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Urban Teachers' Perceptions of Their Challenges in Teaching Primary Grade English Language Learners

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This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

Justina Chizomam Bigelow

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Walden University
2023

Abstract

Urban Teachers' Perceptions of Their Challenges in Teaching Primary Grade English

Language Learners

by

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MEd Lincoln University, USA, 2015

BAEd University of Jos, Nigeria, 1995

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

The population of English language learners (ELLs) enrolled in primary grade urban schools has increased in recent years. There is a gap in the literature on urban teachers' perceptions of the challenges they face when teaching primary grade ELLs. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of urban primary grade teachers regarding the challenges they encounter when teaching ELLs, and what they need to successfully teach ELLs. The seven principles of second language learning by Gupta provided the conceptual framework for this study. A basic qualitative design addressed two research questions that focused on urban teachers' perceptions of successes and challenges they encounter when teaching ELLs, and what they need to successfully teach primary grade ELLs in urban schools. An open-ended interview protocol was followed with 12 urban primary grade teachers recruited through social media groups and publicly available email addresses in the mid-Atlantic United States. Transcribed interview data underwent thematic analysis based on Saldaña's work. Findings revealed that participants (a) encounter multiple successes teaching ELLs when they follow principles of second language learning, (b) encounter a range of challenges in multilingual classrooms, and (c) need resources to support their teaching practices with ELLs. Findings from this study contribute to positive social change by furthering a deeper understanding of challenges teachers encounter teaching ELLs in urban schools, and the successes teachers realize in knowing and following the principles of second language learning in multilingual classrooms. Policymakers can use findings to create policies that provide the resources and professional development needed by urban school primary grade ELL teachers.

Urban Teachers' Perceptions of Their Challenges in Teaching Primary Grade English

Language Learner Students

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Dedication

I dedicate this doctoral study to my late parents: the late Mr. Innocent Ezenmadu Onuoha and the late Mrs. Virginia Onuoha. Though they are gone, they will never be forgotten; I am very grateful for the legacy they left behind.

Also, I dedicate my doctoral study to my husband, Mr. Herbert Bigelow who showed me so much love and support throughout my doctoral journey. He made countless sacrifices to ensure that I was focused on my studies; when I became overwhelmed, he was there to listen to me and encouraged me to push through. And to our daughter, Amarachi Pearl Bigelow, who was instrumental to my success! I call her *Amarachi* which means "the grace of God" in the Igbo language. Amarachi is my special gift from God; she plays her ukulele to calm me down when I hit the bricks. Furthermore, I dedicate my doctoral study to my friend, Yvonne Ferguson-Hardin, my mentor, Dr. Dennis Creedon, and my siblings: Dr. Patience Onuoha, Engr. Godwin Onuoha, Engr. Innocent Onuoha, and Mrs. Charity Alozie who cheered me on throughout my journey.

Finally, I dedicate my doctoral study to Prof. Chigozie Okere, who inspire me to embark on my doctoral journey in 2020; it all started with a casual phone conversation. I am glad I listened to his counsel. Here I am at the end of my journey which began with just a casual phone conversation with Prof. Chigozie Okere.

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First, I acknowledge my God! Who is my SOURCE, my strength, my hope, and my JOY. It has been God all the way, when I felt like giving up, HIS ever-failing love saw me through my doctoral journey. My God, you are good!!! I also want to acknowledge my committee members: Dr. Mary Barbara Trube, and Dr. Sarah Hough who guided me through my dissertation process.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

The focus of the study was to explore urban primary grade teachers' perceptions of the challenges they encounter when teaching primary grade English language learners (ELLs). The study is important because there is a gap in the literature on challenges faced by urban primary ELL teachers (see Li & Peters, 2020; Okhremtchouk & Sellu, 2019; Ridley et al., 2019; Viesca et al., 2019). This study has potential social implications that could lead to a deeper understanding of ELL teachers' successes and challenges when teaching ELLs and what they need to support primary grade ELLs in urban schools. This chapter includes a review of the background literature, problem statement, purpose of the study, and research questions. There is an overview of the conceptual framework and the study's nature, assumptions, limitations, significance, scope, and delimitations. Also included are definitions of key terms and concepts related to this study. I conclude with a summary of key points.

Background

The percentage of enrollment of ELLs in public schools in the United States is increasing (Ramírez et al., 2018). Research revealed that in the fall of 2020, ELL students constituted 13.7% of public school enrollment in primary grade urban schools, which was higher than in the previous school years (National Center of Statistics, 2023). In general, there is a higher enrollment of ELLs in primary urban schools than in the upper and higher grade levels (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022). The high enrollment of ELL students can be very challenging; general education teachers are not receiving training and professional development required to support the learning needs of their ELL

students (Gillon, 2023; Li & Peters, 2020). Viesca et al. (2019) found that teachers often feel underprepared to teach ELL students, who are often multilingual learners, in mainstream classrooms. Many contemporary researchers point out that more research is needed to understand the perceptions of primary-grade teachers regarding the challenges encountered in teaching ELLs (Li & Peters, 2020; Okhremtchouk & Sellu, 2019; Ridley et al., 2019; Viesca et al., 2019). Despite the plethora of current information available on teaching practices to support the learning needs of ELLs, my exhaustive review of the current literature revealed little information regarding urban primary grade teachers' perceptions of the challenges they encounter when teaching ELLs.

Due to the gap in literature more research is needed to explore urban primary grade teachers' perceptions of teaching ELLs and what teachers needed to improve their ability to effectively teach ELL students. As a result of the gap in knowledge, policymakers may provide teachers with what they need to meet the needs of ELLs. Larios and Zetlin (2023) advocated for further studies to improve ELL students' education quality. This study has the potential to contribute to the literature and has social implications that may improve the quality of teaching ELL students. This study also supports positive social change as administrators become more familiar with the perceptions and needs of their ELL teachers, allowing them to provide more significant support for urban primary grade ELL students.

Problem Statement

The problem addressed by this basic qualitative study with interviews was that urban primary grade teachers encounter challenges in teaching primary grade ELL

students (see Li & Peters, 2020; Okhremtchouk & Sellu, 2019; Viesca et al., 2019).

Researchers suggested that teachers often feel underprepared to teach ELL students in a

single classroom serving students whose home languages are diverse (Li & Peters, 2020;

Okhremtchouk & Sellu, 2019; Viesca et al., 2019); thus, ELLS in urban schools often

represent speakers of multiple languages in a single classroom. The increase in the ELL

student enrollment in the United States primary grade schools and the greater demands on

primary grade teachers to meet their learning needs, pointed to the need for more research

on teachers' challenges and what they need to successfully teach ELLs (Li & Peters,

2020; Okhremtchouk & Sellu, 2019; Ridley et al., 2019; Viesca et al., 2019). In their

recent review of the literature, Viesca et al. (2019) found that ELLs have unique

educational needs to access the curriculum and that teachers are struggling because they

lack sufficient training to address the complex learning needs of ELLs. Researchers

suggested teachers need creative solutions that follow a whole-child approach to address

the learning needs of ELLs in classrooms in the United States (Viesca et al., 2019). There

is a gap in the literature regarding urban primary grade teachers' perceptions of the

challenges they face when teaching ELL students.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of urban primary grade

teachers regarding the challenges they encounter when teaching ELLs and what they need

to successfully teach primary grade ELLs in urban schools. The study has potential social

implications that might lead to a deeper understanding of the challenges teachers

encounter when teaching primary grade ELLs and what they need to successfully teach primary grade ELLs in urban schools.

To address this gap in the literature on identifying challenges encountered by urban primary grade teachers and what they need to teach ELLs (Li & Peters, 2020; Okhremtchouk & Sellu, 2019; Ridley et al., 2019; Viesca et al., 2019), I conducted a basic qualitative study with digitally recorded interview sessions with 12 urban primary grade teachers.

Research Questions

The two research questions that guided this study were as follows:

RQ1: What are the perceptions of urban primary grade teachers regarding the successes and challenges they encounter when teaching ELLs?

RQ2: What do urban primary grade teachers need to address the challenges they encounter when teaching ELLs?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this qualitative study was based on the seven principles of second language learning by Gupta (2019). The conceptual framework supported the development of the interview questions. The logical connection between the framework and my study's nature includes the principles and practices of teaching ELLs that Gupta presented which focused on the seven principles of second language learning. The framework is aligned with my research study as it provides strategies for teaching ELLs. Gupta's framework was appropriate as a conceptual framework for this

study as it outlined seven principles of second language learning that had been identified

in the research literature:

- Know your student and their motivation to learn a second language.

- Create a welcoming classroom environment.

- Build background knowledge.

- Provide comprehensible input by building vocabulary.

- Include frequent opportunities for interaction and discussion.

- Use multiple modalities during instruction.

- Conduct ongoing review and assessment.

Gupta's (2019) conceptual theory was relevant to my study and research

questions because understanding Gupta's seven principles for second language learning

might help ELL teachers because it supports the use of collaborative social lessons,

student-teacher relationships, student motivation, and language acquisition techniques.

Therefore, I used the interview protocol matrix (see Appendix B) to show how the

conceptual framework was incorporated into the interview questions. The conceptual

framework also guided my data analysis because the a priori codes were derived from it.

In Chapter 2, I provided greater detail on the connections among key elements of the

framework.

