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Disciplinary Teacher Perceptions and Challenges of Literacy Instruction for English Language Learners

Scarlett Nicole Wetherington
Walden University

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Walden University

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Scarlett Nicole Wetherington

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Walden University
2022

Abstract

Disciplinary Teacher Perceptions and Challenges of Literacy Instruction for English

Language Learners

by

Scarlett Nicole Wetherington

MA, Strayer University, 2017

BS, Strayer University, 2016

Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

November 2022

Abstract

Disciplinary teachers who teach mathematics, science, and social studies are challenged to embed literacy instruction into their disciplines for the growing population of English language learners (ELLs). In a rural middle school in the Southern region of the United States, disciplinary teachers are struggling to embed literacy instruction to support ELLs to meet grade-level achievement standards. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore teachers' perceptions about the challenges of using literacy strategies to teach ELLs in the disciplinary classroom. The conceptual framework for this study included Mezirow's theory of transformative learning. The key research questions of this study were designed to identify disciplinary teachers' perceptions about the challenges of using literacy strategies to teach ELLs, and to understand their efforts to improve literacy outcomes for ELLs. For this research design, semistructured interviews were conducted with nine middle school teachers in Grades 6, 7, and 8 in the disciplinary areas of math, science, and social studies. Data collected were transcribed with open coding to conduct a thematic analysis. Results of this study indicated that disciplinary teachers need professional development to learn how to meet the literacy needs for ELLs. Disciplinary teachers in this study learned that addressing ELLs' own learning challenges will lead to incorporating strategies that are most effective. A professional development series was created to address the needs of these teachers. This study has implications for positive social change on a local and national level, which can guide instructional changes that provide teachers with literacy strategies that improve the social and academic outcomes for ELLs in the local school district.

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Dedication

The completion of this doctoral study is dedicated to my Lord Jesus Christ, who without him, I am nothing. To the love of my life, Christopher, who supported me without ceasing in this journey. To my four children, I want you to know that you can do anything your heart desires. To each of my friends, thank you for everything. This dream could not have been possible without each one of you offering your love and patience. To my late father, your inspiration and belief in me did not end when you left for your heavenly home. I can only wish to be a portion of the person you were.

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Section 1: The Problem

The Local Problem

Due to the increasing population of English language learners (ELLs) in rural Georgia and in the United States, providing literacy instruction in every discipline is crucial (Gupta, 2019). ELLs are the fastest growing subgroup of students in U.S. K-12 public school systems (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2021). According to the National Central for Education Statistics 2020-2021 data, Hispanic students lead ethnicities in this rural Georgia county at 45%, followed by white students at 37% (NCES, 2021). The school district measures student academic achievement using the Georgia Milestones Assessment given each May. Teachers at the study site, a rural, Southern, middle school, acknowledged they are struggling to embed literacy lessons into discipline-specific instruction for ELLs. The gap in practice was that many disciplinary teachers are uncertain about the utilization of literacy strategies for English speaking students without having to incorporate literacy strategies for ELL students as well. The instructional challenge of embedding literacy for all students simultaneously made this study unique and significant as it explored the duality of the problem. Researchers have indicated that teachers of ELL students should provide effective discipline-specific instruction that embeds literacy and cultural foundations to meet the needs of linguistically diverse students such as ELLs (Gupta, 2019; Harman & Wood, 2018; Wissink & Starks, 2019). In addition, researchers have documented a need for professional development to enhance teachers' knowledge and pedagogical base to meet the needs of ELLs (Carley-Rizzuto, 2017; Krawczyk, 2019; Wissink & Starks, 2019).

Murphy and Torff (2019) stated that unprepared teachers favor a less rigorous curriculum for ELL students, often leaving subgroups of students undereducated (Brown & Crippen, 2017). Hanover (2017) found that ELLs are not acquiring social and academic vocabulary necessary to be successful in the classroom, placing ELLs at a disadvantage due to inadequate exposure to English both socially and academically (Carnoy & Garcia, 2017; Tahir et al., 2020). According to Ollerhead (2018), many general education teachers feel inadequate when it comes to meeting the needs of ELLs.

At a rural, Southern, middle school in Georgia, identified as the study site, disciplinary teachers struggled to embed literacy for ELLs in their specific disciplines of mathematics, science, and social studies to meet grade-level achievement standards in all discipline areas as recommended by the Georgia Standards of Excellence. Fisher and Frey (2013) and Robb (2016) made a direct connection between the acquisition of academic vocabulary and disciplinary specific vocabulary when they stated that the understanding of disciplinary specific vocabulary is necessary to comprehend discipline specific texts and improves overall literacy skills and student outcomes on assessments. Even though all teachers at the study site are certified to teach English to speakers of other languages (ESOL) and the utilization of the World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) standards, students were not mastering both the language and the academic language of the discipline. Consequently, data retrieved from the website of the Georgia Governor's Office of Student Achievement (Governor's Office of Student Achievement [GOSA], 2021) indicates that ELLs at the study site have low reading comprehension scores, as measured by the Georgia Milestones Assessment. The Georgia

Milestones Assessment has indicated little improvement in assessment outcomes for these students over the past 5 years (see Table 1). According to the GOSA (2021), the ELLs at the study site did not meet mastery for the disciplinary areas of language arts, math, science, or social studies.

The number of ELLs enrolled in schools within the United States continues to increase. From 2000 to 2017, enrollment reports presented a 29% increase in the number of ELL students in public schools (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2022). De Jong (2021) stated that ELLs are a very complex subgroup of diverse learners that have various academic abilities and cultural backgrounds. According to the NCES, 2022, 3.7 million ELL public school students spoke Spanish, roughly equivalent to 8% of the total school population. The rapidly changing demographic inside of many schools also creates a dramatic decrease in performance indicators measured by individual state accountability assessments as educators are struggling to meet the academic demands that accompany this influx of non-English speakers into the classroom. The NCES (2020) projected that by the year 2025, ELLs will represent at least one quarter of the student population at public schools. Furthermore, the NCES (2020) also estimated that by 2030, ELLs will represent approximately 40% of the of all students in the United States.

The continuous growth of the ELL population in the United States generates an urgent need for disciplinary teachers to possess the knowledge and skills necessary to provide effective literacy strategies that teach academic language and disciplinary instruction to ELLs simultaneously to build a foundation for disciplinary learning and academic language usage (Gupta, 2019; Harman & Wood, 2018; Wissink & Starks,

2019). In order to read and write about specifically toward math, science, and social studies, ELLs need to understand the academic vocabulary that is utilized in academic texts and in the curriculum standard (Page & Smith, 2018). ELLs should have the skills to listen, speak, read, and write about each subject area using academic vocabulary that is discipline specific. According to Page and Smith (2018), all educators must provide students with the skills needed to be college and career ready, as indicated by the Common Core State Standards.

On a national level, researchers have documented that ELL students are not mastering standardized assessments at a level of proficiency (Campbell & Filimon, 2018; Dussling, 2020; Swanson et al., 2019). Although policy makers and political leaders have determined that the ability to read and analyze complex texts ensure a students' success, teachers have never been mandated by any laws how to explicitly provide instruction for ELLs (Page & Smith, 2018). However, it is from these literacy expectations that the Common Core State Standards were formed, placing challenging linguistic demands on both the native speaking student and the ELL (Johnson & Wells, 2017). Federally mandated polices do provide recommendations on accommodations for culturally and linguistically diverse learners. Beginning with the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, which was replaced by Every Student Succeeds Act in 2015, students of all demographic variations were to be provided with an equal education (Duff & Wohlstetter, 2019). Likewise, equal does not indicate that the literacy needs of ELLs are met. Cardoza and Brown (2019) found that not all schools are responsive to the needs of ELLs for various reasons. For example, the ESL programs offered may not contain bilingual support to

ensure success in the disciplinary classroom (Cardoza & Brown, 2019). Even though government and educational representatives work diligently to improve the variations in achievement, ELLs continue to score low on standardized assessments (Vela et al., 2017). Results provided from the 2019 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) data indicate that ELLs are at risk of poor academic outcomes (NCES, 2022). Since 2003, mathematics scores for ELLs in Grade 8 in Georgia have only varied by 4%, with the mean of the scores at 239 (NCES, 2022). In reading, less than 5% of ELLs scored above the proficient level (NCES, 2022). The results from the NAEP indicated a need to be concerned about the growing number of ELL students in schools across the United States. Cardoza and Brown (2019) stated that the greatest challenge faced by public schools is the ability to accommodate ELLs in academics and linguistics.

Table 1

Percentages of ELL Students Scoring Below Proficient in English Language Arts on the Georgia Milestones Assessment

Year	Study site	Georgia
2019-2020	COVID	COVID
2018-2019	95.8	86.0
2017-2018	100.0	96.6
2016-2017	90.9	92.1
2015-2016	100.0	91.7

Source: gosa.ga.gov

Rationale

The indication of low assessment scores and the given demographic of rural Georgia schools indicate a need to explore literacy strategies utilized within the

disciplinary classroom. So Lim Kim (2021) stated that researchers find that teachers have may different hesitations often carry a deficit perspective or negative attitudes toward teaching ELLs because of barriers with support or resources. Through teacher communications, I learned that teachers are concerned with training and resources. Additionally, instructional inconsistencies and teacher self-efficacy play a role in the literacy of dual language learners (Ramirez et al., 2019). As teachers face increased challenges in teaching ELLs, the pedagogical strategies that support these linguistic demands can also be complex (Zhang, 2017). Cardoza and Brown (2019) indicated that ELLs risk having difficulties with reading comprehension in future grade levels without developing necessary literacy skills.

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the teaching practices and perceptions of disciplinary teachers, who teach ELLs in the areas of mathematics, science, and social studies, to identify struggles with embedding literacy strategies for discipline specific learning while supporting ELLs to meet grade-level achievement standards. Teachers should practice pedagogical strategies that make every disciplinary teacher a “teacher of reading” (Alvermann & Moje, 2019). Consequently, ELLs may need additional supports or interventions inside the classroom to demonstrate growth in both disciplinary literacy and the English language. By exploring the teachers’ pedagogical strategies, preparation, and self-efficacy toward incorporating literacy within the disciplines simultaneously, the outcome of the study will help to determine what possible interventions or trainings are needed, if necessary, to increase disciplinary literacy outcomes for ELL students.

Definition of Terms

Academic vocabulary is the vocabulary that is most often used within academic settings, standards, and texts (Page & Smith, 2018).

Disciplinary literacy can be defined as specialized literacy skills in the contents of history, science, mathematics, or any other subject (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2012).

English language learner (ELL) is a term often used to refer to students who are learning *English as a second language (ESL)*. These students struggle with English literacy skills in the areas of listening, speaking, reading, and writing, making these students limited English proficient (Wei, 2020). In this study, the ELL students are Spanish speakers.

English to speakers of other languages (ESOL) refers to educational support offered to ELLs in language acquisition to allow these students to engage and contribute within the classroom (Georgia Department of Education, 2022).

Georgia Milestones Assessment System (GMAS) is an assessment system of all students in any Georgia public school. GMAS places focus on meeting the Georgia Standards of Excellence (Georgia Department of Education, 2022).

Self-efficacy, as defined by Bandura (1977), is the belief in one's ability to manage change and the necessary courses of action.

World-class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) refers to the network of schools that share the same mission to provide equitable education for ELLs in school to achieve high academic standards (WIDA, 2021).

Significance of the Study

This study addressed a local problem by focusing on how disciplinary teachers struggle to embed literacy strategies for discipline specific learning while supporting ELLs to meet grade-level achievement standards at a rural, Southern, middle school. This project is unique because it addressed the difficulties of teaching literacy skills when ELLs are the majority demographic in the mainstream classroom (Fu & Wang, 2021). Teachers' challenges may also be a function of their level of preparation that was provided in their pre-service teacher education (He et al., 2018). Determining the importance of embedded literacy strategies for ELL students can increase not only scores, but help secure jobs, even the most rural of locations. Educators and students are benefactors of data that can guide instruction toward the path of accurate interventions to embed literacy in every discipline. The findings obtained from this research study may assist government and educational agencies in adoption/implementation of programs that increase literacy outcomes for ELL students in both content and English language acquisition. School administrators and educators can analyze the data collected to determine the amount of professional development that educators need to collaborate, learn, and obtain as many interventions as possible to support ELL students in both literacy and discipline specific learning.

With budgets under strict boundaries, school systems must utilize funding in the most appropriate manner. As educators face the daunting task of meeting the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse learners (Gonzales & Hughes, 2018), school systems must decide if the data is indicative of incorporating more co-taught classrooms,

professional development for educators, or different pedagogical strategies. By and large, ELLs are often placed in general education classrooms with English speaking instruction where specialized interventions are not utilized daily, and in this study, I examined the root causes. School systems must utilize data to direct instruction regarding students of this nature. Supplemental instruction and specialized strategies are essential for academic gains in ELL students, as these students are required to master the same standards and proficiency levels as their efficient English-speaking peers on standardized assessments (Campbell & Filimon, 2018). In disciplinary specific areas, such as social studies, a relationship between social and political behavior arises in civic participation when students do not comprehend the narrative of progression and freedom (Almarza, 2001). Literacy in social studies is important to close achievement gaps as it allows students the opportunity to explore various viewpoints, both political and economic, for social change (Ammar et al., 2021).

Research Questions

To address the research questions in this qualitative study, I used a basic qualitative design (Babbie, 2017). This project study established two research questions that were answered with open-ended interview questions. The questions, which focused on exploring the perceptions and challenges that encompass the teachers within the study, were as follows:

- RQ 1: What are disciplinary teachers' perceptions of literacy instruction for ELLs in the disciplinary classroom?

- RQ 2: What are disciplinary teachers' perceptions about the challenges of embedding research-based literacy strategies in their disciplinary instruction for ELLs?

As low reading comprehension scores were a motivating factor to this study, an understanding of teacher perceptions informed best practices to increase student achievement across all disciplines. Since teacher perceptions are a factor of their own self-efficacy and preparation (Bandura, 1977), it was equally important to explore these components toward the utilization of literacy strategies for ELLs. Based on Mezirow's theory of learning, educators reflected on necessary changes to be made within their pedagogical strategies. Many teachers may utilize literacy strategies for ELLs, but these teachers do not ensure that the strategy is in alignment with the disciplinary area of the class. As qualitative research must answer the "why" and "how" questions that are often difficult to answer (Taylor et al., 2016), the methodology behind the research aligned with the conceptual framework behind the phenomenon of interest which is to study the perceptions of teachers that struggle to provide literacy instruction for ELLs, a local problem at the study site. The data generated by this study guided the professional development plan for disciplinary teachers toward embedding literacy strategies for ELLs.

Review of the Literature

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the teaching practices and perceptions of disciplinary teachers, who teach ELLs in the areas of mathematics, science, and social studies, to identify struggles with embedding literacy strategies for

discipline specific learning while supporting ELLs to meet grade-level achievement standards. This information was utilized to seek teacher suggestions for improved training or resources. To gain a better understanding of how disciplinary teachers feel about embedding literacy strategies to support ELL students, I completed an extensive review of the current literature. This literature review is divided into four sections: (a) discussion of the conceptual framework; (b) discussion of teacher perceptions, attitudes, and preparation toward literacy strategies for ELLs; (c) discussion of academic language and literacy strategies for ELLs; and (d) discussion of effective professional development for disciplinary teachers in embedding literacy for ELLs.

In completing this literature review section, I collected peer-reviewed journals and articles dated 2017-2022 from the Walden University Library, Galileo, and Google Scholar. Common databases utilized were Education Research Complete (ERIC), ProQuest, SAGE, and Thoreau. Seminal studies were also included in the findings with studies that relate to the conceptual framework. The following terms were utilized in collecting this information: *teacher perceptions*, *teacher attitudes*, *teacher preparation*, *instruction of ELLs*, *instructional strategies for ELLs*, *disciplinary instruction for ELLs*, and *professional development for ELLs*. Google Scholar was utilized to find state and federal statistics such as the Georgia Department of Education, Governor's Office of Student Achievement, and the National Center for Education Statistics.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework utilized for this qualitative study was Mezirow's (1991) theory of transformative learning. This conceptual framework supported the

process of adult learning by allowing for a critical reflection on the content, the process, and the premise of the problem to understand how teachers feel and how they are challenged when it comes to embedding literacy strategies for ELLs. Under Mezirow's 10 phases of learning transformation, educators can analyze a problem to acquire new knowledge that can be reintegrated into the classroom to increase learning outcomes for all students, especially ELLs. Therefore, this framework suited this doctoral study as I sought to explore the perceptions and challenges faced by disciplinary teachers toward embedding literacy strategies that support ELL students and teachers' recommendations to help incorporate strategies for optimal literacy growth for ELLs. Mezirow suggested that the process of learning is different for adults than it is for children. For adults, learning can occur randomly, or because of formal training and self-directed learning (Knowles, 1977). Hence, when adults reflect critically on the nature of the content to be delivered from their own perspectives and those to which they teach, teachers become more open to change (Mezirow, 1991). According to Mezirow's theory, educators can critique their own perspectives to synthesize a new perspective that will chart a course of progress (Mezirow, 1991). Although educators can be dependent upon other educators and administrators for guidance in uncertain situations, educators can learn from these perspectives and thus, have a responsibility to become self-directed (Knowles, 1977). When ELLs are involved with strategic classroom activities and literacy strategies, cognitive and communication skills show improvement when research-based practices are utilized (Wei, 2020; Wissink & Starks, 2019). Researchers have noted that to have a classroom teacher who is knowledgeable and confident with the implementation of these

strategies may require professional development as part of the adult learning process (Oakes et al., 2018; Umer & Gul, 2019). In disciplinary areas, teachers face complex challenges in providing literacy instruction for ELLs (Zhang, 2017). In turn, teacher characteristics and experiences are significant to the development of literacy skills for ELLs (Ramirez et al., 2019). Therefore, the more teachers reflect and understand the challenges they face, the more receptive they are in finding a solution (Mezirow, 1991). All in all, quality teaching is a direct indicator of student outcomes (Corcoran & O'Flaherty, 2018). Therefore, understanding how to improve teachers' practices through self-reflection (Mezirow, 1991) and increased self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977) can advance student achievement.

