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Prekindergarten Teachers' Perspectives of Supporting the School Readiness of English Language Learners

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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Walden University
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Abstract

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by

Shannon D Rice

MA, University of Phoenix, 2009

BS, University of Maryland, College Park, 2002

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

The problem examined in this study was that English language learners (ELLs) are not meeting readiness proficiency, which contributes to the growing learning gap between ELLs and their native English-speaking peers. The purpose of this qualitative study was to gain an understanding of prekindergarten teachers' perspectives about what is needed to increase their effectiveness in teaching ELLs. The conceptual framework for the study was Vygotsky's sociocultural theory. Prekindergarten teachers' perspectives were examined to understand how they assess, create goals, and monitor the learning progress of ELLs as well as how they can be further supported by colleagues and administration. Data were collected from semistructured interviews with 10 prekindergarten teachers who worked with ELLs. Participant responses were transcribed and analyzed using in vivo coding. Codes were grouped into categories and categories were grouped to make 5 themes used to address the research questions. The results showed that the participating prekindergarten teachers act as the 'More knowledgeable other' by meeting their students' needs through the use of data from formal and informal assessments to create and monitor goals and design classroom activities. The results also indicated that the prekindergarten teachers felt that they need a curriculum that meets the needs of their ELLs and targeted training that helps them to address the distinct learning needs of the ELLs in their class in order to support their instructional practices with ELLs. Implications for positive social change include a specialized professional development and a curriculum that assist prekindergarten teachers in supporting the development of ELLs' readiness skills, which may help to lessen the achievement gap between ELLs who attend prekindergarten and their peers who are native English speakers.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my family, and my students. First and foremost, my children Cameron and Collin. Your patience with me as I worked many days and nights made it possible for me to complete this labor of love. Your love and support inspired me every day to keep going even when times were rough. I hope I have set a model for you to follow, where you know anything you put your mind to can be achieved. My parents, Johnnie and Casandra, I could not have done anything without your love, support, and encouragement. Cearrah, you were my first baby, and I work to inspire you to continue to love with all of your heart. Continue to strive for everything you dream of, and it will all happen for you baby girl.

This work is also dedicated to my students. In 2010, I began teaching in a school that had a large population of students who were learning English as their second language. I realized then that I had so much to learn in order to assist you in growing and achieving in a school system that was not prepared to teach you. I have worked since then to learn about what is needed to support your learning. I hope that this research puts us one step closer to being the educators you need and deserve.

Acknowledgments

I would not have made it through this process without the patience and dedication of my first chair, Dr. Patricia Anderson. Throughout this entire journey, you have made me feel that I was your only candidate, when in reality, you had several. Your "Weekly Woof" always provided the encouragement at the right time. Many times, I thought you picked them just for me.

I would also like to acknowledge my second chair, Dr. Tammy Russell. You were the eagle eye. Just when Dr. Anderson and I thought we had it right, you gave feedback that pushed me to write more concisely. I truly appreciate your time and dedication.

I cannot complete this journey without acknowledging my family, school family, and friends. You helped to support me when I felt like I could not, and did not want to write another word. You spoke my name as Dr., even when I thought that I would not make it. You pushed me, supported me, and encouraged me all the way through this journey. I will never take for granted what our relationships mean to me both personally and professionally.

Thank you all from the bottom of my heart!

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

In this study, I examined the perspectives of prekindergarten teachers regarding their work in extending the development of students who are English language learners (ELL). With the population of students who do not speak English on the steady increase from the 10% of the student population in 2010 to the estimated 25% of the student population by 2025 (Gottfried, Le, & Datar, 2016), it is important to understand what prekindergarten teachers think is needed to assist them in supporting their students. In this first chapter of the study, I provide a brief overview of background literature, a description of the study problem and purpose, the conceptual framework of the study, and the research questions. In addition, I present definitions of terms that will be used throughout the study, assumptions I have made, and the limitations and possible significance of the study.

Background

The goal of prekindergarten and preschool is to provide young children with educational experiences before entering kindergarten (Conger, Gibbs, Uchikoshi, & Winsler, 2019). This concept is known as school readiness. School readiness can be comprised of social-emotional development as well as cognitive development (Abenavoli, Greenberg, & Bierman, 2017). While there is no universal definition of school readiness, research has shown its benefits for future academic growth (Piker & Kimmel, 2018). For example, ELLs' attendance in early childhood programs has been shown to enhance their school readiness (Lee, Han, Waldfogel, & Brooks-Gunn, 2018). However, ELLs require support because they have unique learning needs that their peers

do not have (Gottfried, 2017). Examining the perspectives of prekindergarten teachers about what they need in order to support the development of ELLs may help prekindergarten teachers better prepare their ELLs for kindergarten.

Teachers have differing opinions about what skills are most essential for ELLs to have, but since the focus in kindergarten is academic, early learning programs, including prekindergarten, focus on literacy and math achievement as indicators of school readiness (Piker & Kimmel, 2018). Sonnenschein, Metzger, Dowling, and Baker (2017) highlighted the relationship between language and early literacy skills, finding that ELLs often have long-term difficulties in reading and literacy skills. Another area that teachers likely consider in the realm of kindergarten readiness is social and physical development (Piker & Kimmell, 2018). Hartman, Winsler, and Manfra (2017) found that the behaviors exhibited in prekindergarten or preschool settings were predictive of the behavior concerns found once the students entered kindergarten. Cho, Wang, and Christ (2019) reported that teachers felt that their ELLs were lacking in social-emotional development and were often labeled as behavior problems in the classroom. Piker and Kimmel (2018) also found that early childhood teachers believed social-emotional and physical development were just as important as cognitive development in determining school readiness for ELLs. Although there are many different ideas of what school readiness comprises, the prekindergarten teacher is responsible for supporting ELLs to be ready to begin kindergarten.

Balancing the need to support ELLs in being ready for kindergarten and their developmental needs falls on early childhood teachers, who may work in a child care

center or a public prekindergarten. Prekindergarten teachers take on the role as a more-knowledgeable other (MKO), as outlined in Vygotsky's (1978) social construction of knowledge theory. Eun (2019) examined the dynamic of learning and development in terms of the MKO and found that the MKO is able to assist learners to bridge gaps between what they are not yet able to do independently and the development of skills needed for mastery. Jacobs and Usher (2018) focused on the co-construction of knowledge as the student and MKO, the teacher, work within close proximity. Abtahi, Graven, and Lerman (2017) studied how the MKO can also be tools or peers that are available in the classroom, such as technology. The role of the MKO is to support the growth and development of a less capable person (Abtahi et al., 2017).

The gap in practice addressed in this study was prekindergarten teachers' perspectives about what they do as an MKO and what support they need to be more effective in that role with ELLs. The population of ELLs is expected to make a steady increase as the immigrant population increases (Robertson, García, & Rodriguez, 2016). The ability of prekindergarten teachers to support the growth and development of ELLs is important because school readiness is linked to academic achievement in later years (Isik-Ercan, Demir-Dagdas, Cakmakci, Cava-Tadik, & Intepe-Tingir 2017). As ELLs enter classrooms, it presents a challenge to teachers as to how to support the students' acquisition of a second language as well as learning content knowledge (Rizzuto, 2017). Therefore, it was important to examine the gap in practice to understand prekindergarten teachers' perspectives on what they do and what support they need to extend the development of ELLs.

Problem Statement

The problem was that ELL students throughout the United States are not meeting readiness proficiency on the kindergarten readiness assessments. The data from readiness assessments administered to kindergarten students show that ELLs consistently perform lower than their peers who are English proficient. While readiness assessments are given in kindergarten, the goal of the assessment is to look at how students were prepared for learning prior to entering kindergarten. Barnett et al. (2018) recognized the purpose of prekindergarten, especially in public schools, is to increase young children's development and to assist them in being able to demonstrate readiness as they enter kindergarten. Not each state publishes formal data because the determination of school readiness is not universal or required; however, data from several different states show that this gap in achievement happens in prekindergarten programs across the country. For instance, in the state of Maryland in the 2018–2019 academic year, only 22% of the ELLs demonstrated readiness compared to 52% of students who were fluent English speakers (Maryland Department of Education, 2019). Similarly, in the same academic year in the state of Ohio, 17.5% of ELL students demonstrated kindergarten readiness skills on the assessment compared to 42.6% of students who were fluent in English (Ohio Department of Education, 2019). In Santa Clara County, California during the 2018–2019 academic year, 30% of ELLs demonstrated school readiness in comparison to 59% of non-ELLs who demonstrated readiness (Santa Clara County Office of Education, 2019). In the state of South Carolina, while there is not a consensus score for students who are non-ELLs, only 23.2% of ELLs demonstrated readiness skills when entering kindergarten while

46.8% of students who identified as White and English speaking demonstrated readiness skills (WestEd, 2019). The data from each state or school district reporting formal kindergarten readiness data consistently shows ELLs having lower readiness scores than their peers.

Landry et al. (2017) recognized that while there may be a natural inclination to learn, young children are able to extend development in order to demonstrate school readiness with the help of a teacher. Adair, Colegrove, and McManus (2018) found that there are gaps in effective instructional practices for ELLs in prekindergarten. Swanson, Orosco, and Kudo (2017) pointed out, in their study about reading activities for ELLs, that there is little research about effective teaching methods for ELLs in prekindergarten. However, Gottfried (2017) found that there is a gap in research on the effectiveness of prekindergarten programs for ELLs because these students enter with learning needs that often differ from their peers. In many communities throughout the United States, teachers often feel unsure of how to support and meet the needs of the growing ELL population (Hansen-Thomas, Richins, Kakkar, & Okeyo, 2016). The instructional connection that prekindergarten has with academic achievement and school readiness shows that there was a need to focus on the support that is given to students prior to kindergarten (Ansari & Winsler, 2016). Therefore, it was important to examine the perspectives of prekindergarten teachers and what support they feel was needed to support ELLs during instruction in this study. Examining this topic can provide insight into teaching methods that may be effective in supporting the development of ELLs so they are ready for school and able to demonstrate this readiness. The goal of this study was to increase the

understanding of prekindergarten teachers' perspective about what was needed to support the development of ELLs.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate prekindergarten teachers' perspectives about their needs to support ELL students. For the purpose of this study, prekindergarten teachers were those who teach 4- and 5-year-old students. To address the problem, I used a basic qualitative approach (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016) with semistructured interviews of prekindergarten teachers to gather their perspectives about needed support for ELLs.

Research Questions

The following four research questions guided this study:

1. How do prekindergarten teachers describe their assessment of baseline knowledge for each child in their class who is an ELL?
2. How do prekindergarten teachers describe their creation of stepwise goals for learning for each child in their class who is an ELL?
3. How do prekindergarten teachers describe their evaluation of learner progress for each child in their class who is an ELL?
4. What resources and supports do prekindergarten teachers identify as needed to increase their ability to assess, teach, and evaluate each child in their class who is an ELL?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was Vygotsky's (1978) theory of the social construction of knowledge, and specifically Vygotsky's notion of the role of the MKO in supporting the learning of another. The MKO is a teacher or peer who has mastered the target skill and is able to assist the developmental growth of another individual (Vygotsky, 1978). In order to support a learner's development, the teacher, acting as the MKO, assesses the point at which a student is able to solve a specific problem independently (Vygotsky, 1978). For example, prekindergarten teachers may perform a benchmark assessment that shows what developmental milestones have been reached by students, which Vygotsky (1998) referred to as normative age-level diagnostics. These milestones describe the scope of the skills taught by teachers and learned by students in order to prepare them for school.

The concept of the MKO, as explained in the social construction of knowledge theory presented by Vygotsky (1978), supported this study because it addresses the role of the teacher in a learner's acquisition of knowledge. The research questions in this study aligned with the processes described by Vygotsky, including assessing the learner's current knowledge, creating stepwise goals for learning, and evaluating learner progress towards those goals as well as what support teachers need to be more successful in their role as MKO for the benefit of ELLs. In this study, I examined the perspectives of prekindergarten teachers as the MKO and how they help to develop and sustain the learning of ELLs in order to prepare them for school.

Nature of the Study

In this qualitative study, I used the basic qualitative method of interviews in order to gain insight into the perspectives of prekindergarten teachers and address the gap in practice. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) identified gaining insight into the experiences of people as a chief purpose of the qualitative research approach. Interviews are a common method of collecting data in qualitative research (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The qualitative methodology was well suited to answer the research questions in this study. Other data collection methods, such as a survey, would not have provided the rich detail needed to understand teachers' perspectives, and so, would not have fulfilled the purpose of this study. An observation of teacher planning and practice while teaching ELLs would have provided interesting insight into actual behaviors but would not have captured what teachers thought as they considered their role in scaffolding learning for ELL children.

The focus of this study was the perspectives of prekindergarten teachers and what they need to support the development of ELLs. The central phenomenon that was investigated was the support of development of ELLs who were in enrolled in prekindergarten classes. I conducted interviews with 10 prekindergarten teachers who had worked with students who are ELLs. The sample was obtained through social media, where I posted in groups that contained prekindergarten teachers that work with ELLs. Once the interviews were conducted, the interviews were transcribed and coded using in vivo coding (see Saldaña, 2016). Saldaña (2016) identified this type of coding analysis as one that allows the interviewees' words to be used as codes, which helps to honor their experiences and perspectives.

Definitions

Development: Maturation and a transformation of processes that is usually associated with an age or stage (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky (1978) also viewed learning and development as dependent of one another; learning should be matched with development as outlined in the zone of proximal development.

English language learner (ELL): A student whose first language is not English. The student is usually a child of parents who are immigrants (Gottfried et al., 2016).

More knowledgeable other (MKO): Derived from Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory. A person who possesses more knowledge than a learner and is able to help and support them in their development of a skill or concept. This concept has also been applied also to books, media, and technology (Abtahi et al., 2017).

Prekindergarten: A state-funded educational program for 4-year-old children who mostly come from low-income families with the goal of preparation for school (Barnett et al., 2018).

Scaffolding: A teaching strategy used that assists the teacher with making a task more attainable for the student (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976). The concept refers to the assistance that the teacher gives as the MKO so that students can access the knowledge necessary to operate within their Zone of proximal development (ZPD) (Kelly, 2015).

School readiness: The skills necessary for academic success (Landry et al., 2017). Many areas of development and concepts are included in school readiness, such as cognitive development, social-emotional development, self-regulation, and the ability to engage in learning (Abnenavoli et al., 2017).

Support: The assistance that is provided to the students as they learn new skills and concepts within the classroom. Support can come in the form of instructional strategies; tools, such as calculators; or peers (Abtahi et al., 2017; Eun, 2019; Jacobs & Usher, 2018).

Zone of proximal development (ZPD): "The distance between the actual development as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86).

Assumptions

In this study, I assumed that the participating prekindergarten teachers would be open and honest in their interview responses so that what was shared would be an accurate presentation of their thoughts and experiences. I also assumed that, based on the sampling, the participants would be representative of the prekindergarten teachers who work with ELLs and of prekindergarten teachers generally. These assumptions were necessary in a study based on interviews in which the value of the data were determined by the participants themselves (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Scope and Delimitations

The focus of the study was the perspective of prekindergarten teachers about their practice in providing instruction to ELLs and what support they need to do this work well. This study included the semistructured interviews of 10 prekindergarten teachers who worked in a program where they have students that are ELLs. Excluded from the study were teachers of other grades and teachers who have not taught ELLs.