Nature of the Study

The nature of this study was a basic qualitative study. According to Mishra and

Alok (2022), a basic qualitative research design allows for in depth inquiry and

examination to discover patterns and themes from the data. I interviewed primary grade

teachers who worked with primary grade ELL students and asked specific questions to explore their perceptions concerning the challenges they encounter when teaching ELLs and what they need to successfully teach primary grade ELLs in urban schools.

I obtained data from recorded interviews with 12 participants and made notations of my impressions; where replies were not exactly to the question, I reinstated the questions or asked to follow up questions where needed to gain clarity and accuracy of participants' responses. I listened to the participants' voices, taking note of hesitancy and tone of voice. I read the transcripts carefully three times, highlighted the patterns found, and sorted the codes into categories. I ended with ten categories, which emerged into three themes.

To reduce any bias in my analysis, I engaged the interview volunteers in providing feedback about my interpretation of data through member checking to enhance the trustworthiness of findings (see Shenton, 2004). Saldana (2021) advised the use of triangulation to reduce bias in the analysis of a qualitative study, as this improves the trustworthiness of a study. The result of this analysis could help provide answers that will help guide policies and decision making on how to provide the resources ELL teachers need to successfully teach ELLs.

Definitions

The definitions of key concepts or constructs related to my topic are as follows:

Bilingualism and Bidialectalism: According to Byfield (2019), bilingualism and bidialectalism describe speakers of dialects and two languages, respectively. Bilinguals

speak two languages, while students who speak standard American English and another language are called bidialectal.

Bilingual Education Act in 1968: Bilingual Education Act is the act that promoted bilingualism to address the educational needs of ELLs (National Association of Bilingual Education, 2022).

Comprehensible input: Comprehensible input is an instructional strategy for teaching ELLs where the teacher provides input that allows ELLs to understand the lesson. The comprehensible input includes the use of realia, drawings, and images. (Patrick, 2019).

English language learners (ELLs): According to Byfield (2019), English language learners are students who are speakers of languages other than English. The United States Department of Education (2002) defined ELLs as "students whose language is a language other than English and whose difficulties in speaking, reading, writing or understanding the English language may deny the individual the opportunity to participate fully in society" (p. 69).

English for speakers of other language (ESOL): English for speakers of other language (ESOL) is the teaching of English to students whose native language is not English. Most school districts have ESOL teachers work together with the classroom teacher to support ELL students (Tuttle et al., 2021).

English proficiency level (EPL): English proficiency level (EPL) is a multilingual student's level of English language ability. As measured on a scale of 1-6 using the World Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) screener. The EPLs are

measured annually using listening, speaking, reading, and writing assessments. The EPLs assessment aims to identify ELLs' current level of proficiency (Gamez, 2021).

Mainstream teachers: Mainstream teachers are sometimes called general education teachers. They are trained to teach certain subjects or specific grade levels in elementary, middle, or high school but not prepared as bilingual or ESL specialist (Mills et al., 2020).

Multiple modalities: Multiple modalities are the method of teaching that caters to different learning styles: visual, auditory, and kinesthetic. Multiple modalities address ELL students' needs (Wang et al., 2021).

Sheltered instruction: Sheltered instruction is a method of teaching grade level subjects in English in a comprehensible and engaging way through the use of visual aids, cooperative learning, vocabulary preview, graphic organizer, peer tutoring, and language support to enhance ELL students' fluency in English (Institute of Education Sciences, n.d.).

Translanguaging: Translanguaging is any activity that allows the learner to choose any linguistic repertoire to learn (Deng & Hayden, 2021). In other words, translanguaging is when a student's native language is recognized and used to promote a deeper understanding of the subject matter.

Total physical response (TPR): Total physical response (TPR), according to Xie, (2021), is a method of teaching language whereby the teacher demonstrates what he or she is saying to facilitate comprehension of spoken language. This method is very helpful for teaching ELLs.

World Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) Consortium: is a group of states' departments of education dedicated to designing and implementing high standards and equitable opportunities for English learners to succeed. WIDA screener is an assessment tool used to access the level of English proficiency of ELL students (Gamez, 2021).

Assumptions

This qualitative study was based on three assumptions. My first assumption was that primary grade teachers would provide honest and transparent responses to interview questions. The reason for this assumption was that the participating primary grade teachers had worked in primary grade classrooms with ELL students. My second assumption was that the interview questions would appropriately capture the experiences of primary grade teachers. This assumption was because the interview questions were reviewed by a panel of experts. Finally, I assumed I had chosen the best methodology to answer the research questions. This assumption was because the basic qualitative research approach aligned with my research problem, purpose, and questions. These assumptions are necessary for data validity (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Validity refers to the trustworthiness of the research findings (Burkholder et al., 2020) of the study/or protocol.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope and delimitations of this basic qualitative study allowed me to explore the perception of urban primary grade teachers regarding the challenges they encountered when teaching ELLs and what they needed to successfully teach primary grade ELLs in urban schools. My research boundary was limited to urban school districts in states that

comprised the mid-Atlantic region of the United States. Teachers who met the criteria for participation in the study worked in 12 different urban school districts in the mid-Atlantic United States. The scope of this study was the group to which the study was applicable, and the delimitations narrowed the study down to the participants and location by specifying what the study would not include (see Burkholder et al., 2020). Scope and delimitation were, therefore, important elements in this research study. The scope included what I wanted to explore, while the delimitation specified the boundaries (see Burkholder et al., 2020).

The research problem addressed in the study was the challenges urban primary grade ELL teachers face in teaching ELLs. I chose this specific focus because it was instrumental to the learning outcome of ELL students. Li and Peters (2020) emphasized that instructional accommodations play essential roles in learning outcomes for ELLs. Addressing this aspect of the problem would benefit ELL students. The scope of this study was limited to licensed primary grade teachers. The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of urban primary grade teachers regarding the challenges they encounter when teaching ELLs and what they need to successfully teach primary grade ELLs in urban schools. The literature on the quality of education of ELL students supported the participant selection, as there is a gap in the literature on primary grade teachers' perception of challenges they face in teaching primary grade ELL students. While there is an abundance of information on the quality of education of ELL students, little was known about urban primary grade teachers' perceptions of the challenges they

face in teaching primary grade ELL students. A basic qualitative research design was chosen as the methodology to address the participating teachers' perceptions.

The delimitation of this study included the selection of participants for the study based on inclusion criteria. I explored the perception of urban primary grade teachers regarding the challenges they encountered when teaching ELLs and what they needed to successfully teach primary grade ELLs in urban schools. My research boundary was limited to urban school districts in states that comprised the mid-Atlantic region of the United States. Teachers who met the criteria for participation in the study worked in 12 different urban school districts in the mid-Atlantic United States. I used publicly available email addresses from websites for urban districts that enrolled at least 60% of students who were ELLs, many of whom were bilingual. The study did not include non-ELL primary grade urban schoolteachers.

Research questions (see Appendix A) were created following my conceptual framework. Other frameworks were not used. A panel of experts reviewed and approved the study's interview questions based on their appropriateness, validity, and reliability for addressing the research questions. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), transferability shows that the findings have applicability in another context. I have provided rich descriptive data that readers may use to determine if the findings of this study have the potential to be applied to other programs (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Shenton, 2004). Readers of this study may determine the transferability to their contexts.

Limitations

I have identified three limitations in this study. Limitations of a study are all the factors that are beyond the control of the researcher (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2019). The first potential limitation that might have appeared when collecting data included difficulty in recruiting interview participants. This limitation was addressed using virtual tools such as video calls at participants' convenience. Another limitation was that teachers' schedules might have prevented them from participating in the study due to their workload. I scheduled interview meetings outside of school hours, including weekends, to address this limitation. I also planned on addressing limited access to participants by contacting them on social media. I offered teachers who met the criteria for this study a $20 electronic Amazon gift card to acknowledge their contribution.

The third limitation was my bias as a teacher with experience teaching primary grade students. I have been passionate about meeting the needs of my multilingual students. Acknowledging and avoiding the personal bias that could have influenced the study was addressed using a reflective journal. A reflective journal is used by the researcher to record their thoughts, experiences, opinions, feelings, ideas, and key experiences. Burkholder et al. (2020) stated that keeping a reflective journal helped the researcher avoid bias because the researcher examines and clarifies their personal biases and identifies ways to improve their practice.

Significance

The study is important because there is a gap in the literature on urban primary grade teachers' perceptions of the challenges they encounter when teaching primary

grade ELL students. The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of urban primary grade teachers regarding the challenges they encounter when teaching ELLs and what they need to successfully teach primary grade ELLs in urban schools. The conceptual framework that informed this study was Gupta's seven principles of second language learning. The research question focused on urban teachers' perceptions of the challenges they encounter when teaching primary grade ELL students.

This study has a potential contribution to the field in that it fills the gap in the literature on urban primary grade teachers' perceptions of the challenges they encounter when supporting primary grade ELL students (see Larios & Zetlin, 2023). Exploring these perceptions may contribute to positive social change for primary grade ELL students because urban primary grade teachers will be able to effectively address their challenges because what they need has been revealed in my findings. The potential implication might be that it would address the gap in the literature, and administrators might be able to use the data gained from this study to make decisions that will improve the quality of teaching for ELL students.

Summary

In Chapter 1, I introduced the topic of my qualitative study, the need for this research, and the potential for social change based on the findings. To provide background, I identified the gap in the literature related to the scope of my study. I included the problem statement, purpose of the study, and research questions demonstrating the connections between my program of study and my research study. Open ended interview questions were meant to explore the perception of teachers'

experiences teaching ELLs. I also included the definitions of key concepts related to my topic. I included limitations of this study's assumption, scope, and delimitations to clarify the boundaries of the study and the significance of the study. This deeper understanding of the teacher's perception of what they need to teach primary grade ELL students in urban schools has the potential to contribute to information that could lead to positive social change.