As the overall purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore teacher perceptions about the challenges of using literacy strategies to teach ELL students, the conceptual framework related to the study because it focuses on the teaching strategies and best practices that should be reflected upon, acquired, or altered to increase literacy outcomes for these students. When embedding literacy strategies for ELLs to increase their performance on literacy assessments, educators must also know how to choose and implement these strategies effectively. In this basic qualitative study, the transformative theory of Mezirow (1991) framed my thinking about how a teacher's experience both inside the classroom and those obtained from teacher preparation affect the literacy strategies they utilize in their instruction. By collecting interview data from disciplinary teachers on the struggles faced to embed literacy strategies for ELLs, this study can help teachers develop a critical consciousness toward their own pedagogical strategies and

needs for resources and training. Penke (2018) strongly emphasized the need for schools to examine their current instructional practices and interventions, ascertaining if they are meeting their students' needs, especially concerning literacy development. Through the lens of Mezirow's transformative learning theory, data analysis answered the research questions on perceptions and challenges faced by disciplinary teachers toward embedding literacy strategies for ELLs.

Teacher Perceptions and Attitudes Toward ELLs

Researchers have suggested that the way a teacher feels, and the attitudes possessed are predictors of the quality of teaching occurring in the classroom (Kagan, 1992; Pajares, 1992). Gay (2010) stated that educator beliefs and attitudes are equally as important as their pedagogical background. Disciplinary educator perceptions of ELLs and the literacy strategies required for successful outcomes for these students are vital to understanding the level of literacy instruction provided to increase learning outcomes in the areas of math, science, and social studies. When educators are given the chance to reflect upon these perceptions (Mezirow, 1991), teachers can better understand the cultural demographics of the students they serve to increase academic success (Gay, 2010). From a transformative theory perspective, the challenges that teachers face in supporting ELLs to bridge the achievement gap between general education students and ELLs also challenges teachers to make considerations on the way these students are perceived. Then, educators must embed strategies that respond these variations in literacy instruction and reflections on strategy. In a study conducted by Calkins et al. (2021), social studies teachers were more focused on classroom management than on student

engagement in classrooms with diverse learners. According to Feiman-Nemser (2018), exploring teacher perceptions of their ability to teach ELLs can provide knowledge to better prepare educators to teach culturally and linguistically diverse learners. Samuels (2018) studied the perceptions of elementary teachers regarding their knowledge of students' sociocultural backgrounds and lives. When teachers reflect upon their own individual perceptions toward students of diverse backgrounds and languages, teachers can then focus on how to use or change these perceptions to provide academic benefits for ELLs when culturally responsive teaching strategies are employed in partnership with literacy strategies in each discipline. As many teachers are white females who are monolingual, teacher demographics have not changed much since 2008 (Li & Peters, 2020), creating a lack of diversity and background experience that can foster difficulties in reaching a diverse student population. Ramirez et al. (2019) found that the diversity of dual language learners in the classroom designates the need for culturally competent educators with professional development in presenting a high-quality education for these students. Ramirez et al.'s study focused on the characteristics of classroom teachers that influence bilingual abilities as they relate to language, literacy in all content areas, and specifically math with a study sample of 217 Latino dual language learners attending Head Start. The authors found that the amount of training a teacher received in these pedagogical styles had a positive influence on learning outcomes for both speakers of English and Spanish in the classroom. Ramirez et al. asserted that highly trained teachers often encourage literacy in both the child's native language and English to increase cognition in the disciplines.

When the number of culturally diverse students in the classroom does not align with the pedagogical strategies utilized by the teacher, academic achievement falters across all content areas (Krawczyk, 2019). Kim (2021) claimed that educators are more negatively predisposed to having negative beliefs and attitudes toward speakers of other languages in the classroom. Therefore, teacher perceptions are directly related to student outcomes, as improved instruction can increase academic achievement for ELLs (Owens & Wells, 2021). According to Ollerhead (2018), educators feel inadequate to meet the needs of ELLs, and educators desire additional supports in the classroom to help accommodate. Teacher beliefs can influence pedagogical strategies directly, and consequently these strategies impact achievement (Owens & Wells, 2021). For example, teachers will often emphasize components of the curriculum based on teacher ideologies of which students can master the standard (Park-Johnson, 2020). Murphy and Torff (2019) stated that teachers favor a less rigorous curriculum for ELL students, often leaving subgroups of students undereducated (Brown & Crippen, 2017). Academic performance of ELLs is directly related to the understanding of disciplinary teachers in providing instructional strategies to meet these needs (Ortlieb & Schatz, 2020). Prior to entering a classroom of ELLs, all teachers need to reflect on their perceptions of a multicultural and linguistically diverse classroom to ensure any misconceptions are addressed and teachers are prepared (Athanases & Wong, 2018). Teachers with a higher number of culturally and linguistically diverse students showed an increase in “burn-out” and lower self-efficacy than those who do not teach a high number of diverse students (Glock et al., 2019). According to Engels et. al (2020), the classroom context and

demographic played a large role on all aspects of classroom learning including engagement and behavior. In order for ELLs to make sense of the material being taught in all classes, educators must know how to create a classroom culture of engaged academic literacy (International Literacy Association, 2015, p. 5). Just as Gorski and Pothini (2018) exemplified, cultural norms other than one's own can often conflict without intention. Moule's (2012) iceberg model provides an accurate representation of how cultural norms are often viewed by others in society by depicting below surface concepts of culture that are indicative of cultural norms which can cause strong emotional barriers that others are often unaware of (Moule, 2012). Therefore, educators must be aware of their own notions and preferences in instructional strategies through reflection of both their own teaching and learning as directed by Mezirow (1991).

Literacy Instruction for ELLs

The low achievement scores noted in Table 1 indicate that ELLs are performing below grade level. De La Paz et al. (2014) suggested that growth in literacy skills is maximized when social studies teachers are dedicated to utilizing literacy strategies that increase disciplinary literacy along with the curriculum. Therefore, educators should embed effective literacy instruction that incorporates academic language and social language acquisition to create a strong foundation for learning in every classroom (Gupta, 2019). In this portion of the literature review, pedagogical literacy strategies are explored that could increase academic outcomes in all disciplines. Teachers must practice pedagogical strategies that make every disciplinary teacher a "teacher of reading" (Alvermann & Moje, 2019). As each discipline utilizes vocabulary specific to its own

individual content, all teachers must understand that teaching literacy is every teacher's job for students to become college and career ready (International Literacy Association, 2015, p. 2). Mercuri and Mercuri (2019) argued that literacy and discipline specific language must not be used in isolation but intertwined in areas such as science. To meet the academic standards, ELLs must learn the content and be able to read and write with accurate vocabulary (Mercuri & Mercuri, 2019). Although all students must be able to comprehend texts specific to each discipline, this is especially complex for ELLs. However, many teachers need instruction on how to adjust their teaching strategies to share the responsibilities of providing literacy instruction in every classroom and content to meet the needs of ELLs. For example, the role of language—academic and social—can impact the understanding of the scope and sequence of history.

Acquiring academic language in all disciplines takes time for ELLs. Wineburg (1991) argued that text comprehension is not just knowledge construction, but an investigation that entails human motives; creating a need for students to be exposed to social studies literacy. According to Lou (2020) and Cummins (1981), ELLs require a minimum of 5 years to match native English speakers in academic language. Strategies that incorporate academic language instruction are essential to provide ELLs the opportunity to acquire academic vocabulary necessary to construct meaning from the subject area and print (Yoon, 2021). Educators should know how to teach both academic language and discipline-specific information concurrently to ensure that ELLs have the literacy skills necessary to understand the instruction and vocabulary (Cummins, 1981; Wissink & Starks, 2019). To support students in disciplinary areas such as social studies,

the language aspect of teaching helps students focus on the content (Zhang, 2017). As social and academic language develops together, there is a close relationship between the variables that impact language learning; furthermore, teachers promote academic advances in every content area by making instructional material easier to understand (Marsh, 2018). Cummings (1981) emphasized that basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) for ELLs can take up to 3 years to acquire in English. In the disciplines, pedagogical strategies are a struggle for many teachers as they select strategies that ensure ELLs are mastering the content. A large part of embedding the appropriate strategy incorporates an “unpacking” of the standard to ensure understanding. Through this unpacking, teachers must provide scaffolding activities for those students who are acquiring English language skills and academic vocabulary within the discipline. Common Core State Standards provide opportunities for educators to provide literacy instruction that allows for students to become experts in each individual domain (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2012). Ming (2012) elaborated that disciplinary literacy strategies must be used to help transform students into critical thinkers and problem solvers. Consequently, reading can be viewed as fundamental to all learning. Often, teachers of content areas such as math, science, and social studies are not familiar with the literacy strategies that work best for ELLs within their content areas. In the area of social studies, it is important for teachers to access students’ prior knowledge with pictures and discussion (Laureate, 2014). For science teachers, the application of informational texts can teach students about the physical and biological world around them. Math teachers can apply read/think alouds and visual representations to increase

literacy outcomes (Ming, 2012). Ambriz (2020) conducted a study to discover whether cultural differences in the classroom create a disparity in achievement. In her findings, a disparity did not exist (Ambriz, 2020). As more and more linguistically diverse students enter the mainstream classroom, teachers are concerned with meeting the needs of these students while delivering writing instruction to their English proficient students (Campbell & Filimon, 2018). Campbell and Filimon (2018) stated that no matter what the proficiency level, all students are expected to write with competency on the same standardized scale. The gap between ELLs level of academic achievement as compared to their English-speaking peers improves when adequate supports are in place to emphasize learning within the disciplinary classroom (Artigliere, 2019).

Literacy skills are crucial for developing language and academic skills for all ELL students in all grade levels. Lou (2020) conducted research on pedagogical strategies that provide support for disciplinary teachers to integrate literacy across the curriculum for ELL students as they learn academic language and reading comprehension skills. Lou dissected key teaching strategies that are encompassed behind the 4E framework (2020). The “E’s” focus on functional verbs within academic standards that guide literacy across each discipline. Lou breaks apart each section of the framework and illustrates how it can be a guide for teachers of ELL students. Lou’s research suggests that disciplinary literacy requires a paradigm shift among teacher beliefs and development to teach reading, writing, and communication across each discipline (2020). Furthermore, reflecting Mezirow’s theory of transformative learning (1991) for educators.

As ELL students fall behind native English-speaking students in academic language, ELL students need to be supported in the language of every discipline. Cardoza and Brown (2019) stated that a lack of academic language instruction within the discipline is the primary cause of this poor performance. A variety of teaching models can be employed to provide language instruction to ELLs. In Georgia, ESOL teachers may use the pull-out, push-in, or co-teaching to deliver this instruction (Georgia Department of Education, 2022). Evidence concluded that ELLs achieve the highest growth when they are provided with interventions at least four times a week, as measured on the Accessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State (ACCESS) assessment (Burns et al., 2017). Studies indicated that these interventions deliver maximum student growth and achievement when co-teaching is employed (Beninghof & Leensvaart, 2016). In a Nigerian study, deemed comparable to classrooms in the United States, ELL students scored higher in co-taught classrooms utilizing team-teaching delivery (Bauler et al., 2019). Using mixed methods for research analysis, a Nigerian study yielded survey results that were indicative of student self-efficacy toward a co-taught classroom (Anani et al., 2016).

The number ELL students continue to increase rapidly in the local school and across the nation, it is important to know how to scaffold and support academic language for these students. One study supported ELL students using small group and class discussions in the mathematics classroom (Banse et al., 2017). During these discussions, teachers utilized pedagogical strategies of modeling, displaying questions, vocabulary

usage, and self-talk in hopes of increasing comprehension and conceptual understanding (Banse et al., 2017).

In order for educators to deliver literacy lessons within the disciplines of math, science, and social studies, educators must know how to plan for classroom instruction to utilize standards and evidence-based instruction for ELLs (Echevarria et al., 2008). Echevarria et al. (2008) also encouraged educators to utilize daily objectives that aligns the disciplines of math, science, and social studies with language objectives for ELLs. The quality of classroom instruction is a direct outcome of quality lesson planning (Sahin-Taskin, 2017). Ongoing assessments, both formal and informal, are to be utilized to measure ELLs progression of academic language acquisition and proficiency (Gupta, 2019). These assessments must be planned to ensure alignment.

Disciplinary Teacher Readiness to Provide Instruction for ELLs

ELLs are placed in a difficult situation in which they are learning English as a second language and disciplinary content simultaneously. At the study site, ELLs are taught in the general education classroom with English speaking peers and ESOL certified teachers. A study conducted by Peregoy and Boyle (2005) found that even in classrooms especially designed for ELLs, little special assistance is offered. Educators of all experience levels lack preparation to provide literacy strategies that support second language acquisition and the academic content of the discipline (de Jong, 2021). Thus, the achievement gap broadens between ELLs and their English-speaking peers. Coupled with a lack of preparation, educators are often provided with misunderstandings about the needs of ELLs in the classroom (Harper & Jong, 2004). Notably, Shreiner (2018) implied

that social studies teachers may be reluctant to embed disciplinary literacy strategies if they do not have an advanced degree. Arguably, Schall-Leckrone (2022) suggested three teacher prerequisites revolving around disciplinary literacy for ELLs which include having consistency with focus on literacy, teacher inquiry, and collaboration. Schall-Leckrone (2022) also illustrates a history teacher's transformation over a period of 9 years from a preservice teacher into the role of a mentor teacher without an advanced degree.

Preservice and Provisional Teachers

Many times, the pedagogical strategies prescribed within a teacher preparation program for ELLs are not utilized once the teachers are in the classroom. Within these training programs, teachers do not receive the opportunity to practice in an authentically diverse classroom. Rather, Howell et al. (2021) claimed that preservice training for disciplinary literacy strategies is very limited. In disciplinary classrooms, educators have not received emphasis on literacy strategies for ELLs from their teaching preparation programs (Mills et al., 2020). Pedagogical preparation often places greater emphasis on becoming an expert of a particular discipline rather than providing literacy instruction embedded into each area (Smith & Robinson, 2020). However, some teaching programs require specialized courses with direct focus on academic language instruction for ELLs (Ramos, 2017; Wissink & Starks, 2019). Gebhard (2019) argued that educators are better able to support ELLs learning when educators reflect on class practices and explore institutional approaches for teaching disciplinary literacy to ELLs. Thus, reflecting Mezirow's theory of learning by reflection (1991). Freire (1993) also supported the

theory of teaching and learning by reflection to connect theoretical concepts of literacy instruction. Although many teacher preparation programs offer training in culture and diversity, each university or institution may vary by requirement, and results indicate that social studies teachers were less involved with student engagement and teaching in diverse classrooms than they were classroom management (Calkins et al., 2021). Calkins et al. (2021) also indicated that one quarter of participants from TALIS 2018 reported having no training or teaching with multicultural students. Even after training, teacher candidates continue to state a feeling of being “ill-equipped” to teach speakers of other languages and suggest more training in ELL pedagogical strategies (Pettit, 2019). Preservice teachers need to develop metacognitive awareness about their own attitudes and perceptions about teaching multicultural and multilingual learners in the classroom to teach them in the most equitable and effective way (Deng & Hayden, 2021). Preservice teachers should have a mentor teacher with direct knowledge on pedagogical strategies to enhance literacy instruction for ELLs (Tigert & Percy, 2018).

Veteran Teachers

The increase in of ELLs in the mainstream classroom is indicative of training specifically for literacy instruction to these students, as educators are faced with the task of meeting the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse learners (Gonzales & Hughes, 2018). As disciplinary teachers are often not equipped to teach Common Core State Standards to ELLs (Irby et al., 2018), teachers worry about preparing these students to mastery the standardized testing that accompanies the standards. Disciplinary teachers must simultaneously teach academic language along with the content in order for ELLs to

express learning using literacy constructs (Wissink & Starks, 2019). Penton Herrera (2018) stated that professional development is an ongoing process required to meet the needs of rapidly changing school demographics. Penton Herrera (2018) proposed in his research that the incorporation of action research should be a pedagogical tool for all kindergarten through twelfth grade teachers as a method of improving their instructional strategies for ELL students. When provided with professional development, teachers must put the strategy into action and research the results. All in all, Penton Herrera (2018) claimed that all learning environments can be improved when educators are instructed to reflect, research, and continuously learn, all a direct indicator of Mezirow's conceptual framework for this study.

Planning and Implementation of Instructional Practices

Disciplinary teachers must demonstrate the ability to plan and implement strategies to deliver standards-based instruction for ELL students (Wissinks & Starks, 2019). Research has indicated that evidence-based interventions must be in place to support ELLs in all classrooms (Dussling, 2020). Disciplinary teachers have various elements of literacy and academic instruction to incorporate when teaching ELLs. Nelson and Watkins (2019) emphasized that lessons must be planned to incorporate content and language objectives within every disciplinary classroom. Daily utilization of formative and informative assessments should be utilized to measure language proficiency to ensure that students could master the standard (Gupta, 2019). Additionally, teachers must implement any professional developmental recommendations of research-based strategies for language instruction (Mills et al., 2020). In a study completed by Wei (2020), finding

the best methods to address educator issues and how to construct professional learning that benefits the students and teachers in a positive way-both theoretically and in practice was researched. Wei (2020) noted that collaboration and social context are key components of teacher development. As faced with a shortage of ESL teachers in Texas during the 2020-2021 school year, Wei (2020) noted that all teachers can prepare ELL students for academic success when teachers understand and utilize the research-based practices and theoretical foundations for ELL instruction. Researchers indicated that ELLs need multiple opportunities to practice with vocabulary in multiple contexts involving peer interaction (Gupta, 2019; Wissink & Starks, 2019). Research has also shown that educators who have an active role in collaborative professional development will return ELLs with higher scores in science and reading, as compared to those teachers who did not collaborate (More-Ruano et al., 2019). Furthermore, Svendsen (2020) found that as specialized groups of educators come together for a common purpose, that their team building skills grow greater toward a common purpose. Individual perception can also undergo transformative learning through collaboration (Stronge, 2018).

