2022

First-Year Mainstream Teachers' Perspectives on Preservice Preparation in English Language Learner Instruction

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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Abstract

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MA, Union University, 2013

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Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

Although the number of English language learners (ELLs) in mainstream classrooms has significantly increased over the past decade, first-year teachers continue to begin their careers without adequate training in ELL instruction. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore first-year mainstream teachers' perspectives of their preservice course training and field experiences in ELL instruction. The study site was a small west Tennessee school district where 32 students are currently receiving English as a second language (ESL) services. Supported by Kolb's experiential learning theory, this study was framed by the concept of hands-on experience for learning, which is used by most teacher education programs (i.e., student teaching and field experiences). Using a basic qualitative design approach, interviews were conducted with five local first-year teachers teaching prekindergarten through fifth grade. These interviews were used to collect qualitative data, which was then analyzed using thorough transcript coding procedures. The findings of the data analysis led to the creation of a 3-day professional development program for all teachers in the study site district. This professional development was created to specifically address the concerns and requests that arose in the data collected. This research has potential implications for positive social change by increasing awareness of the need for enhanced preservice training in ELL instruction for local teacher candidates.

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Dedication

This doctoral study is dedicated to the loving memory of my grandmother Nancy Eckert. She is the reason I wanted to become a teacher and I think of her every time I read to my class from one of her old books. I strive to be the same devoted, caring, and hard-working educator she was.

Acknowledgments

I want to thank all the participants for taking the time to partake in my research study and I want to thank the school principals for allowing me to conduct this research. An enormous thanks to all the members of my committee for their enduring support and encouragement. First, I thank Dr. Grace Lappin, my committee chair, who has been with me through some of the most difficult moments of my personal life. She understood my family and health took precedence over my research yet continued to keep me on track. Through her expertise and input, I was able to efficiently complete each stage of my doctoral study. I also thank Dr. LaTisha Shipley, my committee member, for her positive reviews and constructive feedback. I thank Dr. Floralba Arbero Marrero, the university research reviewer, for her comments that have improved the quality of my scholarly work and have guided me towards such a relevant study.

Lastly, I would like to thank my family—my husband, my children, and my mom and dad. They are my motivation, support team, and biggest blessings.

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Section 1: The Problem

First-year teachers begin their careers in the classroom without adequate training and field experience in English language learner (ELL) instruction (Guler, 2020). Researchers have identified several issues pertaining to preservice teachers' readiness in teaching, which include lack of preparedness to teach English as a second language (ESL) students, lack of support for ELLs within the mainstream classroom, and little interactions between teachers and ELLs (Nair & Ghanaguru, 2017). Mainstream teachers participate in the process of language teaching through academic vocabulary instruction and linguistic nuances of their classroom but often struggle with knowing how to include English language (EL) instructional approaches into their teaching (Giles, 2018; Pavlak & Cavendar, 2019).

ELLs present a great challenge for even veteran teachers with little to no previous ESL background (Harrison & Lakin, 2018). ELLs, including recently arrived English learners and long-term English learners, come to school with a significant language barrier in addition to their own unique set of interrelated factors, such as native language schooling (or lack thereof), socioeconomic status, and traumatic experiences associated with leaving their home countries and assimilating to a new culture (Von Esch & Kavanagh, 2018). Teacher education programs have not yet effectively integrated language-focused structures and procedures into core and content-area methods classes (Gupta, 2019); therefore, many K–12 mainstream teachers continue to view ELLs through a deficit perspective (Giles, 2018; Mahalingappa et al., 2018; Villegas, 2018).

Mainstream classrooms today hold a great deal of linguistic and cultural diversity, which further illustrates the need for teacher education programs to better prepare students for ELL instruction (Kim & Choi, 2019). As the presence of ELLs in the U.S. public education system continues to show growth with increases of over 40% in some states (U.S. Department of Education [USDOE], 2021), preservice teachers must inquire and understand the language demands of specific content areas and the adaptive skills to effectively scaffold instruction for EL students (de Jong & Naranjo, 2019; Villegas, 2018; Von Esch & Kavanagh, 2018).

The Local Problem

The local problem is that first-year mainstream teachers are entering the classroom unprepared to modify their instruction for ELL students within a small west Tennessee school district where there are currently 32 students requiring ELL instruction. The focus of my research was on two elementary schools in small, suburban town located in western Tennessee. In the 2018–2019 school year, standardized test data showed a difference in achievement between ELL and non-ELL students district-wide (Tennessee Department of Education [TNDOE], 2019).

One of the schools considered a primary school contains grades prekindergarten through first grade; the other elementary school contains second through sixth grades. The elementary school remains a target school in accordance with Tennessee's new accountability system, with only 16% of the student population scoring on track or mastered on annual state tests (TNDOE, 2019). The town has a population close to 8,000 with only 4% of the population speaking a language other than English within the home

(U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). ESL students meet with one part-time ESL teacher for 1 hour every day per state policy (TNDOE, 2018). However, the 2020 arrival of a poultry processing plant for the largest food company in the United States was anticipated to bring more cultural and linguistic diversity to the area; the plan was set to create over 1,500 jobs, which would also subsequently increase student enrollment in the local schools (Friedman, 2018). In spring 2021, the number of ELLs within this school district had grown by almost 20% (study site administrator, personal communication, May 21, 2021). Mainstream teachers are becoming increasingly overwhelmed by the task of differentiating instruction to accommodate for the unique language needs of ELL students (study site teacher, personal communication, May 21, 2021).

Rationale

ELLs at the study site are receiving the required amount of ESL instruction per Tennessee state policy (TNDOE, 2018). However, recent standardized data reveal 100% of ELL students in Grades K–3 are classified as moderate to high risk in the areas of literacy and reading (NCS Pearson Inc., 2021). District administrators have struggled to improve ELL achievement and reasons for their low performance are unknown. Exploring first-year mainstream teachers' perspectives about their preservice experiences in ELL instruction is warranted. The following subsections contain evidence of the problem at the local and national levels.

Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level

The Tennessee State Board of Education ESL Program Policy (2018) requires all teachers providing instruction to EL students to be trained on the WIDA English

language development standards, which are the standards that guide ELL pullout instruction. A gap in practice exists at the local level, where mainstream and content area teachers in this school district participate in one ESL professional development opportunity each school year led by the ESL teacher, which is an inadequate amount of time to gain a firm understanding of specific ELL strategies (study site superintendent, personal communication, October 1, 2019). Ongoing professional development (e.g., once a month during faculty meetings or professional learning communities) for mainstream teachers across grade levels would be a more effective means of collaboration (study site principal, personal communication, September 16, 2019).

Local university teacher education programs would also greatly benefit from adding coursework designed to address the unique needs of ELLs (local university professor, personal communication, August 26, 2019). Currently, no such course is offered, and most content-based courses only briefly touch on ESL strategies (local university professor, personal communication, August 26, 2019).

Evidence of the Problem from the Literature

Current literature suggests that meeting the needs of ELLs is a nationwide issue, as preservice mainstream teachers complete their degrees without being prepared for ELL instruction in their classroom (Guler, 2020). Research reveals ELLs with low proficiencies simply do not perform academically or participate in the classroom at the level of their English-speaking peers (Giles, 2018; Sugimoto et al., 2017). As ESL students are immersed among their mainstream peers, the linguistic divide becomes greater and teachers find it difficult to accommodate all students equally (Green, 2019).

A common theme emerges in the literature about the increasing need to prepare mainstream classroom teachers to work more productively with ELL students (Sugimoto et al., 2017).

With over five million ELLs enrolled in public school nationwide (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2021), there is a critical need for general education teachers to know how to effectively implement literacy strategies that are linguistically and culturally sensitive (Gupta, 2019). Teacher candidates are not exposed to appropriate ESL strategies that can effectively differentiate instruction for this growing EL population (Johnson & Cain, 2019). The lack of teacher preparedness, along with implicit and explicit beliefs about ELs, creates a stressful learning environment for both teacher and student and decreases ESL students' sense of belonging (Gupta, 2019; Harrison & Lakin, 2018; Villegas, 2018). Further, school districts that do not hold any type of bilingual or multilingual classroom practices signal to ELLs that their native language is of less value (Wedin & Wessman, 2017). To better serve ELLs in the mainstream classroom, it is important to understand how preservice teachers can develop a deeper understanding of the pedagogy and skills related to ELL instruction (de Jong et al., 2018). Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative study was to explore first-year mainstream teachers' perspectives of their preservice course training and field experiences in ELL instruction within a small west Tennessee school district where there are 32 students requiring ELL instruction.

Definition of Terms

English as a second language (ESL): Refers to the language acquisition program provided to ELLs, taught by teachers with ESL certification and specialized preparation in second language development. Students enrolled in an ESL program are often pulled from their mainstream classrooms for small-group ESL instruction in the areas of listening, reading, writing, and speaking (Mills et al., 2020; TNDOE, 2016).

English language (EL)/English language learner (ELL) instruction: Both mainstream and ESL certified teachers provide EL instruction in their respective classrooms (Giles, 2018). EL instruction uses specific language accommodations and modifications to the curriculum to support the academic language development of ESL students.

English language learner (ELL): A student whose first language is something other than English and who needs modifications and accommodations to help them succeed in school (Pappamihiel & Lynn, 2016).

First-year teacher: A teacher who has just completed their undergraduate student teaching experience and has entered the classroom for the first time as a paid professional. These novice teachers are often in need of extensive support and mentoring upon induction into their teaching career (O'Hara et al., 2020).

Mainstream teacher/classroom: Teachers who teach early childhood/elementary grades (sometimes referred to as *general education teachers*) and those who teach a specific content-area but lack awareness regarding second language acquisition processes (Harrison & Lakin, 2018; Mills et al., 2020).

Preservice program/teacher: Undergraduate students enrolled in a teacher education program, sometimes called *teacher candidates*. Most teacher education programs require a limited amount of ESL coursework and theory; however, there has been a major deficit in ELL instructional experiences among teachers prior to entering the classroom (Torres & Tackett, 2016).

Significance of the Study

This study may be significant in that it may address a local gap in practice by focusing specifically on preservice training for first-year mainstream teachers in ELL instruction. This research might be a benefit to local teacher education programs in west Tennessee and may provide insight into new teachers' perspectives of whether they have been adequately prepared for ELL instruction in the mainstream classroom. Potential research findings may lead to positive social change through increased ELL training for preservice teachers in the local setting.

Preparing future teachers to instruct and work effectively with ELL students is an educational challenge that schools across the United States face (Guler, 2020; Villegas et al., 2018). Most educators lack the appropriate preparation to address ELLs' needs (Solano-Campos et al., 2019). The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore first-year mainstream teachers' perspectives of their preservice preparation in ELL instruction to help address the instruction needs of ELLs in a small west Tennessee school district where there are currently 32 students requiring ESL services.

Research Question

This study addresses the inadequate ELL instructional services and academic achievement gap within a small west Tennessee school district by exploring the perspectives of first-year mainstream teachers on their preservice preparation in ELL instruction. I investigated whether teachers' recent enrollment in a U.S. teacher education program included ELL coursework and/or field experiences. The following research question guided this study:

RQ: What are first-year mainstream teachers' perspectives of their preservice preparation in ELL instruction within a small west-Tennessee school district?

Review of the Literature

U.S. public schools included 5.0 million ELLs in fall 2017, a higher number than fall 2000, which was 3.8 million (NCES, 2020). In the state of Tennessee, 45% growth in the ELL population occurred between 2011 and 2017 (TNDOE, 2021). Exploring and investigating first-year mainstream teachers' perspectives of their preservice preparation in ELL instruction is vital for the academic success of the ELL population, particularly in this local school district where the number of ELL students is expected to grow. Tennessee is an English-only state, meaning that all instruction and assessment is done in English; however, as teachers gain knowledge to understand strategies and language learning theories for better ELL instruction, they can make better informed educational judgments that include ELLs' native language and culture. This can promote higher ELL achievement and academic success.

In this literature review, I synthesize published books, peer-reviewed journal articles, and reliable scholarly publications. First, I conducted searches using the following key phrases and words: *English language learners, ELL instruction, ELL and mainstream classrooms, pre-service teachers and ELLs, experiential learning in higher education, teacher perceptions of ELLs, ESL and teacher education,* and *linguistic diversity in mainstream classroom*. The databases used in the searches were Academic Search Complete, APAPsycInfo, Education Source, Educational Resource Information Center (ERIC), ProQuest, EBSCOHost, Gale Academic OneFile Select, Taylor and Francis Online, and Google Scholar. The related literature is organized in terms of the following areas: (a) conceptual framework, (b) historical overview of the problem, (c) growing ELL populations, (d) instructing ELLs in the mainstream classroom, (e) teacher education program overview, (f) need for preparing preservice teachers instructing ELLs, and (g) professional development for current teachers of ELLs.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was guided by the notion that learning is ongoing and different experiences add to the learner's schema of a particular topic. Kolb's (1984) research on experiential learning was used for the conceptual framework of this qualitative study. I examined literature on experiential learning and preservice teaching field experiences that have specifically used the reflective stage of Kolb's (2005) cyclic process. One component of Kolb's experiential learning theory is that learners get hands-on experience and participate in problem-solving tasks. The value of experiential learning in the professional and personal development of preservice teachers

has been the focus of many teacher preparation programs (e.g., student teaching and other field experiences). Kolb's model of experiential learning is a cyclic process; however, the reflective observation stage of the cycle is what framed this qualitative study. Applying this concept to first-year mainstream teachers' experiences in providing second language instruction means they must also reflect about their recent preservice preparation, which is a part of the transformative nature of experiential learning. Further, subsequent research and application of Kolb's theory offer guidance on ways to enhance preservice teachers' professional competencies and enrich their pedagogical knowledge (Lee, 2019a, 2019b). Many of the studies included in Mills et al.'s (2020) research reveals that immersive learning opportunities in which the teacher candidate was the linguistic minority helped unpack the educational theories learned in class. This lens will provide a clear direction for teacher education programs that have not yet included ELL coursework and/or experiences into their preservice teaching experience.

Historical Overview of the Problem

Within the last century, two significant court cases have addressed the issue of non-English languages in American education: *Meyer v. Nebraska* (1923) and *Lau v. Nichols* (1974; Valdes, 2017). During World War I, heightened fear against Germany and other European nations influenced foreign language education in U.S. public schools. Robert Meyer was a teacher who unlawfully taught reading in German to a 10-year-old child, thus leading to his personal appeal against the state law that restricted foreign language instruction (Davis, 2017). The court ruled in favor of Meyer, recognizing that the 14th Amendment protected both teachers' and parents' rights to educate their

children, and prohibiting foreign language education with this context was unreasonable (Davis, 2017).

The 1974 *Lau v. Nichols* Supreme Court decision ruled that offering students with limited English proficiency the same monolingual textbooks, teachers, and curriculum as their English-proficient peers violated the 1964 Civil Rights Act because it denied ELLs access to a comprehensible education (Villegas et al., 2018). As part of the Civil Rights Movement, the Equal Educational Opportunities Act (1974) further barred schools from discriminating students based on gender, race, or nationality (Callahan & Shifrer, 2016). The adoption of the Bilingual Education Act in 1968 made it common practice for schools to hire teachers with specialized training equipped to instruct ELLs (Mills et al., 2020). However, by the 1990s the growing population of ELLs made it difficult for bilingual and ESL programs to keep up, forcing many school districts to place ELLs in mainstream classes (Villegas et al., 2018). Then, with the introduction of No Child Left Behind in 2001 and the reauthorization of the Every Student Succeeds Act in 2015, came an increased awareness to the academic performance of ELLs (Callahan & Shifrer, 2016; Harrison & Lakin, 2018). The Every Student Succeeds Act (2015) calls for evidence of instructional practices based on solid research that is likely to improve student outcomes (Callahan & Shifrer, 2016).

Despite a century of educational policies that aim at addressing the needs of ELLs, school administrators continue to search for ways to reduce the achievement gap that exists between ELLs and their native English-speaking peers. The impact of federal legislation, as well as the high-stakes testing that has accompanied these policies, make

closing this gap even more urgent (de Jong & Naranjo, 2019). However, the lack of knowledge regarding second language acquisition processes and the curriculum shift to Common Core (2010) leave mainstream teachers fearful and unsure of how to include literacy instruction to their students of multiple languages (Harrison & Lakin, 2018; Solano-Campos et al., 2019). More than half of the U.S. states do not require English for speakers of other languages training for preservice teachers (Lavery et al., 2019). Many researchers have found that the historical gap in teacher education on ELL instructional strategies and policies has been the catalyst to the increased gap in learning of ELLs across the country (Harrison & Lakin, 2018; Lavery et al., 2019; Mills et al., 2020; Villegas, 2018).