Limitations

One limitation of this study was the use of a basic qualitative approach that relied on the actions and interpretation of the researcher and, therefore, was open to influence by researcher bias (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I counteracted this limitation by using in vivo coding to analyze the data from the interviews, in which codes are taken directly from the responses of the interviewees. This helped to reduce the effect of researcher bias. Member checks, also known as participant validation, were used to ensure that the in vivo coding reflected the participants' true thoughts and that the coding was a representation of what the participants were conveying in their interview responses (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Dialogic engagement was used throughout the study to ensure that I addressed any personal bias that may have appeared while conducting research, analyzing data, and reporting the findings (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Another limitation of this study was the small sample size and limited geographic area from which participants were drawn. These limitations were necessary in conducting an interview-based study because in-depth interviews must be limited in number given the voluminous data that resulted from each 30-minute interview. Although these limitations may affect the transferability of the study results, the outcomes still have the potential to support positive social change within the community.

Significance

This study addressed a gap in practice regarding the perspectives of prekindergarten teachers about what is needed to support the development of ELLs. Gottfried et al. (2016) found that the ELL population in United States public schools will

continue to increase, making up 25% of the public-school population by 2025. As this population continues to grow, teachers, specifically in prekindergarten, will have to know how to address students' learning needs (Gottfried, 2017). Understanding the perspectives of prekindergarten teachers regarding what they need to support the development of ELLs may help to increase the readiness and learning outcomes of students as they begin formal schooling (see Barnett et al., 2018).

The results of this study have potential implications for positive social change because a greater understanding of teachers' perspectives on how their current practices support school readiness for ELLs may help to improve practices in urban school districts. Furthermore, there may be implications for future teacher training that can help teachers to better support prekindergarten ELLs to be ready for school. The results from this study have the potential to improve the education of young ELL children and the quality of teachers' practices, creating positive social change.

Summary

The ELL student population is growing across the United States (Garrett & Plevyak, 2018). The purpose of this study was to investigate the problem of practice related to prekindergarten teachers' perspectives of what is needed for teachers to support ELLs. Although the readiness of the ELLs is measured at kindergarten, the prekindergarten teacher was the focus in this study because prekindergarten is the age group where school readiness is developed. In the next chapter, I will present a review of extant academic literature to provide further background information about ELL development, school readiness, and teacher practices with ELLs.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The problem under study was that students who are ELLs were not meeting readiness proficiency on kindergarten readiness assessments. The purpose of this study was to investigate prekindergarten teachers' perspectives about their needs in order to support ELLs. There is not a concise definition of school readiness; however, it is the role of prekindergarten to provide young children with skills and development to help them be ready to learn in the formal school setting (Conger et al., 2019; Piker & Kimmel, 2018). With the ELL population on a continuous rise, it is important to understand ways that prekindergarten teachers can support these children in their development so that they are able to demonstrate school readiness when they enter kindergarten (Rizzuto, 2017; Robertson et al., 2016).

In this chapter, I outline Vygotsky's sociocultural theory and the role of the MKO as the conceptual framework that supported this study as well as describe past studies that have used a similar conceptual framework. Extant literature discussing school readiness, prekindergarten teachers and their role as MKO in classroom practices, and the development of ELLs is also examined. I begin by describing how I searched for relevant literature for this review.

Literature Search Strategy

The topic of how teachers support ELLs is not new, many previous studies on the topic can be found; however, literature examining the practices of early childhood teachers, specifically in prekindergarten, was not as expansive. In order to find literature and previous research published within 5 years of the current study, I used the Thoreau

database at Walden University Library as well as Google Scholar. The following keywords and phrases were used to find literature to support the conceptual framework of this study: *sociocultural theory, constructivist theory, Vygotsky, zone of proximal development*, and *more knowledgeable other*. Literature to support the problem in this study was found using keywords and phrases, such as *English language learner, dual language learner, early childhood, teacher practices, development*, and *prekindergarten*. In some cases, prekindergarten was not a keyword used for the age group, so I also used the term *preschool*, which yielded more results.

Conceptual Framework

The concept I used as the framework for this study was Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory. Vygotsky asserted that social interaction between children and their environment is the basis of development, and development is aided by tools that are in the environment. One tool used to aid development is deemed the MKO and is usually a person or object that is able to provide a greater understanding of a task or problem (Clark, 2018). For instance, if a young child points to an object and the MKO repeatedly gives the young child the name for the object, the MKO has now helped to give meaning to the object and a point of reference for the young child to use when interacting with the object in the environment.

Vygotsky (1978) examined the connection between a learner and their cultural and social influences. One component of that connection is language, which plays a key role in the development of young children (Vygotsky, 1978). Language accompanies activities, and as the activities increase in difficulty, language becomes more complex

(Vygotsky, 1978). Through language young children extend their ZPD (Vygotsky, 1978). The ZPD is described as the distance between what the learner can do on their own and what the learner can do with the support of the MKO (Markova, 2017). Therefore, teachers in their role as MKO have the ability to influence the growth and development of ELLs by guiding them through their ZPD. The MKO does not merely disseminate knowledge and information but takes into account what a learner already knows and works as a collaborator with the student in order to produce growth within the ZPD (Jacobs & Usher, 2018). Abtahi et al. (2017) found the interaction between the child and the MKO assisted the child in working through their ZPD because the MKO was able to use guided questions in order to help child further understand a concept.

The MKO assists a learner in working through their ZPD through scaffolding (Veraska, Shiyan, Pramling, & Pramling-Samuelson, 2016). The goal in scaffolding is to provide guidance in completing a task and then to gradually reduce this guidance as the skill or concept becomes an independent skill for the student (Acar, Hong, & Wu, 2017). Scaffolding is an idea introduced by Wood et al. (1976); although scaffolding is not a term used by Vygotsky, the idea and premise of this educational concept is aligned with the ideas presented in Vygotsky's sociocultural theory and the ideas of the MKO and ZPD (Veraska et al., 2016). Scaffolding is a collaboration between the MKO and the student in which the MKO guides the student towards mastery of a target task or concept (Black & Allen, 2018). A prekindergarten teacher, as the MKO, scaffolds learning, serving as a bridge between what the student knows to what the student needs to know.

Scaffolding can include modeling, participating in child-directed activities, and facilitating interactions (Acar et al., 2017).

Scaffolding has been instrumental in the instruction of ELLs (Choi, Wolf, Pooler, Sova, & Faulkner-Bond, 2019) because it focuses on the interaction of the MKO with a student, with the MKO providing support to the student in order to make the task or concept cognitively accessible to the student (Markova, 2016). Scaffolding also allows the use of the student's home language to provide support and extend the ZPD of the student (de Oliveira, Gilmentdinova, & Pelaez-Morales, 2016). According to de Oliveira et al. (2016), scaffolding helps in the development of academic language. While social language is developed quickly, academic language used in the classroom can take 7 to 8 years to master (de Oliveira et al., 2016). Scaffolding is an instructional strategy that helps to improve language development of ELLs (Harvey & Miller, 2017), so a supportive relationship between the student and teacher, as the MKO, is essential. The use of scaffolding can be successful when the teacher understands the complexity of scaffolding, including the strengths and weaknesses of the student (Markova, 2016). One of the biggest challenges faced by ELLs is the language development in English as their second language (de Oliveira et al., 2016).

Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory and Wood et al.'s (1976) concept of scaffolding highlight the importance of the prekindergarten's teacher role in supporting the development of ELLs in prekindergarten. In order to further understand the prekindergarten teacher's role as the MKO supporting the development of ELLs' kindergarten readiness, it is important to examine current literature on ELLs'

development in a classroom setting where their first language is not spoken, the specific strategies put in place by prekindergarten teachers as they strive to meet the needs of ELLs, and what kindergarten or school readiness entails for all prekindergarten students and more specifically ELLs. In subsequent sections, I present a synthesis of literature that helps to examine ELLs' attendance and challenges in prekindergarten settings, ELLs' language and social development, the prekindergarten teacher's role in teaching ELLs, and the challenges that teachers face in developing ELLs school readiness.

ELLs in Prekindergarten

Prekindergarten was designed as a federal program in public schools to address the achievement gap between young children in poverty and students from more affluent communities (Graue, Ryan, Nocera, Northey, & Wilinski, 2017). With the influx of immigrants from other countries, one population that makes up a large part of the prekindergarten student population is students who are learning English as a second language or ELLs. ELLs are students who come from homes where their families are immigrants or refugees and a language other than English is spoken in the home (Okhremtchouk & Sellu, 2019). ELLs speak another language that differs from the language of the school, based upon where their family originated, and are learning English as a second language (Diaz, Cochran, & Karlin, 2016). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2019), in 2016 ELLs made up 9.6% of the student body in the United States. Okhremtchouk and Sellu (2019) estimated that by the year 2030, ELLs will make up 40% of the U.S. K–12 student population. At least 80% of the ELLs who enter prekindergarten come from families that are of low socioeconomic status and

have parents who are not literate in either English or their home language (Gottfried & Kim, 2015). Although the ELL population is increasing, the achievement gap is not closing (Valentino, 2018). The reason that prekindergarten has not been effective in closing the achievement gap between ELLs and their peers is related to the school system's failure to acknowledge the contribution that different cultures bring to the classroom (Souto-Manning, 2016), the misconceptions of learning and development of ELLs held by stakeholders in education (Souto-Manning, 2016), and the lack of teacher preparedness to meet the needs of ELLs (Okhremtchouk & Sellu, 2019).

Kim, Lambert, and Burts (2018) noted that ELLs are often considered a monolithic group by educators, with a majority of the focus on Spanish-speaking students, eliding the rich cultural differences that are present among this group of students. In addition to ELLs speaking different languages, the expectations for development of young children can also be affected by cultural differences (Friesen, Hanson, & Martin, 2015). Familial obligations differ between cultures and affect where parents place importance within the developmental spectrum of their young children (Lansford et al., 2016). For instance, Friesen et al. (2015) noted how some cultures find it respectful when children do not engage in direct contact with adults and other cultures find it appropriate for a child to freely express themselves. Vygotsky (1978) emphasized the importance of culture and its influence on the language and cognitive development of young children, stating that this learning was the basis of their ZPD.

Besides not having cultural differences recognized, ELLs and their family also struggle with assimilating into the new U.S. culture (Hansen-Thomas & Chennapragada,

2018). When English is not the student's first language and they are learning English as their second language, it is looked at as a deficit by teachers and administration, while native English speakers learning another language is looked at as a benefit for their future learning (Souto-Manning, 2016). It is often a misconception of stakeholders that if a person has not assimilated to U.S. culture and the English language, then they are not educated and have nothing to contribute (Souto-Manning, 2016). ELLs maintain the culture of their native country, try to assimilate to U.S. culture by fitting in with their peers, and work to understand the cultural norms of their peers who may also come from a different country (Hansen-Thomas & Chennapragada, 2018). Some ELLs feel that assimilating to U.S. culture means losing the identity of their native country and emphasize the importance of staying in tune with their native country (Diaz et al., 2016). Diaz et al. (2016) examined the self-perception of ELLs and found that those who participated in their study felt that being bilingual can be frustrating because they are trying to learn and understand in two different languages.

When entering educational settings, ELLs face the challenge of learning academic language and learning the English language at the same time (Diaz et al., 2016). ELLs often have low academic achievement compared to their native-English-speaking peers (Jung et al., 2016). Many ELLs enter schools and classrooms with teachers who have not been prepared to teach to the academic and social needs of culturally diverse children (Okhremtchouk & Sellu, 2019). This leaves the ELLs in a new setting, learning both their first language that is spoken at home and the academic and social language of English that is spoken in school, compounded with entering a school system that has not prepared

their teachers or have the resources to meet their unique learning needs (Okhremtchouk & Sellu, 2019). Nevertheless, early learning settings, including publicly funded prekindergarten, have been shown to improve educational outcomes for young children when they enter formal school at kindergarten (Gottfried & Kim, 2015). Researchers have attributed this to the ELLs having early exposure to some U.S. culture and the structure that is seen in formal school (Gottfried & Kim, 2015).

Language Development of ELLs

For all young children, language acquisition begins in infancy and progresses as they move through early childhood (Honig, 2017). Language acquisition has a basis in Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory because it begins in early childhood with social interactions. For young children, language development is also linked to cognitive development because it is through language that young children are able to make sense of their environment and interactions with others (Zauche, Thul, Mahony, & Stapel-Wax, 2016). In an integrated review of literature, Zauche et al. (2016) found that the interactions young children have with adults and others had a lasting impact on cognitive development because these social and engaging activities encouraged the learning of new vocabulary as well as provided a model for language complexity. For ELLs, their initial language acquisition is in their native tongue, often referred to as their heritage language (Arredondo, Rosado, & Satterfield, 2016). The development of ELLs' heritage language is based on interaction with their families and not formal schooling (Cycyk & Hammer, 2018). The use of the heritage language among immigrant families serves as a connection with their cultural background and allows children to communicate with family members

who have yet to learn English (Mori & Calder, 2017). These have a lasting effect on cognitive and social development and show why second language acquisition is integral to the success of ELLs in prekindergarten as they prepare for kindergarten.

Second language acquisition is the process of learning a new language that is different from a person's native language (Sun, 2019). Parents and teachers noted during a study that young children are able to acquire a second language easier than older children and adults (Sawyer, Manz, & Martin, 2017). Second language acquisition happens more within the school unless the family has some experience with the English language (Guglani, 2016). Most children of immigrants focus on learning English once they begin school because English is the dominant language used within schools and parents felt that the time before entering school was more optimal for teaching the heritage language (Cycyk & Hammer, 2018). Like the heritage language, for young children the acquisition of English as a second language happens through input, the child hearing the English language (Abbot-Smith, Morawska-Patera, Luniewska, Spruce, & Haman, 2018). In addition to hearing the English language while in school, the ELLs also receive direct instruction in content areas from the prekindergarten teacher, with all of the instruction being spoken in English in most classrooms (Mesa & Yeomans-Maldonado, 2019). The acquisition of English is compounded for most students because they often struggle with finding a balance between keeping their heritage language, their connection to their family's native country, and assimilating to the dominant culture (Diaz et al., 2016). This is also a struggle for parents, as they know that their child becoming bilingual

can assist them in being successful later, but want their children to continue to be connected to their culture through language (Song, 2019).

Torres and Arrastia-Chisholm (2019) explored some of the barriers to second language acquisition for ELLs, noting that their initial exposure to the English language may be minimum due to relationships with those who speak their first language and their continued use of the language once the student leaves the school setting. Sun (2019) also outlined factors affecting second language acquisition, highlighting factors that affect language acquisition. Two of the internal factors that can affect language acquisition is personality and motivation (Sun, 2019). Extraverted and introverted personalities can affect a child's willingness to learn, as extraverted personalities usually want to communicate with others and introverted personalities are shier and lacks the self-confidence to try new things because they are afraid of making mistakes (Sun, 2019). However, second language acquisition of English was not affected if the teacher was bilingual or monolingual, the quality of instruction is what influenced second language acquisition for Spanish-speaking students (Raikes et al., 2019)

ELLs face distinct learning challenges because they have the task of learning English as well as the task of learning grade-level content (Swanson et al., 2017). There is often a misconception among teachers and education stakeholders that ELLs have a learning disability because they do not meet proficiency in kindergarten readiness skills at the same rate as their peers who are fluent English speakers (Golloher, Whitenack, Simpson, & Sacco, 2018). ELLs are tasked with learning their heritage language and English, the dominant language used in school. While still developing both languages,

young ELLs now have to learn to choose which language it is appropriate to communicate with. Many ELLs speak English at school and their heritage language at home, so being able to appropriately translate between the two can be complicated (Marini, Eliseeva, & Fabbro, 2019). Marini et al. (2019) highlighted that the skill needed to help navigate between their first and second language are executive function and working memory, which are two key factors in social-emotional and cognitive development.