Disciplinary learning for ELLs incorporates both academic language and English as a second language simultaneously. Even though many support programs are in place for ELLs, many students are placed in classrooms where little assistance is offered. The reason for this discrepancy is because teachers are not adequately prepared to provide literacy strategies for ELLs concurrently within the discipline (Mills et al., 2020). Overall, this is a large contributor to the academic deficiency noted from standardized assessment scores. Over the years various researchers such as Vygotsky, Bandura, and

Krashen have helped educators understand second language acquisition for students.

Krashen (1981) developed a popular theory of second language acquisition in which five hypotheses are suggested. As academic language is essential to ELLs' academic achievement and further literacy development, academic language instructional must be provided with fidelity. Using vocabulary that is disciplinary specific, ELLs can demonstrate content knowledge by speaking, writing, and comprehending texts in each discipline with confidence. It is important that all disciplinary teachers understand how the acquisition of a second language occurs to embed these practices into their own literacy instruction (Wissink & Starks, 2019). Disciplinary teachers who teach math, science, and social studies must have discipline specific linguistic strategies to provide effective vocabulary instruction to ELLs (Page & Smith, 2018; Wissink & Starks, 2019).

Teachers should also utilize the WIDA program to measure levels of language proficiency beginning with level 1-entering (2021). The Can Do Descriptors, part of the WIDA (2021) program, establish a goal of 6 to demonstrate proficiency. Under these descriptors, educators are provided with ways to encourage student success in the disciplinary classrooms of language arts, science, social studies, and math (WIDA, 2021). Communication for social purposes is also conducive to this program (WIDA, 2021). From these descriptors, educators can plan necessary scaffolding to support ELLs in each disciplinary area. The WIDA program is utilized in 32 states within the United States (WIDA, 2021). Since the program has widespread implementation, educators of ELLs should incorporate these descriptors to plan for instruction for ELLs as the establishment of WIDA was to ensure that educational practices aligned with linguistic needs for these

students (WIDA, 2021). Cummins's (1981) findings along with Vygotsky's (1978) theory of second language acquisition as a social construct within a zone of proximal development are evident within the WIDA program. Therefore, the WIDA Can Do Descriptors (WIDA, 2021) can be easily coupled with Tomlinson and Moon's model of differentiation (Tomlinson & Moon, 2014) to help educators provide literacy instruction that is customized to allow each ELL student the ability to develop both academic and social language in the disciplinary classroom (WIDA, 2021). Gebhard (2019) stated that educators should be able to "enact a balanced approach to instruction that supports discipline specific literacies" (p.13).

Learning Challenges for ELLs

Studies completed by Ammar et al. (2021) demonstrated that inadequate literacy skills foster larger challenges for linguistically and culturally diverse students that in turn, could be detrimental for the long-term outcomes of these students. ELLs are part of this group of students that face learning challenges due to issues involving the language and other socio-economic advances. Throughout the course of a school day, ELLs are placed in classrooms where teaching occurs in English only. Again, ELLs demonstrate poor academic achievement due to the challenges these students face with learning content and academic language concurrently (Cardoza & Brown, 2019). To close the gap between ELLs and native English speakers, schools must provide instructional supports for these students, especially in the disciplinary area of science (Oliveria et al., 2019). Nelson and Watkins (2019) found that educators were not choosing and explicitly teaching enough Tier 2 words for successful acquisition, and thus ELLs were not being successful in the

disciplines due to lack of academic language instruction. Standards for academic literacy now create an urgency for students to have an increased vocabulary containing academic words (Common Core, 2010). Academic vocabulary can be placed within three tiers (Fisher & Frey, 2014). Tier 1 words are not included in the standards, but they are learned for foundational knowledge of language which incorporates everyday speech (Fisher & Frey, 2014). Tier 2 words are those general academic words that can be prevalent in many contexts/contents, but each word has a different meaning depending on the construct. Tier 3 vocabulary words are essential to understanding a new concept. Cummins (1981) defined the crucial nature of academic language instruction which provides ELLs the ability to make meaning of each disciplinary area. Gupta (2019) also supported the imperative nature of academic language instruction. Garza et al. (2018) conducted a study to compare and describe how eight different fifth-grade classroom teachers focused on strategies to increase ELLs' scores and achievement levels in science and language. The study was quasi-experimental, longitudinal, and provided an in-depth analysis of practices based on field observations within the classroom. The findings support the importance of language in the classroom from verbal and written interactions. It was found multiple linguistic barriers affect understanding in the science classroom (Garza et al., 2018). To combat these barriers, the pedagogical practices that occur in the classroom impact the depth and degree of learning for ELL students. Cummins (1981) claimed that it takes 5 years for an ELL student to catch up to the same linguistic level as an English-speaking peer, placing an increased level of concern for the literacy strategies occurring in each disciplinary classroom. When academic language proficiency is not

developed, ELLs cannot develop the level of comprehension necessary to be college and career ready (Desimone et al., 2019).

Professional Development Regarding ELLs

The literature shows that teachers require professional development to enhance their knowledge and pedagogical base to meet the needs of ELLs in the classroom (Tanguay et al., 2018). Research indicated that ELL literacy skills can be encouraged when teachers are trained to utilize high-impact instructional strategies for language and literacy (Babinski et al., 2018). Teachers desire explicit instruction on how to incorporate literacy for ELLs (Wissinks & Starks, 2019). Wei (2020) noted that collaboration and socialization are key components of teacher development that must be incorporated into research-based practices necessary to prepare ELL students for academic success. In the literacy area of evidence-based writing across the disciplines, Lee (2018) provided information on the difficulties encountered by both the teacher and the student. The current literature on effective instructional practices to embed literacy into disciplinary learning can be acquired through specific professional development (Cavendish, 2021). Penton Herrera (2018) proposed the incorporation of action research as a pedagogical tool for all teachers as a method to improve instructional strategies for ELLs. When partnered with professional development, the strategy presented must be put into action to get results. In Canada, a country also facing large increases of ELLs, Desjardins (2020) focused the study of the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) to teach content area curriculum and language acquisition simultaneously across all disciplines. To utilize this framework, Desjardins places great emphasis on the need for rigorous

professional development over the course of 1–2 years. Nelson and Watkins (2019) claimed that teachers with more than eight hours of professional development were significantly more likely to provide several types of instruction and to utilize specific assessment procedures for ELL students to demonstrate their newly acquired knowledge in both writing and speech.

On the other hand, Hillman (2014) claimed that the research literature does not focus on the exact specifications of professional development completed by teachers to support a successful implementation of literacy strategies within the discipline. This is further supported in claims that disciplinary knowledge is important to develop disciplinary literacy (Howell et al., 2021), but professional development does not make one an expert in the field (Shulman, 1987). Similarly, a year-long study of disciplinary literacy professional development to conclude that metacognition is the true measure of teacher learning (Wilson et al., 2009). Arguably, Moje (2015) called for professional development after developing a framework of disciplinary literacy that incorporates planning, teaching, and supports to implement disciplinary literacy strategies. All in all, the theories of both Mezirow (1991) and Knowles (1977) explain why professional development opportunities can either be a success or a failure for educators. These theories can help explain the success or failure of professional development opportunities offered to teaching staff. The success of professional development can also be determined by factors such as organization of the professional development and teachers' beliefs and self-efficacy. When developing training sessions for educators, facilitators should adhere closely to Knowles theory of andragogy (1977) placing emphasis on the aspects of adult

learning. As indicated by various researchers (Kagan, 1992; Kim, 2021; Pajares, 1992), teacher effectiveness can foster academic advancements for ELLs, and professional development could offer the training needed to increase teacher effectiveness.

Implications

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the teaching practices and perceptions of disciplinary teachers, who teach ELLs in the areas of mathematics, science, and social studies, to identify struggles with embedding literacy strategies for discipline specific learning while supporting ELLs to meet grade-level achievement standards. For the wider educational context, this study will add to what is known about the education of ELLs by providing information on how to address the instructional practices of middle school content area teachers who are struggling to deliver both disciplinary and literacy instruction. By examining how a group of teachers perceive their role in ELL disciplinary literacy instruction and understanding their own practices, it may assist similar schools with relatable issues. This study could lead to positive social change by providing an understanding of the struggles faced by disciplinary teachers when educating ELLs in content area classes. The findings of the study were used to develop professional development workshops (see Appendix A) for teachers on instructional practices for literacy instruction to meet the needs of ELLs in disciplinary classes.

Summary

The number of ELLs who are placed into general education classes alongside of English-speaking peers continues to increase leaving disciplinary teachers, who may or may not be certified to provide instruction for ELLs, to provide much needed instruction.

However, the local setting continues to struggle with providing literacy instruction for ELLs in all disciplines, even when all teachers are ESOL certified. This basic qualitative study focused on middle school general education teachers' perceptions and instructional practices used when teaching ELLs, specifically in the areas of math, science, and social studies. By exploring the perceptions of disciplinary teachers and the literacy strategies for teaching ELLs, improved instruction can be achieved in all disciplinary classrooms.

The next section of this paper will review the methodology for obtaining the data required to complete this project. I will explain the rationale for a basic qualitative study as it applies to Mezirow's theory of adult learning. I will delineate the data collection and analysis process and conclude with any limitations.

Section 2: The Methodology

Research Design and Approach

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the teaching practices and perceptions of disciplinary teachers who teach ELLs in the areas of mathematics, science, and social studies, to identify struggles with embedding literacy strategies for discipline specific learning while supporting ELLs to meet grade-level achievement standards. I used a basic qualitative study to directly answer the research questions to gather insights to perceptions that are not clearly defined or understood (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Qualitative research provides greater depth to problems or social gaps within a field of study, as it would do within this study. Qualitative researchers use participants' experiences and perceptions in real-life contexts to generate research outcomes (Jackson et al., 2007; Nastasi & Schensul, 2005). The element of human nature and perception must be equally addressed in assessing the overall findings which can best be fulfilled by qualitative methods.

Quantitative research, on the other hand, yields numerical data to form a statistical analysis (Edwards, 2020). Edwards (2020) stated that quantitative researchers must rely on probability and inferencing to address the uncertainty that drives the research. Often without knowing, the elements of computation are considered universal. However, the outcomes are not generally one size fits all. Quantitative research focuses on patterns that generate statistical data and lends itself to predetermined close-ended questions that offer no further insight to the phenomenon (Rahman, 2017). To be amenable to scientific study using a quantitative approach, the study must contain various methods to assess the

situation in question and contain multiple variations of test subjects/references (Burkholder et al., 2016). Therefore, a quantitative study would not yield results that relate to the perceptions and experiences that are being researched.

As implied by the name, “mixed” methods research can be a combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods applicable to a study. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) described this methodology as a mixture of both quantitative and qualitative techniques, methods, and concepts into one study. When utilizing this type of approach, it is important to be certain that the results equally address both perception and statistical data (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Since the data from mixed methods employs research from both qualitative and quantitative studies, research questions must adhere to both elements of the research outcomes. A limitation of this type of approach can be that the research can be costly and time consuming (Almalki, 2017). Qualitative research focuses on the ontological side of research-induction, whereas quantitative focuses on deduction derived from numerical findings (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004) making interpretation of the results difficult. Assessment data is best studied with quantitative research, but human perception is best understood through interviews (Babbie, 2017). All in all, a mixed method approach was not used for this research as quantitative data were not the focus of this study.

Rationale for Not Selecting Other Qualitative Research Design

Other qualitative research designs were not chosen for this study as these designs would not answer the research questions with fidelity. Ravitch and Carl (2021) established that grounded theory research generates thematic findings by a continual data

collection. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the problem by finding emerging themes through data analysis (Merriam, 2009). Though the grounded theory design separating data into emerging themes, I did not seek to create a theory. Narrative research design is utilized to examine history conveyed through life stories (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Thus, I did not use this design because it would have been difficult to analyze such findings that are subjective and indirectly answer the research questions (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Other qualitative research designs that would not have been appropriate include narrative, ethnography, or phenomenology. As this study was not focused on a sequence of events, narrative was ill-fitting (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Furthermore, ethnography seeks to establish characteristics of culture, making it an unsuitable design as well. Although this study does allow disciplinary teachers to discuss their experiences, the overall objective was to explore their perceptions with research-based literacy strategies for ELLs. The use of phenomenology would not have been appropriate to this research. When researchers use the phenomenology approach, they seek to find the difference in participants' interpretations of the same experience (Smith, 2013).

Justification

Qualitative research focuses on the nature of reality (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004), which provided the necessary information to explore teachers' perceptions based on their actual experiences. Therefore, I used a basic qualitative study to explore teacher perceptions and the challenges of embedding research-based literacy strategies in the

areas of math, science, and social studies to teach ELL students, as only interviews with educators were used to collect data.

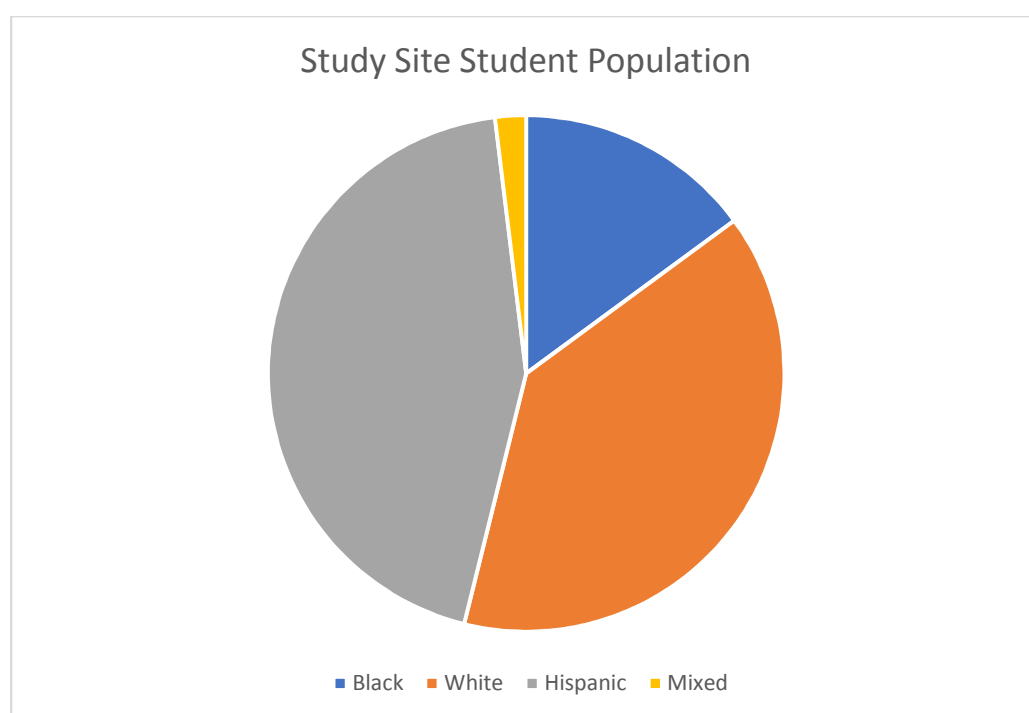
To directly address the research questions in this qualitative study, a basic qualitative design was again the best choice (Babbie, 2017). As qualitative research focuses on constructs of human perception, it provided an analysis that clearly answers the research questions. This capstone had two research questions that needed to be answered with open-ended questions. The questions focused on exploring what perceptions and challenges are encompassed by the teachers in the local study. As low reading comprehension scores on a local level were a motivating factor to this study, an understanding of teacher perceptions could inform best literacy practices that could increase student achievement in all disciplines. The utilization of a qualitative study was best suited for this research methodology as it allowed me to gain further insight into the struggles faced by disciplinary teachers to embed literacy strategies for ELLs in the local setting through the use of semistructured interviews.

As qualitative research must answer the “why” and “how” questions that are often difficult to answer (Taylor, 2016), the methodology behind the research aligned with the concepts surrounding the phenomenon of interest, as the study explored the perceptions of disciplinary teachers toward research-based instructional strategies at the local level. This study explored disciplinary teacher perceptions within a bounded system, as recommended by Merriam (2009). In this basic qualitative study, I interviewed disciplinary teachers in Grades 6, 7, and 8 at the research site. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore disciplinary middle school teacher perceptions about the

challenges of using literacy strategies to teach ELL students and to seek teacher suggestions for improved training or resources. Ultimately, this basic qualitative study allowed me to explore the struggles faced by disciplinary teachers to embed literacy strategies for ELLs, the highest student population in the local setting (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Study Site Student Population



Participants

Criteria for Selecting Participants

The criteria for selecting participants in this qualitative study was to include any disciplinary teacher in the areas of math, science, and social studies, in Grades 6, 7, and 8 in the local middle school. Each teacher has completed ESOL certification and has experience teaching ELL students for at least 3 years. Although each teacher has

certification specifically for ELLs, few teachers have had any professional development with offerings of instructional strategies for these students. As all teachers at the study site teach a high number of ELLs in every disciplinary area, no teacher was excluded. All teachers in these disciplines were asked to participate in this study. Semistructured interviews from nine disciplinary teachers, three from each grade level of 6, 7, and 8 were chosen by purposeful selection as suggested by Ravitch and Carl (2021). Teachers were invited to participate using school email. Participation was voluntary. To ensure that the qualitative research questions were answered with valid information, I was selective in choosing the participants that were most closely related to the study's purpose (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Therefore, purposeful sampling was utilized to select disciplinary teachers in the areas of math, science, and social studies who teach ELLs at the local study site.