In Chapter 2, I provide a synopsis of the existing literature and contributions to my research problem. I include the search strategies I use throughout the study; the conceptual framework for this qualitative study is Gupta's (2019) framework of seven principles of second language learning. I also include an exhaustive synthesis of the studies related to my topic, framework, and problem.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The problem that I addressed in this study was that urban primary grade teachers encounter challenges in teaching primary grade ELL students. The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of urban primary grade teachers regarding challenges they encounter when teaching ELL and what they need to successfully teach primary grade ELL in urban schools. Two phenomena were explored: teachers' challenges when teaching ELLs and what they need to teach ELLs in the urban classroom. In Chapter 2, I provide an in-depth and exhaustive review of the current relevant literature within the previous 5 years. I included the search strategy, and provided the conceptual framework which grounded the study.

Literature Search Strategy

I conducted an extensive literature search using Walden's databases, Academic Search Premier, Academic Search Complete, Education Resources Information Center, Google Scholar, PsychInfo, Education Resource Information Center (ERIC), and Sage Journals. Most of the articles chosen from the databases for this literature review were peer-reviewed and written within the last 5 years. The search terms included different combinations of keywords—*dual language learners, teacher education preparation professional development, policy framework, teacher training, equality, mainstream teachers, English language learners, bilingualism, multilingualism, ESOL, limited English proficiency, phonological awareness, transformative learning, emergent bilinguals, teacher perceptions, biliteracy, language policy, second language learning, challenges in teaching English; English First Additional Language, English language*

teaching, challenges, nonnative English speaking country, and *nonnative English speaking teacher.* Most of the articles chosen from the databases for this literature review were found through searches conducted through Google Scholar, ERIC, Sage Journals, Education Source, and PsychInfo, with limitations that ensured all sources were peer-reviewed and written within the last 5 years.

The iterative search was a step by step process in which I first established a defined goal for my study. I then focused on gathering necessary literature from the Walden University library to ensure the success of my study. I organized my literature with a literature matrix and my prospectus grid. After gathering substantial literature for my prospectus, I submitted my draft to my dissertation chair for review.

Conceptual Framework

In this study, I used Gupta's (2019) framework of seven principles of second language learning, which facilitates a meaningful educational experience that supports learning a second language. Gupta investigated literacy programs that were inclusive of ELL students' language and culture and found that teachers can be prepared on how to relate to their students' language and culture during small group instruction, transitional times, or by displaying books from the country/culture of students. Gupta elaborated on strategies for teaching ELL and pointed out that interaction is the key to second language proficiency.

The conceptual framework was focused on finding comprehensible input and multiple opportunities for interaction, which is the key to second language proficiency.

Gupta's (2019) research findings led to his development of the seven principles of learning a second language model. The seven principles are explained below:

Student-Teacher Relationship

  The first principle is about the student-teacher relationship; Gupta (2019) explained that knowing your students not only makes someone a better teacher but also makes the student a better learner. Students are more likely to engage in their learning when they have a relationship with their teacher; the teacher-student relationship allows the teachers to discover their students' learning needs. The relationship could be built during small group instructions, parent meetings, or school events. It includes learning the students' language, culture, values, family, home environment and creating a culturally responsive, welcoming classroom.

Create A Welcoming Classroom Environment

  The second principle is based on the need to create a welcoming classroom environment; building a welcoming and comfortable classroom environment helps build a relationship with ELL students, and one way to accomplish this is by labeling class items in different languages and incorporating cultural values in the curriculum. A welcoming classroom environment gives ELLs a sense of belonging.

Building Background Knowledge

  The third principle relates to building background knowledge. This is a vital principle for teaching ELLs. When children become familiar with a topic, comprehension becomes easier. Furthermore, building background knowledge with ELLs is crucial for their reading comprehension. Gupta (2019) explained that effective teaching results in

students achieving a higher level of understanding; it is the teacher's responsibility to tap into ELLs' prior knowledge and to activate it. Building background knowledge is an essential strategy for teaching ELLs.

Providing Comprehensible Input by Building Vocabulary

The fourth principle is providing comprehensible input by building vocabulary. The teacher needs to be sensitive to the ELLs' linguistic needs and adjust their teaching strategies using various visuals, print, and text conceptualizations. Gupta (2019) stated that effective teachers try to support their verbal communication by making it more understandable through visuals and providing sufficient background knowledge to help students understand the text. Gupta also suggested research based educational programs for ELLs like www.rewordify.com is a free online service that improves reading, learning, and teaching by simplifying the complexity of the text.

Frequent Opportunities for Interaction and Discussion

The fifth principle relates to including frequent opportunities for interaction and discussion (Gupta, 2019). When students have the opportunity to discuss and interact with their fellow students, it helps them to maintain their attention and apply what they have learned in the real context. Interactions could be encouraged in small group instructions, group or paired activities, and turn-pair-share. Interactive activities help ELLs overcome anxiety and timidity to speak in front of others.

The Use of Multiple Modalities During Instruction

The sixth principle is the use of multiple modalities during instruction. Exhibiting a wide range of teaching styles to meet the needs of ELLs provides space for the

development of unique learners' voices, ideas, thoughts, and opinions. The teacher can take advantage of sophisticated technologies to make learning fun and comprehensible. Teachers can use multiple learning modalities and integrated teaching styles to meet the needs of ELL students.

Conducting Ongoing Reviews and Assessments

The seventh principle is conducting ongoing reviews and assessments. It is an essential component of any instructional practice to evaluate its effectiveness of instruction, and it has formative, ongoing rather than summative, one-shot evaluation. Assessment is more than just grading student work; it is an ongoing evaluation of students' progress. It is an essential part of instruction; it allows the teacher to know the student's area of need and measure lesson effectiveness. Gupta (2019) recommended using multiple modalities to assess ELLs and follow any legal accommodations for assessing ELL students.

Gupta's (2019) framework is important in relation to my study. Gupta found these seven research-based principles teachers have followed when adapting and modifying their practices to support ELLs' learning needs. The seven principles have been found by researchers to be meaningful in addressing challenges teachers encounter when working with ELLs throughout classrooms in the United States (Deng & Zhu, 2022; Poudel, 2020; Zhang, 2022).

Previous Research That Applied Theories for Conceptual Framework

Three scholars used the seven research-based principles identified by Gupta for teaching ELLs successfully in primary grade classrooms in the United States (e.g., Deng

& Zhu, 2022; Poudel, 2020; Zhang, 2022). Examples of researchers who identified Gupta's principles of teaching ELLs as effective are presented in the following paragraphs.

Poudel (2020) used the second and fifth principles of teaching ELLs, which are creating a welcoming classroom environment and including frequent opportunities for interaction and discussion. Poudel described Gupta's (0219) principle of teaching English language learners as the general principles of teaching English as a foreign language. Poudel also mentioned that a good English language teacher needs to have a sound understanding of the approaches, skills, methods, and techniques of teaching ELL students.

Deng and Zhu (2022) used Gupta's fourth principle of teaching ELLs, which is the principle of providing comprehensible input by building vocabulary. The researchers' concept of mind mapping is used in teaching foreign languages and plays an important role in English classroom teaching. Mind mapping is an effective approach for teaching ELL students because it provides comprehensible input in learning and enhances pronunciation and writing skills.

Zhang (2022) used Gupta's (2019) sixth principle of teaching English language learners, which is using multiple modalities during instruction. Zhang promoted the use of auxiliary and alternative communication systems to improve English teaching for ELL students, whereby the teacher can combine text and technological images to promote students' understanding of knowledge. Research revealed that auxiliary and alternative

communication system has good application effect in teaching and can improve the effectiveness of teaching English to ELL students.

Literature Review Related to Key Variables and/or Concepts

In this section, I present relevant research that relates to the challenges that urban primary grade teachers encounter when teaching ELL students. This review of the current literature supported my ability to address the current gap in the literature by collecting data to answer the two research questions that guide the study:

RQ1: What are the perceptions of urban primary grade teachers regarding the successes and challenges they encounter when teaching ELLs?

RQ2: What do urban primary grade teachers need to address the challenges they encounter when teaching ELLs?

Specific literature on current research based articles on urban teachers' challenges in teaching ELLs revealed that teachers often feel underprepared to teach ELL students in mainstream classrooms. Challenges encountered by urban primary grade teachers found in the literature are related to student motivation, classroom environment, student background knowledge, comprehensible input and vocabulary, interaction and discussion, multiple modalities, review and assessment, English language learners, different programs available to ELLs, teacher preparation, professional development, English language learners with disabilities, strategies for working with ELLs, the role of the ESOL teacher, and parent engagement.

Student Motivation

Building a relationship with students and getting to know them increases their motivation level to learn the English language (Gupta, 2019). ELLs become more engaged and motivated to learn the English language when teachers build or develop a genuine relationship with them by showing a genuine interest in their lives. Ridley et al. (2019) suggested teachers should offer a curriculum that is culturally and linguistically responsive to students. Teachers need culturally and linguistically responsive curriculums that support and motivate ELLs to learn the English language.