Growing ELL Population

Approximately five million public school students are classified as ELLs in the United States, which is about 10% of the total population of students in Grades K–12 (Green, 2020; Heineke et al., 2019; NCES, 2021). In fall 2017, almost 75% of ELLs enrolled in U.S. public schools were Spanish speaking and it is predicted that by the year 2050 they will make up 25% of the total population of the country (Krawczyk, 2019; NCES, 2021). Further research shows that the Hispanic/Latino high school dropout rate is higher than any other ethnic subgroup (Steen et al., 2018). The teaching workforce has also remained relatively the same throughout the last few decades, which indicates that it has not been growing to match the increase of ELL learners (Li & Peters, 2020). Li and Peters (2020) found no measurable difference in teachers' ethnicities between 1999–2000 and 2007–2008.

Until recently, a large ELL population has resided in mostly urbanized cities, such as Chicago, New York, and Los Angeles, but Coady (2020) described the urgent need for research on educational policies and practices for rural ELL students and families. Coady explained there is little known about rural ELL education as a subfield, yet around 600,000 ELLs attend rural schools across the United States and one third of all U.S. public schools are considered rural. Further, the total percentage of ELLs enrolled in suburban, town, and rural school systems (20.5%) exceeds the percentage enrolled in city school systems (14.7%; NCES, 2017). Therefore, it is important that teachers and administrators in these school systems are well equipped to serve the growing ELL population.

Instructing ELLs in the Mainstream Classroom

ELLs bring diversity, both culturally and linguistically, to the mainstream classroom. As the demographics of the student population continues to change in school systems across the country, instructing ELLs has become a critical issue for many teachers who do not have a background in ESL (Solano-Campos et al., 2020). Among several instructional strategies, teacher quality has impacted ELLs' academic achievement (Brown & Endo, 2017). There is a critical need for mainstream teachers to know how to effectively build and implement language-learning strategies in their classroom that are inclusive of their ELLs' language and culture (Gupta, 2019). Cummins, a veteran scholar and researcher in the field of English-language learning, recognized there must be significant changes made in the mainstream classroom for ELLs to use language learning meaningfully (Lambert, 2018). Cummins's theories identified

terms like *basic interpersonal communication skills* and *cognitive academic language proficiency*, which have been supported by high-profile ESL agencies (e.g. Colorín Colorado & WIDA Consortium) and other researchers like Margaret Early and Merrill Swain, who have also co-authored books with Cummins (Colorín Colorado, 2018; Cummins & Early, 2015; Cummins & Swain, 1986). According to Cummins's research, it takes 5–7 years for ELLs to become proficient in grade-level academic language (Cummins, 1981). Without the proper support, ELLs will continue to struggle academically throughout their K–12 school years.

The impact of federal legislation has caused ELLs to spend the majority of their academic day in the mainstream classroom instructed by non-ESL teachers (Pappamihiel & Lynn, 2016). Although different EL instructional methods like sheltered English instruction, dual language education, linguistically responsive teaching, and bilingual education have become increasingly used and acknowledged, approximately 74% of mainstream teachers have little to no preparation for working with ELLs (Pappamihiel & Lynn, 2016; Solano-Campos et al., 2020; Solano-Campos et al., 2019). The amount of professional development related to these instructional practices has also been limited (Giles, 2018; Heineke et al., 2019).

Scaffolding and *differentiated instruction* are strategies most often familiar to mainstream teachers. Scaffolding involves the process of adding modifications to any lesson, such as thinking aloud, making predictions, and/or questioning (Zhang, 2017); whereas differentiated instruction may group students according to their academic ability level. The challenge is that scaffolding for a language learner is much different than that

for a student with a learning disability, and many schools have limited ESL resources. Semantic mapping and sentence reconstruction are examples of specific language scaffolding methods not commonly used by mainstream or content-area teachers (Zhang, 2017). School administrators and teachers must try to use multicultural resources for their ELL population. When ELLs have learning experiences in their dominant language and there are bilingual opportunities available, their involvement and chances of academic success are enhanced (Wedin & Wessman, 2017).

Teacher Education Program Overview

To meet the learning needs of ELLs, preservice teachers must have a basic understanding of ESL strategies. However, first-year mainstream teachers complete their degrees with an overwhelming lack of knowledge of second language acquisition (Guler, 2020). Torres and Tackett (2016) conducted a study to develop a more thorough understanding of preservice teachers' beliefs regarding their abilities to effectively educate ELLs in their mainstream class. The researchers found that the participants' beliefs were impacted by whether they had completed prior coursework and field experiences that focused on ELL instruction (Torres & Tackett, 2016). Further data analysis revealed that preservice teachers believed the two greatest obstacles to educating ELLs were language barriers and lack of time and resources for ELL instruction.

Numerous recent studies have revealed that preservice teachers admit not feeling well prepared to teach ELLs (Pavlak & Cavender, 2019; Toronyi, 2020; Torres & Tackett, 2016). Scholars in teacher education have explained the need to better prepare preservice mainstream teachers to work with ELLs (Kang & Veitch, 2017), but teacher

educators have expressed the struggle to find the time to take classes on ELL education (Guler, 2020).

Researchers have also identified several obstacles to implementation of ELL preparation by higher education faculty, including (a) faculty members' autonomy, (b) faculty members' roles as experts, (c) lack of incentives, (d) limited resources, and (e) differing levels of understanding and commitment to ELL instruction (de Jong et al., 2018). Teacher education programs usually consist of an EL-specific course or may modify existing course and field experiences that include teaching ELL students, but these ELL-focused procedures often remain separated from content-area methods classes (Von Esch & Kavanagh, 2018). Developing preservice teachers' knowledge and experience with ELLs has become increasingly pertinent and the role of teacher educators must change with the demand.

Need for Preparing Preservice Teachers Instructing ELLs

Several studies have illustrated the importance of working with ELL students as a preservice teacher (Brown & Endo, 2017; de Jong & Naranjo, 2019; Krawczyk, 2019; Mahalingappha et al., 2018; Mills et al., 2020; Solano-Campos et al., 2020). Nair and Ghanaguru's (2017) qualitative study explored preservice ESL teachers' concerns in terms of preparation, instruction, and evaluations for their student teaching experience. The study also looked at the role of teacher educators in providing support for the preservice teachers. The researchers found that the participants' concerns were very much influenced by their own perceptions of what a classroom entails and from their own

experience as a student. There were very mixed experiences regarding the support from supervising teachers.

Pavlak and Cavendar (2019) explored the experiences of preservice teachers working with English learners in prekindergarten – eighth grades. The preservice teachers were expected to plan and implement literacy lessons for an intervention group comprised of English learners. Through qualitative research methods and analysis, Pavlak and Cavendar found that field experiences provide rich context for working with English learners prior to entering the classroom. Another theme that emerged from the data was that many participants developed an assets-based approach to working with English learners (ELs). Turgut et al. (2016) examined preservice teachers' perceptions of preparedness to teach ELLs in mainstream classrooms before and after participating in a semester-long course on English language (EL) instruction. The course was required for preservice teachers majoring in elementary and special education program. The researchers used thematic analysis to analyze the qualitative data and found that the majority (89%) of participants did not feel prepared to teach ELs due to lack of knowledge of instructional strategies, language differences, experience, and personal traits. After the completion of the course, participants' perceptions on preparedness to teach ELs in the mainstream classroom improved.

Hedge et al. (2018) examined kindergarten teachers' training to teach ELLs and the strategies they employ in the mainstream classroom. Another research question aimed at the types of professional development that would benefit teachers of ELLs. Using mixed methods, 20 teacher participants elaborated on the preparation they received in

ELL teaching, as well as the strategies used by the kindergarten teachers based on popularity. One theme revealed that teachers are not truly prepared to teach ELLs until they are in the classroom. The researchers also found that teachers desire their school districts to do more for them through professional development, in regard to ELL instructional strategies.

One of the most relevant findings from the literature on the need for preservice preparation in ELL instruction is that hands-on or other field experiences with ELLs enhanced preservice teachers' commitment to modifying instruction for these students (Villegas et al., 2018). Teaching is an active process and that preservice teachers must experience teaching ELLs in order to be effective language teachers, rather than just simply being instructed by course professors (Villegas et al., 2018). Teacher candidates come into teacher education programs with beliefs about how to teach based on their own learning experiences and since the majority of preservice teachers do not have experience in second-language acquisition, this can lead to forming deficit perspectives (Mahalingappa et al., 2018). Authentic, meaningful, and reflective learning activities with ELLs must be encouraged throughout preservice teaching experiences.

Professional Development for Current Teachers of ELLs

Rizzuto (2017) explored early childhood teachers' knowledge of ELL instruction compared teacher knowledge and training to student learning outcomes. In this mixed-methods study, participants' responses were contradictory in that it was found they are open to bilingual education in their school, but they did not allow ELLs to use their native language in their classroom. Further data analysis revealed that 70% of teachers

held negative perceptions toward ELLs and felt they were not pedagogically equipped to instruction ELLs in literacy. Professional development topics that are important to and chosen by teachers can help alleviate some of these issues. Rizzuto states that the ultimate goal of professional development is to maximize and increase student learning.

Mellom et al. (2018) investigated the efficacy of culturally responsive teaching used to increase the academic achievement of ELLs in a North Georgia school district. Over the course of two years, mainstream teachers participated in a professional development program called *instructional conversation* pedagogy, which is a teaching strategy designed to promote second language acquisition. The researchers were interested in guiding teacher beliefs about ELLs and how their attitudes may have changed as a result of participation in the instructional conversation program. Five primary categories of teacher beliefs were found, with the most significant being that there is either an overtly negative deficit mentality or ignorance of ELL students' native languages. However, the instructional conversation program changed the way in which teacher participants interacted with their ELL students, such as increasing linguistic awareness and teacher knowledge of students' backgrounds.

Unfortunately, ELL professional development is often limited by the number of resources (i.e., ESL certified teachers and instructional materials) that a school district has or by irrelevant topics chosen by administrators (Rizzuto, 2017). One-way mainstream teachers can become more competent in ELL strategies is through instructional coaching. Nuss (2020) discussed a school initiative in ELL instructional coaching, in which ELL teachers' were assigned as coaches for mainstream teachers.

Their duties included facilitating the mainstream teachers' learning of ELL strategies, second language acquisition theory, and coaching as a mode of professional development for both the EL coach and mainstream teacher. Although there was a very low number of ELs at the study's site, the researcher found that the EL coaching initiative was a catalyst for better communication between ELL and mainstream teacher. Collaborate inquiry often leads to teachers' greater awareness of ELL students' language needs (Giles, 2018).

Professional development can help mainstream teachers gain a specific set of knowledge they can discharge to their instruction. Kibler et al. (2016) studied ELA and ESL teachers' perspectives on how to approach ELLs' writing. The researchers analyzed how the participants responded to ELL writing samples and the way they described their own teaching pedagogies. Through qualitative data collection methods and analysis, the researchers found that a lack of knowledge, expertise, and ELL support for coursework and assessments were among the top concerns of teachers in regard to ELL writers. Both the ELA and ESL teachers' perspectives suggest a need for teachers to acquire more instructional strategies and tools to help ELL students navigate the complexities of academic writing.

Many mainstream teachers have reported the lack of preparation for teaching ELLs, and this has had profound implications for the academic success of their ESL students (Villegas, 2018). Pappamihiel and Lynn (2016) explored current teachers' perceptions of ELL accommodations in the mainstream classroom. Specifically, they investigated how mainstream teachers view the distinction between linguistic and instructional accommodations for ELLs. Pappamihiel and Lynn found that more than half

(59%) of the participants were unfamiliar with the difference between linguistic and instructional ELL accommodations, noting that mainstream teachers felt uncomfortable distinguishing and implementing the two types of accommodations.

School administrators must make ELL professional development a priority in their schools. ELL-focused professional development has been found to mitigate any negative beliefs and attitudes held by monolingual mainstream teachers (Mellom et al., 2018). Although preparation and skills development are a two-part process that begins in preservice training, in-service teachers will continue to find it difficult to meet the needs of ELLs if they do not have appropriate preparation and time. Mainstream teachers have expressed the desire for more professional development in regard to ELL students (Hegde et al., 2018).

Implications

Teacher educators and school administrators who make decisions regarding the provision of ELL instruction could use this study as a source of information. By evaluating the problem of ESL students' academic deficiencies at the elementary level (Grades preK-5), and the lack of preservice experience in teacher education programs, teacher educators can investigate best practice for future mainstream teachers of ELLs. By developing best practices within core content methods courses, the overwhelming concern toward lack of knowledge and preparation may dissolve. Not only does this help preservice teacher preparedness, but it also has the potential to improve ELLs academic, emotional, and social needs and work to promote equitable learning opportunities for them (Giles, 2018). Positive social change may occur as first-year mainstream teachers

gain developed pedagogy and practiced skillsets in how to better meet the unique linguistic needs of ELLs in the mainstream classroom.

Local implications include the possibility of TN Ready scores increasing within the ELL subgroup for tested Grades 3–8 to lessen the gap between ESL students and their mainstream peers. Also, the number of ELLs in Tier III intervention groups across multiple grade levels will decrease as a result of more effective Tier 1 language instruction by mainstream and content-specific teachers due to increased knowledge of appropriate EL accommodations.

Summary

While there is a large body of research detailing the rapidly growing number of ELLs and the challenges, they bring to mainstream teachers, there is little research evaluating teacher education programs and the inclusion of ELL strategies within coursework and field experiences (Harrison & Lakin, 2018; Mahalingappa et al., 2018; Villegas, 2018; Von Esch & Kavanagh, 2018). This lack of research is especially true in smaller school communities where there are not yet a large number of ESL students in comparison to the native English-speaking population (Mahalingappa et al., 2018). Additional research is needed to evaluate how first-year mainstream teachers perceive their preservice coursework and practicum experiences in ELL instruction. It is imperative that ELLs receive appropriate instruction to address their needs so they can reach their full academic potential.

Section 2: The Methodology

Research Design and Approach

The research design for this qualitative study was a basic qualitative inquiry using interviews with first-year mainstream teachers. Burkholder et al. (2016) supported the use of general qualitative inquiry as a qualitative approach to explore and learn about a phenomenon in a natural setting. The context is the at-risk status of elementary (Grades K–5) ELL students in reading and math, determined by mandated state assessment scores, as well as the growing population of ELLs in the community. The site of the study was a local public school district in west Tennessee. The study was intended to explore first-year mainstream teachers' perspectives regarding their preservice preparation in ELL instructional strategies.

I selected a qualitative methodology for this study because it is a method by which a researcher attempts to understand people, groups, and phenomena in their natural settings, which may reflect the meaning of the participants' own experiences (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). One of the key strengths of qualitative research is how comprehensive a perspective it can give, which contributes to a deeper and fuller understanding of the research question (Babbie, 2017). Further, qualitative inquiry involves a dynamic process that is cyclical by nature (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). In contrast, quantitative design methods allow for broad data gathering used to analyze the perspectives of thousands of individuals (Butin, 2010). Quantitative data methods were not appropriate for this study because I did not plan to use any statistical operations in my data analysis.

Other qualitative research design methods, such as case study, ethnography, and evaluation research, were all considered but rejected for this study. A case study is used when trying to learn about phenomena in the context of a particular case (i.e., person or school; Burkholder et al., 2016). Because the research site involves more than one school, a general qualitative inquiry seemed more appropriate across settings. Ethnography is used to explore and decipher cultural contexts of a group (Burkholder et al., 2016). Observations are an emphasized form of data collection in ethnography (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Because the aim of this study was not to understand participants' cultural experiences, I did not choose ethnographic methodology. The goal of qualitative evaluation research is to create greater understanding of statistics and numbers to advocate for the topic of study (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). This was also not a suitable method because I would not be examining numerical data to answer my research question, nor did my research question involve seeking a solution to the local problem. A basic qualitative design would allow me to fully explore first-year mainstream teachers' perspectives of their preservice preparation in ELL instructional strategies.