Social-Emotional Development of ELLs

Social-emotional development is a critical component of development for young children (Buettner, Hur, Jeon, & Andrews, 2016). Social-emotional development can encompass skills such as the ability to express thoughts and needs, to follow directions, to get along with peers, and to demonstrate self-control (Holod, Ogut, Brodziak de los Reyes, Quick, & Manship, 2018; Hustedt, Buell, Hallam, & Pinder, 2018). Stakeholders do not consider social-emotional development as an indicator of academic achievement, but teachers view social-emotional development as a strong indicator of school readiness.(Wenz-Gross, Yoo, Upshur, & Gambino, 2018). Jones and Doolittle (2017) outlined some of the elements of social-emotional development as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, responsible decision-making, cognitive regulation, emotional processes, and social and interpersonal skills (p. 5). Teachers consider students with these social-emotional skills as ready for school, just as much as students who have begun to develop cognitively (Miller & Goldsmith, 2017).

Social-emotional development can be culturally situated, so that students of immigrant and minority ethnic cultures do not hold the same social-emotional values as the teachers (Cho et al., 2019). This can lead to ELLs being labeled as behavior problems within the classroom. In a study on teachers' views of social-emotional competencies among ELLs, Cho et al. (2019) found that prior experiences of the ELLs were not taken into account and teachers wanted to teach the ELLs and their families social-emotional competencies instead of collaborating with them. Mother-child relationships are the basis for social-emotional development among young children and they begin in infancy (Behrendt, Scharke, Herpetz-Dahlmann, Konrad, & Firk, 2019). Behrendt et al. (2019) studied social-emotional development in infants and concluded that social-emotional development is influenced and impacted by parenting styles, social environment, and family environment. Hunter, Bierman, and Hall (2018) noted that many young children from economically disadvantaged families begin prekindergarten with a delay in social-emotional development due to difficulties faced by their families. Zarnegar (2015) studied cultural differences between Americans, Iranians, and Iranian immigrants and found that the stress level shown by Iranian parents is often a direct influence on the stress response shown by their children. Another cultural factor that can affect the social-emotional development of young immigrant children, depends on whether they emigrated to the US or were born here (Zarnegar, 2015). Zarnegar found that the leaving of their native country and the separation from family and known culture and then attempting to assimilate into a new culture can have a disruptive effect on social-emotional development of young children.

Gottfried (2017) examined the benefits of non-parental care of preschool aged children, including prekindergarten. He found that the experience of prekindergarten for ELLs was beneficial because they showed improved social skills once they entered kindergarten (Gottfried, 2017). Teachers participating in a study on supporting ELLs linked language acquisition and social-emotional development; the teachers believed that social-emotional development in early childhood helped with the young children's ability to learn more in the classroom (Jacoby & Lesaux, 2019). Further linking language and social-emotional development, McLeod, Harrison, Whiteford, and Walker (2015) found that when multilingual students have speech and language delays, the students also had delays in other developmental areas including social-emotional development. The link between social-emotional learning and language acquisition aligns with Vygotsky's sociocultural theory as language helps to make sense of the social environment (Vygotsky, 1978).

Prekindergarten Teacher Role in Teaching ELLs

Prekindergarten has been thought by stakeholders in education to help with closing the achievement gaps of children from poor socioeconomic families and communities (Shapiro, Martin, Weiland, & Unterman, 2019). Although the benefit of prekindergarten for the ELL population has not been fully researched (Gottfried, 2017), research has shown that high-quality instruction at the prekindergarten level is in correlation with better outcomes for students who attend the programs (Landry et al., 2017). Since the prekindergarten teacher's role is to provide instruction in these settings, it is vital to look at the role of the prekindergarten teacher in providing instruction to

ELLs as the more knowledgeable other, as they work to move the ELLs through their zone of proximal development.

Teaching and learning with the goal of working through students' ZPD requires a collaboration between the teacher and the student. Although the teacher is considered the MKO, the teacher must acknowledge the reciprocal relationship, as they are still learning from the student as well (Scrimsher & Tudge, 2003). Another critical aspect of teaching and learning for teachers as the MKO is taking the cultural makeup of students into account. This means, especially for ELL students, acknowledging what they know or can do based on their cultural background as a strength and building on this knowledge when working through their ZPD (Scrimsher & Tudge, 2003). Prekindergarten teachers can do this in their role of teaching ELLs and supporting their language and social-emotional development.

Prekindergarten ELLs may enter prekindergarten with varying experiences with language and English language proficiency (Gonzalez et al., 2016). The role of the prekindergarten teacher, as the MKO, is to provide opportunity for the students to engage in language and literacy activities that support the development of English (Sun, 2019). Within the teaching and learning relationship of second language acquisition and to understand how to support movement through the ZPD, the prekindergarten teacher must understand the process and factors that affect second language acquisition (Rizzuto, 2017; Sun, 2019). Raikes et al. (2019) examined three classrooms where students' home language was incorporated in one classroom, only English was spoken in another, and in the third classroom the home language was used occasionally along with English. The

authors found that there was no distinct difference in the acquisition of English for students between the three classrooms but the quality of instruction within the classrooms is what aided the ELLs to acquire English (Raikes et al., 2019). Spencer et al. (2019) conducted a study looking at the use of a dual language intervention, where the students received instruction in both English and Spanish, and how it affected the acquisition of vocabulary in both languages. Their study concluded that the use of the dual language intervention assisted acquiring vocabulary in a second language and also assisted in helping the students to maintain their home language (Spencer et al., 2019).

Collaboration between the student and teacher is another aspect of being the MKO, meaning that this is an opportunity for the teacher to teach and support the student but also learn from the student through this process (Scrimsher & Tudge, 2003). This reciprocal relationship for the teacher can be learning from the student how to better support other students who are struggling through learning English as a second language. Collaboration can also be an effective way for the teacher to support growth through the ZPD when the students have to develop academic language (Lorenzo, Granados, & Avila, 2019). This academic language refers to content specific vocabulary that students must develop in order to demonstrate understanding of the content (Okhremtchouk & Sellu, 2019). Although this vocabulary may have to be more explicitly taught, teachers can provide scaffolds in order to assist students with this aspect of language development (Bigras, Lemay, Bouchard, & Ervasa., 2017). In addition to language development social-emotional development is also critical aspect of development that prekindergarten teachers play a role in.

Social-emotional development can have a great effect on school readiness for ELLs. The prekindergarten teacher as the MKO is responsible for putting in place a social environment where students feel safe to learn and take risks (Acar et al., 2017). Acar et al. (2017) found that the teacher's role as the MKO is important to building positive social interactions in the classroom, and that giving support through scaffolding is important in teaching social skills. Russell, Lee, Spieker, and Oxford (2016) looked at the role of parents and preschool teachers as caregivers, and their role in fostering self-regulation amongst young children. The study found that the role of caregiving at the preschool or prekindergarten age was a predictor for self-regulation in first grade, and self-regulation is one of the key skills within social-emotional development (Russell et al., 2016). A key factor in understanding social-emotional development is understanding the different social expectations of different cultures (Guhn, Milbrath, & Hertzman, 2016). In addition to the culture that a child is born in, there is also the culture of the community that the child lives in. Understanding the cultural backgrounds can give teachers insight to where students are, and how to move through their ZPD, as students feel more comfortable in answering questions and demonstrating what they know (Diaz et al., 2016). The support a prekindergarten teacher provides, acting as MKO, provides the foundation for young children's development and their readiness for school.

School Readiness

School readiness is the set of skills shown by 4- and 5-year-old children that demonstrate their readiness to begin formal schooling (Landry et al., 2017). The definition and components of school readiness are broad, and vary depending on the

stakeholder who is defining it (Cavadel & Frye, 2017). School readiness can include cognitive, social-emotional, behavioral and physical development (Gottfried & Kim, 2015; Smith & Glass, 2019). One of the major indicators for readiness for kindergarten is age, with most states having a mandated birthdate range for young children to begin kindergarten (Miller & Goldsmith, 2017). State-funded prekindergarten programs follow a set of early learning standards to measure school readiness, with a particular focus on literacy and numeracy (Piker & Kimmel, 2018). These state standards guide what is taught in the prekindergarten classroom, and are usually based on the standardized tests are administered at the beginning of kindergarten (Graue et al., 2017; Smith & Glass, 2019). However, it is not usually taken into account by district and state officials who set the prekindergarten standards, that growth and development towards school readiness can be influenced by age, environment, and culture (Gottfried et al., 2016). Gottfried et al. (2016) noted that most school districts take the "maturational perspective" that children are ready for school when they reach a certain age (p. 424). However, research also shows that young children born only months a part can differ developmentally (Gottfried et al. 2016). Davoudzadeh, McTernan, and Grimm (2015) found that when children are older, born a month or two earlier than their peers, are less likely to be retained. Environment, such as socioeconomic status, can also affect school readiness. Hartman et al. (2017) explained that children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, including 37% of whom are ELLs, are at risk of being seen as exhibiting behavior problems, as families begin to assimilate to the U.S. culture and are trying to balance the cultural beliefs of their native country along with those of their new home (Jung & Zhang, 2016).

Teachers often have a different perspective on what school readiness looks like for young children (Piker & Kimmel, 2018). While states focus on the academic aspect of students' readiness, teachers often include social-emotional and physical development to help gauge readiness of students (Hartman et al. 2017). Piker and Kimmel (2018) found that teachers held the notion that social-emotional, physical, and language development was important to all children but essential for ELLs, so that they were able to communicate needs and wants. The teachers found it less necessary to focus on cognitive development, such as literacy and numeracy, because it would be taught in kindergarten (Piker & Kimmel, 2018). Hartman et al. (2017) examined behavior concerns amongst low-income, ethnically, and linguistically diverse children and found that behavior concerns at prekindergarten age directly affected their school readiness scores when they entered kindergarten. Cavadel and Frye (2017) also examined social-emotional development, using theory of mind, for prekindergarten students; they found that social-emotional development as it relates to theory of mind is also related to cognitive learning. Wenz-Gross et al. (2018) conducted a study examining the Second Step Early Learning Curriculum, while this was a specific curriculum being examined, the authors were able to conclude that social-emotional development had positive effects on early learning and school readiness. This demonstrates the importance of social-emotional development and the prekindergarten teacher's role in fostering such development before entering kindergarten.

Prekindergarten Teacher Challenges in Developing ELL School Readiness

Although prekindergarten teachers employed by public school districts usually hold a bachelor's degree in education, the courses taken during preservice rarely include how to address the needs of ELLs (Barr, Eslami, Joshi, Slattery, & Hammer, 2016). Because preschool or prekindergarten programs exist in private settings, in addition to public schools (Gottfried, 2017), not all preschool or prekindergarten teachers hold the bachelor's degree or teaching certificate required of public school teachers, and not all preschool and prekindergarten teachers have experienced comprehensive college coursework that has been experienced by certified public school teachers. This diversity of training suggests not all teachers may be confident in their ability to work with students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and this lack of teacher self-efficacy can affect the quality of instruction that is delivered to ELL students (Hegde, Hewett, & Terrell, 2018). In addition, teachers may have a false sense of self-efficacy for teaching ELL students, derived from a lack of understanding of what is required; Barr et al. (2016) found that while public school elementary teachers felt they had the necessary skills to teach basic literacy to ELLs, this self-efficacy was not reflected in their tested knowledge of literacy constructs with ELLs. Pappamihiel and Lynn (2016) found teachers who taught in inclusive K-12 classrooms knew just as much about English-language learning as specialized second language teachers. They did not feel as confident as second language specialists in implementing the accommodations necessary for their ELL students (Pappamihiel & Lynn, 2016). Russell (2016) reported that high school

general education teachers who were responsible for teaching ELLs felt they were not prepared in their preservice programs to teach ELLs.

Hegde et al. (2018) found that kindergarten teacher preparation programs do not address working with ELLs but that school districts provide professional development opportunities that addressed working with children with varying needs. However, kindergarten teachers still felt that they needed more professional development that helped to address the specific needs of ELLs, such as vocabulary, and culturally responsive practices, such as religion (Hegde et al., 2018). Rizzuto (2017) found one area of difficulty that early childhood teachers experienced when teaching ELLs was understanding how a second language is acquired. Kelly (2015) found that one of the problems with using practices that support language development was that teachers even after training, teachers were not always sure how to implement practices to make them effective for their students.

Outside influences, such as school-based, district-based, and state-based learning expectations can affect the quality of instruction provided to ELLs. In fact, educational processes and goals required by administrators may limit teacher ability to work effectively with ELLs. For example, Brown and Weber (2016) followed two prekindergarten teachers through an action research project guided by professional development, and found that teacher practices are often influenced by the mandated curriculum and not the culturally diverse practices that would meet the needs of their students. Valentino (2018) noted that one of the most effective ways to close the learning gaps that exist is to have quality learning experiences for young children. Jung et al.

(2016) also noted that the teacher-child interaction in early childhood settings has an impact on the quality of instruction that is given to ELLs. With the unique learning needs of ELLs, acquiring a second language and developmentally appropriate content knowledge simultaneously, Jung et al. found that a variety of early literacy activities are needed in order to support the learning and development of ELLs. One conclusion that was found in the study conducted by Brown and Weber was that demands of administration and stakeholders often does not allow the teacher to meet the cultural needs of their students, affecting the quality of instruction for young students, and thus preventing the reduction or closing of the achievement gap between ELLs and their counterparts.

Conclusion

In the literature review I outlined important scholarly sources that support the notion that prekindergarten was designed to have positive effects for young children, and ELLs. Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory provides a framework where learning is social and includes interaction with an MKO in order to assist in growth and development through a student's ZPD. It is the teacher's responsibility as the dominant MKO to provide scaffolds and tools to assist prekindergarten students to grow and develop the skills that are needed in order to demonstrate a readiness to learn once the student has reached kindergarten. While this is the general role and responsibility for prekindergarten teachers, the problem is that teachers are not meeting the needs of ELLs, and they are entering kindergarten unprepared. The literature has shown that ELLs face the challenge of becoming fluent in both their home language and English as their second language.

This challenge along with factors such as low parental education, living in poverty, which can affect social-emotional development, and the lack of teacher efficacy in teaching ELLs, has been examined in previous research. While teachers' preparedness and self-efficacy in teaching ELLs , and school readiness in general has been the topic of previous research, little is known about the specific needs of prekindergarten teachers in supporting ELLs in order to help them be prepared for kindergarten. The perspectives of prekindergarten teachers and what is needed to support the development of readiness amongst ELLs is important in order to bring about social change and prepare ELLs to be ready for school like their native English speaking peers, beginning closing the achievement gap amongst ELLs and native English speaking students. In the next chapter, I will outline the research method used to gain the perspective of prekindergarten teachers on what is needed to support the ELLs so that they are prepared to enter kindergarten.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this study was to investigate prekindergarten teachers' perspectives about their needs in order to support ELLs. For the purpose of this study, prekindergarten teachers were those who teach 4- and 5-year-old students in a public-school setting. To address the problem, I used a basic qualitative approach (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016) with semistructured interviews.

In this chapter, I provide the research questions that guided the study and a rationale on why understanding the perspectives of prekindergarten teachers is important. Chapter 3 also includes my role as the researcher as well as a description of the participants, how they were selected, the method that was used to answer the research questions, and how the data collected were analyzed. Finally, I address the trustworthiness of the study and the ethical procedures that were followed in order to ensure participants were treated in adherence to Institutional Review Board guidelines.

