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Leveraging the Demands of edTPA to Foster Language Instruction for English Learners in Content Classrooms

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This article provides insight into how a required, clinically based national teacher performance assessment for candidates becoming English-as-a-second-language specialists in many U.S. states, the Education Teacher Performance Assessment (edTPA), engenders a focus on language instruction in the content-based classroom. This assessment's focus on language within the content areas provides a positive washback opportunity to strengthen teacher candidates' language instruction in teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL) preparation programs connected to partner schools in which classrooms often provide sheltered content with minimal language instruction. We share how, in our large Masters of Arts program in TESOL, we have purposefully integrated the edTPA into supervised student teaching with positive results for teacher candidates as well as host classrooms.

Keywords: *teacher education, English learners, student teaching, teacher assessment*

Introduction

Teacher education programs in over 35 states across the United States are becoming more familiar with the Education Teacher Performance Assessment (edTPA), a national, subject-specific performance-based assessment that measures readiness to teach among students poised to graduate and seek state certification (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education [AACTE], 2017). Developed by the Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning, and Equity (SCALE), the assessment is designed to measure teacher candidates' ability to connect theory to practice in efforts to enhance K–12 student learning (SCALE, 2015). Additionally, it can be used to support state and national program accreditation (AACTE, 2017). As edTPA continues to be implemented across teacher education programs, preparing student teachers, faculty, supervisors, and schools has been a major initiative within institutions and will likely continue to be in the years ahead.

The edTPA was originally designed to move beyond idiosyncratic teacher assessments administered by individual states and subject areas to provide an authentic measurement of teacher preparedness that would also allow for cross-subject, national data collection (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Sato, 2014). To achieve this standardization, a common structure to the tasks and the rubrics assessing those tasks was developed for use in every teacher certification area. All student teachers submitting an edTPA assessment focus on 3–5 days of connected instruction, during which they plan, teach, and evaluate the impact of this mini-unit on pupil learning. As part of the lessons developed, all of the

edTPA assessments require student teachers to identify both a content goal and an associated academic language function they develop over the course of these several days of instruction. Each task has several rubrics that are used to score performance on the quality of submitted lesson plans, video clips of instruction, student work samples, and related written commentaries about those artifacts.

The development and implementation of the edTPA in all subjects has been contentious for both faculty and teacher candidates. Proponents of the edTPA argue that due to the situated, portfolio based nature of the assessment, it is a more authentic measurement of teacher preparedness than typical multiple choice tests or decontextualized, idiosyncratic essay-based assessments administered by individual states or institutions (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Sato, 2014). Proponents also contend that the edTPA is a positive and necessary catalyst for curricular change in teacher education programs by deepening candidates' knowledge of assessment and instruction, pushing them to consider how their instruction meets students' needs, and how to be explicitly nondeficit in their views of students (Peck, Singer-Gabella, Sloan, & Lin, 2014). There are also arguments that performance exams like the edTPA can capture "practices, skills, and capacities that are essential for good teaching and difficult to measure through paper and pencil exams" (Ledwell & Oyler, 2016, p. 121).

Yet, the literature critiquing the edTPA is extensive. Many scholars and educators have argued that the focus on test preparation for the edTPA has many potential negative effects on teacher preparation and, like all standardized tests, the edTPA fails to capture the complexity and nuance of teaching and learning. The edTPA has been criticized for not accurately assessing what it is designed to measure, allowing for candidates weak in teaching skills to still obtain high scores if they have strong writing skills, and conversely, for candidates with strong teaching skills to receive low scores if they have weaker writing skills. The need for teacher candidates to "perform" makes them fearful of taking on challenging student teaching placements, thus corrupting the authenticity of the exam and altering opportunities to learn about teaching in these schools (Jordan & Hawley, 2016). Therefore, critics point out that the edTPA lacks validity as it is a partial and potentially inaccurate record of teacher performance (Cronenberg et al., 2016; Dover & Schultz, 2016; Kleyn, López, & Makar, 2015). In addition, Au (2013) has noted that the assessment has colonized the student teacher practica experience, taking time from activities that used to take place in practica which now is given over to edTPA preparation. Scholarly critiques have also noted the uneven implementation of the assessment for teacher education institutions (Greenblatt & O'Hara, 2015; Meuwissen & Choppin, 2015), the risks associated with standardizing teacher preparation (Madeloni & Gorlewski, 2013), issues with corporate partnerships in educational testing, and the burdensome time requirement and expense of the assessment (Au, 2013). For many teacher candidates, the cost is prohibitive, costing an initial $300 and an additional $100 fee to retake the test if unsuccessful (edTPA, 2016). Although its rollout across the United States has been highly contentious, this article seeks to move the discourse forward by examining an area of edTPA scholarship that has been overlooked: the positive washback effects of the edTPA in the context of content-based English-as-a-second-language (ESL) teacher preparation.