Participants

Selecting Participants

Quota sampling is a type of nonprobability sampling in which researchers select participants based on prespecified characteristics (Babbie, 2017). The participants for this study were selected according to specific criteria: teachers must be within their first year of classroom teaching, have recently completed an undergraduate degree, teach within the local school district, and are considered a classroom (i.e., mainstream) or content-

specific teacher. Participants did not necessarily need ELLs on their roster as the research question was designed to develop a better understanding of preservice teaching experiences. Teachers who met the participant criteria allowed me to explore their perceptions regarding their preservice preparation in ELL instructional strategies.

The goal was to recruit a minimum of eight first-year teachers for this study with the understanding that this number is relatively low but may lead to deeper inquiry with each participant (Walden University, n.d.). The low number of participants is also justified by the small local school district, in which there are only two elementary schools. I understood that to reach data saturation (Saldana, 2016) the number of participants may have needed to be increased. I was prepared to open the pool of participants to middle- and high-school teachers or consider first- and second-year mainstream teachers' perspectives. The local study site requires additional after-school professional development trainings for all first- and second-year teachers, which was the means by which I gained access to the participants who met the criteria.

Access to Participants

As the district's ESL teacher, I am required to conduct one professional development opportunity each school year for the first- and second-year teachers. Prior to this scheduled training, I obtained all necessary permissions before the start of my study, including approval from the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the district's superintendent of schools, ESL supervisor, and building principals. I ensured confidentiality and anonymity of both the school district and participants in this study prior to any data collection (Butin, 2010). With the help of principals and new-teacher

induction leaders, I had access to participants via school mailboxes, which allowed me to deliver informed consent forms with initial invitations to participate and a description of the study (Appendix B). To guard participants' identities, I assigned each individual a pseudonym that would replace their name in the data collection and analysis sections. My role as a doctoral student researcher, not the districts' ESL teacher, was essential to guarding potential feelings of coercion in this study. More detail on how I planned to protect the researcher–participant relationship throughout the study is described in the following section.

Researcher–Participant Relationship

Ravtich and Carl (2016) explained that working from an inquiry stance helps researchers remain authentic to the participants' experiences. I am currently employed as a part-time ESL teacher at the school district selected as the research site. I have already established trusting professional relationships with each building administrator, as well as many teachers who currently have, or have had, ELL students in their mainstream classroom. I have led multiple in-service trainings on the topic of ELL instructional strategies and served on the district's school development plan team as the ESL representative. However, I have no supervisory role over the participants and had no influence over participants for this study. As the researcher, I needed to practice reflexivity throughout the data collection and analysis process to maintain a systemic approach to trying to understand the complexity of the participant's experiences (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I understand that because I have previous experiences with the study's participants, personal bias may exist in this research study.

Burkholder et al. (2016) defined researcher bias as an unintentional subjective view regarding the study topic or participants. To reduce biases and loss of confidentiality, I did not impose my personal beliefs with preservice preparation in ELL instruction. To make certain this did not happen, I kept a self-reflection journal to record memos and notes regarding the topic of study throughout my research. I only shared my notes with my project study chair to insure I was not inserting my own opinions and had continued to maintain participants' confidentiality by protecting their personal information. Any collected information involved with this study and participants was kept in a password-protected file, and any hard copies of collected data would never be stored on the study's site. The participants were given a chance to ask questions before and after interviews; further, all interviews began with a description of the study (Babbie, 2017). Once I obtained permission to begin the study, I delivered invitations and consent forms via school mailboxes to all potential participants. Follow-up emails were sent to arrange a convenient date and location to conduct an interview with each participant.

Data Collection

Local District Data

According to 2020-2021 early literacy and reading performance scores, ELL students remain in the well-below average category (NCS Pearson, Inc., 2021). These students are then labeled either *moderate* or *high risk* and placed in the appropriate intervention class. See Table 1. Intervention classes are continuously changing throughout the year; however, ELLs have remained in Tier III since August 2020.

Table 1

ELLs' Early Literacy and Reading Scores for Winter 2021

Grade	K	1st	2nd	3rd
Average percentile	8%	5%	1%	13%
Risk status	High	High	High	Moderate to high

Methods and Instruments

The research question was addressed using data collected from face-to-face interviews with first-year mainstream teachers currently employed at the study site. A copy of the interview questions and protocol is included in Appendix C. In qualitative research, a researcher is considered the primary instrument used for data collection. Throughout data collection, subjectivity, social location/identity, positionality, and meaning making of the researcher shape the processes, methods, data, and findings (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The fieldwork (i.e., observations, note taking, and conducting interviews) is an iterative process that must be learned and/or routinely practiced. Keeping this in mind, I also knew my memos that accompanied each interview would be vital tools for analysis.

The interview questions were organized and open ended to obtain in-depth perspectives and experiences of the participants. Babbie (2017) described one of the special strengths of interviewing is its flexibility. My plan was to listen intentionally to the participants' answers, which then shaped subsequent follow-up questions. The questions came from the uniqueness of the ELL population and the problem of the local

school district. Rubin and Rubin (2012) emphasized establishing rapport prior to any interviews taking place. Other qualitative research experts have agreed that a pleasant demeanor, trust, and reciprocity are essential to a qualitative interview (Babbie, 2017; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). In alignment with the research problem and question, the interviews were designed to generate rich descriptions from participants on their own experiences as they communicated their perceptions of their preservice preparation in ELL instruction. In the following section, I explain the procedural safeguards I imposed to guide and support the interviews.

Interview Procedures

Once I successfully recruited first-year mainstream teachers to be a part of this study, I conducted interviews with them either in their own classroom or at another agreed upon private location at the study site. A gratuity was offered and explained prior to meeting and given at the completion of the interview. The materials I used included a participant folder, describing the study and a copy of the questions and interview protocol, a clipboard, a pen, a recording device, and a script. Each interview took between 45 and 60 minutes to complete.

Role of the Researcher

My role as a researcher on this topic was twofold, engaging in the interview process as both the interviewer and employee of the study site. However, I was solely responsible for collecting and analyzing data. Memoing, or writing pertinent notes to myself, helped stimulate ideas for data collection and analysis (Babbie, 2017). Memos are a way I could capture my ongoing ideas as the researcher, while simultaneously

taking field notes, conducting an interview, transcribing an interview, coding data, categorizing, and analyzing results. Exercising researcher reflexivity is also an essential component of managing any ethical issues that could arise during data collection and analysis, and memos can be a fundamental source of reflexivity (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

High-quality research not only involves the examination of personal biases and assumptions but places ethical obligations at the core of the process. As an apprentice education researcher, I referred to Lambert's (2012) *Beginner's Guide to Doing Your Education Research Project* throughout my studies to become more aware of what my ethical role was in conducting a doctoral capstone project from beginning to completion. The role of a qualitative researcher includes ethical responsibilities that ensure a project does not bring harm or disadvantage to anyone who takes part, including myself (Lambert, 2012). Familiarizing myself with ethical considerations was a continual and iterative process. Again, I already had professional working relationships with the participants in this study, which helped to establish a climate of trust and ease (Babbie, 2017; Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Data Analysis

High-quality data analysis involves refined organizational skills and continuous researcher reflexivity. Qualitative data analysis is understood as the process that helps researchers make sense of their data (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). This, of course, is a recursive process, which is structured, systematic, fluid, and flexible (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Ravitch and Carl (2016) proposed three key aspects to effective data analysis: (a) data organization and management, (b) immersive engagement with the data, and (c)

writing, reflection, and representation of the data. The process used in this research study follows those three steps.

In order to move inductively from coded units to large representations (i.e. themes), applying and reapplying codes was a critical process that took place once all data from the participants' interviews was collected. According to Saldana (2016), coding is a process that permits data to be divided, grouped, reorganized, and linked in order to isolate meaning and develop an explanation of the phenomena at large. The following steps are what Saldana (2016) suggests to prepare for data analysis: (a) data layout, (b) precoding, (c) selecting appropriate coding methods, (d) conduct first-cycle coding, (e) conduct second-cycle coding, and (f) transitioning codes to align with study.

Trustworthiness

Unlike the quality criteria involved with quantitative research (e.g., generalizability), ensuring the quality, trustworthiness, and credibility of qualitative research involves a number of ethical considerations at several different steps along the research process. Ravitch and Carl (2016) describe that ethics in qualitative research are multifaceted, complex, and necessitates that a researcher must carefully consider any issues collaboratively (with the help of the IRB) in order for research to be ethical. Specific to qualitative research design, the concept of trustworthiness is the degree in which a researcher can have confidence in their sources, as well as the methods used to gather the sources (Burkholder et al., 2016). Lincoln and Guba (1985) established four criteria to ensure trustworthiness, which include: credibility, transferability,

dependability, and confirmability. These criteria point to the need for individual researchers to be reflexive throughout the data collection process and/or analysis.

Reflecting on my position in relation to the study, I have examined any potential personal biases, as well as applied Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria to my analysis in order to avoid any misleading or inaccurate information. In terms of credibility, qualitative researchers implement strategies like triangulation, member checking, presenting thick description, discussing negative cases, and having prolonged engagement in the field (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). There are a number of reflexive questions I, as the researcher, can consider in order to produce applicable (i.e., transferability), confirmable, and dependable data. Throughout the data collection, analysis, and writing processes, I recursively engaged with the data, took precautions against observer effects (Burkholder et al., 2016), and triangulated the data during each analysis attempt (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). During the coding process, I highlighted participants' quotes to use in my final research to bring thick description to the study.

Discrepant Cases

Discrepant cases were considered, but I maintained an unbiased perspective as any contradictory opinions arose. Discrepant cases may be used to inform local universities regarding the instructional practices of undergraduate students enrolled in teacher education programs. Discrepant cases may also be used to make decisions regarding upcoming in-service teacher trainings within the local school district. A reexamination of all data sources upon receiving any discrepant case will also ensure

credibility and trustworthiness of analysis, of which the results may be applied beyond the study (Burkholder et al., 2016).

In Section 2, I have provided an outline of the research method, specifying how the research was conducted. There is one research question that guided this qualitative study, which helped gain a better understanding of first-year mainstream teachers' perspectives on their preservice preparation in ELL instruction. The participants selected for this study were first-year teachers in Grades preK–5 within the local school district. As an employee of the research site, ethical considerations were addressed throughout the data collection process, during which I practiced extensive researcher reflexivity through organized memo writing, note taking, and well-planned interviews. Data analysis results will be presented in the following section.

Data Analysis Results

The research for this project study was approved through the process relayed by Walden University's International Review Board (IRB) (12-06-21-1008817). In addition to IRB approval, the research was approved by two school building principals (primary and elementary) within the school district of the research site. The data for this study was collected over an eight-week period, during which I interviewed five, first-year mainstream teachers, two from the primary school and three from the elementary school. After distributing and collecting consent forms, I scheduled interviews with the five participants. I used a qualitative interview protocol (Appendix C) for all five interviews. Interviews were audio-recorded and later transcribed, analyzed, and coded for common themes. In order to maintain confidentiality and privacy of the participants, I kept all data

secure by fingerprint-protected, encrypted file storage on my personal device and within a locked filing cabinet in my home office. Hard copies of the participants' signed consent forms were stored and protected separately from the interview data. For all five participants, I assigned a pseudonym to replace their real names in the data collection. The data is to be kept for a period of five years, as required by Walden University's IRB protocol.

All the interview questions were aimed at providing a comprehensive understanding to the sole research question for this qualitative project study (RQ1). Responses from the participants were divided into three categories during the coding process. For the first category, I looked at interview questions that allowed participants to share their perspectives about their preservice program and any ELL preparation they obtained prior to entering the classroom. The second category included responses from interview questions five through nine, about ELL instructional strategies they previously or currently use in their teaching. The final category dealt with the current challenges and responsibilities that first-year teachers perceive in ELL instruction.

Participant Demographics and Preparation in ELL Instruction

The five participants consisted of prekindergarten–fifth grade first-year teachers. All of the participants were women and taught in self-contained classrooms, meaning they are responsible for teaching all subject areas, including English language arts (ELA), math, social studies, and science. Three of the five participants currently have students on their roster that are a part of the ESL pull-out program. At the beginning of each interview, the participants were asked to share their current teaching situation, as well as

any information about their preservice program and licensure. The state of Tennessee offers a practitioner teacher license allowing individuals who hold a bachelor's degree from an accredited institution to enter the education field (TNDOE, 2022). Four out of the five participants are teaching on the state-approved waiver and are currently enrolled in a master's program to receive their professional teaching license in either elementary education (Grades K-5) or special education (Grades K-12). Three participants had undergraduate degrees in an education-related field, however, two of the previously mentioned participants pursued other careers upon graduation and allowed their teaching license to expire. Two participants also held educational assistant positions within the school district prior to transferring to their current teaching role.

At the start of each interview, participants were asked to share what preparation they have had in working with ELLs. Most of the participants revealed occasional encounters with ELLs. Participants 1 and 3, who previously held educational assistant positions in the school they currently teach at, described working specifically with EL students. Participant 1 stated, "As far as preparation goes, I have learned you must always try to get background knowledge on those students first. You need to get background knowledge of where they're at, as far as what they can do, and of course make them feel comfortable in their new environment." Participant 3 shared the same experience stating, "I also took a culture class and diversity class that really opened my mind up to more of what to expect from ELL students, which helped me understand the process of language learning."

Participant 2, who was the only participant to have graduated with a bachelor's degree in elementary education, described her student teaching experience in a large, urban school system: "My internship was in a first-grade classroom in a school with a large Hispanic and Japanese population. We worked closely with the school's ELL teacher, and I remember helping proctor for the WIDA test that they do in the spring, which really showed me the areas in which the students struggle." This participant, as well as those that were previously educational assistants, had firsthand experience with ELL instruction prior to entering the classroom as a first-year mainstream teacher.

The participant group was composed of elementary school teachers and characterized a variety of preservice preparational experiences in ELL instruction. With the exception of Participant 2 who, as previously mentioned, completed her internship in a school with a high ELL population, all of the participants shared that they would have liked if they had specific courses or practicums in ELL instruction. "I had no courses that dealt specifically with ESL students, I think my language arts class touched on some strategies, but nothing that I had to put into practice." Four out the five participants suggested that their high school and university-level Spanish courses were the closest experience to language learning they have really encountered.

Participants answered questions about their perspectives of their preservice preparation in ELL instruction, describing their preservice coursework and experiences, learned instructional strategies for language learners, and the challenges surrounding the support of teachers and students in ELL instruction. Participant 4 noted that although she did not have any preparation from her undergraduate experience, she has spent much of

her own time learning how to help ELLs in the classroom. She stated, “I think new teachers sometimes will prepare themselves, not through their school, but you might come across something that you think will be useful in the classroom.” Participant 5 held similar views:

> A lot of the stuff they teach you, kind of goes out the window when you are in the classroom and what may work for whoever is doing the research you read about may not particularly work for your students. So a lot of times, I will have to look up stuff, and I have a creative brain, so I like to think up strategies on my own that I feel will work and lot of times they do. I just put myself in their shoes and think if this were me, how would I feel when somebody is trying to teach me something that I just do not understand? I never try to make them feel inferior.