Ravitch and Carl (2021) suggested that a selection of a small number of participants in a study can yield sufficient results and detail rich information. Hence, the level of inquiry will be deeper for everyone. As the local study site is a small, rural school, the number of participants was limited. Ravitch and Carl (2021) also suggested that a sample of 9–12 participants is suitable for basic qualitative research. Therefore, I selected nine participants. All the selected disciplinary teachers are ESOL certified and instruct a high number of ELLs in every class, and their willingness to participate was evident during personal conversations. In turn, this helped determine the exact struggles that disciplinary teachers face when embedding literacy strategies for ELLs at the local site.

Gaining Access to Participants

Approval was first requested from Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) to recruit the selected nine participants. Once approval was granted, disciplinary teachers at the local site in the areas of math, science, and social studies were recruited using email communications. I obtained email addresses from the website of the study site. Once the teachers volunteered to participate, they were provided with the necessary consent forms and information to conduct the study by email. Data saturation was met with the nine participants who volunteered (Merriam, 2009) and no additional teachers needed to be contacted.

Researcher-Participant Relationship

In this basic qualitative study, I did not hold a supervisory position over any potential participants. However, I did work closely with the potential participants at the local middle school as a middle school, sixth grade English language arts teacher. I have been employed with the local school site for 6 years and many of the teachers in the study have been employed equally or longer. I provided those teachers who desired to participate in the study with a written explanation of the purpose of the study and my role as the researcher, embedded within an informed consent. The relationship between each participant and me as the researcher was described as collaborative, as the purpose of the study stemmed from needs discussed by the teachers included in the study. Since the study at a local site required a close working relationship between the participant and me to disclose information concerning each disciplinary teacher's struggle to embed literacy strategies for ELLs without formal evaluation, it was necessary to establish a rapport of

trust with each participant. The consent form indicated how data would be collected, validated, and used. The documents explained the process of the interview and transcript validation. User-friendly techniques can also improve the stability of any study (Buhlmann & Cevic, 2020).

Ethical Treatment of Participants

With any research, the overall welfare of the participants should be protected by researchers to cause no harm (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). The IRB at Walden University granted approval (08-10-22-1044260) to ensure that the human participants are protected, with minimal risk. In this basic qualitative study, I provided a description of the project to participants prior to any data collection. This description was disclosed first in electronic format utilizing my Walden school email for cyber protection, and then disclosed using paper format to each participant with signature required at the time of the interview. To ensure continued protection of the participants and to maintain confidentiality, the participants were identified using alphanumeric codes instead of names during the data collection and analysis of this study. As the study site is small, grade levels and disciplines were excluded to allow the information collected to remain untraceable to specific teachers. Thus, the teachers were protected from incrimination. At the end of the study, the electronic documents of the study were secured in a password-protected computer file, and the hard copies are kept secured in a locked filing cabinet where they will remain for 5 years before being destroyed. No one was harmed in any physical, emotional, or professional manner. There were no risks involved with this study. All

aspects of the research were approached with humility and guidelines were created prior to any data collection (Ravitch & Carl, 2021).

Data Collection

In this basic qualitative project study, data were collected from the participants using semistructured teacher interviews. Semistructured interviews allowed me to explore how personal experiences and perspectives are related from one participant to another (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). The utilization of semistructured interviews maintained the focus on exploring disciplinary teacher perceptions ensuring that the study would yield the desired data. Collecting information based on human experiences needed to be collected in its entirety, but also relevant (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Table 2 represents the data collection timeline. During Weeks 1–3, participants were recruited with an inquiry letter by email. Upon agreement, a permission form was provided for documentation of this consensus. Each potential participant was provided with a follow-up inquiry. During Week 4, interviews were scheduled. During Weeks 5–6, interviews were conducted using participant preference of time and location. Upon completion of the interview, transcripts were provided for approval and clarification to each participant. Consequently, debriefing and closure with the participants occurred at the end of the interview in which they are reminded of data privacy, anonymity, security, and destruction of all data collection documents. Data analysis then began using the transcripts with consent from the participant. Upon closing of Weeks 8–9, data analysis concluded.

Table 2*Data Collection Timeline*

Week	Activity
Weeks 1–3	Participants were recruited with an inquiry letter by email
Week 4	Interviews were scheduled
Weeks 5–6	Interviews were conducted using participant preference of time and location; Transcripts were provided for approval and clarification to each participant within 5 days of interview
Weeks 7	Data analysis began
Weeks 8–9	Data analysis concluded

Semistructured Interviews

Instrumentation refers to the selection and use of tools needed in the data collection process within a scope of research. As this was a basic qualitative study, tools needed had to fit the methodology. When conducting research, the researcher must choose methods that are appropriate to answer the posed research questions developed for the study (Walden, 2015a). Interviews are a method of collecting data by asking questions directly to an individual about any experiences or perceptions on a research topic (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). For this study, semistructured interviews were the method of data collection, as they were appropriate to qualitative research. The interview questions were reviewed and acknowledged as appropriate to the study by three literacy experts at the study site. Disciplinary teacher interviews were conducted at the location of each participant's choosing, for approximately 45–60 minutes each. The questions asked allowed for personal reflection and individual reflection toward personal tendencies (Babbie, 2017). This type of questioning is often conducted in a qualitative study and was

best fitted for this project study as a direct source of information. The interviews provided information concerning disciplinary teachers' perceptions of teaching ELLs that can only be collected using this method. Data were collected on computers with programs that use the same functions as paper and pencil. Since qualitative data derives from interviews and personal constructs, data does not present itself with numerical values at the surface level. Therefore, qualitative research must look for patterns in human behavior for meanings that are observable and relatable (Erickson, 2011). The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed using the alpha-numeric code given to each participant for accuracy. To ensure confidentiality, interviews took place after school hours at a location of the participant's choosing.

Data Tracking

This basic qualitative study provided insight into the perceptions and struggles faced by disciplinary teachers of ELL students at the middle grades level. This type of data collection addressed the research questions and conceptual framework of Mezirow's theory of adult learning which was necessary to fulfill this qualitative study with interview questions created by me (see Appendix B). From the semistructured interview, data were collected and analyzed. As each interview was recorded for transcription, my personal computer was utilized with Google Documents text to type application for documentation purposes. Each interview was summarized and transcribed upon completion where it was reviewed holistically and coded for themes and categories. As suggested by Rubin and Rubin (2012), a summary was attached to each interview to explain any emerging themes relevant to the study. Throughout the process, a reflective

journal was kept documenting each interview, and was utilized to verify recurring themes found during transcription. Cloutier and Ravasi (2021) stated that tables are used to make the data collected more transparent. By utilizing tables, the data is easier to follow and understand. Hence, the data is also collected in a more organized manner, making the findings more credible. Therefore, the codes and themes were categorized, color coded, and tabled to ensure accuracy of the findings. To protect the participant, this information is stored on a password protected computer. Any notes taken on paper and pencil are locked in a filing cabinet using the alpha-numeric code of each participant.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher is the sole person responsible for the collection of data in research and the dissemination of the findings (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Hence, the role of the researcher is to shape the research, so that it is without bias or question. The researcher must first develop a plan before beginning any task, as to be certain no errors will diminish the accuracy of data collected. Researchers must understand that they are the key to interpretation of data, and they are more than just data collectors. Rubin and Rubin (2012) stressed that the researcher be free from subjectivity and to refrain from personal outcomes.

To expose underlying issues involving self-development and determination, I needed participatory action from individuals at the study site. This, in turn, incorporated qualitative research. An ontological assumption is that all information studied will be solely based on social constructs revolving around the research phenomenon in question (Creswell, 2018). Personal bias and the need to show success are human traits that can

greatly interfere with any research. Many times, the stakeholders involved in the process have a vested interest in the research in some capacity. For example, parents have their children's education, schools can have funding at stake, and teachers have their own professional evaluations to contend with. As Spaulding (2014) indicated, all variables, internal and external, play a role in the outcomes generated from research. Consequently, accuracy is vital. In this qualitative study, ethical issues were possible, as I was the interviewer and researcher to my own peers. It was crucial that all information collected was coded ethically and explicitly as stated from those interviewed.

Data Analysis

Procedures

Qualitative research strives to understand human behavior patterns that are best organized with codes and categories to find themes. I used an inductive approach to analyze the data collected from interviews that answer the research questions for this basic qualitative study. Interviews were transcribed to ensure accuracy and detail (Nascimento & Steinbuch, 2019) into a Google document and shared with the participants for accuracy within 5 days of interview completion by email. As recommended by Merriam and Tisdell (2015), I ensured that the research was credible and reliable. To ensure this, member checking was utilized. Member checking involves communication with the participants in the study to verify the data interpretation, or to see if the participant has any further comments (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). In the process of member checking all study participants were provided with an opportunity to make any revisions to the collected data if needed, and the ability provide confirmation of the

accuracy of the data collected. Each of these validation actions occurred using email correspondence. These interview documents were verified and returned for analysis within 5 days by email to each participant. Data were collected and coded to identify themes and categories as described below.

Coding

In qualitative research, codes are utilized by the researcher to identify patterns found in language or visual data. Codes are words or phrases that represent the findings collected from interviews, surveys, or other methods of collecting qualitative data (Saldana, 2016). As qualitative research focuses heavily on conceptual phenomena that revolve around human perceptions, it is important to have a systematic approach to decipher the meanings. Coding allows for each pattern of data to be categorized and analyzed (Saldana, 2016). Due to the nature of the research, these patterns allow for data to be indicative of future findings and outcomes (Saldana, 2016). Multiple codes can be attributed under certain themes. However, broader codes must become more specific as the research begins to be more refined (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Saldana suggests that these codes be recorded and analyzed using magnitude coding. In this type of coding, the results can be used to compare other similar findings throughout the research process (2016). These codes can also be modified within the iterative process of coding to add or delete codes as necessary to break into categories (Saldana, 2016). When human behaviors are involved, a diagram such as a flow-chart can best illustrate the codes (Rogers, 2018). I used several cycles of coding to determine how disciplinary teachers perceive literacy instruction for ELLs. In the first cycle of coding, I focused on how the

participants responded to the research questions, coding emerging ideas from each interview (Saldana, 2016).

As codes are collected, they must then be grouped into categories to display a common relationship or classification. Categories form when codes are connected. Thus, categories begin to emerge when data is sorted, and themes are labeled. I used axial coding after the initial coding process to determine if any developing themes have emerged (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). The process of axial coding assisted in creating categories of the most dominant themes (Saldana, 2016). Data saturation is the goal of axial coding, and it can be reached when the collected data is reviewed to identify categories and themes (Saldana, 2016). Axial coding was then utilized once the initial coding process was completed to generate emergent themes (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The process of axial coding helped categorize thematic codes that are most prevalent (Saldana, 2016). After the identification of emerging themes, the overall understanding of the topic was then analyzed (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). It has been indicated that most data collected from qualitative studies are best interpreted when they are presented in the form of visual images (Wolff et al., 2019). Therefore, tables were created to display the findings.

Themes emerge when researchers drill down codes and assign the codes by interpretation. In research, themes are the context of the study by aligning the data to the given phenomenon (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Therefore, themes are the overarching phrases that summarize the research findings. Once the process of synthesizing all the

collected data and themes were identified, I analyzed the understanding of the topic as it relates to the phenomenon in question (Ravitch & Carl, 2021).

Coding Procedures

Data collected were coded using a priori, open, and axial coding methods. Several cycles of coding as recommended by Saldana (2016)) were applied to determine the perceptions of disciplinary teachers about literacy instruction for ELLs and the challenges of embedding research-based literacy strategies in their disciplinary instruction for these students. The codes were placed into tables for a visual representation of my findings.

The analysis began by using a priori coding as recommended by Yin (2018) when the framework can be validated using previous findings. Saldana (2016) called this coding provisional coding or initial coding with a starting list of codes. A priori coding system was developed before examining the data that aligns with the research questions and framework that are proposed in this study. For this basic qualitative study, Mezirow's theory of transformative learning helped establish the semistructured interview questions that were answered by each participant. After each interview was transcribed using Google Documents text-to-speech application, the transcript was member checked by each participant using email. I then looked for a priori codes that contained elements of Mezirow's ten stages of learning: dilemma, self-examination, critical assessment, recognition, exploration, planning course of action, acquisition of knowledge, trying new roles, building of self-confidence, and reintegration. The words and phrases that aligned with these constructs and the research questions were as follows: strategies, consistency, preparation, resources, suggestions.

During the first open coding cycle, the focus was on the perception of literacy instruction for ELLs. As the process of coding is an iterative cycle, first cycle coding often places raw information within categories (Rogers, 2018) to get a bigger picture (Saldana, 2016). Each round of coding can incorporate increased filtration measures to narrow the focus. Elemental codes are the basic, focused filters that begin the iterative process of coding (Rogers, 2018). Rogers describes this technique as utilizing descriptive codes, or short words or phrases that describe the topic or passage. Open coding is a technique used to frame the data based on responses that followed the concepts of the research questions. I downloaded the transcript and gave each line a number (Laureate, 2016). Within each interview, emerging ideas were found and coded (Saldana, 2016). Each interview transcript was read multiple times, where it was then manually coded. After noticing similar concepts and phrases, these concepts were highlighted as recommended by Creswell and Guetterman (2019) and placed in a table for organization as recommended by Wolff et al. (2019).

In the second phase of coding, I completed axial coding to group the codes into categories based on similar findings. Saldana (2016) states that the second cycle of coding is where data is condensed for further analysis. Then, the data collected were analyzed to look for shared patterns and themes provided from each interview question (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Patterns that were found reflected the participants disclosure of limited strategies for ELLs, the importance of consistency of literacy instruction for ELLS in all classes, teachers of ELLs feeling inadequate or unprepared, disclaimer of not enough resources or support, and participants overwhelming need for professional

development to embed literacy into their disciplines for ELLs. To confirm the coding categories and patterns that were generated, notes from jottings during the interviews were also compared to the findings from the open coding analysis as recommended by Miles et al. (2018).

Finally, a thematic approach was used by comparing a prior and open codes and categories to generate themes from the data (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Themes emerge when researchers drill down codes and assign the codes by interpretation. In research, themes are the context of the study by aligning the data to the given phenomenon (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Therefore, themes are the overarching phrases that summarize the research findings. The findings of this basic qualitative study were written as a narrative discussion in which excerpts are identified that support the five themes that emerged. Themes generated from this research were addressing challenges with implemented strategies, consistency with embedding strategies, acquisition of strategies for embedding literacy for ELLs, the usage and need of various resources, and training specifically for embedding literacy to ELLs in each discipline. The major findings were reviewed to ensure that the research questions were answered and that the emerging themes were supported by Mezirow's theory of transformative learning.

Credibility and Trustworthiness

To evaluate qualitative research, it is imperative to look at how reliable a test is to provide outcomes that are in line with the research problem in question. Reliability examines the trustworthiness of a test to remain solid as data is transferred into the equation of other relevant situations. Ravitch and Carl (2021), suggested that all

information that is collected be interpreted truthfully to build credibility of the study. In turn, trustworthiness is built. Overall, trustworthiness is the confidence level established within the study and the outcomes provided at the conclusion (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). As I posed my research methods and interview questions, I remained cognizant of the accuracy of all data obtained. Therefore, I provided each participant with the interview questions prior to the interview to help validate the answers. Interviews were also recorded and directly transcribed. Information collected based on human experiences needs to be collected in-depth, but also relevant (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). During the interview sessions, I applied reflective listening to ensure that relevant data is noted. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) stated that reflective listening is key to thematic development about the perspective of each participant for accuracy.

When the transcription of the interview was complete, participants were allowed to verify the information presented prior to coding with member checking. The dependability, or validity and reliability, of the research findings can be strengthened by this process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

Evidence of Quality of Procedures

For a basic qualitative study, ensuring valid coding is crucial (Merriam, 2009). Interview transcripts were member-checked for accuracy and to provide an additional validation of the data collected (Merriam, 2009). As indicated in all forms, data remained confidential to protect the participants and the credibility of the research (Saldana, 2016).

The data collected from this qualitative study may assist school systems with a high number of ELLs enrolled. Disciplinary teachers who teach ELLs may also gain

insight from this study. With the increasing number of ELLs in the United States, this basic qualitative study may provide information that is transferable across the nation. The perceptions and perspectives within this research could help colleges better understand the supports teachers need to provide literacy for ELLs in the disciplinary classroom.

This study investigated how disciplinary teachers embed literacy instruction to support ELLs. Using a precoding process (Ravitch & Carl, 2016), the first analysis of the data was completed. During this analysis, the research questions- what are disciplinary teachers' perceptions of literacy instruction for ELLs and what are disciplinary teachers' perceptions about the challenges of embedding research-based literacy strategies in their disciplinary instruction for ELLs. The process of precoding provided me with an opportunity to conduct a first read of the data in order to begin with a critical reflection on themes and patterns that could emerge (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Based on Mezirow's theory of learning involving how reflecting on the content, the process, and the premise of the problem can understand how teachers feel and how they are challenged when it comes to embedding literacy strategies for ELLs, I used priori coding (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The goal of this process was to identify emergent themes that generated patterns and categories (Yin, 2018).