This paper outlines how, in our initial teacher certification program in teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL), we have worked to leverage the expectations of the edTPA in order to maximize attention to language, much needed in the classrooms of district partner schools where student teachers are placed. We describe the tools and approaches used to support teacher candidates developing lesson plans, analyzing instruction, and providing feedback to K–12 student work with a focus on language within the content-based classroom. Our research questions for this study include the following:

Research Question 1: Where does the English-as-an-additional-language (EAL) edTPA handbook (SCALE, 2016) promote language awareness within content area teaching?

Research Question 2: How do clinical tools in our TESOL program align with edTPA's attention to language in the content areas?

This examination aims to provide possible approaches to strengthening language awareness in other TESOL teacher preparation contexts.

Contextualizing edTPA Implementation in the Field of TESOL

In many U.S. K–12 ESL classrooms, English is the object of instruction, as well as the medium of instruction for linguistically diverse students learning content across an entire day of school. ESL teachers work with learners at multiple proficiency levels, from multiple home language backgrounds, with content learning usually the main objective. Attention to language instruction, especially academic language, within the content areas is the responsibility of ESL teachers, yet is also one of its most sophisticated pedagogical challenges (Stoller, 2004). The integration of content and language development necessary for student learning is also needed for success on the edTPA in EAL and is an especially difficult skill to develop in novice teachers.

Preparation of ESL teacher candidates in the United States begins with an understanding of the varied contexts they will most likely encounter: content and grade-level classrooms rather than standalone ESL classes. ESL teacher candidates are expected to insert and integrate English language instruction into preexisting content areas such as mathematics, science, social studies, and literature. Adding to this challenge, this content is often being provided by a content or classroom teacher while the ESL teacher pushes in or pulls out ESL students. In these environments, ESL teachers often spend much of the lesson helping English language learners (ELLs) to understand the content, using a variety of adaptations, modifications, and scaffolds, known as sheltering content (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2016). Given the complexity of these environments, when presented with the challenges of simultaneously teaching content in an accessible manner and teaching English language through content, ESL teacher candidates tend to privilege sheltered content teaching. Whereas integrated content and language instruction has been shown to be a highly effective means of developing second language proficiency, it is also clear that this integration is a complex pedagogical challenge, requiring robust attention to language as well as discipline-specific learning (Dalton-Puffer, 2007; Lyster, 2007; Pica, 2008).

The variety of curricular delivery models makes it hard for ESL teacher candidates to take up clear stances regarding the extent to which they will address language, as they encounter a wide spectrum of "instructional approaches that make a dual, though not necessarily equal, commitment to language and content-learning objectives" (Stoller, 2008, p. 59). On one end of the content/language-driven curriculum, incidental, rather than intentional language teaching results in teachers inadvertently prioritizing content over language learning (Lyster, 2007) and, on the other end, foregrounding language goals at the expense of meaningful content learning (Cammarata, 2009).

The varied classroom teaching contexts for ESL is another factor that impacts TESOL teacher candidates. Although there are more recent licensure requirements that ensure that all teachers have some familiarity with teaching English learners, in most U.S. K–12 classrooms, grade-level or content teachers provide the bulk of instruction for ELLs without having had much preparation in second language teaching (Gándara, Maxwell-Jolly, & Driscoll, 2005). In these settings, ESL teachers may be called upon to work collaboratively with their content and classroom teacher counterparts in order to co-plan integrated content and language instruction. However, collaboration between mainstream and ESL specialists, which could potentially provide a structure for planning language and content goals, faces tremendous barriers, with the scales tipping consistently toward

content rather than language learning goals (Arkoudis, 2006; Creese, 2006). To balance the scales and support teachers in developing the requisite skills for teaching language through content, it is essential to raise candidates' language awareness.