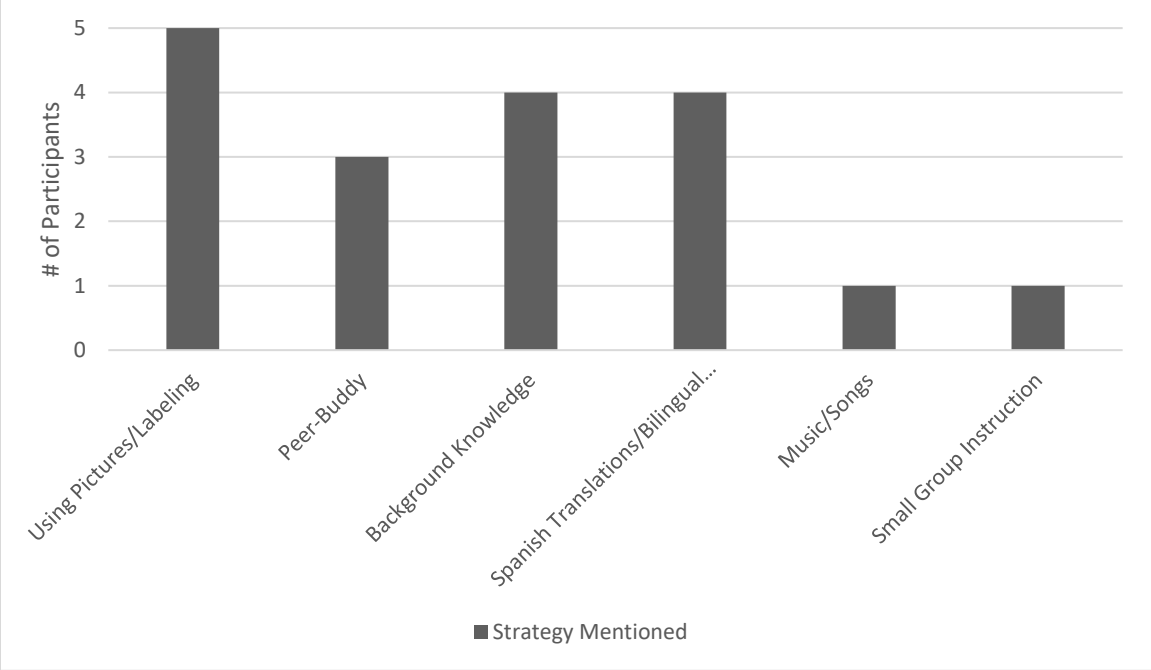
Participant 5 also shared how COVID-19 caused a change in the way courses and content was delivered, “We were not able to do field experiences last year, so I feel like it messed up a lot of the experience we would have had. In place of having experiences, we would have to do things like watch videos…discuss scenarios…a lot more curriculum projects and researching…COVID-19 stopped all of it.”

All the participants shared ELL instructional strategies they have learned and used in their teaching. Among the top responses were using pictures to teach vocabulary and gathering background knowledge and/or data on the student when he/she arrives. Figure 1 illustrates a breakdown of all the instructional strategies mentioned during all the participant interviews. Using Spanish translating devices, either through their phones or computers, was also a strategy mentioned by the participants that currently had ELLs in

their classroom. “It’s hard to communicate, especially if they are brand new to the country, so I either use another student to help me or I just use my phone to say something I need to tell the student.”

Figure 1

ELL Instructional Strategies Learned and Used by Participants



The participants described the ineffectiveness of their preservice program in learning instructional strategies specifically for ELLs. The participants said they did not receive adequate instruction from their professors, nor did they know if they were knowledgeable in ELL strategies since it was not taught: “My professors only touched on the subject of ESL, it was never a whole unit, so they really only supported me when I was doing a project or a paper on it. Other than that, nothing.” In regards their professor’s knowledge of ELL instructional strategies, Participant 2 simply said, “They didn’t know.” Some of the participants did mention that an ESL course was available as an

elective, but it was not required to take as a part of their program. Participant 4 shared, “It just was not a focus or something that they pushed, we didn’t even have an assignment that dealt with strictly ESL.”

As previously mentioned, the participants’ answers were categorized into three areas, based on the interview questions that all aimed to gain an enhanced understanding of the research question (Babbie, 2017). The third category was composed of responses from participants about the challenges that teacher education programs may face when preparing preservice teachers for ELL instruction, as well as who they perceive to hold the responsibility for preparing and training educators to instruct ELLs. Participant 5 felt comfortable sharing her lack of field experiences in general:

> I think in preparing teachers for anything, let alone ESL students, more time in the classroom is needed. Although I had written some awesome lesson plans, executing them in the classroom was totally different. I think the challenge is that my program did not give us enough time to practice in an actual classroom. There is such an emphasis on writing lesson plans, classroom management, teaching strategies…but there was no time to actually do it.

Similarly, Participant 2 said:

> I think that whether you are going to be an ESL teacher or not, I think every teacher…should have to take an ESL course…just because they get pulled out for resources does not mean that you do no need to be able to communicate and engage with that student. I think every teacher needs to have some window of what an ESL student goes through, what they need, what they require, and what

> you need as a teacher to be able to communicate with them…you need to be able to interact with them…make them feel like they are not any different than anybody else in here.

Interestingly, three of the participants mentioned the lack of second-language skills on the part of the professors as a challenge, with Participant 3 stating, "Some of them do not know another language, they do not understand diverse cultures…maybe it is a challenge for them to teach something they don't know about." In regard to interview question 10, when asked about the challenges that teacher education programs face in preparing teachers to instruct ELLs, Participant 2 stated that it was "probably a lack of language skills on the part of the professors." Participant 5 sharing these same opinions said she felt like her education professors should all be able to speak another language.

Although the participants were able to describe their views on the effectiveness of their preservice program, elaborate on learned ELL instructional strategies, and name the challenges that teacher education program may have with ELL instruction, there was a range of responses for the final interview question. The last question was insightfully included as a part of the interview process, to gain a better understanding of who first-year teachers feel are responsible for preparing them for ELL instruction. In general, it was a difficult question for many of the participants to answer, with Participant 1 stating, "I think that it is not just teachers, but professors, assistants, administrators, staff, and everybody else in the school building who holds the responsibility of educating the child." As I was transcribing and categorizing the participants' responses, I laid out each individual response and wrote one of three labels on them in order to visualize the

breakdown of answers. Table 2 shows the responses to the final interview question for each participant.

Table 2

Responses to Final Interview Question

Participant	Preservice program	Current school administration	Both
Participant 1			X
Participant 2		X	
Participant 3			X
Participant 4	X		
Participant 5			X

Participant 5 expressed,

> I feel like it should be equal. Our administration should definitely put an emphasis on the fact that we have ESL students, so that any teacher knows how to work with them. We should have more [professional developments] about how to teach ELL students in case we have them…even the administration should know and understand what our ESL students are going through…but I do wish I had more relevant classes when I was in college.

Additionally, Participant 3 expressed, “You learn so much by doing when you’re a teacher, but I do wish I knew more about it before I was in the classroom.” All of the participants conveyed the need for ongoing professional development in the area of ELL instruction.

These findings of first-year mainstream teachers' perspectives on their preservice preparation in ELL instruction are consistent with some of the literature on teacher education programs and professional development for current teachers of ELLs. These perspectives are critical to developing students' academic potential through curriculum modifications and differentiation (Szymanski & Lynch, 2020). The current preparation of preservice and in-service teachers is minimal and educators' views and beliefs of the effectiveness of ELL professional development contribute to the preparedness to meet the instructional needs of these students (Hiatt & Fairbairn, 2018). All the participants reported not feeling adequately prepared or knowledgeable in the area of ELL instruction.

It is also noteworthy that all the participants had limited responses to the questions about their preservice training. To record more elaborate perspectives, I repeated and rephrased several of the interview questions because the participants did not have much to say about their undergraduate experiences with ELLs. Again, the literature shows that this is a nationwide issue for many teacher candidates, especially in areas of less-diverse populations (Mahalingappa et al., 2018). In this study, the lack of preparedness in ELL instruction and limited ELL strategies known by participants were common themes throughout the literature, which was apparent during the interview process.

Ongoing professional development was the final theme to be identified after following Saldana's (2016) steps for qualitative data coding. After conducting all interviews, transcribing responses, and examining the data through coding, the three themes that emerged from the analysis process were: lack of preparedness, knowledge of

ELL instructional strategies, and ongoing professional development. These themes correlate with much of what the current literature suggests about the importance of preservice experiences in ELL instruction (Brown & Endo, 2017; de Jong & Naranjo, 2019; Krawczyk, 2019; Mahalingappha et al., 2018; Mills et al., 2020; Solano-Campos et al., 2020).

Theme 1: Lack of Preparedness

The participants responded to the following questions about their preservice preparation in ELL instruction: "What preparation, if any, have you had in working with English Language Learners (ELLs)?" "Did your preservice program offer any ELL resources? (Courses? Field experiences? Trainings?)" "Did you have any ELLs in any of your required field experiences and/or internship? Share details of any encounters with an ELL as a preservice teacher." "Do you feel your teacher education program thoroughly prepared you to utilize ELL instructional practices in your classroom? Why or why not?" "Did you perceive your professors to be knowledgeable in the area of ELL instruction? Why or why not?" "How did your professors support you in learning or using ELL instructional strategies at the preservice level?"

All of the participants spoke of their lack of preparedness prior to their first year of teaching. Some words and phrases associated with the theme of preparedness were: (a) trainings, field experiences, courses, (b) second-language learning, diversity, cultural awareness, Spanish, and (c) COVID-19. The theme of preparedness (or lack thereof) can be related to Kolb's (2005) cyclic process of experiential learning, which is the conceptual framework for this study. Pavlak and Cavendar (2019) indicated that field

experiences provide rich context for working with ELs prior to entering the classroom. In this study, the majority of participants did not have any field experiences work specifically with ELLs.

All five participants, who have either completed a degree in education or are currently enrolled in a master's program, felt there were limited opportunities to engage with ELLs as a part of their coursework and trainings. In response to Question 7, Participant 1 stated:

> There really wasn't any preparation in using instructional strategies for just ESL students. Once I became a teacher, I learned more from my colleagues than I did from any of my previous classes. I also asked the ESL teacher a lot of questions when I was having a difficult time with some of my students at the beginning of the year, but as far as learning these strategies before I started working here, that didn't happen.

Only Participant 2 of the five participants felt prepared for ELL instruction due to her student internship experience the previous year:

> I did my internship in a large, urban area with several ESL students. Even though we had a hybrid-learning schedule last year, we still had to learn how to reach these students even when they were at home. It was so much better when we returned to in-person learning and then I got to work with them more.

The participant also shared the support she received as an intern teacher from her mentor teacher, as well as working closely with the ESL teacher later in the year.

However, she did note that if it were not for the diversity in her internship class, she would not know much about ELL instruction.

Participant 4 discussed her lack of preparation, stating:

> I didn't have any preparation in working with ESL kids. The first time I interacted with an ESL student was when I started working here. I did not realize how hard it would be to communicate with them…even on simple things, like their lunch choice or following classroom procedures…and that's just one aspect of it…speaking with the parents is a whole other issue for me.

Generally, the participants expressed their lack of preparation by relating it to their inability to speak and understand the Spanish language. Many of the participants shared they could say a few things in Spanish and would try their best to communicate with their ESL student but wished they would have taken more Spanish classes in college, feeling it would have better prepared them to work with ELLs. Another issue discussed was the lack of preparation due to the global pandemic and COVID-19 restrictions. As previously stated, Participant 2 was the only first-year teacher to have completed a student-teaching internship and did so by teaching through a hybrid model (some online instruction and some in-person). One recent study found that most ELLs are not satisfied with online education, due to technical, academic, and communication challenges (Mahyoob, 2020). The impact of COVID-19 restrictions have infiltrated teacher preparation and ESL student learning.

Lack of preparation prior to teaching in the mainstream classroom was found to be an essential aspect of the participants' perspectives as the majority of them expressed

it to be a cause for limited knowledge of ELL instructional strategies. Additionally, there was some disconnect between what constitutes effective preparation in ELL instruction and what the participants' believed they needed. This disconnect will be discussed further in Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions.

Theme 2: Knowledge of ELL Instructional Strategies

A second theme that appeared from the data analysis was knowledge of ELL instruction with the following ideas linked to the theme: (a) help from colleagues, (b) strategies, (c) background knowledge, and (d) intrinsic motivation. The following interview questions were used to dissect participants' use of ELL instructional strategies: "What instructional practices, if any, have you learned from preservice experiences that help you with ELLs in your classroom?" "What instructional practices, if any, have you used to help you with ELLs in your classroom?" "Do you feel your teacher education program thoroughly prepared you to utilize ELL instructional practices in your classroom? Why or why not?"

Participant 5 shared her responses to the previous set of questions in a positive manner:

> We watched a lot of videos where we would watch a teacher with ESL students, and we would have to write a paper on it…we did have to do a portion about ESL instruction in all of my classes…we were being taught about the accommodations we would have to make for those students. Prior to teaching, one thing that always stuck out to me was to label your room, use pictures to help, repetition, and

> modeling. They gave me a lot of resources, even though I haven't used all of them.

This participant also shared the variety of multicultural opportunities she experienced as a college student, which allowed her to come to the classroom with some background knowledge of different cultures and languages. No other participant shared similar experiences.

The school district which held the research sites requires one training on the WIDA standards for all teachers of ELLs each school year. This year, the training occurred through an online platform and was sent via e-mail to all teachers in August 2021. Two participants recalled the training and some of the strategies shared through the presentation. At the primary school, teachers underwent a four-session training on instructional strategies for struggling readers, which was led by the ESL teacher for that building. Participant 5 shared, "That training was useful for all students, but I wish it more specific to ELL strategies."

Figure 1 showed the ELL instructional strategies mentioned by participants in their interviews, however, regarding participants' instructional practices and knowledge of ELL instruction was more influenced by their colleagues' advice, rather than preservice experiences. Participant 1 stated:

> I learned more from [my colleague] than I ever did in college because she has been teaching for 20 years and has had a lot of ESL students over that time. When I was struggling with a couple of my students, she is the one who told me to use a peer-buddy and showed me what she did on assessments, like our spelling tests, to

> accommodate for them. Those were things they really don't teach me in my classes, at least not specifically for ESL.

Instruction can also be linked to the conceptual framework of experiential learning. The participants received instructional strategies, best practices, and ideas from their preservice experiences, as well as from teacher colleagues and in-service trainings. They used these instructional practices in their classrooms with ELLs and other students. However, a few participants mentioned their self-motivation when finding the most effective instructional strategies for their ELLs. "Of course you want the best for your students, so I just always look for ways I can help them…I put myself in their shoes and try to figure out what I would need if I was in their situation." Participant 1 remarked:

> You don't want them to feel secluded or different from any other student. I do what I can to make sure I'm communicating with them…engaging…interacting…I like to give my own self-assessments in a more comfortable environment where it's not so stressful. I also make sure I have the material ready and that I'm organized with everything…doing my research on what they need first versus what they need next, and I don't go to what's next until they've mastered what is first.

Knowledge of ELL instructional strategies was characterized by participants' intrinsic motivation, teacher collaboration, and utilizing strategies learned from preservice experiences and/or colleagues. Ongoing professional development and training specifically for ELL instructional strategies was identified as a corresponding theme.

Theme 3: Ongoing Professional Development

The third and final theme that emerged from the data analysis was the desire for ongoing professional development and ELL training. Words and phrases connected with the theme of ELL professional development were (a) hands-on, (b) multiple trainings, (c) ESL teacher collaboration, and (d) administration. Ongoing professional development can be associated with the conceptual framework as Kolb's (2015) experiential learning theory is described as a cyclic progress. Ongoing professional development requires careful analysis for the types of trainings in-service teachers may receive (Kim & Morita-Mullaney, 2020). As expressed by four out of the five participants, this fell under the responsibility of current school administration. Participant 2 stated:

> Current school administrators [should prepare and train teachers to work with ELLs] because not everybody will go into a school where that is a need. ESL means training to teach kids that speak any language…any kid from any country could come…and we must be prepared to adapt our teaching to somebody who doesn't understand me.

Many of the participants also shared the opinion that there needs to be more "hands-on" trainings throughout the year, whether it be collaborating with the ESL teacher for that school or bringing in other experts to deliver effective instruction to teachers. "I would like to learn practical steps I can do when a new ESL student comes into my classroom. Like, put me in a simulation or scenario, where I can practice step-by-step all the ways I can help that student learn from day one." Many of the participants

explained that since they did not have any preservice field experiences, they felt that needed multiple trainings throughout the year. Participant 4 shared:

> Especially because the number of ELLs is growing in our community, this needs to be a priority for our administration. How can we help these students and these families? I try my best to communicate and engage, but I know there are other ways I don't know about that will help me do better.

Participant 3 expressed her desire to work more closely with the school's ELL teacher:

> I feel like it's a group effort…it takes a village like everybody says…so administration, parents, teachers, and the ESL teacher all need to be involved in the child's education. I think it would be helpful to have the ESL teacher be a part of our faculty meetings or [professional learning communities], where she can share strategies…like one strategy a week…that would be an easy way to continue learning about ESL for all the teachers and our administration, too.

School districts, as well as universities can work together to identify the core knowledge needed for both preservice and in-service teachers, and design aligned professional development opportunities that lead to more cohesive ELL instruction (Kim & Morita-Mullaney, 2020).