Research Design and Rationale

The problem under study was that ELLs were not meeting readiness proficiency on kindergarten readiness assessments. The following four research questions guided this study:

1. How do prekindergarten teachers describe their assessment of baseline knowledge for each child in their class who is an ELL?
2. How do prekindergarten teachers describe their creation of stepwise goals for learning for each child in their class who is an ELL?

3. How do prekindergarten teachers describe their evaluation of learner progress for each child in their class who is an ELL?
4. What resources and supports do prekindergarten teachers identify as needed to increase their ability to assess, teach, and evaluate each child in their class who is an ELL?

These research questions highlighted the role of the prekindergarten teacher as the MKO and showed how the teachers might help to guide their prekindergarten students through their ZPD. I examined prekindergarten teachers specifically because prekindergarten is designed to assist with preparing students to be prepared for kindergarten (see Valentino, 2018). As the MKO, the prekindergarten teacher has knowledge of what the student knows and comes into the class with. By creating stepwise goals, the teacher is acknowledging where the student is able to go with their assistance and what learning will become independent learning of the students. In order to evaluate progress through the ZPD, a prekindergarten teacher must evaluate what is the new independent learning, assisting in moving the ZPD of the ELLs. Finally, as the MKO, a prekindergarten teacher must have the ability to support and scaffold new information in order to assist the ELLs in making it their new independent knowledge and skills.

In this qualitative study, I employed a phenomenological approach. The qualitative method was chosen because it is grounded in a constructivist view, in which the prekindergarten teacher is assisting ELLs construct knowledge in order to exhibit school readiness skills when they enter kindergarten. A quantitative tradition would not have aligned with this study because examining numerical data would not have given a

clear picture of why ELLs are not meeting proficiency in school readiness skills. In order to receive a clear explanation and create a clear picture, a qualitative study best aligned with the goals of the study. Furthermore, a phenomenological design was most appropriate for this study because the goal was to examine the phenomenon of how prekindergarten teachers teach ELLs. A phenomenological study, as defined by Creswell and Poth (2018), examines a common meaning that is experienced by a group of people. In this study, the group that shared the experience under study was prekindergarten teachers, and the specific population of prekindergarten teachers had the shared experience of teaching ELLs.

Role of the Researcher

The role that I took within this study was that of observer-participant (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). My primary role was as an interviewer, which caused me to engage directly with the participants of the study. Although the participants and I work in the same field, I did not have a personal relationship with the participants, since I teach on a different grade level and in a different school or district. My status as a colleague makes me an insider, as described by Dwyer and Buckle (2009), which made it easier for me to establish rapport with participants because I could relate to their experiences as a classroom teacher. At the same time, my insider status means I already have experiences and opinions regarding work with ELLs, so I took steps, as described in the following paragraphs, to limit the influence of my personal perspectives. I held no clear power over the participants because I did not hold a supervisory position; the participants and I held

the same position. All participants were volunteers and were not mandated to participate by the school district or any other authority.

I conducted this study in the field of early childhood education, specifically in the preschool or prekindergarten setting. I may have brought preconceived assumptions about issues within the early childhood sector of the education system into this study because I teach the grade one level above the grade level studied and work directly with ELLs that have prekindergarten experience. This may have created a personal bias about what happens in a prekindergarten classroom. In order to combat these ethical issues and in an effort to report results that are valid, I employed participant validation strategies, such as member checking (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). After the interviews and transcription of the participants' responses, I sent the transcripts of their interview to each participant to be sure that what was transcribed accurately reflected their feelings and needs as a prekindergarten teacher. I also used in vivo coding, which entailed using the precise words of the participants to analyze and answer the research questions.

There was no defined power difference in the relationship between the participants and I because we held the same position as classroom teachers. However, so that there was a clear understanding of our roles as interviewer and participant, school administration at the school and district level did not participate in any communication. Once participants committed to the study, the communication between us remained private. I protected the identity of the participants in by using pseudonyms when presenting the study results. This helped participants to feel comfortable in being honest when sharing their perspectives on their needs in providing effective instruction for

ELLs. Using the strategy of member checking (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016), I also negated any feelings of power differential in the relationships between myself and the participants.

Methodology

Participant Selection

The population of interest in this study was prekindergarten teachers who had students who were ELLs. In order to identify a sample of this target population, I employed network and snowball sampling (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Network sampling entails using a small number from the target population to recruit others within their network (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The network in this study was social media groups that contained teachers from various grade levels. Snowball sampling is similar to network sampling; in the case of this study, prekindergarten teachers are connected to one another, and contact could be established through other prekindergarten teachers. Prekindergarten was not yet a universal grade in the United States, so I thought it was easiest to employ network and snowball sampling because the teachers may have contact with others that teach within their buildings or within the same grade level in their district.

Specific participant selection from the targeted population was based on the specific criterion that participants must have taught prekindergarten with students who were ELLs. This criterion was important because the problem of the study was the lack of proficiency of ELLs on the kindergarten readiness assessments, and for the participants to have a perspective on what is needed to assist these students, the prekindergarten teacher had to have taught ELLs. In order to be sure that the prekindergarten teachers who

volunteered met this criterion, I asked participants if they had taught in classrooms with ELLs. In an effort to maintain confidentiality, no specific student names or school names were identified during this process.

Ten prekindergarten teachers participated in this study. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), the sample needed for exploration of a phenomenon can vary in size ranging from one to 325. The goal of the size of the sample is to be able to provide a detailed description of the phenomenon being studied so that it is relatable to the audience (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The choice of 10 prekindergarten teachers allowed me to elicit participation from a variety of teachers whose classrooms included ELLs and gave me the opportunity to provide details on how prekindergarten teachers teach ELLs and what support they feel is needed to continue to teach ELLs effectively. In order to recruit participants, I posted a message on a social media platform used by teachers of all grade levels. On this social media platform, I asked for prekindergarten teachers who were willing to participate in the current study to send me their personal e-mail address so that I could provide them with a synopsis of the study. When a prekindergarten teacher agreed to participate, I sent them an e-mail that included the informed consent information. After receiving an e-mail with the statement, “I consent,” showing that the participant understood the expectations of their role in the study, I sent another e-mail confirming their participation in the study and scheduling an interview with them. I continued in this fashion until I reached the target number of 10 participants.

Instrumentation

The instruments used to collect data in this study were the interview questions and myself as the researcher. I asked six open-ended interview questions and two additional follow-up questions (see Appendix B). The interview questions were created by me based on the conceptual framework derived from Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, and more specifically, the concept of the teacher as an MKO guiding ELLs through their ZPD (see Clark, 2018; Markova, 2017). The research questions that guided the study were also used to develop the interview questions. The problem of ELLs not meeting the requirements of kindergarten readiness caused me to want to further examine prekindergarten teachers' perspectives on the teaching and learning of ELLs, which was the basis of the four research questions.

I established content validity through interpretive validity (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Interpretive validity includes the use of the words of the people studied, which is referred to as an emic approach (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The goal of the current study was to gain the perspectives of prekindergarten teachers, so the use of an emic approach assisted in establishing content validity. Content validity is also established by using dialogic engagement for the interview questions (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). In order to support the content validity of the interview questions in this study, I elicited assistance from two experts who each hold a doctorate in education to read over and provide input on the interview questions to ensure that they aligned with the research problem, purpose, and research questions. These experts made suggestions for increasing the specificity of the questions, and I incorporated these suggestions into the set of interview questions.

The participants' responses to each question assisted me in answering the four research questions that guided the study. The first interview question clarified how prekindergarten teachers assess ELLs in order to establish baseline developmental levels, which helped to answer the first research question. The second interview question allowed the prekindergarten teacher to address how they create goals for ELLs for learning throughout their prekindergarten year and what instructional strategies they use to affect those goals, which helped to answer the second research question. In order to address the third research question on how progress is evaluated, the third interview question addressed the formal and informal assessments that the prekindergarten teacher employed in order to evaluate the progress of ELLs. The last two interview questions assisted in answering the final research question, which gauged what additional resources and support the prekindergarten teacher felt were needed in order to prepare ELLs for kindergarten as determined by kindergarten readiness assessments.

The second instrument used in the study was myself as the interviewer. Merriam and Tisdell (2018) highlighted how the researcher as an instrument is common in qualitative studies because the goal of the study is to gain an understanding of the phenomenon. My role as the interviewer entailed me asking my planned interview questions. Since, I am conducting unstructured interviews, I asked additional questions that were not planned, in order to gain a clearer understanding of the perspective of the prekindergarten teacher. Along with being the primary tool for the study, as the researcher I encountered bias and assumptions that I have regarding participants and the subject of teaching ELLs. In order to keep the data collection process valid, I made sure

to check in with participants during data collection to be sure their perspectives are being communicated and not my biases. I used the data collection and analysis results to challenge my biases and assumptions in order to gain a deeper understanding of the perspectives of prekindergarten teachers. Ravitch and Carl (2016) also encouraged reflexivity in order to maintain an ethical and valid study. In order to engage in researcher reflexivity, I maintained subjective questions that are solely based on the conceptual framework, and questions that ask the participants to expand. I also maintained reflexivity by not conducting research with participants from my specific school, or with participants that I may have a relationship with, so that I am able to maintain subjectivity.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Participant recruitment was done through social media. I used social media, as a member of a local group where there are prekindergarten teachers, to reach out and ask if there are any prekindergarten teachers who are willing to participate in the study . When I found willing participants, I asked for their personal e-mail address and sent an e-mail giving a synopsis of the study. As teachers responded, I asked them if they knew any other prekindergarten teachers who would also be willing to participate in the study. I continued to use my contacts until I reached my goal of 10 participants. When teachers responded accepting the invitation to participate, I sent the informed consent document, and I gave them a brief reminder of the criterion that they have taught in a class where some of their students were ELL students. When the participants responded with the “I consent” statement, I scheduled the participants time and platform to engage with me in

an interview. All participation, interviews and member checks were conducted by phone, or Zoom.

Initial data collection began with a 30 to 45 minute interview. Each interview was audio recorded within the communication application and transcribed using a transcription software. After I transcribed each interview, I e-mailed the transcript to the participants for them to read over for accuracy. This follow-up communication allowed for additional questions to be asked if I needed clarification with a response, and it allowed the participant to clarify or correct any responses that they felt were not a true reflection of their perspective. This e-mail was available for participants to review, and was returned to me as quickly as possible.

Data Analysis Plan

All data were collected in the form of audio-recorded interviews and resulted interview transcripts. In order to prepare the data for analysis I created a three column chart in Microsoft Word. The first column was for any field notes, the middle column was the text of the transcript, and the final column was where I extracted the codes. The first column was spaced so that the field notes matched up to the transcript where I noted them during the interviews. There was one chart for all of interview transcripts.

The data were analyzed using first and second cycle coding. The first cycle coding was done through in vivo coding (Saldaña, 2016). In vivo coding allowed the data to be examined using the exact words of the participants (Saldaña, 2016). Using in vivo coding allowed me to ground the analysis in the participants experiences and share their perspectives. During the first cycle of coding I used the three column chart with the

transcript in the middle column, and the in vivo codes in the third column of the chart. After the first cycle of coding, I created a code chart, in order to examine the data, and codes across the 10 participants (see Saldaña, 2016). The code chart consisted of three columns, a list of codes from each of the 10 interviews in the first column, the second column identified the categories that the code would fit in, and the third column was for the themes that began to emerge after the data were examined. The development of categories and themes was the focus of the second cycle coding.

Once the data were charted in the code chart, I engaged in second cycle coding using pattern coding (see Saldaña, 2016). The goal in using pattern coding during the second cycle of coding was to look for any patterns of initial codes. During the pattern coding I examined the code chart created during the first cycle coding. I looked for the patterns in the codes, and began to move them around so that codes that were similar were grouped together in categories, with the category identified in the second column. The categories were examined in order to create themes, which were recorded in the third column. Based on the categories I was able to describe the similarities found in both the first and second cycle coding, and offering possible explanations of the similarities by using thick descriptions of the participants, and their experiences with ELLs. The thick descriptions will allow the audience to determine if the perspectives reported best fit their personal situation, and makes the study applicable to a wider variety of audiences.

Discrepant cases could have arose if a participant appeared to contradict themselves during the interview, expressing ideas that seem contrary to each other. If I noticed this during the course of the interview, I asked the participant to resolve the

contradiction, and used that resolution to inform the data. If I noticed this during my review of the transcript, I e-mailed that participant their transcript for review and asked for clarification. If I did not notice the discrepancy until after the participant transcript was reviewed, I noted it in the analysis and discussion of the study.

Trustworthiness

Credibility is described by Merriam and Tisdell (2016) as the ability to match research findings to reality. I used member checks in order to establish credibility (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Member checks, as described by Ravitch and Carl (2016), happen when the researcher communicates with participants beyond the interview so that the interview can be an accurate reflection of their perspectives. During the study participants participated in one member check beyond their initial interview. This check in with participants was for them to read over the transcript of their interview to correct, add to, or clarify any responses that they felt were needed.

Transferability is the ability for the data, and results of the study to be applied to other contexts beyond the one in which the original study was applied (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Ravitch and Carl (2016) also described transferability as providing "descriptive, context-relevant statements" (p. 189). I established transferability through thick description of the participants' experiences (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The thick description of the participants' experiences allow the reader of the study to make a connection and determine if the results can be applied to their situation (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Participant variation also contributed to the transferability in the study. The teachers came from different regions, which may mean that their experience with

ELLs may differ from other participants. This variation allowed for the context of the prekindergarten teachers be transferable to a wider audience.

Dependability, means that the methods used to collect data align with the problem, purpose, and research questions of the study (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The development of the interview questions helped me to exhibit dependability, as they were designed to assist me in answering the research questions. The research questions were designed to address the problem and purpose of the study. In order to further ensure dependability, while creating the interview questions I engaged in dialogic engagement. The dialogic engagement entailed having two experts to check the interview questions for alignment with the problem, purpose, and research questions that guide the study. Further, the member checks, that also helped me to establish credibility, helped me to create an audit trail. The dialogic engagement and member checks were documented to denote their occurrences and any adjustments that are made. Using dialogic engagement, member checks and audit trails helped to establish dependability of the design, and data collection of the study.

Confirmability denotes that the data of the study can be confirmed and show minimum bias from the researcher (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). In the study, confirmability was established through reflexivity throughout the study. In order to be sure that I acknowledged my personal biases but not allow them to influence the questions I asked during the interview, I participated in a dialogic engagement with two experts who have their doctorate in the education field. This dialogic engagement allowed me to be sure that my interview questions remained objective and not subjective. Also, during the

study, I conducted a member check with the participants. The member check helped me to be sure that the data I collected and the results of the data were a reflection of the prekindergarten teachers' perspective, and not my own thoughts or biases of the research.

Ethical Procedures

I ensured ethical procedures during my study by first gaining approval from Walden's Institutional Review Board (Approval # 06-12-20-0651850). To protect participants' rights and confidentiality, each participant was provided with an informed consent form which gave a brief synopsis of the study, and what the participation expectations of the study were. After reading the informed consent participants had the ability to consent, or choose not to participate in the study.

All materials related to the study, interview recordings, interview transcripts, and e-mail correspondence were stored on a memory flash drive where they will remain for the required 5 years. After the 5 years, the memory flash drive will be destroyed and discarded. All e-mail correspondence was conducted using personal e-mail addresses, and not through school district e-mails. The only persons who have access to data are participants, my dissertation committee, and myself as the researcher. Participants only have access to their own interviews.