Further research also revealed that primary grade teachers are challenged to motivate ELL students (Morgan et al., 2023; Ridley et al., 2019). Morgan et al. (2023) revealed that ELLs are motivated to learn English for two reasons. First, instrumental motivation is the motivation to fulfill academic milestones, while integrative motivation is the motivation to learn the English culture. Instrumental motivation has been found to sustain long time success when learning a new language. Research revealed that the motivation of ELLs can be impacted by social psychological variables like a positive and supportive environment as well as teacher-student relationship, which can increase the motivation to learn; when ELL teacher builds a relationship with their ELL students, they tend to develop an interest to learn the language (Azad et al., 2021; Larios & Zetlin, 2023; Ridley et al., 2019). Creating a supportive learning environment and building a strong teacher-student relationship could motivate ELLs to learn English (Azad et al., 2021); when ELLs feel comfortable in a learning environment, they tend to be responsive to the new language (Ridley et al., 2019).

Classroom Environment

Primary grade teachers are challenged to create a welcoming classroom environment. Research shows that creating a classroom that celebrates their strength rather than focusing on their perceived language and content deficits initiates and cultivates trusting relationships with ELL students and parents (Ridley et al., 2019). When ELL students and parents feel honored and valued by their teachers, they tend to grow academically. The classroom environment directly affects students' motivation to speak. The social aspect has an inhibiting effect on ELL students' engagement in speaking, whereby ELL students attribute their speaking anxiety to the fear of being teased by their English speaking classmates (Ness, 2023). Eichhorn et al. (2019) added that there is a need for teachers to create a welcoming learning atmosphere and build culturally responsive instruction for ELLs. Culturally stimulating environments and effective early literacy teaching strategies influence the success of ELLs (Chahin et al., 2023).

Gupta (2019) suggested that the use of visuals and pictures of students' cultural traditions with labels in both languages, grouping ELL students with respectable and trustworthy partners, saying their names correctly, and getting to know them will help to promote a welcoming and comfortable classroom. Another way of creating a welcoming classroom environment is by creating a culturally responsive classroom. Researchers see a culturally responsive class as a classroom that is student centered based on culture. Primary grade teachers are challenged to build a culturally responsive classroom (Fu & Wang, 2021). A culturally responsive classroom acknowledges the presence of cultural

differences, and students find a connection between themselves and the subject matter. Primary grade teachers can practice culturally responsive teaching by using students' cultural music to promote cultural values, connecting to students' background knowledge, and labeling classroom objects (Comstock et al., 2023; Fu & Wang, 2021). Culturally responsive teaching benefits ELL students because they learn best through cultural congruity.

Student Background Knowledge

Background knowledge supports reading comprehension; effective teaching takes children from where they are and leads them to a new experience of learning (Gupta, 2019; Krashen, 1985; Vygotsky, 1978). Urban primary grade teachers encounter challenges when ELLs are not familiar with the subject matter being taught. Building background knowledge for ELL students is an essential component of literacy. In other words, the more ELLs know about a topic, the easier it is to understand it. Researchers show that when introducing a new topic to ELL students, discussing the topic and concepts helps them to better relate to the topic (Din, 2023; Wawire & Barnes-Story, 2022). In other words, without background knowledge, ELLs will find it difficult to construct meaning from the text.

Comprehensible Input and Vocabulary

Comprehensible input is an instructional strategy for teaching ELLs where the teacher provides input that allows ELLs to understand the lesson. The comprehensible input includes the use of realia, drawings, and images (Patrick, 2019; Sembiante et al., 2023). Urban primary grade teachers encounter challenges in building comprehensive

input and vocabulary for ELL student because, in the course of language acquisition, ELL students often have various challenges, deficits, and disorders, which directly affects children's cognitive education, intellect, and the process of language development thereby leading to psychological changes (Hou, 2022). In other words, the teacher should make their verbal communication more understandable for ELLs using visuals and real objects to meet ELLs' linguistic needs; ELLs need to make meaning of what they are doing. Krashen (2009) and Cummins (2000) stated that for ELL students to acquire a new language, they must be exposed to the language in simplified terms by offering intensive support or scaffold strategies, which include contextualization, modeling, bridging, building schema, thematic planning, multiple entry points, and routines. Contextualization is contextualizing unfamiliar words through manipulatives, word walls, technology, and body language (Patrick, 2019). Modeling involves explicitly showing and demonstrating a concept – students need to be given a clear example of what they are expected to do. Furthermore, bridging and building schema means that the teacher should build new concepts on previous knowledge and understanding (bridge); also, students need to see the connection between what they are learning and their past lessons because background knowledge is crucial for ELLs. Multiple entry points are another scaffolding strategy that promotes differentiated instruction. Teachers should incorporate differentiated instruction so that all students can access the lesson. Finally, routines are an effective strategy for teaching ELLs; when routines are incorporated, language is used consistently and predictably, which helps build ELLs' confidence. Comprehensible input advances the ability to speak the targeted language. This difficulty in language

development of ELLs could improve when teachers use visual language support and incorporate effective teaching strategies such as differentiated instruction, scaffolding, routines, body language; ELLs tend to understand the lesson better when the teacher makes lesson accessible and comprehensible through the use of visual cues (Hou, 2022; Patrick, 2019).

Interaction and Discussion

Teachers are challenged to create opportunities for ELLs to interact. Spoken English has continued to be a concern among ELLs because it imposes certain cognition demands on the learner. Research has shown that classroom interaction and collaborative learning promote the practice of speaking English (Comstock et al., 2023). It is imperative that ELLs are provided with the opportunity to practice the targeted language (English) with their peers in an oral language format. Interaction can take place in small groups or pairs, turn and talk, jigsaw reading, book circles, and story scripts. In addition, Xie (2021) expressed the need for the teacher to provide adequate opportunities for young ELLs to practice the targeted academic language. The classroom teacher can effectively access ELLs' understanding of a subject matter when they are involved in activities that allow them to use the targeted language.

Multiple Modalities

Multiple modalities are different methods of teaching that cater to different learning styles: visual, auditory, and kinesthetic. Multiple modalities respond to ELL students' needs. Primary grade teachers encounter challenges when the learning needs of ELLs are not addressed; ELLs, like English-speaking students, have different learning

styles, such as kinesthetic, visual, verbal, and auditory. Educating them becomes more effective when the teacher takes the time to know them enough to understand their individual learning styles and purposely exhibits a wide range of teaching styles (Beisly et al., 2023; Hsu et al., 2023). Another good example of multiple modalities is the use of auxiliary and alternative communication systems to improve English teaching for ELL students, whereby the teacher can use the combination of text and technological images to deepen students' understanding of knowledge. Research reveals that auxiliary and alternative communication system has good application effect in teaching and can improve the effectiveness of teaching English to ELL students (Zhang, 2022). Using multiple modalities during instruction can be beneficial to ELL students because it increases their motivation to learn English.

Review and Assessment

Conducting an ongoing assessment is an essential component of any instructional practice to check for understanding, track progress, and provide necessary accommodation based on the outcome of the assessment (Gupta, 2019). Gupta (2019) recommends multiple assessments. Urban school primary grade teachers are challenged with the review and assessment of ELL students because substantial challenge remains in developing and implementing the alternate English language proficiency (Alt-ELP), which is the criteria for exiting the ELL program (de Valenzuela et al., 2022). Also, urban primary grade teacher is faced with challenges in developing and implementing the culturally and linguistically responsive (CLR) multitiered system of support (MTSS). Researchers recommend that school psychologists collaborate with the classroom teacher

to develop and implement effective CLR assessment to database decision-making practices in MTSS/RTI (Linen et al., 2022). When a teacher collaborates with a colleague, the outcome is usually productive. There is also an issue with the alignment aspect of English language proficiency (ELP) assessments. The basic tenant of current United States education policy is the alignment between what a test assesses and what content has been determined as meaningful for a student in each grade. The expectation is that a student's performance on a well-aligned assessment should indicate the student's level of mastery of content knowledge. Although the alignment methods and literature on academic content assessment are relatively well established, little guidance is available on how to evaluate the alignment of ELP assessment to standards in terms of their content match. ELL teachers have not had the required training on how to address the learning needs of ELL students (Bailey et al., 2022; Howlett & Penner-Williams, 2020). So, teachers need guidance to effectively evaluate the alignment of ELP assessment.

English Language Learners

In the United States, ELLs, or learners who speak a home language other than English, are enrolled in almost all school districts in the United States. The United States Department of Education (2002) defined ELLs as "students whose language is a language other than English and whose difficulties in speaking, reading, writing or understanding the English language may deny the individual the opportunity to participate fully in society" (p. 69). The population of primary grade ELL students enrolled in urban schools has increased in recent years (Gillon, 2023; Ramírez et al., 2018). Research reveals that the enrollment of ELL students in the fall of 2019 (10.4%, or 5.1 million ELL students) is

higher than the enrollment in the fall of 2010 (9.2%, or 4.5 million ELL students).

Researchers revealed that 792,000 ELLs enrolled in the United States of America

between 2019 and 2020 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022). Due to an

increase in the ELL student population in the United States of America, there is a need to

equip ELL teachers to meet the learning needs of ELL students in mainstreamed

classrooms in urban schools (Li & Peters, 2020; Okhremtchouk & Sellu, 2019; Viesca et

al., 2019). Li and Peters (2020) found that general education teachers are not receiving

training and professional development to address the needs of their ELL students. Li and

Peters (2020) emphasized that if the nation wants to see ELL students' improved learning

outcomes, there needs to be greater efforts devoted to learning how teachers can be

prepared through professional development. Desjardins (2020) stated that many ELL

students are instructed by teachers who lack training in how to best serve ELL students.