From the interviews, I inferred that the participants would benefit from EL-focused professional developments because it would build upon preservice learning and strengthen teaching strategies they currently employ. In Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions, I will acknowledge the teachers' shared lack of knowledge and skills in

ELL instruction, calling on school administrators to provide intentional professional development for them to acquire more EL strategies that will in-turn support the academic needs of their ELLs.

Conclusion

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore first-year mainstream teachers' perspectives on their preservice preparation in ELL instruction. I conducted individual interviews with elementary teachers to gather data to answer the research question. I obtained a deep understanding of five first-year teachers' perspectives on their preservice preparation in ELL instruction, as well as the instructional strategies they currently use as a result of undergraduate coursework and in-service professional developments. The research sites were two elementary schools, both of which have a substantial ELL population in comparison to the entire study body. Three out of the five participants in this doctoral study were responsible for instruction ELL students in their self-contained, mainstream classrooms.

After analyzing the data and participants responses, the results of this doctoral project study led me to develop a 3-day professional development workshop that was focused on developing all elementary mainstream teachers' (Grades preK-5) understanding of ELL instructional strategies. In the data I collected through individual interviews with first-year mainstream teachers, four out of the five teachers believed that ongoing professional development in the area of ELL instruction should be a priority for their current school administration. Additionally, Participant 5 felt that an ELL professional development should be a "requirement" for all the teachers in her school

building, as well as better collaboration with the school's ESL teacher. Out of the five interviewed first-year teachers, only one had experienced ELL professional development prior to entering the classroom, which had influenced the way the participants' perceived who was responsible for their learning needs in the area of ELL instruction.

This doctoral project study can be a catalyst for positive social change because teachers in this school district will become more adequately prepared to instruct ELLs. Through the 3-day training, they will learn current best practices to guide ELL instruction, specific ELL instructional strategies, helpful Spanish words and phrases to use with newcomer students, as well as ways to collaborate and co-plan with the ESL teacher at their school. As an end result, the goal of the workshop will be to extend mainstream teachers' understanding of ELL instruction, thus increasing academic achievement among ELL students.

In Section 2, I have provided a brief description of the ELL Professional Development Workshop Project, as well as explained the purpose, benefits, and goals of the 3-day training with mainstream teachers. The details of this project are specified in Appendix A. Section 3 will more thoroughly describe the project, evaluation plan, and implications aligning with the data that was collected and analyzed in this section.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

The purpose of this doctoral study was to explore first-year mainstream teachers' perceptions on their preservice preparation in ELL instruction. I collected data through one-on-one interviews with five participants. One of the major findings suggested that an in-house training on ELL instructional strategies, newcomer needs, and collaboration with licensed ESL teachers could increase mainstream teachers' knowledge and skill set, thus increasing effective instructional strategies employed and benefitting ELs in the local school district. In this section, I present a 3-day professional development workshop created in response to the data collected and analyzed from the qualitative interviews.

Sims et al. (2021) supported the use of certain mechanisms as the foundation for effective professional development, including definitions, examples and non-examples, explanations of how they affect learning, and research as evidence of best practice. These factors were considered as I planned the 3-day workshop to cover the ELL instructional needs that emerged from the interview data. In this study, I found that participants indicated a desire to participate in professional development that is ongoing and focused on teaching ELs with lower proficiency levels and that allowed time for teacher collaboration.

Rationale

The participants in this study felt that ongoing, in-service professional development was needed to develop better understanding of ELL instructional strategies, especially because the number of K–12 EL students at the study site has increased 267%

within the last school year (federal programs director, personal communication, March 2022). The participants also felt it would benefit ELL students if there was more time during professional development for collaboration and planning with the districts' ESL teachers. The results of my research are supported by the literature on professional development for teachers to help meet the needs of ELLs in the mainstream classroom. ELLs' specific language needs put them in greater jeopardy for struggling academically (Besterman et al., 2018). Teacher professional development can change the narrative for these students if it emphasizes local, context-specific solutions, active teacher participation, commitment to change, and activities that allow teachers to interact meaningfully with their colleagues (Besterman et al., 2018).

The previous literature review in Section 1 of this study focused on research describing the deficit occurring in teacher education programs in regard to the preparation of preservice teachers to instruct ELLs. Although the participants revealed similar perspectives found in current literature, a new theme of addressing in-service teacher professional development in ELL instruction emerged and is the primary focus of the literature review in Section 3. Further, the 3-day workshop was planned for all mainstream elementary teachers (Grades PreK–5) because some of the participants felt professional development in ELL instruction was needed for their colleagues as well.

Effective professional development is fundamental for the development and improvement of teacher performance, which then transforms to better student achievement (Wei, 2020). Attention must be given to ELL professional development that allows mainstream teachers to collaborate, share ideas, and learn instructional strategies

and theory related to second-language learning. A 3-day in-house workshop will create the opportunity for local elementary teachers to participate in meaningful and relevant ELL professional development.

Review of the Literature

For this literature review, search terms and phrases used were *ELL instructional strategies, ELL newcomer strategies, ELL preparation, ELL/ESL professional development, ELL teacher collaboration, ELL training, teacher collaboration and planning,* and *teacher professional development.* The search was completed using educational databases from the Walden University Library, such as Academic Search Complete, ERIC, SAGE, and Google Scholar. Aligned with the findings from the participants' interviews, recent literature shows similar research; teachers without any ELL preparation or licensure have demonstrated lower levels of self-efficacy in the areas of ELL instruction, curriculum development, and assessment (Kim & Morita-Mullaney, 2020). Further studies have shown that only 3% of mainstream teachers report having specialized training to support multilingual learners (Rahman et al., 2017). Even in states like Arizona, where the percentage of ELLs has grown over 63% in the last decade, only 1% of teacher candidates from one of the largest preparation programs in the state graduate with a specialized language endorsement (Farr & Saltmarsh, 2018).

Conceptual Framework

The data that I collected for this doctoral study revealed that first-year mainstream teachers desire to participate in ELL professional development to compensate for the lack of preservice preparation they received. Therefore, I created a 3-day professional

development workshop that would provide general education and content-area teachers (Grades PreK–5) with the strategies, theories, and time for teacher collaboration necessary to improve ELL instruction in their classrooms. Framed by Knowles' (1980) theory of andragogy, which explains how adults learn differently than children do, the in-house workshop considers the four basic principles of developing a learning experience for adults. First, the theory of andragogy is based on a few assumptions about adult learners: (a) adults are independent learners, (b) adults carry a lifetime of experiences, (c) adults need to see prompt application of their learning, and (d) adults are driven by an internal force to learn (Prather, 2015). Based on these assumptions, the four principles of the adult andragogy theory are: (a) adults must be involved in the planning of their learning, (b) experience is the key to the learning activities, (c) the training must have immediate impact on teachers' roles, and (d) adult learning is revolved around problem solving (Prather, 2015).

Knowles' (1980) adult learning theory was appropriate in guiding the project and the literature review on teacher professional development and collaboration in ELL instruction because the participants' perspectives shared through the data collection process revealed a desire to continue learning as professional working adults. Providing learning opportunities through professional development supports mainstream teachers of ELLs by enhancing their knowledge and skills of ELL instruction. As a result of the findings in the data analysis, I conducted the following literature review to expand on the relevance of teacher professional development, professional development specific to ELL

instruction, and teacher collaboration, allowing mainstream teachers to better meet the needs of the growing ELL population in their schools.

Teacher Professional Development

Teacher professional development refers to the reestablishment, development, and expansion of knowledge and skills (Tantawy, 2020). Exploring teachers' perspectives of the impact of professional development on their instruction, knowledge, and career advancement was the purpose behind Tantawy's (2020) study on the influence of professional development in the classroom. One of the themes that emerged from this study was the notion that teacher professional development should be differentiated and created to serve teachers with diverse experiences, backgrounds, and knowledge. A supportive school culture conducive to various forms of professional development was another theme found through qualitative data analysis. Interestingly, the participants in this study preferred more formal professional development types (e.g., conferences, workshops, courses, etc.). These findings align with the type of project I chose for local educators, which was also influenced by participant's perspectives. A more formal, in-house, 3-day workshop on ELL instructional strategies, as opposed to peer observations or narratives, may be a more effective delivery method.

Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) defined effective professional development as structured learning that results in changes in practice and improvements in student learning. According to Darling-Hammond et al. (2017), professional development is also content focused, includes active learning, is collaborative, models best practices, provides coaching support, offers feedback and time for reflection, and is ongoing. The researchers

identified unique practices in professional development programs that were associated with student learning gains (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). The researchers also described feedback and reflection as essential practices that need to be modeled during professional development, which will then help teachers move mindfully toward becoming experts in their profession. These distinct practices indicated having a positive impact on teachers and on student learning experiences. Darling-Hammond et al.'s study is important for my project because sharing instructional strategies and teacher collaboration have been shown to increase teachers' knowledge and skills. These practices are included in the 3-day workshop described in Appendix A.

Through a qualitative research design, Mohan et al. (2017) gathered qualitative data to gain teacher perspectives on the impact of professional development in their schools. The major findings to emerge from teachers' views were, whether teachers are first-year or experienced, professional development is needed to assist the demands and changes continuously being made to their roles (Mohan et al., 2017). Also, the needs of rural and urban teachers were slightly different, but the opportunity for teachers to collaborate and share ideas created the foundation of professional development (Mohan et al., 2017). Overall, Mohan et al.'s findings justified that teachers who engaged in productive professional development tended to work together with their colleagues in an effort to improve student achievement. According to Mohan et al. (2017), professional development and training can increase teachers' knowledge and skills, which positively contributes to better student learning; therefore, the project I created in response to the

participants' perspectives of ongoing professional development is validated through this research.

Puhala's (2020) qualitative study explored the experiences of elementary teachers as they participated in a professional development program on blended learning skills. The teachers' desire to improve their pedagogy was the intrinsic motivation behind the development of the training, which Puhala (2020) found to be relevant to current classroom practices, motivating, and initially supportive based on participants' responses. However, due to the lack of administrative focus at the district level, there was confusion on how the strategies learned from the professional development training would be implemented in the classroom, and therefore, participants described subpar execution (Puhala, 2020). Having local school administrators in attendance to my research-based professional development will be highly encouraged to ensure all involved with ELL students' learning will be consistent throughout the district.

Gore and Rickards's (2021) study with mid-to-late career teachers provided insight on how professional development can rejuvenate and enhance these teachers' practice. Participants completed a successful program called *quality teaching rounds*, which focuses on curriculum, student engagement, social justice, and pedagogical practice (Gore & Rickards, 2021). Although there was initial hesitation from the experienced teachers who participated in quality teaching rounds, the researchers found that dispositions were renewed by the end of the training (Gore & Rickards, 2021). Gore and Rickards' (2021) study illustrates the effectiveness of professional development for teachers who have been in the classroom for many years.

Successful implementation of research-based instructional practices requires teacher training and preparation, which does not always happen with fidelity. McMaster et al. (2021) explored and evaluated research on professional development practices for teachers who provide intensive intervention to at-risk students. Using certain criterion, such as content focus, active learning, coherence, sustained duration, and collective participation, the researchers systematically reviewed a number of studies on professional development practices all over the country (McMaster et al., 2021). McMaster et al. found that most studies delivered professional development through workshops, typically multiday trainings delivered to a group of those who would implement instruction followed by some type of ongoing support. However, much of the research on the effectiveness of different professional development models was inconclusive due to the lack of detailed reports. The criterion used to assess McMaster et al.'s (2021) research on professional development practices is useful in the development of my project as I aim to deliver a thorough and effective professional development opportunity in ELL instruction for local mainstream teachers.

ELL Professional Development

Less than 25% of teachers have participated in any ELL specific professional development opportunities (Besterman et al., 2018). Even as the nation's most rapidly growing student population continues to be on the rise, there is a significant shortage of certified teachers in ESL (Wei, 2020). Mainstream teachers can help prepare ELLs when they partake in professional development that is rooted in theory, research, and ELL instructional strategies (Wei, 2020). Many teachers have a fundamental misunderstanding

about the amount of time it takes for an ELL to acquire a new language, how second-language learning impacts academic achievement, and the correlation between speaking ability and comprehension (Besterman et al., 2018). Therefore, ELL professional development for mainstream teachers provides activities distinct to instructing language learners.

Besterman et al. (2018) conducted a study on the education of ELLs in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) education and the credentials of STEM educators in relation to ELLs. Interestingly, in the southern region of the United States (where this doctoral study site is located), the percentage of science and math teachers who had ELLs in their service load is significantly higher than national rates. With over half of the STEM teachers in Besterman et al.'s (2018) study reporting they had ELL students in their classroom, less than 25% of those teachers participated in ELL specific professional development activities within the last year. Even for those who had participated in ELL professional development, they indicated having only spent eight or less hours in these activities. Not only do the researchers of this study call for investigations into the current state of teacher education programs, they emphasized the need for mainstream teachers to be trained on adaptations for ELLs in the STEM classroom.

Kim and Morita-Mullaney (2020) studied both mainstream and ESL teachers' beliefs in their capacity to achieve ESL specific instructional goals. The researchers explored the differences in ELL preparation among teachers to ELs and how this influenced their self-efficacy in ELL instruction. The participants of this mixed-methods

study ranged in teaching experience from 3–40 years in the field; however, regardless of experience, those with little ELL preparation and/or training showed low levels of ELL competency. This study is important to the development of my project study because it reveals the need for ELL professional development for *all* mainstream teachers responsible for ELL instruction.

Kim (2020) presented findings of STEM teachers' beliefs about ELLs after their participation in a yearlong ESL professional development program. The program aimed to implement an updated ESL curriculum that would integrate STEM objectives and end with an endorsement in ESL education. All the participants described how their involvement in the program changed their previous beliefs about ELLs. The participants had a more thorough understanding of many teaching practices, including: the second-language acquisition process, integrating academic language into STEM instruction, re-evaluating content instruction, understanding ELL students and families, implementing EL curriculum, and being an advocate for EL education. Positive teacher beliefs are critical to an EL student's academic success and professional development programs like the one described in Kim's (2020) study illustrates how effective professional development can have a significant impact on both teachers and students.

ELL professional development for teachers is not limited to just urbanized areas where there are large numbers of ELLs enrolled in school. Ankeny et al. (2019) described a professional development model that aimed to prepare high quality educators working in a rural Florida school district. Six professional development courses were presented to teachers over five semesters, with the courses tailored specifically to working with ELs in

a rural district. As a result of the ongoing professional development opportunity, participants reported an increase in leadership roles to support EL students and families, a desire to deepen their knowledge of ESL practices, and recognition of the need for ongoing development of ELL content knowledge. 10 out of the 21 participants continued on to advanced degree programs to sustain their knowledge on rural ELL students. Ankeny et al.'s (2019) study illustrates the need for ongoing ELL professional development in rural settings, which is similar to the type of community where my project will be carried out.

Babinski et al. (2018) examined the impact of a new teacher professional development program on teaching practices and the language skills of young Latino English learners. The teachers received training on cultural wealth, effective instructional strategies, and a framework for collaborations. The researchers found a positive effect of the program on teachers' use of specific instructional strategies for ELLs in their classroom. In addition, the teachers' professional development was found to have a positive impact on the EL students' learning objectives. The information from this study provides support for the development of my project that has been developed to increase mainstream teachers' knowledge of ELL instructional strategies, in an effort to improve EL students' academic achievement in the local school district.

With the recent changes throughout the country due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is no surprise that many school districts have turned to online professional development as a means to provide teachers of ELLs with opportunities for improvement in the areas of curriculum, assessment, instruction, and technology (Lynch et al., 2021). With the goal

of preparing in-service teachers, administrators, paraprofessionals, and family members, Lynch et al. (2021) developed Project Massive Open Online Professional Individualized Learning. Some of the objectives for this online learning platform included: understanding the process of first- and second-language acquisition, knowledge of the foundations of ELL instruction, formal and informal assessment instruments used in ESL programs, and knowledge of the factors that affect ELLs academic learning. Mainstream teachers of ELLs who participated in the project's pilot year, reported that the strategies learned were essential to increasing their ability to instruct ELs. Although the 3-day workshop I have developed for this doctoral study will be delivered via in-person training, many of the objectives listed in Lynch et al.'s (2021) study were addressed in the project (Appendix A).