The interviews were conducted through telecommunication applications, such as telephone, or Zoom. This helped to ensure that the participants were comfortable enough to be honest with their perspectives because they were participating from a place that was comfortable for them, and not in their work environment. When data were reported within the study, I used pseudonym names (Participant 1, Participant 2, and so on) in

order to protect their identity. All written material, including transcripts, also followed this convention. During the interviews, data analysis, and discussion of the data I was sure to practice reflexivity so that I did not allow my personal biases to influence the questions I asked, or how I interpreted teachers' perspectives. Member checks helped me be sure my biases were not influencing the data.

Summary

In Chapter 3, I provided an outline of the research method, showing how the study was conducted. There were four questions that guided the study, the focus of the questions were to help gain an understanding of the perspective of 10 prekindergarten teachers about what is needed to teach ELLs more effectively so that they are able to show school readiness as measured by the kindergarten readiness assessments. In order to answer these four questions, I used myself as an observer-participant, and eight interview questions, asked in individual interviews conducted by telephone or teleconference. Data were analyzed using in vivo coding during the first cycle, and pattern coding during the second cycle of analysis. I will present the results of the study in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this study was to examine the perspective of prekindergarten teachers about their needs in order to teach ELLs effectively. The research questions addressed prekindergarten teachers' practices in the classroom as well as what support and resources they thought are needed from their schools and curriculums in order to effectively teach and prepare ELLs for kindergarten. The four research questions that guided the study were:

1. How do prekindergarten teachers describe their assessment of baseline knowledge for each child in their class who is an ELL?
2. How do prekindergarten teachers describe their creation of stepwise goals for learning for each child in their class who is an ELL?
3. How do prekindergarten teachers describe their evaluation of learner progress for each child in their class who is an ELL?
4. What resources and supports do prekindergarten teachers identify as needed to increase their ability to assess, teach, and evaluate, each child in their class who is an ELL?

In this chapter, I present the results of the study through providing a description of the study setting, the data collection process, how the data were analyzed, and evidence of the trustworthiness of the study.

Setting

The study consisted of interviews with 10 teachers who had taught prekindergarten with some of their students being ELLs. Each participant determined the

physical setting of their interview. Two participants conducted their interview by phone, and eight participants conducted their interview by Zoom. One of the participants who conducted the interview by Zoom did so with her video camera off. I conducted most of the interviews while the participants were at their own home or at the home of a relative. When initially designing the study, I thought that conducting interviews from home was going to be free from distraction because I felt that with a set time, the participant would be sure to minimize as many distractions as possible but conducting interviews with participants in their home setting actually brought on more distractions than there would have been if we had scheduled in-person interviews, at least for some participants. Some participants had young children to whom they had to attend to during the interview, and others had pets that made additional noise in the background of the phone call or teleconference. However, understanding the unexpected circumstances and in order to show respect for personal responsibilities, I allowed for a pause in the interviews so that the participants could tend to children and pets. My flexibility and understanding made the interview process more comfortable for participants and allowed time for the participant and me to fully engage in the interview process.

Data Collection

I used Facebook to recruit the participants, which opened this study up to prekindergarten teachers from different regions. Five participants directly replied to my request for participants on Facebook, and the other five participants were recruited through other participants and from members of the Facebook groups who shared my original post.

The length of the interviews ranged from 15 to 45 minutes, although I expected all of the interviews to last approximately 30 minutes. The length of the interview depended on the length and depth of the participants' responses. Eight of the participants shared stories to highlight their practices with ELLs. Two of the participants only offered straightforward answers to the interview questions, so their interviews lasted only 15 to 20 minutes. During the interview with one participant, her young child began to cry so she had to take breaks in responding to tend to the child. The child even hung up the phone during the interview, so I had to pause the interview and call the participant back in order to reconnect and continue. In another interview a child came in to ask the participant a question, so we had to stop the interview so the participant answer her child's question. Another participant had a dog that barked during the interview, and she had to pause to let it out before the interview could continue.

I found that when conducting the interviews by telephone and Zoom I did not make many field notes because I could not always see the participant. This did not affect how the participants conveyed their experience because their responses were full of stories that complemented their answers and conversations.

Data Analysis

In this study, data were collected through semistructured interviews. After each interview, I transcribed the participant's responses and sent the transcripts to the corresponding participant. The participants verified their answers to the interview questions and confirmed that their responses were a direct reflection of their thoughts and that the transcriptions reflected their perspectives. After receiving the approved

transcripts back, I merged the 10 interview transcripts together into a Word document to create the set of data. Next, I created a three column chart in order to set up the first cycle of coding. In the three column chart, I inserted headings for field notes, the transcript, and codes. Any field notes taken were placed in the first column, while the set of data made up of the merged transcripts were input to the middle column. I read through the data and extracted words, phrases, and/or sentences that gave insight into the prekindergarten teachers' perspectives of working with ELLs. Those words, phrases, and sentences became the codes for the first cycle of coding. The codes that I extracted used the participants exact words in order to maintain in vivo coding. During first cycle coding, I identified 560 codes. Some of the codes were identical or overlapped, so I kept one and placed a number in parentheses to indicate the number of times this code was extracted. After completing first cycle coding for all 10 participants, I moved into second cycle coding.

Second cycle coding consisted of the creation of a second three column chart. The first column in the chart held the 560 codes that I extracted during the first cycle of coding. In the second cycle of coding, I moved the codes into groups that referenced similar things, and from these groups of codes, I created categories. I then recorded the names of the categories in the second column of the chart. A total of 40 categories were created (see Appendix A). After creating the 40 categories, I grouped the categories that covered the same topics together to create themes, which were placed into the third column. During second cycle coding, five themes emerged: development of ELLs,

assessment, curriculum, instruction, and needs of prekindergarten teachers. These are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Data Categories and Themes

Categories	Themes
Social-emotional development	Development of ELLs
Language development	
Special education	
Developmental appropriateness	
Prior knowledge	
Language learning	
Vocabulary	
Language barrier	
Language ability of students	
Formal assessment	Assessment
Formal assessment frequency	
Informal assessment	
Curriculum	Curriculum
Time constraint of curriculum	
Learning targets	
Classroom instruction	Instruction
Best practices	
Repetition	
Instructional practices	
Instructional planning	
Small groups	
Centers	
Picture support	
Language support	
Nonverbal communication	
Peer earning	
ESL/ESOL services	
Goal setting	
Day-to-day structure	
Collaboration	
Time	
Needs of students	
Perceptions of preK	
Teaching difficulties	
Parent and family communication	Needs of preK teachers
Connection to culture	
Supports needed	
Respect for preK	
The need to be heard	
Professional development	

[a] ESL/ESOL services refer to English as a second language classes used to serve students who are learning English as their second language.

The codes, categories, and themes that I developed during first and second cycles of coding show the complexity of teaching prekindergarten with students who are ELLs. There was an emphasis on the development of ELLs; while learning English was important, the data also showed teachers in this study believed that social-emotional development was just as important when preparing ELLs for kindergarten. Assessment was also important in the prekindergarten classroom. All of the participating prekindergarten teachers had to conduct some form of formal assessment but teachers reported their own informal assessment gave them a more authentic picture of what their students were able to do. One of the categories also focused on was the curriculum not being appropriate for ELLs. One of the codes indicated how the read alouds were either too easy or too hard and did not meet the needs of their students. Within the theme of instruction, the data show that participating teachers did a lot of their instruction through small groups and centers. In the final theme, needs of prekindergarten teachers, the participants relayed a need to be respected and heard by their administration, and they expressed a need for professional development that would help them to directly address the needs of their students who are ELLs.

Throughout the data analysis process, I noticed several discrepant cases. One of the main discrepancies was that there were four prekindergarten teachers who taught in special education prekindergarten programs. Although the classes were not general education classes, the experiences of the prekindergarten teachers aligned with the

experiences of general education prekindergarten teachers, so I did not handle the data from these teachers any differently than I would have had they taught in general education classrooms. There were also two prekindergarten teachers who taught in child care centers and not in a public school. Much like the prekindergarten teachers who taught in special education programs, the experiences these teachers described aligned with the other four prekindergarten teachers who taught in a general prekindergarten program within a public school, so I did not handle the data generated from their interviews any differently than I did the data provided by other teachers. The final discrepancy I noticed was that one teacher worked in a school district in which more of the county funds were allocated toward education, so the funding that was provided to the school was larger than most public schools. Many things that the other teachers said they needed, this prekindergarten teacher said she was provided with. Since funding was the only difference, I recorded the needs that she was thankful for having fulfilled as things that she would have needed if the funding were different.

Results

In this section, I discuss the results of this study in relation to each of the four research questions. The results were derived from the participants interview responses and were used to answer the four research questions. The participants are referred to with pseudonyms (i.e., P1, P2, P3, etc.) in this results section.

Results for Research Question 1

To answer Research Question 1, I asked the participants to describe how they determined the baseline developmental levels (i.e., academic, language, and social-

emotional development) of their ELLs at the beginning of the school year. P7 simply stated, “we had an assessment for all of the students that tested their language, literacy, and math skills.” For P2, her collection of baseline data was a requirement; she explained, “the county has us do a test, actually two.” P3 said, “they are actually tested before the program starts.” Similarly, P6 noted that, “they come to us as a child who is eligible for special education services, they go through a range of testing.” P10 also noted that, “they did most of the screening before they came in.”

P1 showed hesitation about using formal assessment in the beginning of the year. She commented, “I think giving them time, first of all, before I tried to do any sort of analyzing or assessing is critical.” Her reason for giving them time was further explained, “young learners need time to adjust, especially. Most of my students, my classroom is their first school experience.” P4 discussed assessment as being difficult, saying, “it was very difficult because not only was there the language barrier but he couldn’t focus because he did not know what we were saying.” P6 mentioned the input of others for the initial assessment, stating, “depending on what their parents consented to, they will fill out questionnaires, their day care centers will fill out rating scales for temperament.” P2 also addressed the use of others to help acquire baseline data; she explained, “The ESOL [English to speakers of other languages] teacher does a test twice a year.” As a form of formal assessment, P9 simply mentioned “observation.”

Some of the participants were able to access some support during formal assessment in order to gain baseline developmental levels for their students. P5 commented that, “One of the biggest things, I think when you are assessing English

language learners is the use of pictures." P8 used the support of her students' native language, explaining, "I would ask them questions in English, I would get a blank stare, so I was like let me ask you in Spanish and see if you know." Another participant who used the student's native language during formal assessment was P9, who described her testing protocol as "if they answer the question in Spanish, not a problem."

According to these prekindergarten teachers, baseline data for ELLs were gathered through formal assessment. Through these formal assessments prekindergarten teachers reported having a clear picture of where the ELLs in their class are, academically, in their language development, and in their social-emotional development. Language is often a barrier for ELLs when performing assessment, and these teachers wished for time before engaging in formal assessment with prekindergarten students, especially those who are ELLs.

Results for Research Question 2

To answer Research Question 2, I asked participants to describe how they determine what academic, language, and social-emotional learning goals would be most effective for ELLs in their classroom. The participants each had different means of setting stepwise and learning goals for their students. P1 gave insight in to the focus of the goals in her classroom, saying, "we just really focus on vocabulary, language, and social-emotional development." The process was different for P2. She explained, "we look at what they are doing in the classroom and what supports they need." In addition to looking at the supports the ELLs needed, P2 went on to describe her observation of the language development of the students. She described the language development as "either

kids who have quieter voices, or students who are not using pronouns, or not using them accurately." P8 also showed how she focused on language development when she said, "if you're four you don't have a command of any language." She further pointed out that because of this "the goals are aligned with students who speak English because they also have never heard pronouns before, so we're all working on the same thing."

For P3, goal setting and choosing effective goals were based on "district indicators, learning targets." Goal setting for P5 was similar; she explained, "they give you objectives to kind of go by." Going beyond the objectives provided to her, she further explained:

> When I set goals and objectives for the kids, when I lesson plan, I think what it is that I want them to do. I start with what they give us, and then I base it on the individual child, and how fast they progress, for some it takes longer, and some it doesn't.

P9's goal setting was similar; she described it as "there are a lot of SKB's [skill, knowledge, and behavior indicators]." P7 spoke candidly and said, "it was really just to improve their scores on the test. So, most of them started out, they didn't know any of the letters or their letter sounds, and they scored pretty low on the test." Much like P7, P4 based her goals on what the students were able to do; she described their goal to be "at the minimum to get them just to identify a letter, a number, a color, or words in a song."

P6 took a different approach in setting goals for her students; she explained her goal setting process as:

> Knowing where children should be when they go to kindergarten. These are the skills I want them to have, so that when they go to kindergarten at least they have those self-regulation, executive functioning skills, and self-help skills, so even though their other developmental domains may be delayed, they still have a level of independence and self-control, and emotional regulation that sets them up to be successful.

Goal setting for P10 was also different. She described her goal setting this way, "I had to set learning goals for their IEPs [individual education plans]."

Each of the prekindergarten teachers in this study sets goals for their students. The participants based the goals on the developmental needs of the students, which were determined by the learning targets that were set by the district or provided through their district or center curriculum. Two of the participating teachers also based the developmental needs of their students on their IEP. For one of the participants the goals were also based on the assessments that were given to the students, and the goal for the teacher was for the students to acquire the skills in order to improve on the assessment the next time it was given. Language development was another goal for some of the participants because they were working with students who were ELL, and needed to develop the English language. Social-emotional development was the focus on step-wise goals for another participant, whose main goal was for her students to be social-emotionally prepared for kindergarten. Although the participants had different ways to determine the goals for their students, each goal was based on the individual developmental needs of the students in order for them to grow and make progress.

Results for Research Question 3

To answer Research Question 3, I asked participants to discuss how they use assessment throughout the year to evaluate progress of ELLs as they master new skills and concepts. First P1 discussed her use of formal and informal assessments in order to assess the progress of her ELLs; she stated:

> For the formal we use the ELA. We have to administer it three times a year. We use a lot of anecdotal records in my classroom. That in prek is a lot more authentic that the more structured assessment opportunities.

P8 also discussed using the Early Learning Assessment; she explained, "So the formal assessment is the Early Learning Assessment. It's just a lot of observational checklist. But I do flashcards for letters because I don't know if you know them or not." P2 echoed the use of assessment to assess the growth of ELLs; she also stated, "the three times a year, we do, the ESOL teacher does her assessments twice a year." P7 said, "The test was given three times a year," a statement that shows how she tracked the progress of her ELLs. Assessments were also used by P3, who commented, "We did have a district assessment to give. We did a test at the beginning, January, and the end of the year. We did informal on our own."

P4 and P5 did not have the same formal assessment process as the other teachers. P4 described her assessment process this way, "We assess through observation." P5 described her assessment process, "We have different ways. We have one assessment booklet because we are National Association for the Education of Young Children accredited, and we have to track that four times a year. Then we have our own assessment

that we created." P6 had similar methods to assess the growth of her students; she explained, "The developmental scales checklist, we are required to do those three times a year. Then I also keep language samples, writing samples. I have a data sheet so that I can record anecdotal records." P9 described learning targets and checklists as a method to assess and track the growth of her students; she described, "So there are academics like the skill knowledge behavior indicators, they go to social and academic. My assistant does a lot of anecdotal notes, and I record in my notebook." Finally, P10's method of tracking the progress and growth of her students was different; she described, "I had a sheet, I would log in what I was doing. Then because I work with occupational therapists, speech therapists, and adaptive physical education, we all collaborated. We talked about what they were doing."