Supporting Language Awareness in TESOL Teacher Preparation

In order for teachers to teach language within a content environment, they need a high degree of teacher language awareness (TLA; Andrews, 2007). TLA encompasses (a) metalinguistic awareness (knowledge about a language's systems and structures), (b) knowledge of learners' second language learning processes, and (c) pedagogical content knowledge, such as appropriate methods and strategies for language teaching (Andrews, 2003). Teachers' TLA impacts their lesson planning, materials selection, and assessment design (Andrews, 2001; Baecher, Farnsworth, & Ediger, 2014).

Preservice ESL teachers with high TLA tend to better be able to set language learning objectives, design language learning tasks that push student output, and provide direct feedback linguistic errors; however, they might struggle to situate this language in rich content (Cammarata, 2009; Long, 2007). On the other hand, teachers who are focused on the content learning of students may neglect to attend to language form, letting errors go uncorrected and placing their emphasis only on meaning rather than accuracy. Lyster (2007) pointed out the need for teachers to be especially aware of erring toward the side of sheltering content only, as language learners may not then receive sufficient and extended language development necessary to achieve high levels of proficiency. He cautioned that

> much incidental attention to language is too brief and likely too perfunctory to convey sufficient information about certain grammatical subsystems and this, in those cases, can be considered neither systematic nor apt to make the most of content-based instruction as a means for teaching language. (p. 27)

In the coursework and applied fieldwork components of a master's in TESOL program, ensuring that candidates stay focused on their role as language teachers within content contexts is a challenge that can be aided by external accreditation processes, such as when meeting TESOL professional standards in national review, or through edTPA requirements. These external measures emphasize the centrality of language awareness in ESL teacher preparation.

Method

In this self-study of teacher education practice (Dinkelman, 2003; Loughran, 2007), our research team focused on key tasks that aligned with the edTPA in EAL. The researchers acted as participant observers (Marshall & Rossman, 2003). In these roles, we were seeking to explore possibilities for programmatic change as well as hoping to learn more about how we might better serve our TESOL candidates in EAL. The first author is the TESOL program coordinator and responsible for developing course materials for TESOL classes as well as an instructor of methods, curriculum, and supervised student teaching classes. The second author is a clinical lecturer in the TESOL program. He is the lead instructor for supervised student teaching courses and responsible for training TESOL Clinical Supervisors as well as a doctoral student in TESOL. The third author is an experienced ESL teacher and serves in the role of edTPA professional development facilitator, working directly with candidates on preparing their submissions. Together, we reviewed key artifacts used within the program to seek out patterns of emphasis on language instruction within the content areas in the EAL edTPA preparation process (Weber, 1990).

Context for Examining the Impact of the edTPA in EAL in a TESOL Program

During the spring of 2012, New York was the first state to adopt edTPA for the preparation of initial certification candidates in ESL, and all preservice teacher candidates must complete this assessment in order to apply for K–12 ESL teacher certification. Due to the low incidence of ESL initial certification pathways in the United States, the vast majority of states only offer ESL as an endorsement or extension on a prior certification. New York TESOL teacher educators had no models or examples from other states to examine when the process began. In addition, due to rollout of the test as consequential for licensure with no pilot phase, New York State teacher education faculty had an abbreviated amount of time to prepare candidates for success (Greenblatt & O'Hara, 2015; Greenblatt, 2016).

Teacher candidates must submit their edTPA EAL portfolio to Pearson, Inc., where it is evaluated by professionals in the field who have been hired by Pearson and assigned a score for each task and rubric, as well as an overall score, with a maximum score of 5 points on each of the 15 rubrics for a maximum total score for the EAL portfolio of 75 points. At the inception of edTPA, New York determined a passing score of 41 points and a mastery score, a distinguished designation of advanced proficiency, of 48 points.

Our teacher education context is a master of arts program in TESOL housed within a large, urban public university system. Throughout the master's program, teacher candidates engage in fieldwork and student teaching in our partnered school district, the New York City Department of Education, within which ESL services are offered in a wide range of settings. From prekindergarten to 12th grade, ESL program models vary from international network schools, to dual-language and bilingual schools, push-in, pull-out, to standalone. Student teachers are placed for two semesters of teaching— one at the primary level and one at the secondary level (15 weeks, 7 hr daily, in each setting). Student teachers tend to be either career changers, with some experience teaching English as a foreign language in overseas contexts, or recent college graduates.