Wei's (2020) study explored the experiences and perspectives of a public-school principal at an ELL newcomer middle school, concerning professional development of teachers for ELLs. Through qualitative data inquiry, the researcher provided practical considerations in designing ELL professional development by receiving input from the recipient about her experiences. Some of the ideas shared were to tailor professional development programs to specific groups of ELLs, prioritizing the teaching of reading to ELLs, and taking initiative to being an agent of professional development. The information detailed in Wei's (2020) research provides support for the development of my project on professional development for teachers of ELLs, which has been thoughtfully created through the contribution of local educators' input.

Collaboration With ESL Teacher

Teacher collaboration reveals the process by which educators work together and sheds light on the possibilities for further professional learning and growth across ESL teaching contexts (Giles & Yazan, 2021). Darling-Hammond et al.'s (2017) research affirms that teacher collaboration can allow for professional growth as professionals work together to meet the needs of ELLs. Giles and Yazan's (2021) study investigated how a new ESL teacher initiated, participated, and sustained a collaborative teacher partnership with a content-area teacher. The researchers found that inadequate time for collaborative lesson planning, as well as contrasting views on collaborative teaching, created unique challenges that led to the teachers' different learning outcomes. This study asserts that teacher collaboration with an ESL certified educator is mostly dependent on time, as well as the ESL teacher's self-motivation to work with his/her colleagues. Similarly, until recently I was the only certified ESL teacher in the local school district where my doctoral study took place. Not only has the 3-day professional development workshop been developed as a result of thorough data analysis, but it is also because of my own desire to help teachers become more familiar with ELL instructional strategies. Giles and Yazan's (2021) study illustrated how pertinent it is for collaboration to occur for both ESL and content-area teachers, despite many challenges that both parties may face.

Teacher collaboration and even co-teaching between ESL and mainstream teachers is a recognized approach to addressing the unique needs of ELLs in schools around the world. Bauler and Kang's (2020) study addressed the impact of co-teaching practices over time, in order to understand the barriers that exist and what supports

should be reinforced. Over the course of three years, the researchers explored trends in co-teaching and collaboration practices, challenges that persisted that affected co-teaching, and ESL state proficiency test scores before and after policy implementation. While the participants did reveal that time constraints were the largest contributing factor to successful teacher collaboration and co-teaching, there were three unique practices that made it work: (a) intentional teaching assignments, (b) equality of teaching roles, and (c) full inclusion of ELLs in the mainstream classroom. These practices seemed to have positively impacted students' state performance scores in comparison to before the Bauler and Kang's (2020) study began. Driven by the data, this research is important to my project because it quantifiably illustrates the successes of ELL teacher collaboration for elementary ELLs.

ELLs often miss out on important opportunities to gain the academic language skills required for achievement. Marr and Saltmarsh (2018) researched collaborative coaching partnerships which embodies four major components: (a) content planning, (b) developing and using assessments, (c) instructional practices, and (d) community building. Through a program called iTeachELLs, instructional coaches focused on identifying, learning, and improving teacher instruction to language learners. The successes of this program included elements such as: the ability to provide individual coaching and mentorship, specific lesson plan development for teachers of ELLs, and building teacher collaboration to improve the education of diverse learners. These examples of successful implementation of iTeachELLs are significant to my project as it

illustrates the importance of teacher collaboration with ELL professionals, which is a key component of the 3-day training outlined in Appendix A.

Ralston et al. (2019) investigated the implementation of the Guided Language Acquisition Design model, during which teachers received a combination of training, coaching, and collaboration. The impact of the model includes an acceleration of English language development, as well as gains in student retention. This training requires a full week of intensive training; however, studies showed that only 47% of participants continued to use the strategies learned beyond the initial training year. Therefore, Ralston et al. (2019) created extended professional learning experience implementing the components of the model, but also focusing on team collaboration. Many of the participants shared they lacked confidence in their ability to successfully teach ELLs, but through continued professional development opportunities, their knowledge and confidence increased. These research findings are important to the development of my 3-day project because it aligns with the first-year mainstream teachers' perspectives in that ongoing professional development and teacher collaboration is desired in order to maintain confidence in learned teaching strategies.

Vintan and Gallagher (2019) explored current practices of teacher collaboration between ESL and elementary teachers and provided recommendations on how to enhance collaborative relationships that support ELL instruction. ESL teachers encountered barriers such as lack of training, technology, and tools to facilitate collaboration, as well as limited time to work with the classroom teacher. Other related challenges included a perceived misunderstanding of the ESL teachers' role and lack of professional

development opportunities for teachers. As a result, the researchers suggested to implement scheduled times to meet and assess the progress of ELLs, encourage classroom teachers to attend more professional development activities specifically targeted around ELL instruction, and emphasize regular collaboration.

The discussion on teacher collaboration is not limited to mainstream teachers, but also extends to content-area teachers in higher grade levels. Using a culturally and linguistically relevant citizenship education program, Jaffee (2021) explored how an ESL teacher and middle school social studies teacher collaborated to meet the needs of emergent bilingual students. A significant finding from Jaffee's (2021) study includes the varied perspectives on collaboration between the two participants. One participant emphasized content, while the other viewed pedagogy as most important. Their connections to students and conceptions of success also varied. The ESL teacher did more to support the ELLs in the social studies classroom, which supports the idea that mainstream and content-area teachers can learn from ESL teachers about student advocacy, co-teaching strategies, and methods that support second-language learning.

The professional development workshop that I developed as an initiative for teacher collaboration and knowledge of ELL instructional strategies, includes information to support all mainstream educators, administrators, and other school personnel in their effort to increase the academic achievement of ELLs in the school district. Allowing for professional dialogue during the workshop will lead teachers to gain multiple perspectives of ELL instruction through collaboration, as well as foster their learning by

reflecting on important assumptions about teaching and exploring the nature of student learning (Chien, 2020).

Project Description

The professional development project proposed will be a 3-day workshop with the first session planned for the beginning of the school year. The workshop will be open to all elementary mainstream teachers (Grades PreK-5) who are responsible for the instruction of ELLs in their classroom. The teachers will spend time learning and practicing ELL instructional strategies to increase their knowledge and skills with their colleagues during grade-level collaborative break-out sessions. The sessions will be delivered on previously scheduled district in-service days over a period of six months. The time between each of the three sessions will provide teachers with a chance to review and practice strategies both independently and collaboratively with their colleagues, as well as a period of self-reflection that can be shared at subsequent sessions. A detailed description of the Professional Development Workshop Project learning objectives, daily schedule, and materials are presented in Appendix A.

All three sessions will be held over the course of six months. The first one at the end of July, second at the beginning of November, and third at the beginning of January. Each session will have its own specific objectives, with a focus on gaining knowledge and understanding of the ESL program, as well as learning effective ELL instructional strategies and information about teacher collaboration. Additionally, time will be allotted for the teachers to share challenges and successes after the first session, engage in hands-on collaboration simulations, and learn a few Spanish words and phrases that will greet

newcomer students. Overall, there will be a lot of lecture-oriented sessions because this aligns with the findings that these teachers have never learned basic ESL principles in preservice coursework. However, each day does include interactive and hands-on materials for practice. For example, Day 1 has a grade-group activity where participants must compose a lesson plan that includes ESL differentiations. Day 2, participants will deconstruct a lesson plan. Day 3, the participants will collaborate and plan together, putting into practice all the strategies they have learned in the workshop to model an effective ELL lesson. Each workshop day also includes whole and small group discussions. I have included this explanation in Section 3. Each workshop day will include both lecture and hands-on activities to practice ELL instructional strategies. The final day will also be dedicated to scheduling monthly planning sessions and discuss workshop material that has not been understood.

The goals of this project include increasing teacher knowledge and implementation of ELL instructional strategies within the mainstream classroom, increase teacher knowledge and implementation of collaborating with the school's ESL teacher, and becoming familiar with the WIDA English Language Development Standards and language expectations for ELL students in Grades K–12 (WIDA, 2020). The target audience will be all elementary mainstream teachers (Grades PreK-5), including seasoned and newly hired teachers. The workshop will be housed at the elementary school, where there is sufficient space for all teachers to gather for the day.

Needed Resources and Existing Supports

Because the 3-day workshop will be presented in-house, all needed technological resources will be available at the school site, including a computer and projector, PA system, ELMO, and smartboard. Potentially, I will need the administrative team to be in attendance as a show of support for teachers, as well as our ELL students. Other needed resources include teachers' curriculum manuals and quarterly pacing guides. Advertising for each of the workshop days will be through school email, sent from district administrators, and reminders via school mailboxes and intercom announcements. Fortunately, Title III funds are available for professional development and could be used if other unforeseen resources are needed. Since the each of the three sessions will be held on district in-service days, I will ask if district funds could be used for the purchase of breakfast and snacks. As the primary facilitator of the workshop, I will make copies of handouts and materials for all current and future attendees and navigate further questions or concerns through email communication.

Potential Barriers and Solutions

Proactively, I will address potential barriers prior to implementation of the professional development workshop and work to find solutions as issues arise. One potential barrier could be the time involved for participants, which takes away from other district initiatives. However, since the workshop days will be presented over a period of six months, there will be other teacher in-service days scheduled during that time and can be strategically utilized for other professional development topics. Teachers will never be

out of the classroom, required to create substitute plans, which will also help accommodate teacher schedules.

Another potential barrier would be lack of finances to cover meals and refreshments. As described earlier, Title III funds are available to purchase most of the professional development materials needed, however, those funds cannot be used for the purchase of food. Instead, I will ask district administrators to fund breakfast and other food items from the general budget. Since administrative support may be another potential barrier, using their finances for my project may not be something they see necessary. Providing teacher participants with food during the day is a morale boost, as well as appropriate for sustaining focus throughout each session; therefore, I would make a case that it is essential for the all-day demand.

Finally, COVID-19 has proven to be an educational barrier in the past and could resurface as a potential barrier during this professional development initiative. If there was an outbreak of the virus prior to any of the three scheduled professional development days, this could affect teacher attendance, gathering of materials and other supplies, and possibly cause cancellation of the workshop altogether. The resiliency and intelligence of many trusted populations around the country have already provided solutions to the many effects of COVID-19, including the wearing of masks, vaccinations, social distancing, and the use of technology as a means for presenting and communicating remotely. If COVID-19 becomes a threat during implementation, I can request any of the previously mentioned solutions be encouraged so that all participants will feel safe and can continue their professional development activities.

Roles and Responsibilities

I will be the sole facilitator of all three workshop days, responsible for the creating, planning, communicating, and delivery of each session designed to inform educators of the unique instructional strategies for ELLs. I will lead the discussions at each workshop but utilize other colleagues, ESL certified professionals, and instructional coaches to facilitate breakout sessions. Further, my responsibilities will continue beyond each workshop day, as I will ask every participant to engage through ongoing conversations, teacher collaboration, and self-reflection. The activities that take place between each of the three days will be a core topic of discussion for the coming session(s). I will provide all the materials, handouts, and electronic resources required for effective implementation.

Project Evaluation Plan

Both formative and summative project evaluations will be used to provide timely and constructive feedback. The success of this project will also depend on the participants' willingness to implement ELL instructional strategies and align their teaching to the concepts learned in each session. Some formative indicators of success will be arranging and monitoring scheduled times to collaborate with the ESL teacher(s), participating in ongoing conversations in-between professional development workshops, and receiving reports of positive teacher self-reflections.

At the end of each in-service day, there will be a summative evaluation given to participants that I will use to assess the effectiveness of the workshop. Day 1 Evaluation, Day 2 Evaluation, and Day 3 Evaluation are included in Appendix A. I will ask that

participants fill out these evaluation forms and turn them in prior to leaving. I will use their responses to gather information about how the teachers perceived the ELL concepts and strategies taught that day. In addition to the Day 3 Evaluation, a final summative evaluation will be delivered via school email and will be sent out a couple of months after the third and final session has concluded. This will allow time after the last workshop day for the teachers to implement and reflect on what was learned. The final evaluation will be created through a survey generator and responses will be anonymous. The questions will be open-ended, allowing participants to provide feedback on the impact the professional development had on their teaching, their students' academic performance, and whether or not they were able to collaborate with other teachers with fidelity (see Appendix A). There will also be a chance to share ideas for future professional development topics. As an outcomes-based evaluation, the data collected from these anonymous reports will justify the overall impact the professional development instruction had on teacher implementation and whether it was effective or inadequate. Again, this may inform future professional development opportunities on the topic of ELL instructional strategies.

Key Stakeholders

The key stakeholders are teachers, school leaders, district administrators, and ELL students and families. Teachers will give their input on the effectiveness of the professional development on their instruction to ELLs through summative and formative evaluations. As the sole facilitator, I will collect, analyze and communicate these findings with school leaders and district administrators. School leaders are also considered key

stakeholders as they will continue to support the teachers in their ongoing education and implementation of ELL instructional strategies. District administrators will make valuable decisions regarding future professional development opportunities for mainstream teachers involving ELL instruction. Finally, ESL students and families are considered key stakeholders because the students will benefit from the increased knowledge and understanding of their mainstream and content-area teachers in the area of ELL instruction, thus producing higher academic achievement. Their families will also benefit as their ELL student will be better prepared for school success, creating a more accessible path for future learning and careers.

Project Implications

This professional development project will be a catalyst for positive social change because teachers with previously little preparation or confidence to teach ELLs, will feel more adequately knowledgeable in ELL instructional strategies and second-language acquisition models presented during the 3-day workshop sessions. If the population of ELLs in the local school system continues to trend upwards, teachers and schools will be better equipped to serve them. On a larger scale, social change will ensue because the findings of this study and the results of the project evaluation will have the interest for neighboring districts, higher education institutions, and local policymakers. Districts can work together to provide more professional development opportunities for mainstream teachers in ELL instruction, assuring their collaborative efforts will benefit this growing subgroup of students. Further, there are several nearby colleges and universities that filter their student teachers and first-year teachers into the local systems. These institutions

may recognize the cruciality of preparing educators who instruct ELLs, which may influence local policymakers to consider imbedding ESL certification courses into their curriculum and/or new teacher program field experiences.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

My career in education over the past decade has led me to conduct this research on a phenomenon that is a significant issue according to recent literature. Working with one of the fastest-growing student populations in both the local setting and in the country has revealed its challenges for teachers, school administrators, and teacher educators. My current role as an ESL teacher is what inspired me to look at first-year mainstream teachers' perspectives of their preservice preparation in ELL instruction. Through participant interviews, I examined their perspectives which led me to develop the 3-day professional development workshop. This workshop was designed to directly impact mainstream teachers' knowledge and understanding of second-language acquisition and ELL instructional strategies and to provide collaborative planning time with ESL certified professionals. The development of this workshop helped me understand the value of ongoing professional development in ELL instruction. Some of my findings have already been presented to district stakeholders to encourage making ELL professional development a district initiative for the 2022–2023 school year.

In Section 4, I discuss the process of aligning the project with the literature and my research. This section includes project strengths and limitations, recommendations for alternative approaches, scholarship, leadership, self-reflections, and the impact on social change. I also share reasons why this study may offer considerations for future research, as well as guide higher-quality preservice preparation and in-service professional development in ELL instruction.

Project Strengths and Limitations

Aligned with the problem of this doctoral study, the development of this project is intended to help first-year mainstream teachers become more knowledgeable in ELL instruction, thus helping to close the achievement gap between ELLs and non-ELLs. Based on the findings of this study and a scholarly review of recent literature, I concluded that it would be beneficial for all elementary mainstream teachers of ELLs (Grades PreK–5) to participate in ongoing ELL professional development. Addressing teachers' needs and incorporating an intensive overview of ELL instructional strategies will benefit students academically and linguistically. Teachers will learn how to accommodate ELL newcomers; modify instruction, lesson plans, and assessments; use appropriate ELL strategies for each language proficiency level; and receive more time to collaborate with ESL certified teachers.

The data collected through participant interviews revealed that first-year mainstream teachers are not prepared to instruct ELLs. All the participants indicated feeling that school administration was responsible for helping teachers become more knowledgeable in ELL instruction. Tantawy's (2020) research revealed that professional development positively influences teacher performance, personal qualities, student outcomes, career progression, and commitment to the profession. Therefore, this project aligned with the findings from Section 2 of this study and meets the professional desires of in-service teachers, providing a convenient setting for them to gain knowledge and skills of ELL instructional strategies. In addition, the workshop will hopefully affect the way teachers plan instruction, deliver content, and assess ELL student learning.