Prekindergarten teachers in this study reported using evaluation tools and techniques to support the progress of their students towards their learning goals. They used both formal and informal assessment in order to keep track of learning progress. Formal assessment for most of these teachers was used to track the students, usually three times a year. Teachers reported that informal assessment was used daily in order to monitor, and adjust goals as students meet goals, or when they need additional support.

Results for Research Question 4

To answer Research Question 4, I asked the prekindergarten teachers who were a part of this study what supports they needed from colleagues, school administration, and their districts. The prekindergarten teachers in the study were also asked what additional resources could be provided by their curriculum. The participants identified professional,

instructional needs, as well as curriculum enhancements that would help them to become more effective with the ELLs in their classes.

One of the most immediate needs expressed by some participants was the need to be heard and respected. P2 shared her sentiments:

> The first thing that we need for people to understand that we are not just playing with cute adorable little children. It does look like play but it is actual learning, and we are actually teachers. It does look like play but it is actual learning, and we are actually teachers. And, I don't think anyone does it consciously but I think there is an enormous K-5 focus, and what that inevitably does is ignore the prek kids. Remember us for assemblies, and remember us for fire drills, remembering that we exist.

P5 and P9 both shared similar sentiments of being respected. First, P5 asked for administration "to actually be aware of what was going on, and to really listen, and to be heard when your teacher is telling you I need help." P9 said that "administration has to understand the importance of play based instruction." Two participants did not recall receiving any type of support. P1 recalled, "we don't have a lot of supports from anywhere outside of what we are doing in our room." Similarly, P10 stated, "we provided the scaffolds ourselves, and I don't recall any other support."

Participants described the supports they felt were needed in order to better assess, teach, and evaluate the ELLs in their classroom. One of these was professional development. P1 discussed receiving professional development "that gives the opportunity to deeply learn the research behind ELL development." P3 also expressed the

desire to have professional development on ELLs; saying, “more training about ESL [English as a Second Language], about working with them, about ideas that could help the kids more.” Further expanding on the need for professional development, P4 asked for “training that I need to work with these children, training that we can utilize.” For P6, the professional development offerings provided by her district were described as “Academy courses, where the teachers are able to identify or choose their own supports based on their needs.”

Instructional support from coaches is a support that P6 identified. She mentioned “we have a great system from our instruction coaches. I have instructional support teachers at my disposal when I get to the point where I don’t know what to do with a kid I can ask for help.” Another support identified by some of the participants is to have an ESOL or ESL teacher to come in and assist ELLs. P3 mentioned, “there should be a support person that comes and maybe help evaluate the kids in Spanish so that you can learn more about them.” P7 recalls having an ESL teacher who pulled students out of her classroom but she thought, “it would have been helpful for them to come into the classroom, and work with them, so that I can see those supports more and learn from that too.” P8 expressed:

> We don’t get ESOL services. If we got some ESOL support, it doesn’t have to be as intense as it is in the upper grades. Once a week would be more than enough, just to check in and see where they are.

P3 also expressed the need for ESOL support saying, “if preschool could have some kind of program like ESOL , something that would help in planning because language lessons help all kids.”

The curriculum as a resource was also addressed by the participants. P1 expressed a need to “have a well-paced curriculum.” She further explained that the curriculum does not “give the opportunity to go deep, and spend a lot of time on a subject.” P2 shared her sentiment by asking for “a curriculum that makes sense.” Currently her curriculum “ranges from books that are 50 pages long that would take 30 minutes to read to board books that would be more appropriate for 1- and 2- year olds.” She further stated that the curriculum is “hard to navigate and it makes you trust the curriculum less when you have to go back and sort of relook at it for appropriateness before you have to adapt your lesson for it.” Following this thought, P7 also commented on the curriculum, saying, “it was a very scripted curriculum. I wouldn’t say there was a whole lot of specific support for ELLs written in it. They gave specific books to read and they were very long and very wordy.” P4 would like for her curriculum to include “something where we can indulge in their culture.” She furthers her wish by stating, “It is great for them to learn the stuff that is going on but for us to have a collaborative community we have to learn about their culture as well.” P6 wished for “bilingual books.” P8 also wished for “more bilingual material, and a curriculum with better pacing that allows for the varying learning speeds of the students.”

Prekindergarten teachers who participated in the study had professional and instructional needs that would help them assess, teach, and evaluate the ELLs in their

classroom. The participants indicated that they needed an administration that was supportive and recognized prekindergarten as an area of early childhood where real teaching and learning takes place. They expressed a desire to be heard, seen, and respected as teachers. Support from instructional coaches that could come in observe, model, and evaluate their teacher practices was another need of the participating teachers. In addition to instructional coaches, having an ESOL or ESL teacher who specifically worked with ELLs in acquiring and learning English was viewed as something that would be helpful. Professional development that provided the participating teachers with an understanding of how ELLs develop, specifically language, and strategies that teachers can use within their classroom to assist them was a support and resource that the teachers felt is currently lacking. Resources that would help the participating prekindergarten teachers to assess, teach, and evaluate the ELLs in the classroom included a curriculum designed to meet the unique learning needs of ELLs, to allow more time and practice of skills and concepts for ELLs, and a curriculum that was developmentally appropriate. With these supports and resources the participating prekindergarten teachers felt that their success with ELLs would increase.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

In order to establish credibility during data collection I participated in member checks. These member checks consisted of transcribing the interviews, and sending the transcription to the participants. The participants had the opportunity to read over the transcript of their interview and make any necessary changes. After each interview I did the transcription myself, and e-mailed it to the corresponding participant. Each

participant read over the transcript. Nine of the participants responded without making any edits to their transcript. One participant made changes to the transcript and sent it back to me. The corrected transcript was used for data analysis and results. For data analysis and the reporting results, I used in vivo coding. The use of in vivo coding helped me to establish credibility because I used the direct words and quotes, sharing the experiences of prekindergarten teachers who work in the classroom with ELLs.

I maintained transferability through the use of participant variation. Using social media to recruit participants allowed me to find participants from different regions of the country. Although some participants worked within the same state, they worked in different districts. Another form of participant variation that I used was the use of two of participants that taught preschool in a child care center, while others worked in public school programs. This allowed for transferability with readers because it can appeal to a wider audience of preschool and prekindergarten teachers in different settings and regions of the country. With the answers provided during the interviews and through data analysis, I was able to provide thick descriptions of the participants experiences with teaching ELLs. Participant variation and thick descriptions allowed me to maintain transferability throughout the reporting of the data and results.

I maintained dependability throughout data collection. I used the interview questions that were reviewed through dialogic engagement. During this dialogic engagement with two experts, we made sure that the interview questions aligned with the problem and purpose of the study. This process helped me to maintain dependability because it helped me to be able to collect data that was grounded and aligned. To further

create dependability of the study, I participated in member checks. The member checks that I did helped me to establish credibility by creating an audit trail where the participants were able to make changes to the transcript of their interview. Creating audit trails enabled me to maintain dependability as the participants were able to assist me in being sure that the data that I would analyze was not based on my own interpretation or bias. One of the participants made changes to her transcript. It did not change her answers but it was to help clarify an acronym that she used during her interview.

I supported confirmability by using dialogic engagement and member checks. Through these processes I was able to show minimum bias as the researcher during the design and data collection process of the study. The process of dialogic engagement helped me to ensure that the interview questions that I used during data collection were grounded and aligned with the study. The member check happened when I sent the participants a copy of their interview transcripts, and they reviewed, edited, revised, and approved them. The member check allowed the participants to review their interview transcript, and that it was a reflection of their perspectives as the participating prekindergarten teachers.

Summary

In this study I found that the prekindergarten teachers who participated engaged in formal assessment in order to determine baseline data for development of the ELLs in their classroom. When creating stepwise goals, the prekindergarten teachers who participated used data collected from initial formal assessments, as well as informal assessments, to determine what goals are appropriate for their students who are ELLs.

Throughout the school year, the prekindergarten teachers who participated in the study evaluated the learning and monitored the stepwise goals created, by reassessing students using the formal assessment three times a year, and by using observation and anecdotal records.

Prekindergarten teachers who participated in the study expressed the need to be heard and respected, and wanted the same for their students. They reported often feeling forgotten as a grade level. In order to increase their effectiveness in assessing, teaching, and evaluating ELLs the prekindergarten teachers who participated in the study felt that they needed professional development that specifically addressed the developmental needs of ELLs. They also needed a curriculum that allows for the pacing, structure, and flexibility required when teaching ELLs. Finally, they needed more bilingual resources, and materials that encourage learning through play. In Chapter 5, I will examine how the perspectives of the teachers in this study match the current literature. Limitations for the study, recommendations, and implications for future research will also be discussed.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to investigate prekindergarten teachers' perspectives about their needs in order to support ELLs. I conducted this qualitative study to address the gap in practice surrounding the development of school readiness skills in ELLs. Prekindergarten was designed to be an early intervention for young children who live in poverty and provide early learning experience that is often experienced by their peers (Graue et al., 2017). However, data from across the nation show that ELLs continue to underperform their peers on kindergarten readiness assessments (see Maryland Department of Education, 2019; Ohio Department of Education, 2019; Santa Clara County Office of Education, 2019; WestEd, 2019). I interviewed 10 prekindergarten teachers to explore their experiences and perspectives of working with students who are ELLs. The results indicated that prekindergarten teachers are often unable to support the development of ELLs because they are not supported by the structure of the education system in ways that allow them to be effective.

In this chapter, I provide a comparison of the findings of this study with those of current literature on the development of ELLs and the role of prekindergarten teachers that teach them. I also examine the limitations of this study, provide recommendations, and discuss implications.

Interpretation of the Findings

The prekindergarten teachers who participated in the study often recognized the previous experiences of ELLs in their classroom. They expressed a desire to get to know their students and their cultures better. The experiences and thoughts expressed by the

participants countered the findings of Souto-Manning (2016), who wrote that education stakeholders often hold the misconception that if students have not assimilated and have limited proficiency with the English language, then those students have nothing to contribute. Family and values are a large part of culture, and the participants confirmed literature on the importance of this aspect of culture when working with families of ELLs but disconfirmed that prekindergarten teachers rarely take this into account. The thoughts and sentiments expressed by the participants regarding the values in different cultures are aligned with Friesen et al. (2015) who emphasized the difference of adult and child relationships across different cultures, including differences in familial obligations and expectations. Although the literature showed the importance of recognizing the culture of the students, it implied that this is often overlooked by teachers (Souto-Manning, 2016). The participants in the current study showed that as teachers who work with ELLs, they do recognize families' cultural differences and perspectives and try to incorporate them in their classrooms. The responses of the participants showed that the pacing set by the school districts and centers as well as the chosen curriculum includes time for this to be a part of the teachers' day-to-day activities with their students.

Language development was a focus of the prekindergarten teachers who participated in this study. The participants each mentioned some form of classroom instruction as well as instructional support and scaffolds that showed their emphasis on the language development of the students in their class who were ELLs. The participants also showed this focus on language development by stating their need for more bilingual materials. These concerns match the findings of Spencer et al. (2019), who showed that

the use of the home language can increase students' vocabulary in the second language as well as help to maintain the students' home language. This was evident among the participants. Each participant spoke about using Spanish in some form when working with their students. If the teacher was not bilingual, there was usually an assistant or paraprofessional who worked in the classroom that could provide the scaffold between the students' home language and the English language. These interactions between teacher and student align with the findings of Zauche et al. (2016) that showed that the interaction between student and teacher is essential to language development because the teacher is the model for the use of vocabulary and language complexity. Furthermore, the results from the current study confirm the participating prekindergarten teachers' role in the assistance of language development by providing a model for language. According to Abbot-Smith et al. (2018), such role models are instrumental in students' ability to acquire English as their second language when they engage and demonstrate language throughout the day in their classrooms.

While Spencer et al. (2019) found that the use of home language assisted in increasing the vocabulary of the second language for ELLs, Zauche et al. (2016) and Raikes et al. (2019) mentioned that the quality of the program is what ultimately assisted the ELLs in acquiring English as their second language. The participants in the current study confirmed that the quality of the program is just as important as using the home language. While only two participants directly addressed quality instruction, the other participants described their activities with students that showed the importance of the quality of their instruction. Their main goal was for their students to grow and learn. The

teachers did not always have what they needed but they made things work so that their students received quality instruction. Much of this was done through the collaboration with their assistants or paraprofessionals. The focus of the teachers in the current study was on the students and helping them to begin to learn English by using their home language and providing them with quality interactions that helped to set the basis for language development.

In addition to language development, the social-emotional development of ELLs proved to be a rich topic for participants in this study. Some factors of social-emotional development seemed to be a greater factor in preparing the ELLs for kindergarten than cognitive or academic preparation. These findings aligns with the work of Wenz-Gross et al. (2018), who found that although administrative stakeholders do not always focus on this aspect of development, teachers find social-emotional development as a strong indicator of school readiness. In their description of the skills that they focus on, the prekindergarten teachers who participated in the current study always named some aspect of social-emotional learning. The participants all mentioned their programs having a focus on play and less of a focus on direct instruction. The focus on play created social environments in which the students needed social-emotional skills to work along with their peers. Some of the skills that the participants mentioned included executive functioning, self-regulation, independence, waiting their turn, accepting prohibition, and using manners. Many of the participants favored focusing on social-emotional skills over academic skills because they felt these skills contributed to readiness of their students and that academic content would be taught in kindergarten. This same sentiment was

expressed by Piker and Kimmel (2018), who reported that teachers assumed academic tasks, such as literacy and numeracy, would be taught in kindergarten. Wenz-Gross et al. further concluded that young children who were more developed in social-emotional skills had more positive outcomes for early learning and school readiness than did students with less social-emotional skills. Gottfried (2017) also concluded that one of the benefits from ELLs attending prekindergarten is their improved social skills exhibited in kindergarten.

Another factor of the social-emotional development of ELLs that was confirmed with the results of this study is the misinterpretation of behavior. Cho et al. (2019) mentioned that cultural differences and the values held by different cultures can often lead to ELLs being labeled as a behavior problem. This is similar to what I found in the current study in which teachers noted their misinterpretation of behavior was caused by the language barrier. ELLs were often missing the social language to communicate with their peers, and this lack of social language presented the opportunity for the ELLs' behavior to be misunderstood as a negative behavior, when in reality, their behavior was a reaction to the frustration of not being able to communicate. Zarnergar (2015) showed that the inability to communicate in a social setting can be compounded with the social-emotional effects of having to assimilate to the new culture.

The role of the prekindergarten teacher in teaching ELLs was described by Vygotsky (1978) as the MKO. In this role, the teacher and the student share a collaborative relationship in order to help the student work through their ZPD. In this role, the teacher must be able to acknowledge what the student knows, continue to build

on this knowledge, and assist the student to master new knowledge and concepts (Scrimsher & Tudge, 2003). The participating prekindergarten teachers showed they embraced their role as the MKO. They were able to provide their ELLs with the opportunities to engage in activities that helped the students to grow their current skills and develop new skills. To accomplish this growth and development, they participated in collaborative activities with their students. One such collaborative activity that all 10 participants spoke about was small groups. The participants described the small group activities as being differentiated so that they fit the specific needs of the students. The students also engaged in instructional centers during small group time, and these centers were also differentiated so they met the students' needs and helped them to build on the skills that they already possessed as independent skills. Small groups were one way that the prekindergarten teachers in the study showed how they shared a collaborative relationship with the ELLs in their classroom. This collaborative interaction with the ELLs showed that the participating prekindergarten teachers were able to act as the MKO and provide students with opportunities for immersion into language and literacy activities, as described by Sun (2019).