During the academic years 2014–2016, the focus of this study, there were 96 student teachers who participated in supervised teaching. Of these, around 60% were teaching at the elementary grades and 40% in secondary schools. In the elementary settings, almost 100% were in coteaching collaborative models (push-in or pull-out), and in the secondary settings only about 20% were in those models. The remaining secondary ESL teacher candidates were in English language arts settings. Teacher candidates completed edTPA in the first semester placement in order to focus on their master's capstone inquiry project in the second placement. As discussed earlier, the major challenge for developing our teacher candidates' skills in English language instruction is the nature of their placement settings, which focus on content and much less on language development. Although the candidates are placed with cooperating teachers who are licensed in ESL at these sites, the struggle for the cooperating teachers and student teachers to foreground language teaching is constant.

With the advent of edTPA, we found a surprising ally in our quest to deepen the language awareness among our TESOL candidates. Due to the high-stakes nature of the test, candidates, faculty, and school-based partners were motivated to enact the integrated language-content teaching we promote in the program and the guidelines of edTPA supported this work. Although edTPA is completed in the clinical experience of the master's program, submission to Pearson is not an academic graduation requirement, nor are scoring thresholds, as set by the state for licensure. Since 2014, 96 candidates from our institution submitted the edTPA in EAL from our institution, 80 have passed our state's required scale score (83%), and 62 have achieved mastery scores (65%). Due to the large size of our program, we note as well that out of the total number of edTPAs in EAL scored nationally in 2015, our candidates consist of 14% of all submissions (SCALE, 2016). Table 1 illustrates the national edTPA data and the participant candidates' completion.

Table 1. *TESOL EAL edTPA 2015 Highlights*

	N	Mean Score
All handbook subject areas nationwide	27,172	44.2
EAL nationwide	417	48.9
EAL at our institution	58	50.9

Note. TESOL = teaching English to speakers of other languages; EAL = English as an additional language. Based on data from the 2015 edTPA administrative report (SCALE, 2016, pp. 49–50).

Data Sources and Procedures

During the academic years 2014–2015 and 2015–2016, we collected a variety of artifacts to review the ways that edTPA has influenced our TESOL teacher education program. In order to investigate the three research questions in this study, we focused on (a) the edTPA for EAL handbook,(b) the lesson plan template and the observation rubric used to supervise TESOL candidates completing the edTPA, and (c) interviews with clinical supervisors and teacher candidates completed after submitting edTPA.

For this study, the research team analyzed the documents described above and conducted open-ended interviews with both teacher candidates and clinical supervisors. In the document analysis, we sought to identify points where candidates were compelled to examine how English language skills were being addressed in the content areas. This, we believed, would help us to gain an understanding of how candidates' language awareness was developed as a result of working closely with these documents in their clinical practice settings.

For interviews, we employed questions adapted from Spradley (1979) with grand tour, mini-tour, example and experience questions, seeking to allow participants to contribute to the research agenda and study outcomes. The second author interviewed each participant once in sessions lasting approximately 45 min. All interview data were transcribed and uploaded into NVivo. We employed a descriptive coding process, seeking to establish emergent categories while searching for meaningful patterns and to learn more from participants' voices and observations (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The codes were reexamined twice and initial codes were refined into axial codes representing hierarchal concepts and overarching themes that emerged from the data analysis (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

Findings

From the process of examining the edTPA handbook, clinical observation and lesson plan tools, and listening to teacher candidate and supervisors' experiences, we identified several areas of consistency that work in unison to support teacher candidate development of language focus in content-based ESL teaching.

Research Question 1

First, we deconstructed edTPA for EAL with a focus on where the assessment requires candidates to demonstrate evidence of their ability to plan, provide instruction and assess learners in a way that is centered on English language teaching in the content classroom and evaluates their ability to do so. As seen in the table below, the edTPA in EAL clearly specifies English language teaching practices that are not merely scaffolding or sheltering content activities for English learners. These practices specifically direct the teacher candidate away from providing only support for the content area and toward English language teaching in the content area. From planning to assessment, candidates are reminded to focus on how their instruction targets English language skills being developed in a content area unit, where pupils can be seen interacting with the target language, and what evidence of use of the target language can be found.