Discrepant Cases

With human interaction, confidentiality and validity of the research are easily compromised if not handled correctly. Preconceived notions can also deter developing themes (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Therefore, the data must be validated. When data emerges that contradict thematic findings of a study, a discrepant case occurs (Ravitch &

Carl, 2021). Discrepant cases refer to contradictory findings that emerge during the analysis of qualitative data (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). In this study, the process of member checking was utilized to ensure accuracy of data collected and to identify any possibility of discrepant cases. After debriefing the participants and verification of transcripts with member checking, no discrepancies were found using this internal validation process.

Assumptions, Limitations, Scope, and Delimitations

Assumptions

The site for this basic qualitative study was a rural middle school in a southern state. Based on personal conversations and experience with the demographic, I assumed that all disciplinary teachers were struggling to embed literacy lessons for ELLs. I also assumed that all participants would provide open and honest responses to the questions posed during the semistructured interviews.

Limitations

One limitation to this qualitative study was that it only involved disciplinary teachers at a rural, southern, public middle school in Georgia. The participants responded to semistructured interview questions based on their experiences teaching ELLs. Another limitation to the study could have been that the number of years since the participant last attended college. Results of this study could have also differed if the participants also taught special education, or if they had previously served as an ESOL co-teacher. Since the study focused on Hispanic ELLs at the study site, this could be a limitation to the study, as it did not focus on all ELLs. The limitation of this study was that it focused on Hispanic ELLs and not all ELL students. The data that were collected focused on

providing literacy instruction to ELLs at the study site, which is largely Hispanic. Therefore, the findings of this qualitative study will not represent all middle school disciplinary teachers across the United States.

Scope of the Study

The study site was a public middle school in rural, southern, Georgia where the number of ELLs continues to grow. At this same location, ELLs are not mastering standardized assessments. At the project site, disciplinary teachers have struggled to embed literacy strategies for ELLs.

Delimitations

The participants in this study consisted of disciplinary teachers in the areas of math, science, and social studies at the middle school level. Participation in the study was limited to those teachers who had at least 3 years teaching ELLs, and to those who had ESOL certification. The data collected was scrutinized to ensure that the results reflected a true depiction of the perspectives of the participants. Throughout the study, I reflected upon my own personal biases and experiences to ensure that these notations did not influence the data in any form.

Conclusion

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to understand disciplinary teachers' perceptions about the challenges of embedding research-based literacy strategies in their disciplinary instruction for ELLs. This basic qualitative study aligned with the conceptual framework, data collection methods, analysis, and procedures of Mezirow's theory of learning. Mezirow's theory of transformative learning was the key

driver to understanding how disciplinary teachers perceive the teaching of literacy strategies for ELLs. Using the Mezirow's research as a model for this qualitative study, the struggles, and perceptions of disciplinary teachers of ELLs has emerged.

Data Analysis Results

This basic qualitative study helps explain why disciplinary educators are struggling to embed literacy instruction into their lessons to support ELLs. In this study, I investigated middle school disciplinary teacher's perceptions of providing literacy strategies to ELLs. Qualitative research can further explain phenomena that require in-depth interpretation (Burkholder et. al., 2016). Mezirow's theory of transformative learning guided the analysis of the data collected through semi-structured interviews. By utilizing the five phases of data collection and analysis suggested by Yin (2018), the data were analyzed for this study. These phases begin with design and preparation before moving into the collect and analyze phases that can be repeated as needed before data is shared in the final phase.

Data from this study was generated from semistructured interviews from nine disciplinary middle school teachers. A total of 16 teachers were invited to participate, with nine teachers responding. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed using Google documents talk to text feature and summarized as recommended by Rubin and Rubin (2012). After reviewing the transcripts recorded from the interviews the results of this study were deduced. Overall, the findings of this study were guided by the purpose of the study and the research questions that were designed.

The interview questions were separated by each question's ability to answer each research question. The data that was collected from both segments of questions placed into a table to depict the patterns and themes that emerged. A priori codes were given prior to manual coding. Then, an inductive coding analysis was applied to distinguish the initial codes for analysis. During the axial phase of coding as directed by Yin (2018), patterns emerged. Thematic analysis completed during the third phase of decoding for the first research question (RQ1) elaborates on the emerging themes of the data collected. The themes that emerged were in alignment with Mezirow's theory of transformative learning (1991). The following section is a discussion of how the data were analyzed according to answers from the interview questions.

The first seven interview questions were designed to answer RQ1 (i.e., What are disciplinary teachers' perceptions of literacy instruction for ELLs in the disciplinary classroom?). After the data were synthesized, patterns began to emerge such as strategies, consistency, preparation (see Table 3). The data collected was organized by emergent patterns and themes and represented in tables. The analysis was conducted with the basis of Saldana's and Yin's coding protocols.

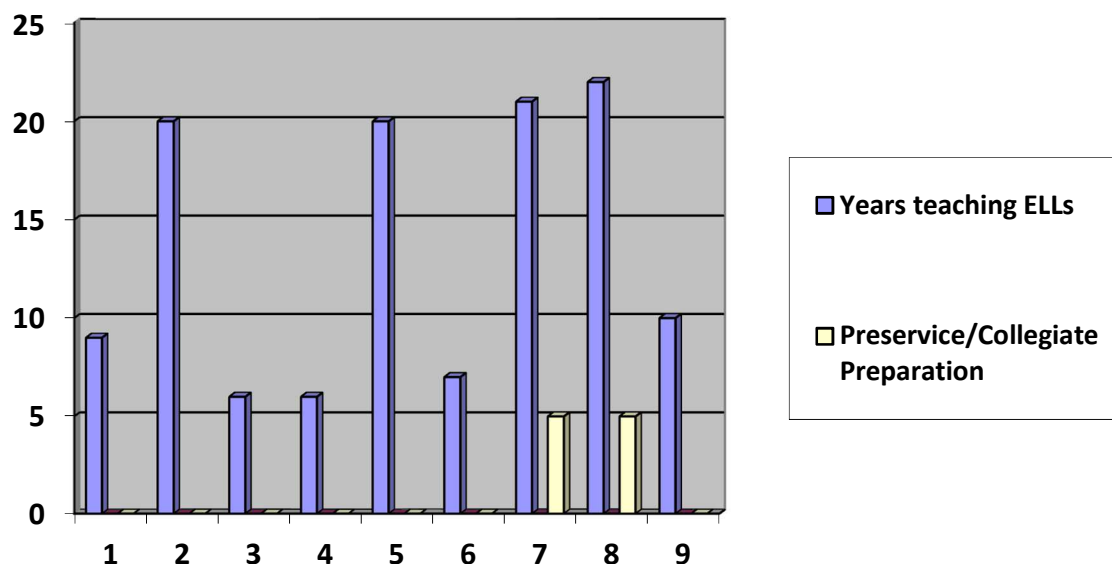
The last four interview questions were posed to answer RQ2 (i.e., What are disciplinary teachers' perceptions about the challenges of embedding research-based literacy strategies in their disciplinary instruction for ELLs?). The data collected from these questions resulted in two patterns indicated by resources and suggestions during the second decoding phase. The third stage of decoding (Yin, 2018) resulted in patterns and themes as depicted in the following section.

Table 3*Summative Coding Table for Research Questions*

Research question	A priori codes	Patterns	Themes
RQ1	Strategies	Limited strategies; usage of pictures.	Addressing challenges with implemented strategies
	Consistency	Importance of consistency in all classes	Consistency with embedding strategies
	Preparation	Feeling inadequate or unprepared	Acquisition of strategies for literacy
RQ2	Resources	Lack resources or support	Various resources needed
	Suggestions	Need for professional development	Training needs to be quality and specific to ELLs

Participant Demographics

In this study, it is evident that all participants have a degree in education, and the inclusion criteria indicated that all participants have Georgia Certification to teach ESOL. While all participants claim at least 3 years of working with ELLs, all participants acknowledged no local training or professional development to work with ELLs. All educators interviewed indicated that no classes were required to obtain their ESOL certification, only independent studying, and the passing of a state exam. Seven of the nine educators indicated no preservice or collegiate classes regarding ELLs. While the other two of the nine indicated that the only education received was in classes taken while pursuing their master's degrees (see Figure 2).

Figure 2*Participant Demographics***Strategies, Consistency, and Preparation****Pattern: Limited Strategies**

Issues with the number of strategies was the next pattern that emerged.

Participants not only acknowledged that the strategies that were being utilized were self-taught, but the strategies were also very limited. Participant 1 noted that a “few vocabulary strategies” were all that is known and utilized. Participant 2 also indicated the usage of “pictures and graphs” for understanding, but immediately refuted the use of cooperative learning and peer reviews for ELLs, stating these did not work due to limited understanding (by the ELL). Following on the same strategy as Participant 2, Participants 3, 5, 8, and 9, also indicated the usage of pictures to enhance vocabulary acquisition for ELLs. Participants 4 and 6, who are both math teachers, revealed that their go to strategy

included the use of manipulatives. Participant 7 elaborated on the use of a TIP chart, where ELLs draw a picture that helps “them think of the word”, and also indicated that the use of any self-directed learning strategy has never worked for ELLs. Participant 8 claimed that “ELLs struggle the most with vocabulary, so that is where I (participant 8) focus the most.” The consensus of the participants limited itself to only one or two strategies for the ELLs in their classrooms. Building on a prior early childhood teaching role, Participant 9 stated that the strategies utilized in that disciplinary classroom come from “the little bit of background knowledge acquired from an early childhood teaching program.” Again, Participant 9 reflected on the use of visuals and small group activities as the main instructional strategies for ELLs.

The findings that resulted from the interviews regarding the implementation and embedding literacy strategies for ELLs in every disciplinary classroom indicated that educators valued the use of differentiated instructional strategies. The participants felt that providing individualized instruction was a key component for increasing academic outcomes for ELLs. The utilization of a few online applications, small group instruction, manipulatives, and vocabulary strategies were noted as the instructional methods utilized by disciplinary teachers at the study site.

Theme 1: Addressing Challenges with Strategies

All participants in the study addressed some form of limitation with strategies that have been attempted in their disciplinary classrooms. As the pattern suggested, strategies were limited to the usage of pictures and geared heavily toward vocabulary. To validate the theme, Participant 1 indicated that students could not work independently and that

students are “not able to self-direct.” This sentiment was echoed by Participant 5 when this educator stated, “anything the student had to complete directly on their own (did not work).” Participants 2, 6, and 7 agreed that any type of partner or peer strategy did not work well. However, Participants 4, 8, and 9 elaborated on the failures experienced with whole group strategies. Participant 4 included the fact that “relying on them (ELLs) to log in and begin work independently did not work well.” Participant 3 stated a struggle with students that do not want to learn English and “will not help themselves.” Participant 3 also noted being at “a loss” for why this is the case. Participant 9 summed up the disconnect with whole group work by describing both the teacher and the student as “overwhelmed.” While most of the teachers interviewed indicated the importance of vocabulary strategies, very few strategies were mentioned other than including some form of visual representation.

Pattern: Importance of Consistency

Consistency was the next pattern that emerged from the data that was collected. When selecting literacy strategies to embed for ELLs, all participants expressed the need for consistency across every discipline. Participant 1 elaborated that “literacy is important not only in reading, but in math, as students must read and answer word problems.” Participant 2 expressed the need for consistency by stating a lack of consistency would “cause confusion and chaos for ELLs.” Participant 3 stated, “incorporating some form of literacy every day” should be every teacher’s goal. Participant 4 elaborated on the need to be “consistent across content areas, grade levels, and the entire school.” This participant added that strategies that are beneficial for English class are equally as beneficial in every

discipline. Participant 5 explained that by embedding literacy strategies in every discipline, ELLs would then “better understand the bigger picture” and it would “increase confidence in every class.” All participant indicated that vocabulary was the key issue for the ELLs that they teach. These staff members also indicated that they do not feel prepared to provide literacy strategies in a consistent manner. Participant 6 expressed frustration with the inability to provide instruction for these students to better learn the language which would be beneficial for all disciplinary areas. Participant 7 was also frustrated because “so many other needs have to be met”, and that being consistent is difficult when “there is not enough planning time, not enough resources, or enough help”, while also exclaiming how important consistency is to student achievement. Participant 9 indicated that consistency is key to making “connections across the curriculum so they (ELLs) can become better learners in every classroom.”

While all participants agreed with the importance of consistency across every discipline toward providing literacy instruction to ELLs, participants also noted that in order to be consistent, teachers need to know how to deliver this type of instruction. Participant 5 elaborated that “both teachers and students are discouraged.” To implement consistent instruction, participants noted that more training to support ELLs in literacy was crucial for these students to reach standard mastery.

Theme 2: Consistency with Embedding Literacy Strategies

The second theme that emerged from the study included the planning and usage of literacy strategies within each discipline. While the overarching pattern included how all of the participants felt consistency was important, the strategies planned by each

participant were not consistent. As indicated with theme one, these participants share very little similarities in strategy utilized. While every participant felt that vocabulary and language played a crucial role in student achievement, each participant activated a different strategy in their classes. For example, Participant 1 focused on “some type of modified assignment” for vocabulary instruction, with a focus on using pictures with vocabulary in both Spanish and English. Participant 2 “plan to provide pictographs for the vocabulary”, and Participant 3 only noted planning to “incorporate the vocabulary” and by echoing a strategy used by Participant 1. Participant 4 focused on reading the standard and also stated that a “fluent student will read it in Spanish. They will also read any directions in Spanish.” As an active literacy strategy, Participant 5 uses interactive notebooks, along with activities that “incorporate pictures and words” and this participant used the “WIDA standards and differentiation”, but also revealed in a contradictory statement that “I do not plan specifically for these students.” Participant 6 noted that when planning is important for students to use pictures to “help create meaning for the academic vocabulary and the standard”, but no strategy was mentioned other than flashcards. Participant 8 plans to use “a lot of visuals”, but no other strategies were listed. Participant 9 plans with resources used “for my lower students or my students with disabilities because these are lower-level resources.” From this theme, it can be concluded that the teachers all have intentions of incorporating some type of strategy as indicated by Table 4. Subsequently, the strategies are not consistent in application.

Table 4*Strategies That Worked Well by Each Participant*

Participant	Strategy
P1	Pictures with Spanish and English language for vocabulary
P2	Pictographs
P3	Pictures with Spanish and English language for vocabulary
P4	Manipulatives; Peer helper
P5	Interactive notebooks; pictures and words
P6	Pictures and Words; Cube Strategy
P7	TIP chart
P8	Pictures; Small groups
P9	Graphic organizers; Google Translate

Pattern: Inadequate Education or Preparation

The data collected from the semistructured interview indicated that all participants had no professional development in working with ELLs. Most participants revealed that the only preparation provided was gain by independent research. Participant 1 noted that “articles read during personal time” was the extent of any additional preparation for ELLs. Participant 2 indicated, “The internet was my only help . . . I learned strategies by self-exploration of content related to science literacy.” Participant 2 also added that “way back in college, I might have been provided with a class on teaching ELLs, but I do not remember it.” Participant 3 revealed that “Not very much” is done in that classroom to embed literacy into the discipline because this teacher feels “not trained.” When asked about pre-service courses in college, participant 6 remarked, “not specifically for ELLs.” This remark was similar in nature to that collected by participant 7. Participant 8 indicated that when it comes to choosing strategies for ELLs, it required personal

research, especially in the area of academic vocabulary. All participants indicated that to obtain ESOL certification, only a test was required, not coursework.

Theme 3: Acquisition of Literacy Strategies

The last theme that emerged from RQ1 was the acquisition of literacy strategies. As the prior theme and participants indicated very few literacy strategies that are utilized for ELLs in the disciplinary classroom, the third phase coding of the data stemmed from the participants' amplification of receiving no assistance in the classroom to serve these students or help in planning for literacy. Participant 2 commented that "no assistance" is given for specific literacy instruction. Participants 4 and 5 noted the strong importance of reading in math, with Participant 6 adding that "if you can't read the word problem, then you can't solve the word problem." However, it was added that "they (ELLs) do not understand" by at least three participants on more than one question. This statement was followed up with concerns of frustration toward helping these students gain understanding, as the teachers felt as if they were missing key pedagogical strategies. Participants 7 and 8 stressed the need to work with students on "one-on-one" basis in order to ensure understanding of that day's activity. To sum up the utilization of current strategies, Participant 9 drew upon literacy strategies once used for elementary students and claimed to "adapt" them for middle school ELLs. All in all, participants discussed the importance of literacy to understand the standard, academic language, and the disciplinary content. Thus, with limited strategies and guidance, participants echoed a need for strategies that were specific for ELLs in each discipline.

Resources and Suggestions

Pattern: Lack of Resources

All nine educators interviewed indicated a desire for some form of resource to aid in providing literacy strategies for ELLs in their discipline. Participant 1 indicated a need to collaborate with an ESOL specialist “more than just a monthly video.” This sentiment was echoed by Participants 3, 5, 8, and 9. Participant 6 added that the ESOL coordinator at the study site “only completed paperwork” on students for the central office. This job description was also vocalized by Participant 8 when it was stated that the ESOL coordinator is “overwhelmed with paperwork.” Participant 9 felt that the most beneficial resource would be for the “ESOL coordinator to come in and help with small groups.” Participant 8 compared the utilization of the ESOL coordinator to that of a “co-teacher” and requested this service as a resource. Online resources such as supplemental software for ELLs was a desire of Participants 1, 2, 3, and 6. Participant 6 added that an online platform to teach other languages to the teacher would be a useful tool. All in all, the pattern indicated reflected the participants’ desire for more resources in some form to help provide literacy instruction to ELLs.

Pattern: Need Professional Development

When asked to answer questions 8 and 9 of the semistructured interview, except for participant 2, each participant validated a need for professional development for teaching literacy strategies to ELLs. All participants indicated that the district has not provided any targeted professional development for providing literacy strategies to ELLs. Participant 9 requested professional development to be “geared toward my students with

trainers who are knowledgeable about teaching ELLs.” To further consecrate the request of Participant 9, Participant 8 stated, “(training) needs to be worth taking and effective.” Participant 7 wanted the professional development to be specific to the discipline provided in each classroom. Therefore, it can be concluded that professional development to acquire specific strategies for ELLs was the consensus of the participants interviewed.