Rauĺ et al. (2019) added that most teachers give less rigorous work to ELLs because they

have low expectations of them. Owens & Wells (2021) added that mainstream teachers

use the wrong accommodation to teach ELL students because of their negative perception

and lack of knowledge of ELL education. Li and Peters (2020) found that general

education teachers are not receiving training and professional development to address the

needs of their ELL students, so they are not prepared to effectively work with the

growing ELL population, and more research is needed in this area. ELL students have

unique educational needs, and many ELLs in the United States classrooms struggle to

access the curriculum (Li & Peters, 2020).

Different Programs Available to ELLs

Different programs are available to ELLs in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States. According to de Valenzuela et al. (2022), schools are mandated to provide language instruction educational programs, such as English as a second language (ESL). To be legible for English language services (ELS), students must be identified as ELS; English language proficiency (ELP) assessments in the United States K-12 public students are used to identify students with a home language other than English (de Valenzuela et al., 2022). The programs include the social-emotional learning (SEL), research basic virtual educational program for ELLs, the translanguaging writing program, pull out, push-in program, and language assistant program.

Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)

Olivo et al. (2021) stated that social-emotional learning (SEL) is a process of developing and applying academic, social awareness, and relationship skills in the classroom environment. Research shows that ELLs face more socio-emotional and socio-cultural issues that peers in mainstream classrooms as part of the development and socialization of ELLs in U.S. Schools (Herrera & Martinez-Alba, 2021). Intervention data based on SEL core competencies (responsible decision making, relationship skills, self management, social awareness, and self awareness) are effective at improving ELL's self awareness and relationship skills (Olivo et al., 2021).

Research Based Educational Virtual Program for ELLs

There are research based educational programs for ELLs like rewordify.com, Lexia Core 5, and Lexia PowerUp. Rewordify.com provides free online services that

improve reading, learning, and teaching by simplifying the complexity of the text (Gupta, 2019). ELL students will benefit from it. Lexia Core 5 and Lexia PowerUp are fun computer based programs that have helped students in grades K-5, especially ELL students. Lexia PowerUp helps improve students' literacy skills (Hurwitz & Macaruso, 2021). The Lexia PowerUp literacy program was created to support struggling readers by combining online activities with delivered lessons (Hurwitz & Macaruso, 2021). Lexia will benefit ELL students.

The Translanguaging Writing Program

According to Parmegiani (2022), the translanguaging writing program gave ELLs the ability to use their mother tongue writing a translanguaging framework; the writing program gave them the opportunity to participate fully in academic literacy practice. Researchers found that the translanguaging allowed ELL students to say what they want to say and provided them the opportunity to increase student command of the lexical-syntactic structure they need to participate more fully in a mainstream classroom (Parmegiani, 2022; Sembiante et al., 2023). This program has played a vital role in building ELL students' confidence and academic improvement.

Pull-out and Push-in Program

Pull-out and push-in programs are usually done by the English to speakers of another language (ESOL) teacher. The pull-out and push-in programs help to improve ELLs students' English skills. In the pull-out, the ESOL teacher takes out ELL students from the mainstream classroom to a specific place and teaches content areas with

language support and accommodation. In the push-in program, the ESOL teacher joins the mainstream ELLs' classroom and assists ELL students during instructional time. (Cho et al., 2021). The pull-out and push-out programs are intended to support ELL students. However, when pulled out during instructional time, they miss the core lesson and have to study harder to make up for the lost instructional time.

Language Assistant Program

The language assistant program ensures that all ELL students achieve English proficiency and meet the academic expectations required of all students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022). ELLs can benefit from the services of a speech-language pathology assistant. The speech-language pathology helps to make language learning fun by teaching through conversation, games, and age-appropriate educational activities with the ELL. Strategies used by teachers in language assistance programs have been found to improve students' oral output, build their self-confidence, and enhance their speaking skills (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022). The goal of the language assistant program is to foster the literacy skills of the participants.

Teacher Preparation

Research revealed that ELL teachers do not have the required training in English language proficiency (ELP), and as such, they lack the skills to specifically address the need for suitable content instruction for ELLs (Dwomoh et al., 2022; Howlett & Penner-Williams, 2020; Kim et al., 2022). Further research indicated that teachers who positioned themselves in a variety of ways, such as a teacher for all students, a teacher for regular education students, or a teacher for a single subject, discovered that many teacher

preparation programs do not provide adequate training on facilitating instruction for

ELLs. A growing body of releases shows that many general education teachers feel

underprepared to work with multilingual learners; teachers are not trained and equipped

to teach ELLs (Deng et al., 2020; Olds et al., 2021; Viesca et al., 2019; Xu et al., 2022).

In addition, Poudel (2020) added that in many schools, the teachers are untrained, and

they do not have the pedagogical skills to address the needs of their ELL students. The

policymakers have not made teaching a prestigious job. This frustrating situation makes

teaching ELLs challenging for teachers. Teaching ELL students is challenging because

classroom teachers have limited professional development to help them teach grade level

content to limited English proficient students. More research revealed that the average

score from assessments measuring teachers' perceived preparedness to teach ELL

students in the mainstream education classroom was 2.16 on a four point scale (Deng et

al., 2020; Li & Peters, 2020; Okhremtchouk & Sellu 2019; Wissink & Starks, 2019)

Teacher Professional Development

Teacher professional development is a structured activity for teachers. It is

designed to increase or improve their ability to teach effectively (Sims & Fletcher-Wood,

2021). Researchers found that general education teachers are not receiving training and

professional development to address the needs of their ELL students (Choi et al., 2022; Li

& Peters, 2020). Larios and Zetlin (2023) added that educating ELL students requires

effective training that will support and guide teachers on how to create a more inclusive

learning environment to accommodate ELL students. Stairs-Davenport (2021) mentioned

that teachers were curious to know about the instruction, curriculum and assessment,

language differences, and strategies for teaching ELL. His findings suggest that most teachers work with ELLs but are not equipped to teach them.

English Language Learners with Disabilities

Primary grade teachers face challenges in teaching ELLs and even more challenges working with ELLs with disabilities. Research revealed that 792,000 ELLs enrolled in the United States were students with disabilities, which represented 15.5% of total ELL enrolment in 2019-2020 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022). The high enrollment rate of ELL students can be very challenging. According to Morgan et al. (2023), the practice of inclusion of children with a disability has increased worldwide since the deceleration of education for all. The increasing number of ELLs with disability across the globe with attention deficit hyperactivity (ADHD), down syndrome, autism spectrum disorder (ASD), dyslexia, and mental disorder retardation poses challenges to primary teachers who lack the skill to cater to all students. ELL students experience persistent problems in social communication and interaction. Morgan et al. (2023) argued that an ELL student with learning disabilities is less likely to be identified as having disabilities since the main focus is English language proficiency, and this is a violation of the Individual with Disabilities Education Act's (IDEA) Child Find, and Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) requirement. So, ELL students with disabilities who are not formally identified to receive special education services continue to lag academically. Due to their cognitive disability, most of them struggle to learn new vocabulary. Every learner learns in their learning style and preferences in acquiring a new language. Researchers reported learning could be a very challenging process for ELLs

with disabilities (Hashim et al., 2021). Primary grade teachers need to be supported to serve the growing population of ELLs with disabilities.

Role of the English for Speakers of Other Language (ESOL) Teacher

English for speakers of other language (ESOL) teachers work with the classroom teacher and school counselor transformatively to support the specific needs of ELL students, like language support and advocating for ELLS' rights. The United States public schools are legally obligated to provide ELLs with equal, inclusive education opportunity and instructional support services, and the services of ESOL teacher is one of them (Tuttle et al., 2021).

Parent Engagement

Parent engagement is an interactive process whereby parents and schoolwork together to support the learning development of a student. It is a shared responsibility of parents and the school that requires mutual respect and understanding. The goal of parent engagement is student success. It is the school's responsibility to recognize the language and cultural differences, provide all correspondence in the parents' local language, and facilitate educational workshops to keep them informed about the classroom's academic contents so that they can support their children. (Early Childhood National Center, 2023). ELL students will benefit from parent engagement.

Ridley et al. (2019) encouraged teachers to promote parent engagement by initiating and cultivating trusting relationships based on mutual respect and partnership with the parents of their students to engage in their children's schooling. When parents feel valued and respected by their child's teacher, they will be engaged in their child's

learning, and it all starts with a mutual relationship and communication. Research shows that parent engagements built on broad empowerment, mutual respect, understanding, and shared responsibility lead to reading improvement and general academic growth of students. There should be resources like interpreters, translated school memos, and parent programs readily available and accessible to all ELL families (McCarthy et al., 2020; Sommer et al., 2020; Stauss et al., 2021). Premo et al. (2023) added that parent engagement promotes student attendance and enhances ELLs' motivation to learn the English language. Based on the research's findings, parents should be welcomed and respected in the school building and involved in their child's education.

Strategies For Working with ELLs

In this section, I presented various evidence based strategies found in the current literature that teachers have used when working with ELLs. The various strategies for working with ELLs are as follows: vocabulary instruction, sound wall, differentiated instruction, sheltered instruction, reader's theater, integrated content, collaborative reading, total physical response (TPR), use of realia, and mind mapping.