Table 2. *An Analysis of the edTPA Handbook in English as an Additional Language for Language Awareness*

Task	Overview and Commentary Directions
1. Planning	Asks candidates to determine a central focus that supports language development and to choose a language function and language demands for the learning segment and learning tasks. Candidates must articulate how the lesson addresses grammatical, discourse, pragmatic, and metalinguistic competence. Explicit connections must be made to ELL relevant research and/or theory.
2. Instruction	Asks candidates to select lessons to video record that show interaction with students to support ELD. Specifically suggests that selected clips should focus on students practicing language in multiple modalities and academic language in relation to multiple competencies.
3. Assessment	Asks candidates to select one assessment that evaluates English language proficiency and summarize and analyze student learning patterns toward the acquisition of English language proficiency. Candidate must show examples of assessments and discuss students' use of vocabulary and/or key phrases and language competence. Candidates must show evidence of feedback that shows plan for future support in ELD.

Note. ELL = English language learner; ELD = English language development.

As seen in the analysis of the EAL handbook's Task Overview and Commentary Directions in Table 2, the design of edTPA is clearly structured to push candidates to foreground English language instruction in the content areas and to be able to clearly identify at the learning segment level their overarching language function and targeted linguistic competencies. In the planning phase, candidates are required to show they can identify the language demands of the materials and tasks and design linguistic supports to enable students to engage with the content areas as well as develop target language. The EAL rubric evaluates candidates on the competencies outlined in the Task Directions and Commentary. Table 3 includes an analysis of how the EAL rubric evaluates these competencies.

As evidenced by the rubric and handbook, candidates need to be able to draw out student language, build on their language, and encourage student output of the target language. Assessment evidence must focus on students' use of the target language and how feedback on language was provided to further drive toward the language goal. The themes that emerged from these analyses illustrate how at all points throughout the process of preparing their edTPA materials, candidates must have high language awareness in order to meet the specifications of the assessment.

Table 3. *Analysis of the edTPA Rubric in English as an Additional Language for Language Awareness*

Task	Rubric Evaluation
1. Planning	
Rubric 1	Planning for English language development, specifically how plans build on each other to support language development and the connection between language competency and content across multiple modalities.
Rubric 2	The candidate's plans for varied and targeted support for students, linking specific strategies to respond to common errors or developmental language needs.
Rubric 3	Candidate's use of knowledge of students' language learning needs to justify plans.
Rubric 4	Candidate's ability to identity and support language demands with targeted language supports, including vocabulary/key phrases, language functions, and additional language competences.
Rubric 5	The planned assessments and their potential to provide evidence of students' English language development.
2. Instruction	
Rubric 6	Candidate's demonstration of a learning environment in which students take risks with language.
Rubric 7	The level of student engagement in language tasks and if those tasks are developing language proficiency through multiple modalities and competencies in a meaningful context.
Rubric 8	How candidates elicit and build on students' responses in way that develop English language proficiency through multiple modalities and competencies in a meaningful context.
Rubric 9	How instruction provides opportunities for students to make connections between the content and their cultural and linguistic backgrounds.
Rubric 10	How well the candidate justifies changes in instruction with ELL research and theory.
3. Assessment	
Rubric 11	Candidate's analysis of student work to demonstrate patterns of language learning.
Rubric 12	The feedback the candidate provided to students to address specific strengths and needs related to English language proficiency.
Rubric 13	How the candidate provides feedback and support to students on their progress and to make connections between language and content.
Rubric 14	How the candidate explains and provides evidence of students' use of the language function, vocabulary/key phrases and additional language demands.
Rubric 15	How the candidate uses analysis to plan for next steps for language instruction and targeted support for individuals, in connection with relevant ELL research and/or theory.

Note. ELL = English language learner.