Theme 3: Various Resources Needed

Deriving from RQ2 is the first theme indicating that participants have varied resource needs. One of the challenges discussed by all participants was the lack of resources to serve ELLs with literacy in each discipline. While three participants, 1, 2, and 6 indicated a need for resources that could help with vocabulary, Participants 4, 8, and 9 all requested more assistance from the ESOL coordinator/teacher. The ESOL coordinator/teacher was described by Participant 4 as one that “does not come into the classroom often for student instruction or for planning.” In addition, Participant 9 felt that having a “true ELL or ESOL teacher” would be the “most beneficial” resource given the demographics of the school. Several participants focused on the importance of having an ESOL teacher or coordinator that would collaborate and plan for strategies that could be used in each disciplinary classroom. In addition, four participants voiced a desire for an online program or some type of technology that could assist with providing disciplinary literacy to ELLs. Participant 5 desired both online resources because that would be easier for “both the student and the teacher” and “more time to plan.” To work concurrently with an online class, Participant 7 also felt that “teacher could learn a little bit of their [ELLs] language” and that a resource was needed for that acquisition. By the same token,

all participants felt that both the ELLs and teachers would be more successful if provided with resources specific to ELLs.

Theme 4: Need Professional Development

Equally important to this study, was theme four emerging from RQ2. All educators requested professional development. All participants indicated that the school district has not provided detailed professional development for disciplinary educators to better provide literacy instruction for the ELLs. Moreover, participants indicated a desire for professional development that was of quality and specific to the demographic of the school. Participants 8 and 9 elaborated on this need, with Participant 9 stating “training or professional development is actually geared toward my students with trainers who are knowledgeable about teaching ELLs.” Participant 8 proclaimed the need for “strategies that I can use in the classroom that are going to be quality and feasible.” Likewise, participant 5 added that “training and professional development needs to be of quality. I need to know what works for the students that I have.” Three participants wanted professional development training with specific vocabulary instruction. Furthermore, participant 4 specifically asked for “more training to embed literacy” into the discipline for ELLs. Comparatively, Participant 3 stated that to embed literacy there “needs to be more training for teachers no matter how many years they have been teaching.”

Conclusion

In conclusion, the disciplinary teachers at the study site are required to have ESOL certification. However, this is an exam without any prerequisites. All participants interviewed disclosed that they do not feel prepared to utilize literacy strategies for ELLs.

All in all, teachers rely on their own personally acquired knowledge and experience provide literacy instruction for ELLs. Overall, the purpose of this qualitative study was to explore disciplinary teachers' perceptions about the challenges of embedding literacy strategies for ELLs. In the final analysis, the study revealed that specific literacy strategies must be utilized consistently to enhance both the pedagogical skills and the academic outcomes of ELLs. The study revealed the importance of using strategies that are beneficial to both the discipline and the student. It draws significance upon the need for specific professional development to enrich educators with these strategies. Challenges with a lack of resources and professional development were disclosed. As all but one teacher indicated the need for professional development specific for literacy instruction for ELLs, a professional development series has been proposed to address these needs. To conclude, if the challenges were addressed, disciplinary educators may provide more effect literacy instruction in their classes for ELLs.

Section 3: The Project

The proposed project for this basic qualitative study is a 3-day professional development webinar. This professional development webinar will give disciplinary teachers at the study site strategies for embedding literacy into their daily lessons for ELLs. The proposed webinar was a result of the data collected from the semistructured interviews at the study site. Three themes emerged from the data that helped answer RQ1: addressing challenges with strategies, consistency of applying strategies, and acquisition of strategies for literacy and vocabulary. One theme emerged from the data that helped answer RQ2: need resources and quality training specific to ELLs with an emphasis on vocabulary. These themes helped shape this professional development webinar for disciplinary teachers of ELLs.

With this professional development series, several goals exist. The first goal is to provide disciplinary teachers with research-based strategies for embedding literacy for ELLs. Another goal of this webinar is to inform disciplinary teachers about the learning difficulties that ELLs often exhibit. Two learning outcomes have been established for this webinar to include the understanding of the complexities ELLs face in the disciplinary classroom, and to increase teacher knowledge of research-based strategies that are available to improve assessment outcomes for ELLs. This professional development target audience is any disciplinary middle school teacher who teach ELLs.

Rationale

Georgia public schools are increasing in population with ELLs at all levels of language acquisition. This study indicated that disciplinary teachers do not have the

educational background needed to embed effective research-based literacy strategies for ELLs, even though these students are placed into their classrooms. All nine participants were frustrated about having zero professional development for ELLs, especially in a school district where these students represent the highest population. Data collected from this qualitative study indicated that disciplinary teachers need additional support and resources to effectively embed literacy strategies for ELLs.

The proposed 3-day professional development series would provide middle school disciplinary teachers at the study site the ability to acquire strategies that could be immediately implemented. At the same time, these teachers could ask questions and receive feedback without delay. The professional development would be accessible on the district's professional learning website. Due to the ongoing limitations of COVID-19 and the shortage of substitute teachers, an online webinar would be a more economical choice. Additionally, online availability allows for convenience and worldwide accessibility.

Review of the Literature

In this doctoral project study, I explored the perceptions of middle school disciplinary teachers for providing literacy strategies to ELLs. The gap in practice, that many disciplinary teachers seem uncertain about the utilization of literacy strategies for English speaking students without having to incorporate literacy strategies for ELL students simultaneously, was also explored. This literature review focuses on the structure and themes of the project, including a discussion of professional development, and acquisition and utilization of literacy strategies for ELLs.

Search Strategies

The use of scholarly literature related to the findings of the study were utilized to find research articles for this literature review. Various resources contributed to this literature review. Several databases were accessed to gather information. These databases included ERIC, EBSCO, ProQuest, Galileo, Google Scholar, Thoreau, and SAGE Journals. Search terms utilized to gather information were *professional development*, *research-based strategies for ELLs*, *instructional practices*, *Mezirow*, *consistency of literacy strategies for ELLs*, and *resources for teaching literacy to ELLs*. Journal articles were peer-reviewed literature publications from the years 2018-2022. This literature review provided a framework for the project study. This section includes discussions about (a) Mezirow's theory of learning as it applies to the project, (b) quality and specific professional development, and (c) acquisition and consistent utilization of literacy strategies for ELLs.

Conceptual Framework of Project

The conceptual framework that guided this project creation was Mezirow's (1991) theory of transformative learning. As the teachers stated that training was necessary to support ELLs in their disciplinary classrooms, they also were open to the application of these strategies in a consistent manner to increase academic outcomes for their students by enhancing their own pedagogical skills. Mezirow's theory of transformative learning focuses on reflection of the content, process, and premise of the problem to find a solution. Angay-Crowder et al. (2021) stated that educators that apply Mezirow's theory understand that transformative learning "the process" of making changes in teaching

experiences that incorporate concepts and values. As educators state the need for increased training, this stems from a reflection of the problem and the desire to take the action necessary to make personal changes for growth to which the students will be the beneficiaries. Mezirow provided a clear division of learning by environmental control, communication, and reflection. Darkenwald and Merriam (1982) claimed that to enhance pedagogical skills and to acquire greater success, adult learners must be subject to teaching that helps them fulfill the roles they have in real-life situations. Researchers Angay-Crowder et al. (2021) also stated that professional development can improve the outcomes of all stakeholders. A dilemma can be the catalyst for transformative learning (Mezirow, 1991). Therefore, the local problem indicates a dilemma that needs a solution.

When developing a professional development series for disciplinary teachers to support literacy instruction for ELLs, it is crucial to keep Mezirow's theory of transformative learning as a guide, along with Knowles (1977) assertion that learning for adults can occur as a result of formal training. Osman and Warner (2020) defined the term professional development as any training with a goal of improving pedagogical strategies for educators. The element of reflection and reintegration are crucial for a successful program, as based on Mezirow's (1991) theory of transformative learning. Those who plan experiences for educators, such as professional development, need to develop opportunities for participants to reflect on the problem, process, and content. The professional development needs to follow a series of objectives that allows time for reflection, creation, and assessment (Conner et al., 2018). Therefore, professional development must consider teachers' behaviors toward teaching and learning to ensure

reflective changes that are integrated into the classroom (Burner & Svendsen, 2020).

Table 5 demonstrates how Mezirow's theory of transformative learning guided the Disciplinary Literacy for ELLs professional development webinar for disciplinary teachers at the study site.

Table 5

Application of Mezirow's Theory of Transformative Learning to the Professional Development "Disciplinary Literacy for ELLs"

Mezirow's 10 steps of transformative learning	Application
Step 1: Dilemma	Acknowledged by educators during the semistructured interview and local problem
Step 2: Self-examination	Interview questions allowed for reflection of literacy practices that worked well or did not work; perceptions were revealed.
Step 3: Critical assessment	During the semistructured interview, participants acknowledged strengths and deficits.
Step 4: Recognition	Patterns and themes are generated from the interviews and are used to formulate participant needs for the professional development.
Step 5: Exploration	The professional development webinar provides a variety of interactions and resources to allow educators the opportunity to ask questions and receive feedback.
Step 6: Planning action	Educators will be given the opportunity to choose literacy strategies that could be best applied to their ELL students.
Step 7: Acquisition of knowledge	The professional development webinar provides disciplinary teachers with research-based literacy strategies that can help those who are challenged to find strategies that work for their ELLs.
Step 8: Trying of roles	The webinar allows for planning and collaboration with a variety of resources.
Step 9: Building of self-confidence	The professional development offers practical applications of literacy strategies. Teachers will immediately see the profound changes that could be made to their pedagogical style by offerings that build autonomy.
Step 10: Reintegration	Educators will reflect on each day's learning with questions related to real-world classroom applications (past and future). New perceptions and strategies can be taken back into the classroom.

Professional Development

One theme that emerged was that disciplinary teachers wanted specific and quality professional development to provide literacy instruction for ELLs. Babinski et. al. (2018) claimed that school districts need to provide quality professional development for enhanced pedagogical strategies. Based on the collected data and the requests of the teachers' professional learning needs, leaders must be dedicated to long-term training objectives for teachers in order to support ELLs in academic achievement. Through the utilization of professional development, teachers can acquire knowledge to provide research-based literacy instruction for ELLs. As teaching is an ever-changing field of learning for all involved, teachers must commit to learning throughout their career (Kennedy, 2019). Kennedy (2019) also examined the assumptions that accompany teaching and learning and asserted that teacher mindset must be transformed through professional development that is effective and meaningful. O'Neal et al. (2019) asserted that ELLs are more likely to settle in rural locations and that educators are not prepared to meet these diverse needs. Hanada and Shermanb (2018) suggested that disciplinary teachers design lessons that are meeting the literacy needs of ELLs. Therefore, as indicated by Guskey (2017), any educational improvements stem from the acquisition of quality professional development. Brady and Esmail (2019) reported that colleges are limited in coursework that adheres to the demographics found in many public-school systems. To be able to implement new strategies, school administrators must ensure that teachers are prepared to provide literacy instruction for every student, including ELLs (Feiman-Nemser, 2018). To ensure this acquisition of adult learning, Gess-Newsome et

al. (2019) discussed the important of professional development to allow teachers to learn the newest pedagogical strategies to enhance learning for themselves and their students. To follow up with the importance of professional development, Sezer et al. (2019) reported that supportive school leaders see greater student achievement than those who are not actively involved. Phinazee (2021) reported that professional development improves teacher understanding of new strategies. In a like comparison, Shea et al. (2018) noted that professional development for educators is essential for teacher and student learning.

Supporting diverse learners is a key component in preparing teachers for classroom instruction. Irby et al. (2018) suggested that professional development needs to be targeted for teachers to provide appropriate strategies for ELLs. As this was a key suggestion from the participants interviewed, targeted professional development to include linguistic training for teachers can improve state assessment scores for ELLs (Johnson et al., 2016). Consequently, increasing pedagogical knowledge can help teachers feel more prepared to meet the literacy development and needs of ELLs (Plaatjies, 2019). Okhremtchouck and Sellu (2019) examined teacher preparation and perception on instruction for ELLs. Participants from the study indicated an enhanced self-efficacy to support ELLs after attending a professional development opportunity (Okhremtchouk & Sellu, 2019). In a similar study, Villegas et al. (2018) found that educators become more willing to implement instructional strategies when they were provided with the ability to reflect on their own understanding of teaching ELLs. The findings of the Villegas et al.'s study align with Mezirow's (1991) theory of

transformative learning on the need for adult learners to reflect on the elements of a given problem. Kovacs (2018) stated that professional development should foster critical thinking, reflection, and generate action for change in the classroom, again echoing the findings of Mezirow. In a similar fashion to the findings of the study, Plaisir (2020) found that when quality professional development is lacking, teachers could not implement strategies best suited for student learning. Smith et al. (2019) also indicated that quality professional development was essential to implementing new pedagogical strategies. Greene and Jones (2020) suggested the creation of professional development to incorporate technology as students are familiar with various forms, again a resource that participants expressed a desire to include. In a study conducted by Azukas (2019), it was reported that educators had increased confidence with planning, implementation, and collaboration when teachers participated in professional development that was specific to their learning needs. Reflecting on Mezirow's phases of learning for adults, this incorporates the self-examination, assessment, and planning to acquire more knowledge that will be transferrable into the classroom environment. Therefore, Martin et al. (2019) claimed that professional development is essential for student success when teachers reflect and modify their instructional practices. Ajani (2019) summed up professional development as activity that modifies teachers' practices to provide a higher quality of instruction for student achievement.

Consistent Literacy Strategies for ELLs

Consistency is a key variable for providing literacy instruction to ELLs. Walker and Laing (2019) asserted that student diversity of various cultures and learning needs

have increased in public schools. Peercy et al. (2017) stated that students do not receive the maximum benefits of any strategy if teachers do not deliver instructional practices on a consistent basis. Researchers (Coady et al., 2019; Shea et al., 2018) have stated that ELL achievement is an outcome of the educator's ability to meet their learning needs in every discipline. When providing professional development for teachers of ELLs, Louie et al. (2019) asserted that educators must understand how to embed academic language into their daily instruction. It was noted by de Jong (2021) that teachers do not often implement strategies to facilitate language acquisition for ELLs. A study by Arood et al. (2020) found an increase with level of cognitive and metacognition abilities with students who were provided with a teaching strategy in which the educator was confident and consistent. Fisher et al. (2012) argued that when teachers do not have resources that are relevant to student demographic and when teachers do not have the knowledge to meet these complex learning needs, students will not retain the information. Educators in this study echoed a need for various resources to help with consistent implementation of literacy strategies in each discipline. Mitchell (2019) found that technology has directly changed how teachers provide instruction. Thus, allowing for a consistent form of instruction that students understand. However, Clement and Cochran (2020) affirmed that educational courses did not provide strategies that allow for differentiated instruction. Therefore, educators are not prepared to provide daily literacy instruction to ELLs. This is also a key assertion from the data analysis. To stress the importance of daily literacy instruction within the disciplines, Ricklefs (2019) asserted that literacy is the foundation for success in all disciplines and students' home language must be factored into strategies

as a support. To further support the need for consistent language strategies, Coady et al. (2019) also added that teachers of ELLs must incorporate vocabulary that is specific to each discipline with dual forms of English instruction. Comparatively, Robertson and Padesky (2020) found that students must also be engaged with the activity to be completely invested in learning. According to Phillips Galloway and McClain, discussion is key to discourse within the content (2020). Fisher and Frey (2014) also supported this practice by citing the speaking and listening standard from Common Core.

Project Description

The problem addressed in the qualitative study was that disciplinary teachers were struggling to embed disciplinary specific literacy strategies for ELLs. The data from this study indicated that participants at the study site required professional development on literacy strategies for ELLs. The issues with embedding these literacy strategies will be addressed during this professional development webinar.

Day 1 will focus on the learning complexities of ELLs when placed in the disciplinary classroom. It will highlight why ELLs struggle with the content. The first theme focused on addressing issues that accompany the previously implemented strategies. A pattern that also emerged from the study was that disciplinary teachers at the study site were frustrated with feeling inadequate or ill-prepared. The professional development series would cover these different areas of concern. Because ELLs have difficulties with language acquisition, disciplinary teachers need to understand the strategies that can incorporate both academic and basic language of communication for these students.

Day 2 will focus on the importance of embedding consistent strategies across the disciplines. The second theme of the study indicated the need for strategies that can be embedded with consistency and fidelity. Many participants indicated that other educators, such as a trained ESOL provider could be a helpful resource when working with ELLs. By inviting these educators to share strategies that could be embedded in every lesson, educators could then feel better prepared for implementation on a daily basis. The professional development would provide research-based strategies that ensure success for ELLs in every discipline. Within this professional development, there will be opportunities for participants to collaborate and design lessons based on the information presented. When developing this professional development, it was important to examine the resources, supports, and barriers for teachers at the study site who work with ELLs in the disciplinary classroom. During day two of training, themes of resources and strategies that emerged from the analysis will be addressed.

Day 3 of the training will focus on building confidence and reflection for reintegration as suggested by Mezirow (1991). Participants will again be invited to submit questions for the opening session, again reflecting Mezirow's phase of transformative learning that exhibits a rational thought process to include a personal desire for change (Merriam & Kim, 2012). Educators will be provided with an opportunity for to further explore literacy strategies for ELLs. The training will also allow for reflection and discussion on how it can drive lessons for student achievement. To be effective, professional development must allow for educator discussion on the students, perceptions, and instructional strategies for ELLs (Gore & Rosser, 2020). With

continued collaboration, participants can continue to practice and plan lessons using newly acquired vocabulary and literacy strategies. Literacy specialists will also be involved in the day's activities. Upon the conclusion of the training, participants will be able to submit an evaluation of the program regarding objectives and goals.

