of the participant's ability or time constraints or lack of time constraint. It depends on how much they know about ELLS to begin with. I do not always find that person from the district is that helpful. sometimes they are. Sometimes they are not. Depends on whether they want you emerge and whether they do not want to you to do immersion
	17:17	There are a lot of factors. But it is not consistent. There is not one consistent thing that we do across the board. I think some participants are more helpful than others and that is dependent on the participant. I really do try as much as I can to help my classes. But I hear them talking about how they are not getting, they are not understanding and other that they're not getting. So, I do not know.

SPEAKER	18:14	What are your perceptions on facilitating consistent implementation of individual instructional strategies for English language learners?
		Across participants or in my own room.
TEACHER 6		It could be on your own, across participants, whatever your thoughts.
SPEAKER		
TEACHER 6	18:39	Again, I think it depends on the participant. Some participants are more well equipped. They have more strategies at their fingertips that they can use.
	18:59	There is not a district policy in place that says we need to do this. There is not a district policy in place that say every teacher needs to do this with these kids every day. You are going to give X amount of individualized time. It is not like an IEP would cause you have to have this much instruction. It is not like the kids are thinking that way. In other words, where it got you got X amount of instructional extra time that you got to provide for them each day and there is an inclusion.
	19:32	I think you need an inclusion participant. This is a that is a language teacher that would honestly solve a lot of the problem because that teacher could work with them more directly. I mean that's honestly the answer is if they got an inclusion teacher that is an ELL English teacher, that would solve the problem because they would have somebody that could work with them and that person would be the liaison between the parent and the child . When the ELL person comes work, there is not a lot going on. They are so spread out they are the person for the entire district, K-12 and a pre-K to 12. That is just crazy. It is not what you can expect that human being to handle every single school in the district and every single child and especially in our district right now. We have so many kids that all are ELL that are coming from Mexico, from central South America and then we have also had other kids we accept. It is more prevalent problem then maybe 10, 20 years ago. We still have an influx of Vietnamese kids coming out and they have their own learning issues. I look at these children and I have nothing about that language at all. So, I mean, it is even more difficult.

SPEAKER	21:21	What assistance have you had that has been beneficial for implementing consistent instructional practices for English language learners?
TEACHER 6		Say that again.
SPEAKER	21:37	Yes, what assistance have you had that has been beneficial for implementing consistent instructional practices for English language learners?

TEACHER 6	21:47	The assistance, depending on the year. A couple of years ago, I had we had an ELL coordinator. She was very on the go and she offered a lot of hands on practical suggestions that we could use. She knew all the kids well. And said she could offer specific, detailed instruction or specific detail advice, that could help us with them. And that was helpful. And just figuring out how to work with them one on one, that was probably beneficial.
	23:11	It goes back to resources and time and somebody that can just devote themselves to them. They get lost in the classroom with 30 other kids that get lost.
	23:29	If the individual wants help when it could be given and then just the assistance with the management so that the participants can work more specifically with those children.

SPEAKER	23:46	Would you like to have more help with implementing consistent instructional strategies or practices for working with the English language? And why?
TEACHER 6		Definitely. I kind of feel like they are getting gypped.
	24:01	I do not speak Spanish, so I feel like I'm not giving them everything I could be giving them.
	24:10	I feel like I am doing the best I can with what I have got and what I've been given. But it is really not enough. I feel like they should be getting more so I think any additional help would be useful.

SPEAKER	24:34	What did I not ask that you want to discuss about English language learners?
TEACHER 6	24:48	The only other thing I would say is that there needs to be a consistency. It needs to be consistent across school districts.
	24:58	What they do from public to private because what happens because a lot of times these kids are transitory. They come from one thing, they move with their parents from job to job, and so they are migrant. Lots of students move from job to job, district to district.
	25:21	What they get in one district is not the same thing they get in another district.
	25:30	It is not even like statewide issues like they get from XXX to XXX. If they move from XXX and then they come to serve our location, or they were at a Catholic school and then they moved to public school. There needs to be some consistency across the board on a national level. Then on a state level as to what we're doing in all of our schools , public and private , so that they're getting the same thing wherever they go , because a lot of them move , fairly often they don't they don't necessarily stay put well more than a year.

SPEAKER	26:28	Well, again, I want to thank you for volunteering to participate in this study. Remember that any time you wish to not participate any more, you have the right to do so. Also, if you have any questions about this study after our interview today feel free to email me at lakisha.nelson@walden.edu the same email address you can find on your consent form. Again, I want to thank you and have a great day
TEACHER 6	26:57	Thank you. Good Luck.
SPEAKER	26:59	Thank you.