Research Question 2

Next, we analyzed two key tools developed in our TESOL teacher preparation program to support language awareness throughout the teaching cycle: (a) the lesson plan format and (b) the observation rubric completed by the clinical supervisor. The lesson plan template is one that is used throughout the program whenever candidates are tasked with lesson design. It is currently used in four courses: Methodology of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages, K–12 ESL Curriculum and Materials Through the Content Areas, and throughout our two Student Teaching Supervision courses. In the analysis, items that clearly direct the teacher candidate to foreground English

language instruction in the content areas—and not just to shelter content—were highlighted. In Table 4, these aspects are presented thematically.

Table 4. *Analysis of Lesson Plan Template and Observation Rubric*

Language Awareness Themes	Extracted Language From the Lesson Plan Template	Extracted Language From the Observation Rubric
Candidates must identify a language function developed over a series of connected lessons	Language function: What is the language function that students will be working toward in this learning segment? Choose one language function	The lesson plan fits into a series of connected language lessons that span at least 3 days and drive toward a single language function
Candidates must identify standards-based language objective	English language proficiency standards: Which language skills is this learning segment teaching, practicing, and assessing? Use WIDA or New York State New Language Arts (ESL) Progressions Language objective: What language will the students be asked to practice/learn in this lesson?	Language objective is integrated with the content objectives
Candidates must identify where student language production of target language will occur and how student language will be assessed	Performance assessment: What will students produce for you to assess both content understanding and language skills at the end of this learning segment?	Planned language activities and assessments are clearly connected to language objectives and are structured to push student language production
Candidates must identify vocabulary and the language objective cannot be limited to vocabulary	Target vocabulary: Content-specific: What are the content/discipline words in this learning segment (one to three)?	The lesson plan specifies a clear language objective which includes but is not limited to vocabulary, modalities, grammar, functions, discourse, pragmatics, etc.
Candidates must identify differentiation based on language proficiency	How will it be differentiated for students at different proficiency levels (process/product/content)? How will students be grouped/paired?	Language tasks are differentiated to ensure students at all proficiency levels can participate and be challenged
Candidates must model accurate target language	Guided practice of lesson talk: What will you model in terms of language forms/target language? How will you set them up to "notice" some language?	Candidate communicates accurately in spoken and written English
Candidates must assess target language formally and informally throughout the lesson	Guiding questions for assessment of task: What will you do to watch and provide on-the-spot feedback on language use to students as you circulate or target a particular group?	Students spend most of the lesson time engaged, and extending target language
Candidates must identify assessments that measure target language use	Impact on student learning (informal assessment): What data did you collect during or at the conclusion of the lesson to review in order to ascertain where students are in their language and content learning?	Candidate exits the lesson with data on student language and content learning

Note. WIDA = World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment; ESL = English as a second language.

Identifying specific instances where the lesson plan design process and the observation criteria required teacher candidates to consider English language teaching—and not just scaffolding content—was another way for us to see how the demands of edTPA support developing language awareness among our TESOL candidates. Table 4 makes visible the multiple moments in planning, instructing, and assessing students where language awareness plays a role in determining the teacher's course of action. The themes illustrated from these artifacts show how at all points throughout the process of learning to teach, and eventually in their edTPA portfolio, candidates are developing language awareness.

Equipped with lesson plans and the observation rubric that reinforce a focus on language teaching and learning, we carried out supervisor professional development sessions five times per year over the first 2 years of edTPA implementation. In those sessions, we reviewed the demands of edTPA, the rubrics, and modeled and practiced providing language-focused feedback on sample candidate submissions. Supervisors reviewed lesson plans, were guided through pre-observation feedback with a focus on elements of the lesson plan where attention to ELD could be seen and reviewed videos of the lessons with a focus on target English language use among learners. This process supported supervisors who range in their own language awareness and directed them away from generic classroom management feedback and toward English language teaching feedback (Lindahl & Baecher, 2016).

In analyzing feedback from supervisors to candidates on their observations, as well as teacher candidate reflections, it was clear that the prompts that were language-focused generated student and supervisor attention to English language instruction and learning in the classroom. A sample of representative comments from supervisors to candidates on their lesson plans provided in preobservation included, "How is this a language-focused objective? This looks like a language objective that you would give monolingual students too. How is this plan 'ESL'?" and "Your objective states a language objective but I don't see that being enacted in the modeling or student work portion of your lesson. What will students really *do* to practice the language you specified in your objective?"