Resources, Barriers, and Solutions

The resources needed to implement this project include funding and time for the professional development. Administration at the study site and at the district office will be consulted on the availability of these resources and to receive permission to provide the newly created professional development. As the need for this professional development is essential for student achievement, I have already been granted support from the principal at the study site. The superintendent has spoken with me personally to ensure that I have access to any resources necessary to make this project a success. Last but not least, I have the support of the curriculum director to assist with scheduling the training.

When it comes to implementing this professional development, there are a few potential barriers. Finding substitutes for teachers to attend the webinar could be difficult. The availability of participants to attend is crucial to successful outcomes of the professional development. However, this barrier could be overcome by scheduling the webinar during the district's planned in-service days which occur each semester.

Project Implementation and Timetable

Presenting the findings of this research and the accompanied professional development with administration at the school is a key facet in promoting change. This

professional development plan will be presented to administrators during instructional planning days scheduled for January of this school year. The presentation will allow administration time to develop guidelines for the professional development opportunity before the beginning of the next school year. Table 6 indicates the schedule of events for the professional development over the course of two days. As this webinar will initially be a live event, breaks are scheduled within the time allotted.

Table 6

Professional Development Schedule

	Time	Day1	Day 2	Day 3
Registration	8:00-8:15	Google Survey	Google Form	Open Floor Session for Q & A
Introduction	8:20-8:30	Daily objectives	Daily Objectives	Daily Objectives
Session 1	8:30-9:30	Challenges for ELLs	Creating literacy lessons for ELLs (speaker)	Reflection on Learning
Session 2	9:45-11:00	Speaker	Application/ Collaboration: Creating a lesson	Strategies for Vocabulary-Literacy Specialist (Q & A)
Lunch	11:00-12:00			
Session 3	12:00-1:00	Resources	Application: Teaching a lesson	Assessing Student Learning
Session 4	1:15-2:15	Importance of consistency discussion	Sharing lessons and discussion	Collaboration and Planning
Closing	2:15-2:30	Exit Ticket	Survey	Evaluation

Roles and Responsibilities for Professional Development

As the researcher and project developer, it will be my responsibility to discuss the findings of the study with the principal at the study site. First, the webinar information and project outline will be reviewed by the administrator at the local study site and the curriculum director at the board of education. After their approval, they will decide which teachers will attend the initial webinar. The roles and responsibilities of this professional development will be for middle school disciplinary teachers to attend the professional development series as indicated by the curriculum director at the local board of education. The administration of the local middle school will approve the necessary time off needed for teachers to attend the webinar. Designated teachers will enter the necessary request to secure a substitute in the district's absence system. During the professional development, it will be crucial for all attending disciplinary teachers to watch with their cameras on and to interact with the training. My additional responsibilities will be to ensure that the technology specialist has all the necessary materials to help present the series of professional development.

Project Evaluation Plan

An outcome-based evaluation of the project will be utilized to measure the effectiveness of the webinar (professional development). By using a Google Form, the professional development can be evaluated by those who participated in the initial training. A link will be provided to all participants. When collecting feedback, email addresses and names will be omitted from the form to secure honest results.

The goals of the project are to provide disciplinary teachers with research-based literacy strategies for ELLs and to provide a better understanding of learning complexities of ELLs to disciplinary teachers. When educators implement research-based literacy strategies, the educator can provide more effective lessons for ELLs. Results from the evaluation form will be shared with district and local administrators including the principal and the superintendent. Other stakeholders at the project site also include all teachers and ELLs.

Project Implications

At the project site, disciplinary teachers indicated a need for research-based literacy strategies for ELLs. The data from this study are reflected in the design of this professional development series. Disciplinary teachers will benefit from this professional development by learning about the complexities that ELLs face when learning academic language and research-based literacy strategies that are appropriate for academic growth for ELLs.

The activities planned within the professional development will promote enhanced collaboration between teachers at the study site. The planned activities include discussions about why ELLs struggle with academic language, learning about strategies that enhance the learning environment for ELLs, practicing with these strategies from a student's point of view, exploring resources for ELLs, and opportunities for collaboration with other teachers.

Stakeholders

This project should be used by school districts to increase pedagogical knowledge of research-based literacy strategies for ELLs. Teachers at the study site will acquire research-based literacy strategies for ELLs to increase achievement scores. Implications for possible social change include greater collaboration among disciplinary teachers and a better understanding of preparing and delivering effective lessons for ELLs.

Conclusion

During the data analysis process, I identified a need for professional development. The goal of the webinar is to increase disciplinary teachers' knowledge about research-based literacy strategies for ELLs and to incorporate these strategies into every lesson. The professional development was created to utilize research-based practices and collaboration among disciplinary teachers. As disciplinary teachers progress through the series of professional development, they will learn about various research-based literacy strategies that can increase academic achievement scores for ELLs. By providing a webinar for professional development, the content can be maintained for future training purposes within the school district.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Project Strengths and Limitations

This section contains an overview of the project study. Included within this section are recommendations for addressing the problem identified. As a researcher, I must deeply reflect on the project study and how it helped develop my scholarly thinking into a scholar practitioner. In this section, I also reflect on what I learned from the research. In conclusion, I reflect on the implications and applications for future research.

Project Strengths

The data collected from the participants served as a guide for the project deliverable. The professional development webinar was created to fill the gap in practice identified at the study site in which many disciplinary teachers are uncertain about the utilization of literacy strategies for English speaking students without having to incorporate literacy strategies for ELL students as well. The problem based on this qualitative study was that disciplinary teachers are struggling to embed literacy lessons into discipline-specific instruction for ELL students. According to the findings in Section 2, disciplinary teachers at the study site needed professional development focused on providing research-based literacy strategies for ELLs.

There are several strengths of the project study. First, participants in this study acknowledged a need for professional development and resources to support ELLs in their disciplinary classrooms. In response to these concerns, the professional development webinar series will be recorded and made available for future reference on the school district's website.

Another strength of this study is that the professional development will address areas of concern as stated by the initial participants in the study. It will also include concerns that are expressed by those attending the webinar. Since participation is virtual, the use of breakout rooms will be generated to encourage discussion and collaboration of the information presented. From this, the presenters can provide scaffolds for learning by demonstrating the suggested research-based literacy strategy. Thus, the material will be engaging and practical.

Finally, the project was based on Mezirow's theory of learning and research-based strategies for developing professional learning. Disciplinary teachers will be provided with opportunities to learn more about literacy strategies that work to increase academic outcomes for ELLs. Overall, the professional development will allow for an enhanced classroom experience for both the student and the teacher.

Project Limitations

One limitation of this project was the timing of the presentation. Since this project was generated after the start of the school year, it will most likely be offered at a later date set aside for professional development. As it is a multiple day event, it will be complicated to get substitutes to fill absent teachers. Therefore, the training will be most likely be offered during the summer months. To determine what dates work best, it will be important to consider the schedules of all involved, vacations, and other conflicts.

A second limitation of the project involves the presentation of the webinar after it is published. As it will be difficult to edit after completion, revising the information within could be complex. However, technological advancements will make it easier to

remove breaks and information that could be eliminated to condense the information into a shorter time span. Hence, teachers would not need three full days out of class to view the webinar.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

By using a qualitative design, a professional development webinar for disciplinary teachers of ELLs at the middle school level was created. The problem was that disciplinary teachers were struggling to embed literacy lessons into discipline-specific instruction for ELL students. There are several ways this problem could have been addressed alternatively.

First, the criteria of the participant could have been based on different material. Since I excluded any teacher without at least 3 years' experience teaching ELLs, recent graduates were not included in the data. Therefore, any changes in pre-service education required currently are not included in the data. Focus interviews were also not utilized. While the consensus of participants in this study yielded equal outcomes, the validity and security of the data would have also been different when generated from a group setting.

Another way the problem could have been alternatively addressed would be to utilize a quantitative approach. By administering a survey, the scope and range of the study could have been extended to include other districts and demographics over a larger sample size.

Alternative Solutions

For this local problem, another solution to the problem would be to offer specific professional development for disciplinary teachers in research-based literacy strategies.

While the district mandated that all teachers acquire ESOL certification, no specific training was provided. Instead of the certification, teachers could have been offered the ESOL endorsement where training was required for completion. Professional learning communities could also have a large impact on the incorporation of research-based literacy strategies for ELLs by mandating the use of interventions into lessons.

Scholarship, Project Development and Evaluation, and Leadership and Change Scholarship

Mezirow (1991) stated that during the learning process, one must reflect on the content, the process, and the premise of the problem in order to make changes. As I reflect on the doctoral process, I understand this trilogy. Over the course of my study, I realized how important each step was in achieving my goal. This goal was to construct scholarship for ELLs that promoted academic achievement in every discipline. The coursework provided in this doctoral program established the foundation necessary to see this project to its culmination. Throughout the series of instruction, I was provided with opportunities to improve my own pedagogical knowledge and make changes in my own classroom instruction. The key to completing the research process was grounded in collaboration with my professors. I completed the doctoral process in a timely manner by improving my ability to complete scholarly data collection and analysis as the research continued to progress. Finally, a social change for disciplinary teachers of ELLs was connected with a passion for helping the demographic of students that I teach on a personal level.

Project Development

As mentioned, this project played a large role in my own pedagogical characteristics. First, I learned the importance of turning my passion into a study that could yield data for change. I discovered that by applying Mezirow's theory of transformative learning to my own pedagogy, I could help other educators reflect on their strategies for ELLs. Through the creation of a professional development series, I learned to develop goals that are specific to a need that is beneficial both financially and socially.

Leadership and Change

As a middle school teacher at the study site, I have had experience with the same student demographics as my participants. I have had limited experience in leadership positions. However, I learned how to respect the vulnerabilities of my peers to elicit genuine responses. This process has provided me with the opportunity to collaborate with many professionals in every area of my coursework and project. I now feel more confident in my ability to research and write, and to become a practitioner of my own proposed professional development.

Analysis of Self as Scholar

As I reflect on this doctoral process, I see myself as a different person than when I first started. I am proud to say that I have completed this in just under 3 years, and I feel more empowered and strengthened to be a better advocate for my students and my peers. My research skills and knowledge base has strengthened. This process takes dedication and diligence to see to completion. All in all, the scholarly attributes acquired in this process are visible in the professional development generated.

Analysis of Self as a Practitioner

Through this process, I have become a better teacher as an advocate for my students, and I see myself as an agent for change. As a doctoral candidate, I have demonstrated that learning is never ending, and that each person is in control of their own destiny. Since education is an essential component of life, the ability to create a professional learning program for my own peers is an active form of conveying this element. As a middle school English language arts teacher, it is my responsibility to implement research-based strategies for every student's success that carry over into every discipline. After completing this study, I can demonstrate the knowledge I have gained into my daily classroom lessons with greater self-efficacy to meet the needs of my ELLs.

Analysis of Self as Project Developer

As a project developer, I learned that there is more to the creation of professional development than just designing a slide presentation. The data must drive the needs of the projected audience. In this role, I was able to take adult learning and financial constraints into consideration for formulating professional development. Using information that was collected and analyzed from the research, the professional development was created to meet these needs. It was my desire that this professional development would be a resource that could be used for years to come to help increase academic outcomes for ELLs.

Reflection on Importance of the Work

As the professional development was formulated by data collected from disciplinary teachers of ELLs, this professional development can be beneficial to all

teachers of ELLs. During the semistructured interview, participants were asked to share additional information or requests for resources needed to embed literacy strategies for ELLs into their lessons. Participants revealed that they were not equipped, or trained, to provide this type of instruction. As a result of this deficit in pedagogical instruction, disciplinary teachers needed this research to be better supported. This professional development can aid all teachers of ELLs with strategies for embedding literacy in every content area.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

Implications

This project study addressed positive social change in several ways. All stakeholders—teachers, students, administrators, and parents of ELLs—can benefit from this project. On the local level, teachers have the opportunity to create lessons with research-based literacy strategies for ELLs. Student achievement should then increase, and teacher self-efficacy to deliver literacy lessons to ELLs should also improve. The professional development will encourage collaboration to enhance pedagogical knowledge and skills. Mezirow's theory of transformative learning elaborates on the need for educators to reflect critically on the content, process, and premise of any problem at hand (1991). This is echoed by Knowles (1977), who indicated that change must start with the educator. Therefore, this project provides ample opportunity for educators to adjust their own pedagogy to increase student outcomes in literacy. Educators will be practitioners of positive social change as they learn and incorporate strategies that promote achievement for ELLs.

The most beneficial stakeholder that would from this project would be the ELLs and their parents. Once literacy strategies are implemented into the disciplinary classrooms with fidelity, student outcomes in language and achievement should increase. When students can understand the academic language of the standards, ELLs can demonstrate growth in all disciplinary areas. Overall, student frustration should decrease, and engagement should increase. Parents of ELLs can be more confident in the classroom environment to meet their needs of their children with literacy advancements that will follow throughout the years.

Another stakeholder that would benefit from this project to become a catalyst for social change will be the administration. As the number of ELLs continues to increase across the nation, administration needs to ensure that all teachers are implementing research-based literacy strategies for ELLs. Through the implementation of this professional development, administrators will know that the ELLs are being provided with every opportunity to be career ready at the completion of high school.

From the results of this study, the principles of Mezirow's (1991) theory of transformative learning were applied to create the professional development. As suggested by Mezirow, teachers must be able to recognize the need for change and act upon it. This professional development is applicable to all teachers of ELLs and could affect social change by utilization in every disciplinary area.

Applications for Future Research

Going forward, a recommendation for future research would be to study perceptions of disciplinary teachers across the nation. A quantitative approach could also

be generated with a larger sample size. With more data in hand, the results from the study site could be validated. Thus, the professional development could also be modified to fit the needs of a particular district. All in all, this study could be replicated in another district to compare the findings and recommendations of the teachers.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this project was developed utilizing the data yielded from the study site. All participants in the study requested professional development to increase their knowledge of literacy strategies for ELLs and to increase their own self-efficacy in delivering these lessons. To address the gap in practice, the professional development was created to provide teachers with literacy strategies for simultaneous delivery in a classroom with English and non-English speakers alike. The professional development allows educators the ability to discuss, collaborate, and create lessons to enhance literacy for ELLs. The literature review guided the professional development creation. Ultimately, all stakeholders should benefit from this project as it has implications for positive social change for everyone.

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Appendix A: The Project

The following project was developed as indicated from data collected in the qualitative study *Disciplinary Teacher Perceptions and Challenges of Literacy Instruction for English Language Learners*. The project is guided by scholarly articles and responses from the participants in the study. The following scholarly resources were used to support the project:

Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation. (2020). CAEP consolidated handbook. Washington, DC.

Fenty, N.S., McDuffie-Landrum, K., & Fisher, G. (2012). Using collaboration, co-teaching, and question answer relationships to enhance content area literacy. *Teaching Exceptional Children, 44*(6), 28-37.

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Disciplinary Literacy for ELLs

Project Study

Three-Day Schedule



Day 1	Day 2	Day 3
Challenges for ELLs And Consistency of Disciplinary Literacy	Research-based Literacy Lessons for ELLs in Every Discipline	Reflection on Learning Vocabulary Strategies Assessment for Student Learning Collaboration and Planning

Registration	8:00-8:15	Google Survey
Introduction	8:20-8:30	ObjectivesSchedule
Session 1	8:30-9:30	Challenges for ELLs
Session 2	9:45-11:00	Speaker: From an ELL's perspective
Lunch	11:00-12:00	
Session 3	12:00-1:00	Available Resources Technology Presentation
Session 4	1:15-2:15	Importance of Consistency video/discussion
Closing	2:15-2:30	Exit Ticket: 3 Takeways from today

Day 1: Challenges for
ELLs

Consistency across the
Disciplines

Background: Why the project?

Teacher knowledge is crucial to student outcomes

Disciplinary Teachers are struggling to embed literacy lessons for ELLS

Standardized assessment scores

Number of ELLs in public schools are increasing.
Musu-Gillette et al. (2017) projected that by the year 2025, ELLs will represent at least one - quarter of the student population at public schools.



English Language Learning (ELL) Students

Characteristics:

- **Native language is not English**
 - **Difficulty with aspects of the English language**
 - **Migratory Employment of the family= move to several schools a year (Gorski & Pothini, 2018)**
 - **Various cultural backgrounds**
-

Who are ELLs?

Day 1 Conclusion

Questions or
Comments

Open discussion

Review of Today's
Topics

Turn and Talk with your
neighbor

Exit Ticket

What are 3 key
"takeaways" from
today's session?

Complete the Google
Form and submit before
leaving. See you
tomorrow!



Day 2:
Research-based
Literacy
Strategies for
ELLs

Registration	8:00-8:15	Google Form Q and A
Introduction	8:20-8:30	ObjectivesSchedule
Session 1	8:30-9:30	Creating Literacy Lessons for ELLs (Speaker) Objective: Participants will
Session 2	9:45-11:00	Application and Collaboration: Creating a literacy lesson for ELLs
Lunch	11:00-12:00	
Session 3	12:00-1:00	Application: Teaching a lesson for ELLs
Session 4	1:15-2:15	Sharing lessons and discussion
Closing	2:15-2:30	Evaluation

Day 2: Research- based Literacy Strategies for ELLs

Learning Needs for ELL

- Classroom support from ESL teachers
- Curriculum differentiated for culture
- Lessons that address different styles and comprehension levels
- Visual Aides
- Flexible Grouping
- Bilingual Resources (Vela et. al., 2017).
- Teacher Consideration



How do I meet these needs?