Vocabulary Instruction

Research reveals that academic vocabulary plays important role in language acquisition. Guiding principles for vocabulary instruction are found to be helpful in addressing the challenges ELL teachers face when teaching academic vocabulary to ELL students. The guiding includes principles of vocabulary instruction include building students' background knowledge, providing multiple exposures to the vocabulary, using visuals, providing opportunities to hear and use the new vocabulary, modelling how to

use academic language, and explicit instruction (Wei, 2021). In addition, Rojas et al. (2023) suggested that the acknowledgment and use of students' native language in an educational environment is a useful strategy for vocabulary instruction. Finally, developing word consciousness is another guide for teaching vocabulary; teachers can empower students to develop strategies for independent word learning (Din, 2023; Wei, 2021).

Sound Wall

According to Novelli and Sayeski (2022), sound walls help students make the speech to print connection, the visual representation of how the sounds are produced (mouth picture). Sound wall teaches ELL students speech gestures that support students' phonemic awareness (Novelli & Sayeski, 2022). A sound wall is a phonics support strategy focusing on articulating sounds/phones. The mouth formation visuals make it ELL-friendly.

Differentiated Instruction

The goal of differentiated instruction is to provide resources to meet the civil rights obligations to provide each ELL student with appropriate education, language support, and meaningful access to academic instruction. Researchers stated differentiated instruction is essential to ELLs' academic success. (Gallardo et al., 2020; Petray et al., 2021). Other researchers added that differentiated instruction is an effective instructional strategy for teaching ELL students, and it allows ELL teachers to cater to diverse cultural groups of students in the classroom (Kiramba et al., 2022).

Sheltered Instruction

ELLs need additional support to achieve academic success, and sheltered instruction is one of the strategies for supporting ELLs. Desjardins (2020) noted that sheltered instruction is teaching ELL students grade level subjects in English in a way that is comprehensible and engaging. As linguistic diversity increases in the United States, primary grade ELL teachers have faced challenges implementing instructional strategies designed to increase proficiency because they receive little or no training to provide the support (Desjardins, 2020; WWC, n.d.). ELLs need to learn academic content and develop proficiency in the English language. Researchers developed the sheltered instruction observation protocol (SIOP), which is an instructional model for ELL students' linguistic development and educational achievement (Shi et al., 2021).

Reader's Theater

Reading has been a challenge for ELL students. Reader's theater is another instructional strategy used for increasing reading fluency. Researchers describe reading theater as a way to build fluency in reading; it requires students to practice reading aloud with expression. The goal of reading theater is to increase fluency in a fun and engaging way. The reader's theater strategy benefits ELL students because they read the same text extensively until they become fluent (Khing, 2020; Kulo et al., 2021; Thienkalaya & Chusanachoti, 2020; Uribe, 2018). Based on the research's findings, reader's theater is an effective instructional approach for ELLs.

Integrated Content

Integrated content strategy is teaching content to make academic content accessible for ELL students. Research revealed that ELL teachers are challenged to provide language and content area instruction. However, English can be taught in a content set through carefully constructed learning activities. ELL teachers can teach any subject by linking language development with content learning (Peng, 2022). Researchers mentioned building ELL students' background knowledge supports comprehension (Durgunoglu et al., 2021). Background knowledge plays an important role in the comprehension of the text; the integrated content strategy is designed to facilitate ELLs' language development.

Collaborative Reading

Collaborative reading is another instructional strategy for improving ELL student fluency skills. The researcher explained that during collaborative reading, the classroom teacher collaborates with the speech pathologist through shared book reading to enhance their instructional quality and effectively support the language and literacy needs of ELL students. (Solmaz, 2020; Murphy et al., 2023). Primary grade teachers are challenged to provide space or opportunities for ELLs to interact and discuss freely. Collaborative reading has been found to benefit ELL students; they are able to successfully socialize in linguistically and culturally rich socio interactive spaces. ELL students need a conducive and safe learning environment to practice the targeted language (English) with their classmates in the classroom, and collaborative reading is one of the strategies for increasing the opportunity for ELLs to interact and discuss. Moreover, Teng (2020)

mentioned that in addition to collaborative reading, self regulated strategy development (SRSD) improves reading skills. This strategy of teaching ELL students can help improve their reading skills.

Use of Realia

Realia are real objects that help language learners connect with the content taught in the classroom. Rahmayani (2022) explained that realia are visual teaching aid used to provide ELL students with direct experience in a learning environment. They promote vocabulary acquisition, motivate ELLs to learn a language, and significantly improve students' vocabulary mastery. Vocabulary is important and fundamental in language acquisition. Realia could be in the form of concrete objects used to help the learner. Researchers found that the use of realia has improved vocabulary mastery and that they are also fun and enjoyable learning processes for ELL students (Fitri, 2022; Lee et al., 2021; Manapbayeva et al., 2021). The use of realia is another beneficial strategy for teaching ELL students. This research study has revealed that vocabulary is the main foundation for speaking any language, and as such, mastering the vocabulary through the use of realia is very helpful for language acquisition.

Total Physical Response (TPR)

According to Xu (2020), Total physical response (TPR) is a technique for teaching vocabulary or language to young English learners by using the physical movement of the body to support verbal output; it is bringing the word to life, for example, if the teacher wants to tell a young ELL to put the pencil on the table, he can hold up a pencil and demonstrate how to put the pencil on the table while the young

learner learns by listening to the teacher's oral communication and observation of the teacher's action. Xu (2020) stated that TPR is a good teaching method for teaching a second language to ELL students and that the purpose of TPR is to create a positive connection between action and speaking to promote language and vocabulary learning efficiency. Xie (2021) recommends TPR for teaching young ELLs because it is a practical way of teaching ELL students, increases ELL students' motivation to learn English, promotes a positive attitude toward learning, and develops young ELLs' initial ability to use English in daily communication. TPR activities involve the use of pictures, flashcards, songs, storytelling, role plays, and rhymes. It plays a vital role in young ELLs' language acquisition. However, primary grade teachers lack adequate training to fully implement the TPR teaching technique. Research has shown that when using the TPR method, children tend to be active in learning the English language and have shown improvement in vocabulary test scores (Itmeizeh & Saleh., 2022; Nuraeni, 2019; Xu, 2020). TPR is useful for teaching young ELL students to learn English because it creates a good learning atmosphere.

Mind Mapping

Mind mapping is another technique for teaching ELL students. Researchers explained that it is an effective approach for teaching ELL students because it provides comprehensible input in learning, making learning meaningful for ELL students (Deng & Zhu, 2022). This research on mind mapping is used in teaching foreign languages, and it plays an important role in English classroom teaching.

Ways Researchers in The Discipline Have Approached the Problem

In this section, I reviewed the current literature and described how other researchers approached ELL teachers' challenges and the strengths and weaknesses of their approaches. Researchers approached the research problem through qualitative and quantitative approaches, and their participants were teachers, school administrators, and students. Very few researchers explored the challenges of primary grade teachers when teaching ELLs (Li & Peters, 2020; Okhremtchouk & Sellu, 2019; Ridley et al., 2019; Viesca et al., 2019).

Professional Development For ELL Teachers

The main research question for this study concerned the primary grade teachers' experiences with teaching ELLs. Li and Peters' (2020) study on preparing K-12 teachers for ELLs: Improving teachers' L2 knowledge and strategies through innovative professional development is related to my study because preparing teachers with the necessary professional development would improve the quality of education of ELLs. The approach Li and Peters used was quantitative research with survey data.

Rationale, Strength, and Weakness of the Selection

Their rationale for selecting qualitative research was the various data collection methods. They used observation, pre- and post-assessment tests, and survey data. The weakness of their approach was in the methodology. Quantitative studies focus on the result with numbers and do not provide participants' knowledge and experiences with in-depth information.

ELL Instructional Practice

Researchers pointed out the need for teachers to build a culturally appropriate and collaborative relationship with ELLs (Owens & Wells, 2021). These researchers carried out research on primary grade ELL teachers' perceptions regarding their instructional practices aligned with improving ELL academic achievement. They used qualitative descriptive study research with survey data.

Rationale, Strength, and Weakness of the Selection

Their rationale for selecting qualitative descriptive study research with survey data was to provide participants' knowledge and experiences with in-depth information. The sample size was nine participants, which might not be enough to generalize the findings; the weakness lies in the sample size.

Challenges to Prepare ELL Teachers

Larios and Zetlin (2023) stated that effective training and guidance would alleviate the challenges ELL teachers face when teaching ELLs. The rationale of this mixed method study was the instrumentation used and a wide variety of data collection methods, such as focus groups, open ended interviews questions, and questionnaires. The qualitative approach used was meaningful for the use of open ended interview questions that addressed participant experiences. The weakness of their approach was the lack of generalization of data. They relied on data from three schools.

Summary and Conclusion

In Chapter 2, I provided an exhaustive review of literature that addressed challenges that primary grade teachers encounter when teaching ELLs and research based

ways that teachers have supported ELLs in primary grade classrooms. Among the topics were student motivation, classroom environment, interaction and discussion, comprehensible input and vocabulary, review and assessment, multiple modalities, student background knowledge, English language learners with disabilities, different resources available to ELLs, strategies for working with ELLs, teacher preparation, the role of the English for Speakers of Other Language (ESOL) teacher, and parent engagement. My rationale for selecting the variables was related to the phenomenon of interest, which were challenges teachers encounter when teaching ELLs and what they need to teach ELLs in urban classrooms.