In their preobservation comments, we noted that supervisors, who observe teacher candidates three times in their classroom per semester of student teaching, were paying attention to the English language use apparent in teachers' plans. Supervisors' commitment to seeing candidates focus on language development in their observed lessons was increased and validated by their knowledge that explicit attention to language in the candidates' plans was something required for success on edTPA. One supervisor, Jamie, put it thus,

> If I can help my student teacher plan for clear language goals, and create a simple language task that will get her students to use that language, I know I am doing a good job for her. When I go in and then observe the lesson and see the ELL students actually practicing that target language, and we debrief afterwards about that language use, SHE knows she is doing a good job for her students. I think it is therefore a good thing that the edTPA serves as a motivator for the student teachers and their ELL students to make sure there is some focus on English teaching!

Despite drawbacks, all participants communicated that the test had direct benefits to their teaching practice in one or more of the following aspects: strengthening planning, assessment and differentiation of instruction; and reflecting on and articulating teaching practice. Jason, an eighth-grade teacher candidate, stated that preparing for edTPA "really trains teachers to think ahead [about the] content and language they will be working on." He noted that the planning and assessment pushed him to think about how to differentiate for students' varied learning needs including students with interrupted formal education or long-term ELLs. Another TESOL candidate, Sam, who works with seventh-grade students, shared that preparing for and reflecting on edTPA

pushed her to consider new assessment practices for feedback that were less teacher centered and more oriented toward peer-to-peer learning and corrective feedback. According to two of the participants, preparing for edTPA pushed them to reflect on and analyze their practice beyond their usual experience. Jason commented that preparing for and reflecting on the edTPA "had the advantage of forcing [and] requiring the teacher to be really reflective in a granular way about their rationale, what they're doing and whether it's working or not."

Development of language awareness was an aspect of the process for candidates, who noted that the demands of edTPA and programmatic requirements to be fulfilled in lesson design and observation visits pushed them to negotiate more language into their content units of study. Without the focus on language in the requirements of student teaching, Sam remarked that candidates stated that it would be easy to slide into the "way things are in schools—no time for language teaching, just lots of content the ELLs are trying to understand."

Discussion

This self-study has reinforced our understanding of the critical balance in teacher preparation between meaningful coursework that supports candidates as they enter the profession and opportunities to enact those practices in the field. Hardman (2009) suggested that "effective teacher preparation programs view field experiences as an extension of coursework…as a tool for candidates to translate theory into practice and advance their learning to a higher level" (p. 584). Ultimately, student success results from extensive opportunities for teacher candidates to practice skills during their training (Boyd, Grossman, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2008). Building language awareness has been and continues to be at the core of what we aim to do in our TESOL program and we have found that edTPA in EAL provides many points of alignment for these ongoing efforts. Our approach has been to use the edTPA as one of many activities that support integration of course content with clinical experiences (Burns, Henry, & Lindauer, 2015). We expect that course, field, and program experiences consist of repeated opportunities to scaffold and model desired practices, and thus what the edTPA demands is familiar to them, albeit on a larger scale.

Through carrying out this study, we have gained a deeper understanding of how edTPA is structured to push candidates to develop language awareness in planning, instruction and assessment. We have also come to a better understanding of how our course assignments, activities and observation tools are aligned to support language awareness. We are cognizant that each of these requisite skills takes time to develop as teacher candidates repeatedly view and practice teaching throughout their program, and that designing, executing, and evaluating student English language learning in the midst of a content or grade-level classroom will be a problem of practice with which they will likely always struggle. The struggle to design and implement a coherent unit of study that not only deepens learners' understanding of important grade-level content-area concepts but also develops English language skills will continue throughout ESL teachers' careers, and ideally constructing the edTPA portfolio orients them toward that work.

What we hope to see in research and practitioner inquiry are more studies of how TESOL teacher preparation is taking place in the unique contexts of U.S. K–12 ESL settings, and how institutions of teacher education, if expected to prepare ESL teachers with those skills for initial licensure, will be able to sustain and continue developing language awareness across the induction period and beyond. Ultimately, if edTPA for EAL is viewed as an advocacy tool for English learner students to ensure they gain access to English language instruction, then educators need to further build bridges between expectations for teacher candidates and those of school leaders and working teachers. English learners benefit when all teachers and school leaders have high language awareness.

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