Acar et al. (2017) defined scaffolding as an instructional practice used when a teacher acts as the MKO. Scaffolding was described as the teacher providing guidance during the completion of a task and then gradually reducing the guidance as the student became independent in the skill (Acar et al., 2017). Scaffolding for ELLs happens during language acquisition and includes the teacher using the students' home language to help make the connection between the students' first and second languages (de Oliveira et al.,

2016). The participants in the current study used the scaffolding of language in their classrooms. Four of the participants discussed being bilingual or having someone in the classroom who was bilingual, and two additional participants commented that they were able to speak some Spanish. The participants were able to use the students' home language in some of their lessons and interactions with the ELLs in their classroom. Spencer et al. (2019) found the use of dual languages assisted students in acquiring vocabulary in their second language and also maintaining their home language. Mori and Calder (2017) showed the importance of maintaining the home language and concluded that this maintenance of home language allows the young children to continue to speak with relatives who have yet to learn the English language. Other methods of scaffolding that the participants mentioned engaging in were the use of picture support, gestures, and sign language.

Another scaffold that the prekindergarten teachers who participated in this study mentioned was the use of peers as models and tutors for their students who were ELLs. Clark (2018) defined the MKO as a person that is able to provide a greater understanding of a task or problem, which may include peers. In the classrooms described by teachers in the current study, peers provided the ELLs with support in completing tasks or modeling the use of academic and social language. This is an integral part of both the role of the MKO and the use of scaffolding to support ELLs in their learning (see Markova, 2016). Participants relied on peers to assist the students with daily routines, and the play-based curriculum allowed ELLs and their native-English-speaking peers to have social interactions throughout the day. Although some of the students engaged in the play

activity did not speak each other's language, they were able to connect and share the experience. The experiences shared by the prekindergarten teachers in this study confirmed the use of scaffolding as a successful strategy to support the development of ELLs.

Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory implies that the learning of language is based on social interactions, and as the activities become more difficult, the complexity of the language also increases. The participants in the current study confirmed these notions of providing students with a rich environment in which they were able to use language to support the development of ELLs. Each of the participants worked in programs that were play based, meaning that their students were engaged in center activities for most of the day. These center activities allowed for students to have social interactions with both the teacher and their peers. These interactions happened authentically, while the students were engaged in centers or in small group instruction with the teachers. Through their descriptions of classroom activities and practices, the prekindergarten teachers in this study showed that they engaged in their role as the MKO for their students in their class who were ELLs.

During the review of literature, I presented previous research on the challenges faced by prekindergarten teachers supporting the development of ELLs. Pappamihiel and Lynn (2016) discussed the self-efficacy of teachers of students with ELLs and how teachers did not feel confident with implementing the necessary accommodations for ELLs. The participants in the current study confirmed this finding. Some participants expressed a need to have a colleague on staff who focused on second language

acquisition. Four of the teachers spoke about having an ESOL teachers who worked with their ELLs, and the gratefulness they felt to have this support. The other participants mentioned how these ESOL teachers were present in other grade levels but they were not available at the prekindergarten level. There was not previous research focusing on ESOL teachers as a support for prekindergarten teachers because this is a support that is typically not provided until students reach kindergarten. The participating prekindergarten teachers' need for a teacher who specializes in the instruction of second language acquisition showed that they lack confidence in their self-efficacy in supporting ELLs' language development. This finding aligned with the work of Rizzuto (2017), who found that early childhood teachers do not always understand how a second language is acquired. The prekindergarten teachers in the current study also expressed a need for specialized professional development that focused on the instruction of ELLs, mirroring the findings of Hedge et al. (2018). The participants seemed to struggle with communicating with their students and their students' families who spoke little or no English.

One final need expressed by the prekindergarten teachers who participated in the study was the need to be seen, understood, and respected by administration. Participants reported they often felt a disconnect between themselves and the administration at the school level. According to participants, in their schools there was not a clear vision or expectation for prekindergarten from the administration, and one of the only things that administrators knew about prekindergarten was that students in prekindergarten engage in play based education. The administration did not understand the work and development

of the prekindergarten students that happens when the students are engaged in play. Brown and Weber (2016) shared this same sentiment; they found that the expectations of administrative stakeholders affect how teachers meet the needs of their students, and low or mismatched expectations can lead to reduced quality of instruction for the students. The administrative stakeholders are often responsible for the purchase of curriculum materials, as well as setting the pace of content taught within the classroom and expectations for teachers. Some of the participants did not always set personal goals based on their knowledge and relationship with the students but were simply focused on efforts to improve student scores on an assessment, or to meet their IEP goals. While these goals are important, narrow goals that are data-focused can affect the quality of the instruction because they do not support the growth of the students. Jung et al. (2016) emphasized the importance of quality of instruction, which includes teacher-student interactions, to the development of ELLs.

Limitations of the Study

One limitation of this study was that interviews were not conducted in person but, because of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, over the telephone using a teleconference application. This introduced a number of distractions during the interview. The distractions included young children crying, and pets barking during the interview. These distractions led to some participants having to stop, sometimes in the middle of a thought, to tend to pets and children. The interruption in the train of thought caused the participants to answer the questions more quickly so that the interview could finish and they could attend to their family. Also, by having to conduct the interviews by telephone,

I was not able to take field notes. The documentation of field notes can assist in understanding what nonverbal communication that the participant may have been using, such as gestures to add emphasis, or facial expressions shown during the response to an interview question.

Another limitation occurred during data analysis. During data analysis I used in vivo coding in order to understand the perspective of prekindergarten teachers. I found that using in vivo coding in order to understand the perspective and experiences of prekindergarten teachers led to too many codes, categories and themes. During analysis, I found that while the stories and examples helped to provide thick descriptions of their experiences, they did not work well as codes during data analysis. When I conducted the initial attempt at first cycle of coding, I felt that I overcoded the interviews, so I had to go back and do the first cycle of coding a second time. I had to go through second cycle coding several times in order to condense the and reorganize the codes into categories, and redevelop the categories into larger themes, so that the themes could be usable data when I reported the results.

Recommendations

Although the participants from the study represented several geographical regions of the United States, I recommend that the more teachers from different regions within the country be used in a replication of this study. In a larger research study, the participant pool can be expanded, and provide a more complete picture of how preschool teachers support school readiness in ELLs. At the same time, I also recommend this study to be replicated in a single geographic area, which may allow state or specific school

districts to examine their prekindergarten programs in order to find the model of prekindergarten instruction that will increase effectiveness with ELLs in their own context. Future research might focus on the different sectors of prekindergarten and preschool. In this study I included any program that taught ELLs, both public prekindergarten and private preschools. Although the experiences of the teachers were similar, it may be beneficial to examine separately how these programs address the readiness skills of ELLs. The different funding structures of the two programs may affect the quality of the programs, and ultimately the readiness skills that ELLs show once they get to kindergarten. A quantitative study comparing the scores of ELLs who attend the two different programs may contribute to a better understanding of how to improve the effectiveness of prekindergarten teachers who teach ELLs. Also, the participant pool of this current study only included the lead teacher but since prekindergarten programs usually have lead teachers and paraprofessionals, the paraprofessional could also be considered as participants in future research. Expanding or tightly focusing the geographic locale and the participation pool might provide a broader perspective on prekindergarten programs than I was able to demonstrate in this study, and how they support the development of ELLs.

Based on the results of this study, future research might examine the curriculum used in programs that enroll many ELLs. Participants in this study commented that the pacing and curriculum materials they used were not always appropriate for ELLs. Understanding the curriculum that is used by the teachers to support their instruction for ELLs, may give insight to how to better support ELL development. Also, future research

could examine the professional development provided to teachers who teach ELLs, including in topics that may not appear directly related to second language acquisition. Participants often noted that while they are provided with professional development in a wide range of instructional areas, this often does not include application of the training to ELLs, and so has limited usefulness to teachers once they begin working with their students who are ELLs. A study of how professional development affects the classroom practices for prekindergarten teachers of ELLs would provide insight into ways professional development across all instructional areas might be inclusive of ELLs and increase the effectiveness of these teachers.

A final recommendation for future research is a study that examines administrators' view of prekindergarten programs. The participants in the study expressed a feeling of disconnect between their administration and what they do in their classroom. Most of the participants mentioned not feeling supported. An in depth study into the attitudes and perspectives of administrators regarding prekindergarten may increase understanding of why prekindergarten teachers in this study believed they were supported less than teachers of other grade levels in public school settings.

Implications

One implication for prekindergarten teachers that arises from this study is the need for prekindergarten teachers to seek professional development that helps them to understand second language acquisition and that assists with specific classroom activities that support the development of prekindergarten students who are ELLs. The results of the study showed that the prekindergarten teachers felt that professional development was

one thing they needed to support ELLs. Based on the perspectives of the prekindergarten teachers that participated in the study, this support was not provided by their school district. It may be necessary that prekindergarten teachers seek professional development outside that provided by their school districts, and that they should then be permitted to apply such training to their annual professional development requirement. Prekindergarten teachers may also seek the assistance of instructional coaches or ESOL teachers within their buildings and worksites. Engaging in additional professional development may help prekindergarten teachers increase their effectiveness with the ELLs in their classroom.

Implications for administrators include providing improved professional development for prekindergarten teachers. Professional development with the proper focus on instructional strategies has the potential to provide prekindergarten teachers with the support that is needed to increase their effectiveness with ELLs in their classroom. The prekindergarten teachers who participated in the study emphasized their need for professional development that explicitly addressed working with ELLs as a support that was needed.

Based on the results from the study, another implication for administrative stakeholders on the school level is to engage in their own professional development in order to gain a better understanding of the goal of play-based instruction. The perspectives of the prekindergarten teachers in the study showed that they felt administration did not understand how and why prekindergarten students engaged in play-based activities, and administration felt that prekindergarten students were only

playing and not learning. The support of administration can help the prekindergarten teacher feel valued as an educator, as they revealed that they often felt ignored and overlooked, and thus allow them to support the students in their classroom more effectively.

Another implication for administrators would be to provide prekindergarten teachers who teach ELLs with a curriculum that focuses on specific instructional needs of ELLs. Administrators can take the opportunity to find a curriculum that is developmentally appropriate for all learners who will be accessing it. The pacing and level of books that are used should fit the developmental levels of the students. Since curriculum is used as a guide for instruction, this is an integral support that the prekindergarten teachers need to support the growth of their students. Administrators can also provide other instructional support, such as an ESOL teacher or instructional coach. These instructional leaders could be used on the school level to provide assistance and support to prekindergarten teachers in modeling lessons, and provide support for implementing instructional practices that assist prekindergarten teachers in supporting ELLs. The ESOL teacher can also assist in assessing language development and provide a model for strategies that support second language acquisition.

Implications for higher education policy at the preservice level, based on the results of the study and previous research, is to include instruction in teaching specialized populations such as ELLs. Gottfried et al. (2016) estimated 25% of the student population by 2025 will be ELLs. With such an increase in the student population, it is important that teacher education programs prepare their teacher candidates for the classrooms that

they will enter into as teachers. This will have a positive social impact because teachers could enter classrooms prepared to meet the distinct learning needs of their ELLs.

Finally, the implication that arises from the study for curriculum developers is to develop a curriculum that specifically addresses the needs of ELLs. It is important for curriculum developers to write curriculum that supports teachers who teach ELLs with specific materials that address the needs of young children who are acquiring a second language. While most curricula have adaptations embedded in current curriculum, there is a need for more specific research-based strategies that can be used in supporting the development of ELLs. This would include better pacing, that allows the teachers time to reteach, or repeat foundational concepts that are integral in the development of ELLs, and other young learners. Based on the results of the study, including social-emotional aspects in a prekindergarten curriculum is essential, as this has been shown by this study and previous research to be a focus of prekindergarten teachers in supporting the development of school readiness in ELLs.

The study has implications for social change in that, with innovations from curriculum developers, preservice programs, and administrative stakeholders, teachers will be prepared to support the developmental needs of ELLs students in their programs. The results of the study showed that prekindergarten teachers often understood their role as the MKO, and provided classroom activities and implemented strategies that assisted in the language and social emotional development of their prekindergarten students. However, they did not feel prepared because they did not have a curriculum that supported their efforts as the MKO. If the prekindergarten teachers receive the necessary

support from curriculum developers, preservice programs, and administrative stakeholders they will be able to assist ELLs in achieving school readiness. This support may create positive social change because it will strengthen the quality of early childhood programs in both public and private settings. Increasing the quality of prekindergarten programs may begin to close the achievement gap that exists between young ELLs and their peers, and have a positive social change effect on the academic achievement of all learners.

Conclusion

The problem I sought to address in this study was the consistent achievement gap in school readiness between ELLs and their native English-speaking peers. The study was designed to take the point of view of the prekindergarten teacher since they are the teachers who are tasked with preparing young children for school success. The conceptual framework of the study was Vygotsky's (1978) notion of the teacher's role in assisting young children to develop essential skills, including language. I interviewed 10 prekindergarten teachers from different regions across the United States. Each prekindergarten teacher participated in an interview conducted via phone or Zoom. The participating prekindergarten teachers gave insight into their classroom practices, and what they thought they needed in order to increase their effectiveness with ELLs in their classroom.

The results of the study showed that each participant engaged with their students as the MKO, and did what they could to support the development of their students with what they were provided. For instance, the prekindergarten teachers set learning goals for

each individual student, and took both formal and informal assessments to help monitor the growth of their students. The prekindergarten teachers also used assessment data to help plan activities that met the individual needs of their students. However, unless the school district or center was well funded, the prekindergarten teachers did not feel well supported by the administration at their site, and curriculum and other materials were often not detailed enough or paced appropriately to serve ELLs. The prekindergarten teachers in this study felt that they needed additional professional support in assisting the ELLs with acquiring English as their second language, such as from an ESOL teacher. Targeted professional development that addresses the specific instructional needs of ELLs was another area where prekindergarten teachers felt they needed support in order to be effective.

Although prekindergarten is designed as an intervention for low-income families who often do not have the opportunity for early learning experiences, it is evident from the results of the study that the gap in practice is structural. There is a disconnect between the expectations of prekindergarten and preschool, and the support teachers are given to assist ELLs in their classroom. This suggests opportunities for positive social change that can happen at every level. Teachers must continue to examine their classroom practices to be sure they are doing what they can to meet the needs of their students. Administrators can work to include prekindergarten teachers in the school's academic mission, and consider professional development for teachers of young children to address their distinct learning needs. Administrators, curriculum developers, and policy makers can provide prekindergarten teachers with materials and training that assist them to better

meet the needs of ELLs in their classroom. With structural change and resulting in supports provided to prekindergarten teachers, prekindergarten teachers will be able to provide developmental support to ELLs and close the achievement gap.