Another strength of this project is the initiative it has created to schedule future collaborative planning sessions with ESL teachers. Currently, grade-level teachers meet weekly in professional learning communities to discuss testing data and plan accordingly, but one participant shared her desire to meet regularly with the ESL teacher. The final day of the workshop is devoted to teacher collaboration with ESL professionals and school administrators. Together, they will work to schedule monthly planning meetings with the school's ESL teacher. This will ensure that ongoing professional development continues between workshop sessions, and mainstream teachers will have convenient times to purposefully collaborate concerning ELL instruction.

Although this project will benefit the teachers, school administrators, and ELL students, the project could have some limitations. Because the workshop sessions are planned to be delivered on prescheduled district in-service days, if the professional development topic is not approved or considered pertinent by district leaders, then time constraints and participant availability may be the first limitations of this project. This may affect when the sessions can take place and some of the teachers may not be willing to attend professional development outside of regular school hours, therefore affecting participation. Teachers may feel the workshop is additional work they would have to do if the professional development is not presented on an in-service day. In addition, this project would not be efficient if teachers cannot participate and provide feedback for future learning.

Another limitation of this project is the small number of participants interviewed. Only five first-year mainstream teachers responded to the initial invitation to participate

in the study (Appendix B), which does not represent the extensive body of teachers who instruct ELLs within the school district. Although the small number of participants can be justified by the small pool of participants, the project is still limited to a specific group. The results of this project on a larger scale could be different. However, the data gathered illustrate the need for all mainstream teachers to participate in the ELL professional development workshop, which would add to the total number of teachers to attend the in-person trainings.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

This project was developed to assist mainstream teachers in their instruction of ELLs and to provide ongoing support through collaboration with ESL teachers. Alternative definitions to the local problem could focus more on the preparation of teachers at the systemic level, as well as at the preservice level. First, the problem could have been defined to address the lack of district initiative to provide time, professional development, and other resources to teachers of ELLs. Second, the problem could have been defined to explore multiple local preservice teacher programs and their response to the growing ELL population in mainstream classrooms. Both possible definitions would lead to the need for teacher preparedness, knowledge, and understanding of ELL instructional strategies and either preservice or in-service training to benefit teachers and ELL academic achievement. These definitions also align with the themes found in the literature that illustrate the current and significant call for teacher preparation and professional development.

The problem that grounded this doctoral project study is that first-year teachers are entering the mainstream classroom unprepared to modify their instruction to meet the needs of ELLs. One alternative solution to address the local problem would be to investigate administrators, teacher leaders, and district professionals' perspectives on the role they play in mentoring first-year teachers in the district and the extra professional development opportunities available specifically for new teachers. Exploring how ELL instruction falls into new teacher mentoring could illustrate how the problem expands to other stakeholders within the school district.

Another solution to the problem involves the findings from the participant interviews, which indicate that professional development in ELL instruction should be a collaborative effort used by school administrators and all educators, even veteran teachers. Based on these findings, the project was developed to be delivered to more than just first-year teachers; however, it could be informative to interview instructional coaches and administrators to gain a more in-depth look into the initial problem. I could have also used other forms of data collection instruments, such as surveys or focus groups, which may have provided a wider variety of information and perspectives and increased the credibility of the study. I could have also changed the sample size to include secondary first-year teachers (Grades 6–12) to obtain more perspectives not limited by grade level.

Finally, to address the limitation involving time constraints and teacher participation, an alternative approach would be to deliver professional development via an online format, such as a webinar. District teachers already use an online platform for

required yearly trainings. The presentation could be easily uploaded, and in-service teachers could access the workshop at their own convenience. The project itself would need to be revamped to accommodate the online delivery, but if time restrictions prove to be a legitimate limitation, a webinar would provide teachers with more flexibility without negatively affecting the overall goals of the professional development.

Scholarship, Project Development and Evaluation, and Leadership and Change

My interest in this topic came from my career as an educator working with ELLs over the past decade, my desire to help colleagues with ELL instruction, and my educational philosophy. I have always been an advocate for ELLs, throughout my teaching career, because I have witnessed firsthand the difficulties of learning English as a second language. My scholarship experience as a doctoral student has influentially refined this topic through the completion of courses, major assignments, and progression through the final study stages. Reflecting on the processes of research and project development, I now understand how current literature grounds a study. From the literature and the themes that arose in the research, I found the foundation for the development of my project. In addition, I realized this topic is extremely relevant, yet still understudied in current research.

Another motivating factor in the development of this project was the local district data that illustrate a major achievement gap between ELLs and non-ELLs. As of spring 2021, 100% of ELLs (Grades K–3) were considered moderate to high-risk in literacy and reading abilities (NCS Pearson Inc., 2021). Despite the district's initiative to hire more ESL personnel for the 2021–2022 school year, the data remain the same. Further, the

number of ELLs enrolled in all three district schools continues to steadily grow, and more mainstream teachers are reaching out for support. Ultimately, I wanted to understand what my colleagues' preservice experiences were in ELL instruction as my experiences are different from those of most mainstream teachers. Because I desired a fresh perspective, I decided to pursue first-year mainstream teachers' perspectives of their preservice experiences in ELL instruction. Unfortunately, there is large turnover of teachers each year in the school district; however, this worked to my advantage because the pool of first-year teachers was enough to show data saturation.

Being a doctoral student at Walden University has led me to generate change in both my professional and personal life. I have grown as a scholar, using critical thinking skills to synthesize a wealth of information found in books, peer-reviewed articles, and journals related to ELL instruction. The development of this project has already led to numerous conversations among district leaders that make me yearn to continue research on teacher perspectives of ELL instruction. My goal is to find a variety of ways I can share the research-based knowledge I have gained as a doctoral student, whether that be through professional development or other learning platforms.

Before entering a doctoral program, I had some experience in developing professional development workshops for colleagues. However, I had only created small presentations and trainings to school staff, mostly on effective modifications and accommodations for ELLs in the classroom. I have presented to a variety of audiences over the past several years, including new teachers, teachers from all grade levels, and

school administrators. Even with these experiences, none involved the in-depth planning of the development of this project.

Teachers are unprepared to meet the academic needs of ELLs, which is evident in the current research and findings from this study. Therefore, the opportunities for my colleagues to participate in professional development that will increase their knowledge and understanding of ELL instruction is essential. Their participation will create a community of growth that will help meet the needs of ELLs in the district.

Through the individual interviews I conducted, I realized that first-year teachers are aware of the areas in which they need professional development, and they are eager to strengthen their craft. One participant noted that most of the professional development planned for in-service teachers has nothing to do with ELL instruction, yet this is a major area of desired improvement. From these conversations, I developed an intensive 3-day workshop that will be useful, practical, and relatable for all mainstream teachers who work with ELLs. The overall goals of the workshop are to increase teacher knowledge and understanding of second-language learning, increase teacher knowledge and understanding of ELL instructional strategies, and allow teachers to practice collaboration with ESL teachers. With these goals as the foundation for the workshop, teachers will be able to appropriately modify instruction based on ELLs' needs, implement more ELL instructional strategies in their classroom, and continue to collaborate with the ESL teacher on a regular basis. The evaluation of these outcomes will be observed over time but could also be identified through ELL academic growth.

Walden University's emphasis on being a social change agent has been an inspiring aspect of my doctoral studies and project study development. The most significant impact of the desire for social change has been the personal motivation to excel in every part of earning this degree. In relation to the development of the project, the scholar and practitioner components merged together to form a thoroughly research-based, knowledgeable, essential, and meaningful professional development for teachers of ELLs. Change will be expected, as it illustrates the effectiveness of the project and the devotion of the teachers who apply new ELL instructional strategies. Change will also naturally occur among the students who will benefit from linguistic accommodations. Change will be required regarding the unpreparedness of preservice and in-service teachers who are responsible for the instruction of ELLs.

Through this experience, I have increased my knowledge of the skills required to be a teacher leader. I have had the ongoing opportunity to mentor one of the participants in this study who had taken the initiative to reach out after I completed an in-service workshop on comprehension and fluency strategies for struggling readers. This mentorship opportunity has contributed to my personal growth in leadership. I have never had the desire to be a school administrator, but I have realized I enjoy working with apprentice teachers who may need extra support as they are just beginning their career in education. I am thankful this project has led to that epiphany, and I plan to continue to exercise my ability to lead in this capacity.

Analysis of Self as a Scholar

As a doctoral student at Walden University, I had opportunities to grow as a student and a professional through coursework and scholarly writing, as well as increase my understanding and practice of qualitative research. I learned how to identify a researchable problem, analyze relevant and current peer-reviewed literature related to my topic, and develop research questions for collecting and analyzing data. I collected data via individual interviews and followed all the protocol for an ethical study. The project study challenged me to create a well-planned, research-based, effective professional development for my colleagues.

Since I work with EL students every day, I felt that I already had a good knowledge base of what mainstream teachers needed to serve ELLs. I consider myself a proficient researcher and knew how to access the Walden library and databases. In addition to the research and writing, I watched several webinars on all the components of a doctoral study which I found to be extremely helpful in the beginning stages. I quickly realized what an iterative process each stage would be, but I kept myself organized and on-track using the term plans. Following the qualitative project study checklist, keeping in contact with my committee, and continuously revising each draft of my writing helped me feel like I was always moving forward. I saw true progress from the beginning stages of the prospectus to the completion of the final study.

Analysis of Self as a Practitioner

As a practitioner, I identified a problem within local school district that significantly affected the schools' performance on annual state assessments. Conducting

this study allowed me to develop and share a professional development plan for promoting social change within the school district while simultaneously discovering new knowledge that will enhance my role as a teacher and leader at my school. I will continue to build on my doctoral experience as a lifelong learner to create a learning environment that is positive, meaningful, and solution-oriented for students. My learning experience at Walden has taught me how to support my ideas, suggestions, and input with current and relevant research. As an educator, I have become a scholar-practitioner accessible for my colleagues by utilizing and sharing research-based ELL instructional strategies to increase academic learning.

As I reflect on my doctoral journey, I realize it gave me more confidence as a professional educator. I have a greater understanding of the needs of teachers regarding ELL instruction based on the numerous hours I spent researching the topic. I have become a more informed advocate in my school district for increased ongoing professional development for teachers of ELLs. I continue to share the research I have found with colleagues and administrators in hopes it will bring about more conversations, collaborations, and professional development facilitations on better preparing teachers to meet the needs of the growing ELL population. My passion for education has been renewed as I have used the gained knowledge from coursework readings and doctoral research for everyday applications in my instruction. I will continue to find value in the literature, apply new concepts, and work to promote success for all ELL students.

Analysis of Self as a Project Developer

Four of the five participants I interviewed for this study are teaching on a state-approved waiver. Based on these findings, I realized that these teachers and others that are not in their first year, did not have the type of preservice experiences that licensed teachers receive. This made the development of the project more substantial in terms of creating an effective and sustainable workshop for teachers of ELLs. I wanted to ensure that participants would receive the basics of second-language acquisition, as well as plan for plenty of time to practice new ELL instructional strategies. It was also very important to ensure there would be an emphasis placed on teacher collaboration and mentorship. As a project developer, I sought to create a research-based approach to professional development that would assist these educators with their growth in ELL instruction and education in general. The benefits for new and veteran teachers' instructional practices are unlimited as the ongoing opportunities to collaborate, share resources, create a positive network of learning, and gain knowledge from research will ultimately promote student achievement. The development of the project will also help build a stronger community of professional learners, who will take better ownership of the role they have in ELL instruction.

Reflection on Importance of the Work

I began exploring mainstream teachers' perspectives on their preservice preparation in ELL instruction because it has been a problem I have identified since I started my career in education over a decade ago. By reading through numerous studies and journal articles on similar topics and gathering data from local first-year teachers, my

work would inform the implementation of effective ELL instructional strategies and create an initiative for continuous professional development. I interviewed first-year elementary school teachers because they have a fresh perspective of their preservice preparation, and the majority of the district's ELLs are in Grades PreK-5. Both locally and nationally, teacher unpreparedness to teach ELs in the mainstream classroom is evident from the interviews and current literature. From the findings of this study's interviews, the professional development workshop project aligned nicely with the participants' desires to increase their knowledge and skills related to ELL instruction.

When professional development aligns with teachers' intrinsic motivation to improve their instruction, social change will occur. ELLs will experience academic success and test scores will improve. As ELLs improve in their learning, teachers may feel a sense of accomplishment that they have broken the language barrier and found a successful method of instruction. ELLs will benefit from their teachers' consistent time in professional growth and collaboration. Beyond the local level, other nearby school districts could use the components of the workshop to assist in providing successful implementation of ELL instructional strategies for mainstream teachers who feel ill-equipped in this area. This project study may aid school administrators who need to understand how professional development in ELL instruction will be supportive for both teachers and students.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

This study focused on first-year mainstream teachers' perspectives of their preservice preparation in ELL instruction. The nature of this qualitative research

generated multiple ideas of how to provide local educators with targeted professional development to improve their knowledge and understanding of ELL instructional practices to improve student academic outcomes. The implication of developing professional development material based on the data collected in the interviews with first-year teachers was to gain a better sense of what teachers' need to effectively instruct ELLs in their classrooms. Teachers need support developing a deep skill set through systematic professional development (McMaster et al., 2021). This study was able to provide information to teachers with no preservice experience in ELL instruction with research-based teaching strategies and approaches to implement in the classroom to support the needs of their ELL students. It was also important that teachers communicate with their colleagues and continue to share successes through collaboration with an ESL teacher.

Professional development for teachers who serve ELLs in their classrooms has been minimal (Hiatt & Fairbairn, 2018). Through this project, mainstream teachers from many school districts will have opportunities to increase their ESL knowledge and implement strategies to support ELL academic achievement. This study can provide a positive impact on ELL professional development as it is specific in content and relevant to teachers. However, effective professional development still requires input and active participation from those receiving the instruction. Based on the findings of this study, although some participants did not feel adequately prepared to meet the instructional needs of ELLs before entering the classroom, they did desire to engage in continuous professional development to increase their knowledge of ELL instruction, specifically for

their own students' growth. School administrators must also be aware of the correlation between their students' needs and teacher preparedness. Therefore, the positive social change implications include increasing knowledge useful for educators, principals, school district leaders, and researchers to provide the best teaching practices for school success.

Another notable application is that teachers will have more collaborative discussions among colleagues and with input from an ESL certified teacher. The workshop is the catalyst for ongoing teacher collaboration, which was identified as a need from some of the participants of this study. Establishing peer-partnerships with teachers new to the field of education will assist in providing a clearer understanding of implementing ELL instructional strategies in the mainstream classroom. Applying guided practice for collaborative meetings will also ensure that conversations will further increase knowledge and understanding of second-language acquisition. By doing so, classroom teachers will form an ESL support system that is focused on appropriate educational goals for ELs (Vintan & Gallagher, 2019).

A future research topic could explore how mainstream teachers use some of the same learning strategies for ELL students with other struggling students. A fundamental component would be to examine how some of the same ESL instructional strategies may work with the non-ELL students that also need support with academic language. Another research path would be to look further into teacher education program initiatives to address the growing ELL population across the nation. There is limited research on preservice experiences for students enrolled in an elementary or secondary degree program. In order to be proactive in the field of ESL education, preservice training should

be prioritized by university stakeholders. The participants' interviews from this study revealed there is a grave misunderstanding of what ESL education consists of and it would be a pertinent solution to correcting any misconceptions. Additionally, since this study only focused on mainstream elementary teachers' perspectives, future research may include secondary teacher's perspectives of their preservice preparation in ELL instruction for students in higher grades.

Conclusion

Section 4 provided an analysis of the research and project development process, as well as the personal and scholarly experiences learned along the way. Progress toward increasing mainstream teachers' knowledge of ELL instruction as the rise of ELLs continues to grow is a positive result of the project study. Continuing the work in this area is urgent as district stakeholders laboriously look for ways to close the achievement gap between ELs and non-ELs. This work also helped me to understand the value of ongoing professional development to effectively prepare teachers for ELL instruction, especially since the findings of this study revealed the considerable lack of preservice experiences for teachers without an ESL certification. In addition, seeking teachers' perspectives should always be the first step in developing any type of professional development, for doing so will guide the content and provide an authentic and meaningful experience for teachers' professional growth.