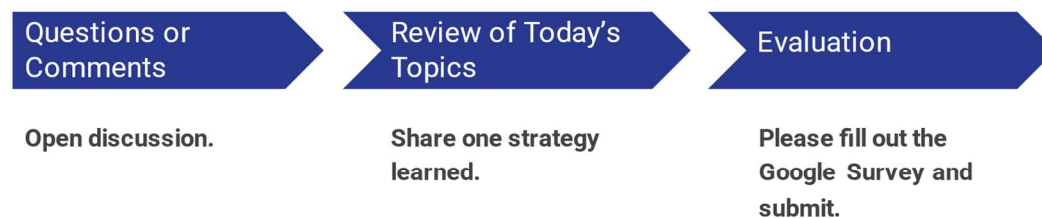
Educators “need opportunities to develop professional capabilities that will enable them to adjust and adapt instruction in appropriate ways for the diversity they are likely to encounter in their professional lives” (CAEP, 2020, p. 28).

Therefore, educators must:

- * Have high academic expectations
- * Cultural awareness
- * Know the students!
- * Provide authentic assessments
- * Parent-School Connections



Day 2 Conclusion



Registration	8:00-8:15	Open Floor Q and A
Introduction	8:20-8:30	ObjectivesSchedule
Session 1	8:30-9:30	Reflection on Learning; Past and Present
Session 2	9:45-11:00	Strategies for Vocabulary Presentation by Literacy Specialist from RESA
Lunch	11:00-12:00	
Session 3	12:00-1:00	Application:Assessing Student Learning
Session 4	1:15-2:15	Collaboration and Planning
Closing	2:15-2:30	Evaluation

Day 3: Reflection, Assessment, and Collaboration



Why should I collaborate?

Educators must work together to enhance the learning of students by shared planning for differentiated instruction (Mofield, 2020).

Through collaboration teachers can:

Identify personal biases and reevaluate perspectives

Look for possible challenges or opportunities

Design equitable and fair outcomes

Fabricate immediate and long - term solutions

Gain pedagogical strategies from another expert (Fenty et. al., 2012)

Put the plan into place!

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- Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation. (2020). CAEP consolidated handbook. Washington, DC.
- Fenty, N.S., McDuffie-Landrum, K., & Fisher, G. (2012). Using collaboration, coteaching, and question answer relationships to enhance content area literacy. *Teaching Exceptional Children, 44*(6), 28-37.
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- Musu-Gillette, L., De Brey, C., McFarland, J., Hussar, W., Sonnenberg, W., & Wilkins-Chickler, S. (2017). Status and trends in the education of racial and ethnic groups 2017. NCES 2017-051. *National Center for Education Statistics*.
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Disciplinary Literacy for ELLs PD Evaluation

Please fill out the following evaluation based on the two-day PD you just completed.

- 1. How would you rate the quality of the professional development? Mark only one oval.**

Excellent
Good
Neutral
Would Not Recommend

- 2. What impact will this PD have in your classroom? Mark only one oval.**

I already implement this information.
I will implement this material immediately.
I am too overwhelmed to implement.
Only parts of this information were useful.

- 3. Which session was/were the most helpful? Select all that are applicable.**

Challenges of ELLs
From an ELLs Perspective Resources- Technology
Importance of Consistency Creating Literacy Lessons Speaker
Collaboration/Application- Creating a literacy lesson
Application: Teaching a literacy lesson
Sharing and discussion with peers

- 4. Is there anything that you would like additional information on? Please include your email to receive an individualized response.**

Appendix B: Interview Question Guide

Alignment of Interview Questions to Research Questions and Mezirow's Theory of Learning

Interview Question	Research Question or Framework
1. What do you consider to be disciplinary literacy?	RQ1 Mezirow's Theory of Learning
2. What experience do you have with providing literacy strategies to ELLs?	RQ1
3. What literacy strategies have worked well in your disciplinary area to embed literacy strategies for ELLs?	RQ1 Mezirow's Theory of Learning
4. What literacy strategies did not work well when it was attempted to be embedded into the lesson? Follow Up- Explain why it did not work.	RQ1 Mezirow's Theory of Learning
5. Why do you feel that it is important to embed literacy strategies for ELLs into your discipline?	RQ1 Mezirow's Theory of Learning
6. What are your perceptions of providing consistent literacy strategies to ELLs?	RQ1
7. What preparation have you been provided to embed literacy	RQ1 and RQ2

instruction to ELLs in your discipline?	
8. What suggestions do you offer that can improve training to embed literacy instruction for ELLs into your discipline?	RQ2
9. What are a few resources that could aid in teaching literacy strategies to ELL students?	RQ2
10. What assistance have you previously been provided that allowed you to embed literacy strategies for ELLs into your instruction?	RQ2
11. Describe how you plan literacy instruction for ELLs in your classroom.	Mezirow's Theory of Learning RQ2
12. What did I not ask that you still would like to discuss or elaborate on?	Mezirow's Theory of Learning

Appendix C: RQ1 A Priori and Second Phase Codes

A Priori Code: Strategies**Table C1***RQ1 Coding Pattern 1: Limited Strategies; Usage of pictures*

Participant	Excerpt	Second phase code
P1	“few vocabulary strategies”	“limited strategies”
P2	“some phonics, pictures and graphs . . . for vocabulary”	“pictures- few strategies”
P3	“not very much . . . writing mostly with pictures”	“limited strategies; pictures”
P4	“manipulatives” “small group . . . pair some non- English speaking students with ELL students that are fluent in English and Spanish”	“peer strategies”
P5	“interactive notebooks so they can see what they are learning in pictures and words”	“one strategy; pictures”
P6	“Using pictures and flashcards for vocabulary; cube strategy”	“two strategies; pictures”
P7	“TIP chart . . . write the definition and then draw a picture that will make them think of the word”	“one strategy; pictures”
P8	“Pictures, small groups”	“two strategies”
P9	“graphic organizers; I have learned to use Google Translate”	“two strategies”

A Priori Code: Consistency**Table C2***RQ1 Coding Pattern 2: Importance of Consistency*

Participant	Excerpt	Second phase code
P1	“literacy is important not only in reading, but in math, as students must read and answer word problems”	“literacy is important” “must read”
P2	“It has to be consistent. If it’s not consistent and you have spots missing, then it would cause confusion and chaos.”	“has to be consistent”
P3	“If you don’t do it (literacy instruction) every day, you’ll forget to do it.. it’s just not beneficial. “make sure you are incorporating some form of literacy every day.”	“literacy every day”
P4	“It (literacy instruction) needs to be consistent across content areas, grade levels, and the entire school” “. . . the science department is focusing on literacy strategies, but social studies and math is not . . . it’s not effective.”	“consistent in all areas,grades”
P5	“students need it (literacy) in social studies and math, and all the other subjects, as well, to help them understand the big picture. If they got confidence in my class with their language, they would also have confidence in ELA and other classes with their language.”	“literacy in all subjects...to understand the big picture”
P6	“find those procedures in the word problem is crucial from literacy strategies.”	“crucial from literacy strategies”
P7	“literacy is important for them to be able to understand the concept of science”	“important... understand concept”
P8	“These kids really need to know how to read and write. This is essential to be able to survive in the real-world.”	“essential to be able to survive”
P9	“helping them be able to learn to read it and write can help them make connections across the curriculum so they can become better learners in every classroom.”	“make connections across the curriculum; better learners in every classroom”

A Priori Code: Preparation**Table C3***RQ1 Coding Pattern 3: Feeling Inadequate or Unprepared*

Participant	Excerpt	Second phase code
P1	“I do not feel prepared . . . I could provide better instruction for them if I had some guidance. I am very frustrated with my own lack of knowledge.”	“not prepared; frustrated”
P2	“self-exploration of content related to literacy on internet.”	“self-exploration”
P3	“not very much is done to embed literacy in my discipline . . . no training”	“no literacy-no training”
P4	“It is very frustrating because I am not prepared. Both the students and teachers are so discouraged.”	“frustrating; not prepared; discouraged”
P5	“I do not remember much (about preservice college work).”	“training not retained”
P6	“(the ESOL coordinator) does not come in and provide or demonstrate any strategies”	“no help with strategies”
P7	“frustrating for both the student and the teacher. I do not feel prepared. We have so many ELLs. No training in preservice education.”	“frustrating; not prepared; no training”
P8	“I have not had any preparation. I have not been trained to handle these (ELLs) students.”	“no preparation; not trained for ELLs”
P9	“It can be very stressful and overwhelming . . . students are not getting the quality education they deserve.”	“stressful; overwhelming; not getting quality education.”

Appendix D: RQ1 Third Phase Codes

Table D1*RQ1 Theme 1: Addressing Challenges with Strategies*

Participant	Excerpt	Third phase code
P1	“Handing or giving them the vocabulary without definitions with pictures and asking them to find it on their own. Students are not able to self-direct.”	“vocabulary without definitions with pictures” “not able to self-direct”
P2	“Cooperative learning and peer work (did not work) because all the information was limited to the other student providing translation and assistance.”	“Cooperative learning; peer work” “limited to the other student”
P3	“I have students that don’t want to learn in English or will not help themselves making it very difficult.”	“don’t want to learn in English” “Will not help themselves” “difficult”
P4	“Teaching a whole group lesson . . . relying on them (ELLs) to log in and begin their work independently did not work well.”	“whole group; independent” “did not work well”
P5	“Strategies that did not work were note taking as they did not understand the content due to language. Anything the student had to complete directly on their own.”	“did not work” “note taking” “did not understand the content” “directly on their own”
P6	“Pals does not work because some are reading at a high and low levels and it just did not match up.”	“Pals” “did not match”
P7	“Because there is such a language barrier, they (ELLs) do not understand anything I say, and I do not understand anything they (ELLs) say. Pairing them with a partner does not work well either. One person ends up doing all of the work.”	“language barrier” “do not understand” “Pairing with partner”
P8	“Whole group does not work because the ELLs are sitting there, they are lost, and they do not have a clue what is going on.”	“Whole group” “lost, do not have a clue”
P9	“Whole group does not work because the student feels like they are being submerged into the content and then they are not able to keep up with the other students or the teacher, so they become overwhelmed.”	“whole group” “not able to keep up” “overwhelmed”

Table D2*RQ1 Theme 2: Consistency With Embedding Strategies*

Participant	Excerpt	Third phase code
P1	“When planning literacy instruction, I look at the standard and ensure that all of my ELLs have some type of modified assignment when it comes to vocabulary.”	“planning . . . look at standard” “modified assignment . . . vocabulary”
P2	“I plan to provide pictographs for the vocabulary”	“plan to provide pictographs . . . vocabulary”
P3	“When planning, I look at the standards of what we are doing this week. Then, I incorporate the vocabulary.”	“planning . . . look at the standards” “incorporate the vocabulary”
P4	“When we present new material, we read the standard. We have student read the standard and then one of our Spanish fluent students will read it in Spanish. They will also read any directions in Spanish.”	“present new material . . . read the standard” “read it in Spanish” “read directions in Spanish”
P5	“I include the WIDA standards and differentiation. Truthfully, I do not plan specifically for these students.”	“WIDA standards” “differentiation” “do not plan specifically”
P6	“When planning . . . certain strategies like being able to see the vocabulary is important. We use flashcards. The pictures help create meaning for academic vocabulary and the standard.”	“planning . . . certain strategies” “see the vocabulary” “pictures to create meaning for academic vocabulary”
P7	“When planning . . . I look at the vocabulary and make sure that the students can use a TIP chart.”	“planning vocabulary” “TIP chart”
P8	“I try to make sure that I have a lot of visuals. I try to have graphic organizers because I know that those types of instructional strategies do help.”	“visuals; graphic organizers” “strategies do help”
P9	“When I am planning for ELL instruction, I pretty much use the same resources that I use for my lower students or my students with disabilities because these are lower level resources.”	“planning for ELL instruction” “same resources . . . lower students; students with disabilities . . . lower level resources”

Table D3*RQ1 Theme 3: Acquisition of Strategies for Literacy*

Participant	Excerpt	Third phase code
P1	“I give students their vocabulary words with the definitions. I also provide pictures and giving them definitions in Spanish. Other than this, I really do not have any strategies.”	“vocabulary words with pictures; definitions in Spanish” “do not have any strategies”
P2	“No assistance given for science specific literacy instruction”	“no assistance” “science specific literacy”
P3	“I look up words in their (ELLs) language and make sure I have dual language for all vocabulary”	“Words . . . language” “vocabulary”
P4	“reading is heavy in math. If you can’t read, then I don’t believe that you can do any subject area.”	“reading . . . in math” “can’t read . . . can’t do any subject area”
P5	“high number of ESOL students, I’ve always tried to do some differentiation”	“High number” “some differentiation”
P6	“If you can’t read the word problem, then you can’t solve the word problem”	“can’t read” “can’t solve”
P7	“(ELLs) need one-on-one instruction.”	“one-on-one”
P8	“they do not understand until I get there and one-on-one with them.”	“do not understand” “one-on-one”
P9	“adapt it (literacy strategies for elementary students) to the middle school classroom for ELLs”	“adapt”

Appendix E: RQ2 A Priori and Second Phase Codes

A Priori Code: Resources**Table E1***RQ2 Coding Pattern 1: Not enough resources or support*

Participant	Excerpt	Second phase code
P1	“ESOL coordinator sends out articles to read” “no collaborative planning with ESOL coordinator”	“no collaboration”
P2	“need more phonics resources relative to science to help ELLs better interpret vocabulary.”	“need more resources for vocabulary”
P3	“ESOL teacher checks in once a week but does not come into the classroom and work with students. An online program would help provide literacy strategies for ELLs”	“no classroom help; need online program”
P4	“ESOL teacher does not come into the classrooms often for student instruction or planning”	“no one in classroom to help; no collaboration”
P5	“Need more training and more time to plan. Teachers are rushed to develop a plan. Online resources would be easy for both the student and the teacher.”	“need training; time to plan; online resources for both the student and the teacher”
P6	“ESOL teacher only completes paperwork. She does not come in and provide any strategies. Anything online that involves vocabulary strategies or teaching new languages to the teacher would help.”	“no one in classroom for strategies”
P7	“Resources that could in teaching literacy to ELLs would be mainly professional development or an online class.”	“need professional development or online class”
P8	“we need much better communication with the ESOL coordinaton . . . let her be able to come into the classroom and help teach these students like a co-teacher. She (ESOL coordinator) is overwhelmed with paperwork.”	“need help from ESOL coordinator”
P9	“A true ELL or ESOL teacher that could come in and actually help with small groups . . . would be the most beneficial resource.”	“ESOL teacher to help”

A Priori Code: Suggestions**Table E2***RQ2 Coding Pattern 1: Need for Professional Development*

Participant	Excerpt	Second phase code
P1	“need some type of basic training for literacy instruction for ELLs. Recommend professional development specifically for ELLs in math with vocabulary acquisition.”	“need training; professional development specific to ELLs”
P2	“No assistance for science specific literacy instruction”	“no assistance”
P3	“needs to be more training for teachers no matter how many years they have been teaching. Professional development would help.”	“need more training; professional development”
P4	“We need more training... teachers do not know how to help these students.”	“need more training”
P5	“the district should find some (professional development) to meet our ELL needs.”	“professional development; specific ELL needs”
P6	“no professional development has been offered.”	“no professional development offered”
P7	“mainly (need) professional development or an online class specific to the class”	“need professional development; specific”
P8	“we need training . . . training needs to be worth taking and effective”	“Need training; effective”
P9	“trainings or professional developments that are geared toward my students with trainers who are knowledgeable about teaching ELLs.”	“professional development” “knowledgeable of ELLs”

Appendix F: RQ2 Third Phase Codes

Table F1*RQ2 Theme 1: Various Resources Needed*

Participant	Excerpt	Third phase code
P1	“online resources specifically for ELLs in math with vocabulary”	“online” “specific . . . vocabulary”
P2	“more phonics resources... to help students better interpret the vocabulary”	“phonics resources” “vocabulary”
P3	“an online program”	“online”
P4	“(ESOL teacher) does not come into the classrooms often for student instruction or planning”	“ESOL teacher” “instruction or planning”
P5	“more time to plan . . . online resources would be easy for both the student and the teacher”	“time to plan” “online resources”
P6	“anything involving vocabulary strategies . . . technology”	“vocabulary” “technology”
P7	“an online class...teachers could learn a little bit of their (ELLs) language”	“online class” “learn . . . language”
P8	“better communication with ESOL coordinator”	“communication” “ESOL coordinator”
P9	“true ELL or ESOL teacher (could help) . . . most beneficial”	“ELL or ESOL teacher”

Table F2*RQ2 Theme 2: Quality and Specific Training*

Participant	Excerpt	Third phase code
P1	“need some type of basic training for literacy instruction for ELLs. “A focus on academic vocabulary instruction”	“training for literacy instruction” “academic vocabulary”
P2	“a more phonics type approach . . . to help students better interpret vocabulary”	“phonics . . . interpret vocabulary”
P3	“needs to be more training for teachers (to embed literacy) no matter how many years they have been teaching”	“training to embed literacy”
P4	“more training to embed literacy or professional learning opportunities”	“training” “embed literacy” “professional learning”
P5	“training and professional development needs to be of quality. I need to know what works for the students I have.”	“training; professional development” “quality” “students I have”
P6	“professional development that involves vocabulary strategies”	“professional development” “vocabulary strategies”
P7	“In teaching literacy to ELLs . . . mainly professional development”	“literacy” “professional development”
P8	“it needs to be training that is worth taking and we need some that is effective . . . I need strategies that I can use in the classroom that are going to be quality and feasible.”	“training” “worth taking; effective” “strategies . . . quality and feasible”
P9	“training or professional development that are actually going to be geared toward my students with trainers who are knowledgeable about teaching ELLs”	“training; professional development” “geared toward students” “trainers . . . knowledgeable about ELLs”