My review began with the conceptual framework based on the seven principles of second language learning by Gupta (2019). I then included relevant research in the field that addressed the problem and purpose of this study. Researchers discovered that teachers often feel unequipped to teach ELLs in mainstream classrooms (Larios & Zetlin, 2023; Li & Peters, 2020; Okhremtchouk & Sellu, 2019; Ridley et al., 2019; Viesca et al., 2019). Viesca et al. (2019) found that ELLs have unique educational needs to access the curriculum and that teachers are struggling because they lack sufficient training to address the complex learning needs of ELLs. Moreover, Olds et al. (2021) discovered that many teachers were not adequately prepared in their preservice preparation programs. In addition, Deng et al. (2020) reported that a growing body of researchers found that underprepared teachers keep ELL students performing below academic expectations. Professional development for in service teachers of ELLs is limited and often fails to help them teach grade level content to ELLs (Deng et al., 2020).

What is Known and What is not Known in the Discipline Related to the Study

What is known from my review of the literature is that teachers encounter challenges when teaching ELLs and are not equipped to teach ELLs, and researchers have suggested that more studies are needed. What is not known and is addressed in this study is urban primary grade teachers' perceptions of challenges they encounter when teaching ELLs and what they need to successfully teach primary grade ELLs in urban schools.

How the Present Study Fills the Gap in Literature

The present study aimed to fill these gaps in the literature by conducting interviews to explore the perceptions of urban primary grade teachers regarding the challenges they encounter when teaching ELLs and what they need to successfully teach primary grade ELLs in urban schools. The data I collected in this study may lead to a better understanding of challenges encountered by teachers and what they need to be successful in teaching ELLs in urban primary grade classrooms.

Transitional Material to Connect the Gap in The Literature

By following the qualitative research approach outlined in Chapter 3, I connected the gap in the literature by addressing the research questions. I provided relevant, in depth information from open ended interview questions with urban primary grade teachers of ELLs in urban schools. In Chapter 3, I included the methodology, research design and rationale, research questions, research tradition, and my rationale for choosing a basic qualitative research design. Chapter 3 also included the role of the researcher, researcher bias, the use of incentives, participant selection logic, and procedures for recruitment,

participation, and data collection. The relationships between saturation and sample size,

instrumentation, trustworthiness, and ethical procedures were presented.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of urban primary grade teachers regarding the challenges they encounter when teaching ELLs and what they need to successfully teach primary grade ELLs in urban schools. In Chapter 3, I describe the research design and rationale, explain my role as the researcher, address the methodology I used, and discuss the process of recruiting participants, instrumentation, data collection and analysis, and the issues of trustworthiness. In the remainder of this chapter below, I describe the central concept of the study,

Research Design and Rationale

ELL students have unique educational needs and teachers need training to address their complex learning issues with creative and holistic solutions, without which ELL students may struggle to access the curriculum in the United States classrooms (Kim et al., 2022). However, research shows that teachers often feel underprepared to teach ELL students in their classrooms (Dwomoh et al., 2022; Kim et al., 2022; Li & Peters, 2020; Okhremtchouk & Sellu, 2019; Xu et al., 2022). The central phenomena investigated in this study was urban primary grade teachers' perceptions of such struggles.

The two reach questions that guided this study were as follows:

RQ1: What are the perceptions of urban primary grade teachers regarding the successes and challenges they encounter when teaching ELLs?

RQ2: What do urban primary grade teachers need to address the challenges they encounter when teaching ELLs?

The central concept or phenomenon investigated was urban primary grade teachers' perceptions of the challenges they encounter when teaching primary grade ELL students and what they need to teach ELLs in urban primary grades. Research has shown that teachers often feel underprepared to teach ELL students, who are often multilingual learners, in mainstream classrooms (Dwomoh et al., 2022; Kim et al., 2022; Li & Peters, 2020; Okhremtchouk & Sellu, 2019; Xu et al., 2022). In a literature review, Kim et al. (2022) found ELL students have unique educational needs, and teachers need training to address their complex learning issues with creative and holistic solutions. Without these creative and holistic solutions, ELL students may struggle to access the curriculum in the United States classrooms (Kim et al., 2022)

I selected a basic qualitative design using open-ended interviews to address my research questions. Merriam (2018) stated that researchers who use basic qualitative research design are interested in how people interpret their experience, how they view the world around them, and the meaning they attribute to their experience. In addition, Babchuk (2017) stated that the purpose of the basic qualitative approach is to recognize how people discover understanding from their experiences. This design was the most applicable for my study because it allowed me to uncover the ways in which primary teachers interpret their experiences with teaching ELL students and what they perceive to be successes and challenges among those experiences.

My rationale for choosing a basic qualitative research design using open ended interview questions was that it is the research approach that best aligns with my research problem, purpose, and questions (see Burkholder et al., 2020). It also offered me the

opportunity to study the primary grade teachers' perceptions more closely.

According to Mishra and Alok (2022), a basic qualitative research design allows

for in-depth inquiry and examination to discover patterns and themes from the

data. Other qualitative designs that I considered were phenomenology and

grounded theory. Phenomenology focuses on the lived experiences of the

participants, and the main data collection method is through interviews

(Burkholder et al., 2020). The phenomenological approach was not aligned with

my study as strongly as a basic qualitative design using open-ended questions. I

was more interested in primary grade teachers' viewpoints about the challenges

they encounter when teaching ELL students. Grounded theory was not applicable

because it is not as descriptive as a basic qualitative design using open ended

interview questions, and the purpose is mainly to develop a theory (see Creswell,

2013). I chose basic qualitative research design using open ended interview

questions because it aligned with my study. This design allowed me to achieve

my purposes of exploring perceptions of urban primary grade teachers regarding

the challenges they encounter when teaching ELLs and what they need to

successfully teach primary ELLs in urban schools.

Role of the Researcher

As the researcher, I was responsible for all facets of the study:

interviewing, recording, transcribing, and analyzing data provided by 12 teachers

from urban school districts throughout the mid-Atlantic region of the United

States. According to Rubin and Rubin (2012), researchers are active participants

in their research; their curiosity, personalities, sensitivity, and knowledge all affect the quality of work. The role of the researcher in qualitative research is to ascertain the feelings and perceptions of study participants (Sutton & Austin, 2015).

I am an early childhood certified teacher in a metropolitan district in a large city in the region where the research was conducted. I have interacted as a member of a team of teachers who have taught ELL students for over 7 years. My interaction with primary grade ELL students occurred in the classroom as a teacher. I was frequently in contact with primary grade teachers because I was teaching primary grade while conducting my research. I did not interview primary grade teachers I knew personally or professionally. I had no supervisorial relationship with volunteer participants, teachers, or administrators from an urban school district in the mid-Atlantic state in the United States. I listened actively while interviewing a total of 12 participants.

Personal Bias

Merriam and Tisdell (2015) pointed out that the human instrument is not without bias, and that the researcher needs to recognize and monitor biases rather than trying to eliminate them. As with any human interaction, the lens of each person involved plays a part in the outcome. For this reason, a reflective journal was used throughout the process to monitor my bias. I had a personal bias because I was passionate about meeting the needs of my multilingual students. As the primary instrument for data collection, my role and experience could have influenced my judgment while asking questions and analyzing data. However, I overcame my bias by writing about it and being aware through the reflective journal that it could have affected my judgment.

Incentives were cash payments to attract participants, encourage response actions, and appreciate them for contributing their time. I emailed volunteer participants an electronic Amazon $20 gift card to acknowledge their contribution following the member check process. Participants learned about the incentive in the informed consent form.

Methodology

To address the research question of this basic qualitative study, I interviewed 12 urban primary grade teachers (nine K-2 regular education teachers and three teachers of English as a second language). Study volunteers were recruited via publicly available email from the mid-Atlantic region of the United States. Criteria for accepting volunteers for included teachers who have taught ELL students for a minimum of 3 years in mid-Atlantic urban school districts where I was not employed in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States, with at least 60% enrollment of bilingual students.

Participants

I recruited a total of 12 urban K-2 teachers from K-2 grades, including multi grade level teachers of ESOL in multiple states in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States. Recruitment was conducted through publicly available emails. Volunteers were asked to respond to a flyer by email. I provided interested participants with the institutional review board (IRB) approved informed consent document via email. If they understood the informed consent form and had no questions, participants were asked to notify me of any questions or to respond with the words "I consent."

During the recruitment process, I selected participants purposefully across four groups of teachers (kindergarten, first grade, second grade ESOL teachers) from those who volunteered and met the following criteria on a first come basis:

- Urban school primary grade teacher

- Licensed or certified educator

- Full time teacher of ELLs

- Employed in a school with at least 60% enrollment of ESOL students.

I offered volunteers a $20 Amazon electronic gift card to acknowledge their contribution.

Number of Participants / Rationale for the Selection

According to Rubin et al. (2012), a sample size of 12 participants is typically recommended for data saturation when interviewing for individual perspectives. Further, according to Hennik et al. (2017), a sample size of nine is adequate to reach coding saturation, which occurs when the researcher starts to hear the same responses repeatedly in further interviews. I conducted 12 interviews and reached data saturation.

Relationship Between Saturation and Sample Size

The relationship between sample size and saturation is that saturation is used to determine sample size. The sample size can affect the outcome of the research (Hennink et al., 2019). According to Babbie (2017), the minimum sample size to reach data saturation is 12 to 15; therefore, I aimed to recruit 12 to 15 for the sample size; however, I was able to recruit 12 urban primary grade teachers who met the criteria for this study.