The completion of this project study also provided an opportunity for self-reflection as I have evaluated myself as a scholar, practitioner, and project developer. I have assessed both the limitations and benefits of my project. I will encourage myself to

continue being a lifelong learner so I can be a knowledgeable resource for my colleagues. I will venture to empower other teachers with the tools they need to successfully implement ELL instructional strategies for their students.

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Appendix A: The Project

Professional Development Workshop: ELL Instructional Strategies

Purpose

Both the literature and results of the data collected from this study reveal that 80 percent of participating first-year teachers are not prepared to meet the instructional needs of ELLs in the mainstream classroom. Four out of the five participants I interviewed indicated having zero to only pre-service course or field experience related to ELL instruction. Participants indicated a desire for ongoing, in-service professional development to become more knowledgeable in the area of second-language acquisition. Participants also felt that more time to collaborate with the ESL teacher(s) would benefit their planning and instruction. Based on the data, I concluded that a 3-day professional development workshop would be the most appropriate delivery for increasing the knowledge of ELL instructional strategies for mainstream teachers in Grades PreK-5. The 3-day workshop will be presented over the course of a six-month period, with the first day planned at the beginning of the school year. The purpose of this workshop is to provide an opportunity for teachers to grow in their understanding of ELL instruction, time to collaborate with ESL certified professionals, and experience implementing learned strategies.

Objectives and Learning Outcomes

The objectives of the 3-day professional development workshop in ELL instructional strategies are as follows:

- Teachers will increase their knowledge and understanding of second-language acquisition.
- Teachers will increase their knowledge and understanding of ELL instructional strategies.
- Teachers will practice co-planning and collaboration with ESL teachers.
- The learning outcomes of the 3-day professional development workshop in ELL
- instructional strategies are as follows:
- Teachers will differentiate and modify instruction based on individual ELL students' needs.
- Teachers will implement ELL instructional strategies in the mainstream classroom.
- Teachers will plan monthly collaborative meetings with the ESL teachers.

Daily Plans

Day 1: Second Language Acquisition Models and ELL Proficiency Levels	
Time:	Topic:
8:00-9:00	Sign-in and Breakfast Teachers sit at tables by grade-level Welcome and Introduction(s) Professional development presented by Sally Hernandez Present norms for workshop Ice-Breaker Learn Spanish words and phrases
9:00-10:15	Overview: Why Professional Development in ELL Instruction? Explain study and research conducted, results of interviews, development of project 3-Day Professional Development Schedule First session presented in July, second session in November, and final session in January. All sessions presented in-house, during pre-planned in-service workdays.

	Each session will focus on a different topic related to ELL instruction Purpose Provide an opportunity for teachers to grow in their understanding of second-language acquisition, ELL instruction, time to collaborate with ESL certified professionals, and experience implementing learned strategies. Problem that Prompted Study and Professional Development: First-year teachers begin their careers in the classroom without adequate training and field experience in English Language Learner (ELL) instruction (Guler, 2020). As the number of ELLs within this school district has already grown by almost 20 percent in the spring of 2021 (personal communication, administrator, May 21, 2021), mainstream teachers are becoming increasingly overwhelmed by the task of differentiating instruction to accommodate for the unique language needs of these students (personal communication, teacher, May 21, 2021). By the spring of 2022, the ELL population has grown 267 percent. Most educators lack the appropriate preparation to address ELL's needs (Solano-Campos et al., 2019). Interview Findings: First-year teachers had little to no preparation in ELL instruction First-year teachers desired on-going professional development in ELL instructional strategies First-year teachers desired time to collaborate with the ESL teacher(s) Day 1 Objective: Increase teacher knowledge and understanding of second-language acquisition and ELL proficiency levels. Table Discussion: What was your pre-service experience in ELL instruction?

	Why is important to learn about second-language acquisition theories/models? How do you accommodate for the different proficiency levels of the ELLs in your classroom?
10:15-10:30	Break
10:30-11:30	Presentation: Second-Language Acquisition Theories Provide information about several second-language acquisition theories Explain benefits of knowing how ELL students learn a second language and why proficiency levels impact instruction Break-Out Ask teachers to model how they would interact with a newcomer student on their first day in their classroom. Use anchor charts to document effective strategies.
11:30-12:30	Lunch
12:30-1:30	Presentation: ELL Proficiency Levels Give overview of the ESL pull-out program and the WIDA Standards Define ELD Proficiency Levels and explain how this affects ESL grouping Explain the different between conversational and academic English Present research on language development timeline Present WIDA Can-Do Descriptors
1:30-1:45	Break
1:45-2:45	Break Out Activity Teachers will be given a grade-appropriate lesson plan to differentiate for beginning, intermediate, and advanced ELLs Teachers will include Can-Do Descriptors as their objectives for each ELL proficiency level Break Out Discussion Whole-group discussion on how knowledge of proficiency levels and second-language acquisition theory influenced differentiation

	Document strategies on anchor charts
2:45-3:00	Complete Day 1 Evaluation Teachers will turn in evaluations before leaving

Day 1 Evaluation: Second Language Acquisition Theories and ELL Proficiency Levels

Presenter: _____ Date: _____
Directions: Please respond to each question presented below. Your feedback is valuable and will be kept confidential.
Based on the professional development session today, please describe one second-language acquisition theory in your own words:

Based on the professional development session today, please list at least two ELL proficiency levels:

Explain how you would accommodate a newcomer student using your knowledge of the Can-Do Descriptors.

Would you recommend this workshop to a colleague or friend in another district? Explain why or why not.

On a scale of 1 to 5, how would you rate this professional development session?

Not Helpful 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely Helpful

Day 2: ELL Instructional Strategies for the Mainstream Classroom	
Time:	Topic:
8:00-8:30	Sign-in and Breakfast Teachers will sit at tables with mixed grade-levels Welcome and Introduction(s) Professional development presented by ESL certified professionals Reminder of norms for the day Ice-Breaker Learn Spanish words and phrases
8:30-9:30	Day 2 Objective: Increase teacher knowledge and understanding of ELL instructional strategies. Table Discussion: What are some effective strategies you have used for your ELL students? What are some non-effective strategies you have tired with your ELL students? What is the most challenging part of teaching ELLs? Whole-Group Discussion: Use anchor charts to document and discuss answers
9:30-9:45	Break
9:45-11:00	Presentation: Effective, Research-based ELL Instructional Strategies Provide explanation of similarities and differences between regular differentiation and language-specific differentiation Remind teachers that they are all vocabulary teachers—they teacher the language of their classroom Define, explain, and model ELL instructional strategies Table Discussion: Have you used any of the presented strategies? Which do you feel will be most helpful for your ELL students?

11:00-12:00	Lunch
12:00-1:30	ELL Instruction in Action: Play video(s) of mainstream teachers modeling ELL instructional strategies during whole-group and small-group lessons Teachers will take notes on each video, identifying which strategies were utilized Whole-Group Discussion: What worked/did not work for each lesson presented? What strategies were used? How were ELL students assessed?
1:30-1:45	Break
1:45-2:45	Planning for and Assessing an ELL Student Deconstruct a second-grade math lesson plan Include ELL instructional strategies Present and explain assessment strategies for ELLs Generate formative and summative assessment ideas
2:45-3:00	Complete Day 2 Evaluation Teachers will turn in evaluations before leaving

Day 2 Evaluation: ELL Instructional Strategies for the Mainstream Classroom
Presenter: _____ Date: _____
Directions: Please respond to each question presented below. Your feedback is valuable and will be kept confidential.

Based on the professional development session today, please describe one ELL instructional strategy you will use in your classroom:

Based on the professional development session today, please describe on ELL assessment strategy (either formative or summative) you will use in your classroom:

Explain how you would accommodate a newcomer student using your knowledge of ELL strategies:

Would you recommend this workshop to a colleague or friend in another district? Explain why or why not.

On a scale of 1 to 5, how would you rate this professional development session?

Not Helpful 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely Helpful

Day 3: Co-Planning and Collaboration with ESL Teacher(s)	
Time:	Topic:
8:00-8:30	Sign-in and Breakfast Teachers will sit at tables by grade-levels Welcome and Introduction(s) Professional development presented by Sally Hernandez and school administration Reminder of norms for the day Ice-Breaker Learn Spanish words and phrases
8:30-9:30	Day 3 Objective: Teachers will practice co-planning and collaboration with an ESL teacher. Present Research on Teacher Collaboration: Findings from participant interviews suggested that time to collaborate with the ESL teacher would be helpful

	Teacher collaboration and even co-teaching between ESL and mainstream teachers is a recognized approach to addressing the unique needs of ELLs in schools around the world. Teacher collaboration reveals the process by which educators work together and sheds light on the possibilities for further professional learning and growth across ESL teaching contexts (Giles & Yazan, 2021). Show video of successful co-teaching and collaborative practices in a bilingual classroom Video Response Discussion: What resources did the teachers use to co-teach? What resources did the teachers use to plan collaboratively? How did the lesson affect/engage ELL student learning?
9:30-9:45	Break
9:45-11:00	Co-planning Time: Teachers will have one ESL certified professional per table Teachers, along with ESL professional, will create one ELA and one math lesson plan Teachers will include ELL instructional strategies in each plan, as well as differentiated assessments for each ELL proficiency level Teachers will use district approved lesson plan template Teachers will gather resources and materials needed to model lesson plan
11:00-12:00	Lunch
12:00-2:00	Presentation of Lesson Plans: Each grade group will present their collaborative lesson plan(s), modeling the ELL instructional strategies and assessments documented
2:00-2:15	Break
2:15-2:45	Final Day Wrap-Up and Future Planning:

	Teachers, along with school administration, will schedule future monthly meetings with ESL teacher to continue collaborative planning Whole-Group Discussion: Teachers will discuss future challenges they perceive regarding ELL instruction Teachers will discuss how the professional development workshop has presently impacted their teaching
2:45-3:00	Complete Day 3 Evaluations Teachers will turn in evaluations before leaving

Day 3 Evaluation: ELL Teacher Collaboration
Presenter: _____ Date: _____
Directions: Please respond to each question presented below. Your feedback is valuable and will be kept confidential.

Based on the professional development session today, please describe how you plan to collaborate with colleagues and ESL certified professionals in the future:

Based on the professional development session today, please describe how teacher collaboration can affect student engagement:

Explain how you would accommodate a newcomer student using collaborative teacher planning:

Would you recommend this workshop to a colleague or friend in another district? Explain why or why not.

On a scale of 1 to 5, how would you rate this professional development session?

Not Helpful 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely Helpful

On a scale of 1 to 5, how would you rate this professional development workshop, in its entirety?

Not Helpful 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely Helpful

Appendix B: Initial Invitation and Informed Consent

Dear Colleague,
I am working on my Doctoral Project Study through Walden University and seek your participation in gathering data for my research. As a first-year mainstream teacher, I want your valued input on your pre-service preparation in ELL instruction. Attached is an informed consent document, in which you will find a thorough description of the study, as well as the measures I will be taking to conduct confidential qualitative interviews with local first-year teachers. Each in-person interview will take approximately one hour to complete and will be audio recorded. Due to COVID-19, if you would prefer a phone interview, you can indicate that in the attached informed consent document. For your time, you will receive a $20 Visa gift card.
If you would like to participate in this study, please sign and return the informed consent document to me at your earliest convenience. If you do not wish to participate in this study, you do not have to return the consent form.
I appreciate your willingness to further my research!

Sincerely,

Sally Hernandez
ESL Teacher

Consent Form

You are invited to take part in a research study about first-year mainstream teachers' perspectives on their pre-service preparation in ELL instruction. This form is part of a process called "informed consent" to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part.

This study seeks 8 volunteers who are:

- First-year mainstream teachers in Grades PreK-5
- Work at Stigall Primary or East Elementary

This study is being conducted by a researcher named Sally Hernandez, who is a doctoral student at Walden University. You might already know the researcher as an ESL teacher, but this study is separate from that role.

Study Purpose:
The purpose of this study is to explore first-year teachers' perspectives on their pre-service preparation in ELL instruction.

Procedures:
This study will involve you completing the following steps:

- Interviews will be approximately one-hour in length and will be audio-recorded for the purpose of reviewing and transcribing responses.
- Due to COVID-19, a telephone interview is also an option for participation in this study. Participants will indicate whether they would prefer a telephone interview by checking YES or NO at the end of this informed consent. You will communicate via e-mail with the researcher to schedule a telephone interview and follow all previously stated procedures.

Here are some sample questions:

1. What instructional practices have you learned from pre-service experiences that help you with ELLs in your classroom?
2. Describe any encounters you had with an ELL as a pre-service teacher.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:
Research should only be done with those who freely volunteer. So everyone involved will respect your decision to join or not. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind later. You may stop at any time. Please note that that declining or stopping will not negatively impact the participant's relationship with the researcher or access to services provided by the organization.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:
Being in this study could involve some risk of the minor discomforts that can be encountered in daily life such as sharing sensitive information. With the protections in place, this study would pose minimal risk to your wellbeing.

This study offers no direct benefits to individual volunteers. The aim of this study is to benefit society by highlighting the pre-service preparation in ELL instruction for local teacher candidates. Once the analysis is complete, the researcher will share the overall results by emailing you a summary.

Payment:
The researcher will give each participant a $20 Visa gift card at the completion of the individual interview.

Privacy:
The researcher is required to protect your privacy. Your identity will be kept confidential, within the limits of the law. The researcher is only allowed to share your identity or contact info as needed with Walden University supervisors (who are also required to protect your privacy) or with authorities if court-ordered (very rare). The researcher will not use your personal information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in the study reports. If the researcher were to share this dataset with another researcher in the future, the dataset would contain no identifiers so this would not involve another round of obtaining informed consent. Data will be kept secure through a fingerprint-protected

computer, as well as using pseudonyms in place of real names on all interview documents, research notes, and other written work. Any hard copies of data related to the study will be kept in a locked filing cabinet within the researcher's personal possession. Data will be kept for a period of at least 5 years, as required by the university.

Contacts and Questions:
If you want to talk privately about your rights as a participant or any negative parts of the study, you can call Walden University's Research Participant Advocate at 612-312-1210. Walden University's approval number for this study is 12-06-21-1008817. It expires on December 5, 2022.

You might wish to retain this consent form for your records. You may ask the researcher or Walden University for a copy at any time using the contact info above.

Obtaining Your Consent

If you feel you understand the study and wish to volunteer, please indicate your consent by signing below.

Printed Name of Participant _____

Date of consent _____

Participant's Signature _____

Telephone Interview Preferred? ____YES ____NO

Researcher's Signature _____

Appendix C: Interview Questions and Protocol

Study: First-Year Mainstream Teachers' Perspectives on Their Pre-Service Preparation in ELL Instruction

Date:

Time of Interview:

Location of Interview:

Interviewer:

Pseudonym:

Project Study Description and Information: Thank you for being willing to participate in this interview! I am a doctoral student at Walden University and this interview is a part of my project study research. The purpose of my study is to explore first-year mainstream perspectives on their pre-service coursework, training, and other experiences in ELL instruction. Today I will be conducting an in-person interview. I will be audio recording the interview, per your consent, so that I can accurately transcribe our conversation. All information shared today will be confidential. I will also send you a copy of the transcription to you to ensure my recordings were accurate.

Questions:

Please give a brief overview of your current teaching situation. (What school do you work at? Grade level? Subjects taught? Licensure/endorsements?

What preparation, if any, have you had in working with English Language Learners (ELLs)?

Did your pre-service program offer any ELL resources? (Courses? Field experiences? Trainings?)

Did you have any ELLs in any of your required field experiences and/or internship? Share details of any encounters with an ELL as a pre-service teacher.

What instructional practices, if any, have you learned from pre-service experiences that help you with ELLs in your classroom?

What instructional practices, if any, have you used to help you with ELLs in your classroom?

Do you feel your teacher education program thoroughly prepared you to utilize ELL instructional practices in your classroom? Why or why not?

Did you perceive your professors to be knowledgeable in the area of ELL instruction? Why or why not?

How did your professors support you in learning or using ELL instructional strategies at the pre-service level?

What are some challenges you perceive occur in teacher education programs in preparing pre-service teachers to instruct ELLs in the mainstream classroom?

Who do you feel holds the responsibility of preparing/training teachers to work with ELLs: teacher education programs or current school administration? Please elaborate.