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Appendix A: Second Cycle Codes and Categories

Codes	Categories
Help them with their independence and social skills (4) We didn't see social-emotional until they came and you can observe (3) Self-regulation (2) Self-help skills (2) It got to the point where he was assigned an aide between the teachers in the classroom (2) Very descriptive portrait of a child's social skills and developmental needs Social-emotional lesson is only supporting what we have been seeing throughout the day during their play Executive functioning skills We do behavioral too Sitting in your place for 5 minutes Accepting no Saying more please Being able to advocate for themselves Waiting your turn Being able to parallel play for some kids that is really hard too They cried for mom Know though that we are there if they need support You don't feel left out or singled out He would have tantrums He would never try to hurt anybody He would try to bang his head on the floor He needed more change Attention span like 2 seconds	Social-Emotional Development
Are they expanding their utterances (2) Are they only using familiar nouns (2) Everything we do is all about the language development The volume of speech Their willingness to participate Are they answering with a single word Are they using educational vocabulary informal stuff like using pronouns using each other's names asking questions when they need help asking questions in response to literacy and math We really do a lot of if you need something how do you ask, what do you say	Language development

I teach in an inclusion classroom Little over 1/3 of our students have IEPs All of my IEP students spoke another language at home Not all of them received formal services Kids were there because they had an IEP Even though their other developmental domains may be delayed Some have serious delays or are seriously advanced Kids who are non-verbal Reduced teacher to student ratio A child who is eligible for special education services Go through a range of testing Referred to one of our early childhood resource centers	Special Education
Use the ELA as a framework for what is developmentally appropriate it's not developmentally appropriate Just not prek appropriate Board books that would be more appropriate for one and two year olds At that age you can't really do formal (assessment) because it's just not appropriate It ranges from books that are 50 pages long that would take us 30 minutes to even read	Developmental Appropriateness
I got a flashcard you because I don't know if you know them or not (2) My classroom is their first school experience They didn't know any of the letters or their letter sounds Either you know them or you don't (letters and counting) when my kids that have all the letters already know we're working on sounds This is gonna vary, some kids are gonna be above and some are below for different reasons We're working on just getting to five because it's a struggle	Prior Knowledge
In addition to their language learning But all of them spoke another language at home I would get blank stares Let me ask you in Spanish If they answer the question in Spanish no problem	Language Learning
Being provided with vocabulary cards They could give me basic vocabulary Building vocabulary and trying to see improvement in all of those categories	Vocabulary

It was very difficult because not only was there a language barrier but he could focus because he did not know what we were saying (2) It is not behavior it is a lack of language development (2) I don't know basic words in his language to try to translate It is putting them when it shouldn't be accounted for because there is a language barrier We are not even supposed to give those assessments because of the language barrier The English language is so tricky You didn't know in your native language If you're four you don't have command of any language When you do have maybe a completely different language, where the characters are now not the same as counting systems	Language Barrier
They have relatives that speak English pretty well (2) You know what's going on you just don't know English (2) If you don't know English, and you are listening to a story in English you are not going to be able to answer questions See if you know either (English or Spanish) Ask them questions in English The first thing I usually get from them in English is a tattle You learning English and putting things together When we talk when we do things but they're picking up and usually it's one of the things that literally just clicks (learning English) Your parents might be educated but if they don't know the English version, they can't help you because the methods are completely different	Language Ability of Students
We have different ways to assess (2) For the formal we use the Early language Assessment ELA (2) Tested before the program starts (2) We are sort of thrown into formal assessment right away It is hard to first make that initial assessment without considering the other factors A formal assessment for alphabet recognition is useful We have district assessment A lot of the assessment for this age is a follow me kind of thing We do a secondary assessment, Those type of assessments too can be misleading for those student We have what is called the ASQSE Those assessments as far as social emotional learning because if they are not acting on a normal scale then it becomes a behavior issue	Formal Assessment

We have one assessment booklet because we are NAEYC	
Language assessment too	
Diagnostic assessments are usually given anyway to determine their eligibility for special ed	
I didn't do assessments	
The school psychologists that did that and the specialists (assessments)	
The county has us do a test, actually two	
For special education we assess their social emotional, we assess their learning language and acquisition, and then we assess their self-help	
They are screened through the DIAL-4 (at-risk screening)	
Tested their language, literacy, and math skills	
Gave us baseline for all students	
Some of the test was listening to the story and answering questions	
The less you answer the better change you can get in	
Indicating at the end (ELL status)	
We have administer it 3 times a year (7)	Formal Assessment Frequency
Twice a year (2)	
Then the ESOL teacher does a test twice a year	
We have to track that 4 times a year	
We usually give that right around conference time	
Observation (9)	Informal Assessment
We use anecdotal records in my classroom (6)	
It is informal data (4)	
A lot of it is observational checklist (3)	
(Anecdotal records) is a lot more authentic than the more structured assessment opportunities (3)	
Developmental scales checklist (2)	
observation it speaks for itself (2)	
We do not necessarily record levels throughout the year with the informal	
Take data every day, every lesson, every minilesson on their language in addition to whatever skill we are working on	
Measuring data through their IEP goals	
We also take data in addition to how many numbers they know but how they are using language	
Sometimes I'll take that individual test that I used to do	
I need you to rote count every now and then	

An indication for specific things for ELLs (4) We use it as a guideline (the curriculum) (3) I do not like the way they introduced the letters (3) I think that is hard for any of the kids but especially ELLs (Length and number of words in a book) (2) So scripted (2) Well-paced curriculum would be ideal (2) I love the read alouds Curriculum targets a lot thankfully A curriculum that makes any sense would be wonderful Trust the curriculum less when you have to go back and relook at appropriateness before you have to adapt your lesson A curriculum that matches my kids' needs It is nice that our curriculum gives you objectives, and however you want to meet or address those objectives is your choice There was not a whole lot of specific support for ELLs written in it (curriculum) The curriculum was just to follow the IEPs I don't like the math If they revamped (the curriculum) units and it aligns to the head start program	Curriculum
Just to check in and say, hey let me get a little group of you know your kids and see what's going on and see where they are Making sure that there are opportunities for students to really practice those skills I think there is such a focus on rigor People confuse rigor with speed Fast does not mean deeper or better If we were given the opportunity from the people above us to go deep and spend a lot more time on a subject, our students would have a really strong foundation	Time constraint of curriculum
Have district indicators, learning targets (2) Learning your ABCs, letters and sounds, numbers, counting to 20, recognizing numbers to 10 (2) They are pretty much worked on through the year If we knew someone was having a problem she would watch them We did take video Use all of the learning targets in small groups With the ELLs , early childhood has SKBs (Skill, knowledge, behavior indicators)	Learning Targets

Can you count (6) recognize letters (3) One to one correspondence (2) Writing their names (2) Writing letters and numbers (2) Letter sounds sequencing Fine motor skills Gross motor skills We do handwriting We do asking and answering questions Can they recognize their name Can you subitize Can you jump We are playing with playdough Imitate what I am saying and doing	Classroom Instruction
I think there should be a support person that comes and maybe help evaluate the kids in Spanish (2) You can learn more about them (2) It is called immersion, and well they are immersed in it all the time What are some specific things that would help them Try to get a little more information about the child's knowledge, growth, and potential Language lessons help all kids if you're teaching effectively, in prek, early childhood it should really reach you ells because it's all about things. I'm supposed to be on the floor I'm supposed to be spinning around dancing Please don't do that (assess one-on-one)	Best Practices
It was constant repetition (3) Repetitive phrases	Repetition
This is how you actually use this item (manipulatives) (2) Pulling them one-on-one We train them on the computer- ABC Ya, Dreambox We use manipulatives Every day we are going over a shape Think outside of the box Be flexible with your rules I am big on singing songs I am really big on word play and rhymes Training how to use the mouse I might even count for some of my kids coming up with every game under the sun to try start doing big poems and picking out sight words	Instructional Practices

I wish they had a little more structured planning guide (2) You list all your materials (2) Every single step you are doing (2) I like flexibility (2) It is through the activities; it is through the center that we put out to make sure it is meeting a variety of needs We go based on that standards that we are given, then we incorporate it with what we are doing, and what we want to do More specific	Instructional Planning
So, we have small group and whole group lessons (10) My co-teacher and I do a tremendous amount of small group instruction in our room (3) We didn't do the group by levels (3) Their small group lessons we base that on data (2) We do a small group literacy (2) We had some students that could definitely be challenged in the small group (2) That strategy seems to really help (small groups) It allows us to model and then give opportunities for independent practice in a stress free less pressure situation A small group math All of the 5 small group blocks are based on what we are asked to do I try to visit each group Talking in a small group as opposed to speaking in front of 18 other people kind of take the pressure off and allow children the opportunity to explore their language confidence We also made sure that we gave them things that they could be successful We would be fluid sometimes; they would just go with the flow The kids learn from each other, and we wanted them to feel connected.	Small Groups
We do those mini rotations (3) Larger time for them to do free centers (afternoon) building an early childhood classroom with the right centers, the right toys, the right books It is more informal (centers), which is better but then sometimes it's worse I do like their centers We have our science, literacy, writing, math, and then sensory center in the morning In the afternoon they do housekeeping, and blocks, and legos You have choice The choice can get out of hand	Centers

Give options Narrowing the choices They can go where they want	
I had picture cards, like real photographs (4) I labeled all of the things on the shelves in both languages and with the pictures We use visual schedules	Picture Support
Tell me something about the card We would help them prompt the sentence, and they could repeat it if they would need to (3) The most rote in class (2) Time for them to process language They could tell us something and we would write it for them and let them share	Language Support
Incorporating sign language and gestures (3) Taking them by the hand and showing them (3) A lot of the time it is a follow me, and do what I do kind of thing They can't read at the age so it was more visual cues Another strategy I had to reduce the amount of verbal demands I would have to model	Nonverbal Communication
Finding another child who likes to be the helper (4) A lot of learning through peers and conversations (2) Need to play with kids that speak English because that's how you learn it (2) Partner work Able to be those peer models for ELLs They will pick up those things from peers more than we will	Peer Learning
If preschool could have some kind of program like ESL (5) We had a specific ESL teacher who pull them out to work with them (2) It would have been helpful for them to come in the classroom and work with them as well (2) If the ESL support teacher could also provide suggestions or even help you	ESL/ ESOL Services
I base it on the individual child (6) What they need to be successful in kindergarten (3) At least they have those key phrases that can always rely upon that (2) This is what should be accomplished by this point in the year (2) Do what we could to support language growth and development. (2) When you write objectives, it is what do you want them to do and how are they going to show you that they can do that (2)	Goal Setting

So, she (ESOL teacher) looks based on her assessments she readjusts them (ESOL goals) (2) Based the activities with their IEP goals and objectives (2) These are the skills I want them to have they have all the sounds already; towards the end of the year I usually had a group that started kindergarten rotations Keep language samples, writing samples for each IEP goal We start with a goal and objective, then we plan according to that Improve their scores on the test Depending on the level of the child I try to incorporate the objectives for the general curriculum I start with what they give us How fast they progress As the year progresses it (the goal) becomes one of the standards The learning goal at the minimum is to try to get them to just identify If we can just get the child to repeat a letter, a number, a color, words in a song I set goals and objectives for kids when we lesson plan Their goals pretty much are in line	
Then we do morning meeting (3) A lot of the same routines (2) Our day is sort of structured We start the day with play It does look like play but it is actual learning A lot of play based It is just constantly changing with PreK I know how to better structure my read aloud or playdough center I do not think people realize that (structure of the day) A lot of people might not realize the amount of work From the moment that they walk in to the moment the leave is structure	Day to Day Structure
Collaboration (3) We work nicely together (2) We were a team We do our planning and clean-up and preparation for the afternoon More cohesive for me to be able to be in there really coteaching all day It was a team of four We will just divide the kids and work and rotate We provided the scaffolds ourselves Work with occupational therapists and speech therapists and adaptive PE We worked out a schedule between the three of us	Collaboration

Giving them time before I tried to do any sort of analyzing or assessing is critical (starting right away with assessments)Not always best practice because young learners need time to adjust If an ELL student is not writing their name after 6 weeks that they could just need more time	Time
Just saying that this where are students are (3) I get 4 year olds and they are already behind (3) They may not respond and the wrong thing to think is that they don't know (2) At home maybe they are being taught in a different way It depends on the age of the student Acknowledging that ELL students just need patience, time, practice What supports they need For some it takes longer and some it doesn't It just really depends on the kids and where they are developmentally We have to change the dynamic of the sentences so it does not look like this child has a behavior issues because it is not behavior issues it is just not understanding	Needs of Students
We are actually teachers Ignore the prek kids They are real people and they are really learning I wish that I was seen by my school-based administration Remembering us	Perceptions of PreK
Me being able to say the directions to him was the hard part They don't want us to guide Hard to navigate We're gonna get there when we get there It was a struggle Sometimes those things can be different in how you count, like in French how you count and do math is completely different It's hard to plan stuff Juggling the small group, the large group, as well as little instructional activities It is a more of do what I see but I am not really understanding You want me to do my job, I am doing the best I can You just go in there and just teach	Teaching Difficulties
If you really want them to be involved there needs to be somebody that can relay everything to them (5) You have to connect with the parents (3) A lot of times the parent does not know what the development is even if they have had children before (3) Fill out questionnaires (2)	Parent and Family Communication

Parents' consent But how do we translate if the parent too, has minimal to no interpretation of the English language I think they (families) want to be involved and a lot of them are working 2 jobs You are actually advocating for the position you are in as a teacher for these families and children	
Give me some of the other things we can incorporate their culture other than waiting until we may do the cultural day (2) We need as much uniformity of that native language The language is culture Know who is coming into our classroom beforehand will assist with just a small part of the culture before the language For us to have a collaborative community we have to learn about their culture as well.	Connection to culture
if you do not have the support where they can come in, observe, give feedback, teach you how to analyze data, teach you how to write an effective IEP goal, use different strategies for a variety of language disorder (4) I have instructional support research teachers at my disposal (2) They are able to come in model (2) Developing their (assistants) instructional capacities (2) If you do not have a good working and trusting relationship with your assistant it can be really miserable (2) Help me think through different strategies (2) More access to bilingual material (2) Appropriate planning time (2) having that support with administration and instructional coaches (2) support teachers where they are able to identify or choose their supports based on their needs I think the support from that is for them to relook at how they introduced those letters Actually, be aware of what was going on You are not giving me the tools I need to work with this child Just being able to communicate Crucial in helping us getting those working norms Needs more hands on stuff We really need a strong director at the top Coherent vision of what good instruction looks like Put together a list of things that we need, knowing that it will come	Supports Needed

Respect (2) We need people to understand the importance of play based (learning) (2) We need for people to understand that we are not just playing	Respect for Prek
The dynamic is that they are not listening to what we need (4) Be heard when your teacher is telling you I need help It is like we don't know what we are talking about (teachers) It is like we went to school for this I think we can identify these identifiers better than you can admin that really value early childhood education knowing that we are valued as a grade level just because we are not a testing grade that our kids deserve to have a great teacher I would love for people to come in and say, hey you know, see she needs more materials	The need to be heard
Trainings where we are given the opportunity to deeply learn the research behind ELL (5) Additional PD (3) You need a special type of professional development when you are working with a special population Give me training on how to translate these words correctly so that I can reach my families Give me something that I am actually learning Give us trainings that we can utilize	Professional Development

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Appendix B: Interview Questions

1. How do you determine the academic, language and social-emotional developmental levels of a child who is an English Language Learner when school starts at the beginning of the year?
2. How do you determine what academic, language and social-emotional learning goals will be most effective for ELLs in your classroom?
3. How do you keep track of the academic, language and social-emotional growth of ELLs throughout the school year?
    a. What formal and informal assessments are used to assess growth of ELLs?
4. What classroom activities or strategies do you use to guide ELLs as they gain and master new skills and concepts?
    a. How are these activities and strategies related to or influenced by goals for growth set for ELLs?
5. What types of support from colleagues, school administration, or the district do you feel you need to increase their effectiveness with ELLs in your classroom?
6. What resources do you feel are needed from the district or state mandated curriculum in order to increase your effectiveness with ELLs in your classroom?