Instrumentation

I collected data for this qualitative research study using an interview protocol consisting of open ended interview questions with participants (Patton, 2015). Prompts were also used to probe for additional information to clarify the responses of some participants. The interview questions were focused on teacher-student interaction and teachers' perceptions of the successes and challenges they face when teaching ELLs. The interview questions I developed were sent to a panel of experts in ESOL teaching and learning for review and validation and recommendations for including some questions and removing others. I followed the guidance of members of the expert panel. The questions were guided by the seven principles of second language learning (see Gupta, 2019). All interviews were digitally audio recorded. The alignment among the conceptual framework, the RQs, and the interview questions is included in Appendix A. I conducted my interviews using Zoom conferencing because this allowed the meeting to take place anywhere and at any time using the internet. It also allowed for the easy capability to record and transcribe interview transcripts, allowing for fewer transcription errors. In summary for this section, I refer to the work of Shenton (2004), who suggested that the adoption of well-established research methods, conducting interviews with multiple subjects from a variety of organizations, becoming familiar with the subjects, including relevant and grounded questions with prompts, and using frequent debriefing sessions and peer feedback can lead to credibility or internal validity. Further, according to Burkholder et al. (2020), validity refers to the trustworthiness of the research findings of the study or of the protocol.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

I designed an invitation flyer that I posted to LinkedIn and emailed to 44 teachers at their publicly available email addresses within districts that had 60% or more ELL student population in three states located in the mid-Atlantic United States. My intention was to accept the first 15 educators. A total of 17 teachers responded and interviews were scheduled. Out of the 17 teachers, three teachers declined the invitation to interview and two of the teachers did not show up for the interview. Nine K-2 regular education teachers who taught ELLs in general education classrooms and three ESOL certified teachers agreed to be interviewed. This process took approximately two months. I used an interview protocol that addressed the research questions:

RQ : What are the perceptions of urban primary grade teachers regarding the successes and challenges they encounter when teaching ELLs?

RQ2: What do urban primary grade teachers need to address the challenges they encounter when teaching ELLs?

Using Zoom conferencing, 12 urban primary grade teachers (nine K-2 regular education teachers and 3 ESOL teachers) from three urban school districts in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States with at least 60% enrollment of bilingual students were interviewed until data saturation occurred. As soon as interviews were conducted, I began coding my data using open codes. The same comments were heard over and over again from the participants (see Babbie, 2017). I used Zoom conferencing because it offered audio recording and transcription.

The data collection process took 2 months. Participants were offered a range of dates and times for their interviews. Each participant was interviewed once, lasting between 40-60 minutes. Each participant was asked the same series of questions to ensure the reliability of the data (see Shenton, 2004). Coding was used to analyze data, a cyclical process to identify patterns, categories, themes, and concepts (see Saldaña, 2021). According to Saldaña (2021), there are different types of coding methods, and determining which is appropriate can happen beforehand, during the interviews, or after the initial review of the data. As I coded data, I used the authentic language of participants to ensure that data was based on participant perceptions (Saldaña, 2021). I used a journal to document the interviews and reflect on any biases.

I had sufficient participants, so there was no need to recruit additional primary grade teachers. Interviews were conducted by using audio recordings following interview protocols through Zoom conferencing. After recruiting teachers through publicly available emails, I interviewed three regular education teachers and one ESOL teacher at each grade level. One of the ethical procedures necessary for a study involves maintaining participant confidentiality. Therefore, during coding, each participant was assigned a number. All identifiable information was kept separate from the interview transcript, and only codes were used in the dissertation. Volunteers' privacy was secured via password protection, and any physical data was secured inside a locked cabinet. As per Walden University requirements, all data will be kept in a secure place that only I have access to for 5 years, and then it will be destroyed.

Data Analysis

For this basic qualitative study with interviews, data collected from participants were used for conducting a thematic analysis. I followed specific phases that were outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), as follows:

1. Familiarizing myself with the research data

2. Generating initial codes

3. Searching for themes

4. Reviewing themes

5. Defining and naming themes

6. Write up the final report.

Data analysis involved developing major themes that captured the way urban primary grade ELL teachers perceived the challenges they encountered when teaching ELLs and what they needed to successfully teach ELLs. I transcribed all the individual audio recorded interviews. The transcription was done in conjunction with notes taken during the interview to ensure accuracy. I used Zoom for transcription of the data and then corrected any transcription that did not accurately reflect what the participant said. I listened repeatedly to the tapes and carefully cleaned the transcription for accuracy. To ensure that the transcripts accurately reflected the views expressed by the participants, I allowed participants to review the transcripts for accuracy (see Saldaña, 2021). Once participants confirmed the accuracy of the transcripts and made the necessary changes, the coding process began. Saldaña's (2021) coding system was used for coding and thematic analysis of the data. According to Saldaña, this coding process should be carried

out in two cycles. The first cycle, or open coding, will involve reading the transcripts multiple times to identify codes. Saldaña described codes as words or phrases repeatedly appearing in the transcripts that could help answer the research questions. After the initial coding of the transcripts, the second cycle or a priori coding was conducted. My objective in the second cycle was to reconfigure and synthesize the various codes identified in the first cycle into broader categories and themes.

Developing themes was an iterative process requiring that I give attention to details. Unlike the codes, themes are broad ideas that capture the true essence of how the participants perceived the phenomenon under study based on their lived experiences, and it is basically a phrase or sentence describing what the data said about the codes (Saldaña, 2021). Themes helped to resolve the research questions and better explained the phenomenon of the study (Saldaña, 2021). The results of my findings are included in Chapter 4.

Each transcription was carefully analyzed for meanings that continually recurred, assigning codes to the passage of data (Saldaña, 2021). First cycle coding, as described above, was highlighted in every transcript. Next, the organization of codes into topical categories was completed. Saldaña (2021) explained that descriptive coding in a qualitative study of a second cycle is topical in nature. The second cycle of coding narrowed down the numerous codes in the first cycle, making the organization of the data easier to visualize (Saldaña, 2021). Once the categories were sorted, themes emerged. This study found ten categories and three themes.

Issues of Trustworthiness

In qualitative research, it is critical to establish credibility or trustworthiness in the truth of the study's findings to ensure that there is rigor (Burkholder et al., 2020). According to Ravitch and Carl (2016), trustworthiness is best established when multiple methods of data collection are employed. And the common theme they have is trustworthiness. The issues of trustworthiness are addressed in the way that the study is aligned, and the research is conducted.

For this study, I used audio recordings of the interviews and took notes during each interview to ensure that every detail was accurately captured. I completed member checking by compiling a two-page summary of the interview summaries. Each participant was sent a copy of this summary for their input on the data to ensure that the data were valid and that I had properly interpreted and portrayed their points of view. Member checking is an opportunity for participants to check if the information they provided was interpreted accurately (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Member checking is a process. The first stage was to provide participants with a detailed interpretation of the information they provided so they could review it for accuracy and clarity of data (Babbie, 2017). In the second stage, I carefully read and reflected on the participants' feedback, made necessary updates, stayed in touch with them to inform them of the outcome of data analyses, and engaged them in the interpretation of data to enhance the validity, trustworthiness, and credibility of research study results (Shenton, 2004).

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), trustworthiness evaluates the worth of research. Trustworthiness involves the establishment of four key elements that produce confidence in the research procedures:

- Credibility

- Transferability

- Dependability

- Confirmability

Credibility

Credibility is the measure of truth in research findings. In other words, the credibility of a research study is the confidence that the finding is true. The strategies for establishing credibility include peer debriefing, persistent observation, triangulation, prolonged engagement, negative or deviant case analysis, and referential adequacy. Peer debriefing allows the researcher an opportunity for catharsis. Persistent observation identifies elements that are relevant to the problem of the study; it provides the depth of the study. Triangulation requires extensive study to ensure the literature review is rich, robust, comprehensive, and well-developed. Prolonged engagement involves spending quality time in the field of study to have a better understanding of the phenomenon of interest and building rapport and trust between researchers and participants; it provides the scope of the study. Negative or deviant case analysis involves searching for elements that are not related to or support the study. Referential adequacy involves identifying a part of the data to be achieved but not analyzed, then returning to the achieved data to analyze it to test for the validity of findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Member checking is

an opportunity for participants to check if the information they provided was interpreted

accurately (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Lincoln & Guba (1985) stated that member checking

is a technique for establishing the validity of data. Member checking is a process. The

first stage was to provide participants with a detailed interpretation of the information

they provided so they could review it for accuracy and clarity of data (Babbie, 2017). In

the second stage, I carefully read and reflected on the participants' feedback, made

necessary updates, stayed in touch with them to inform them of the outcome of data

analyses, and engaged them in the interpretation of data to enhance the validity,

trustworthiness, and credibility of research study results (Shenton, 2004). Credibility in

this research study increased by interviewing 12 primary grade teachers from the urban

school district in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States.

Transferability

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), transferability shows that the research

study findings could be applicable to other contexts. The extent to which individuals read

the findings or data from a particular study and feel that findings can be applied to their

programs (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Shenton, 2004). Transferability in qualitative

research refers to the extent to which other researchers could repeat a research study by

following the research study procedure and getting the same result. Transferability

assumes that if the situations were similar with similar context, population, and research

process, the result would be the same (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). To work toward

transferability, I wrote thick, rich descriptions so the readers of this dissertation could

determine if my findings had transferability to their context.

Dependability

To ensure the dependability of this study, I explained the process, context, and population of the study in a consistent and repeatable manner. Another researcher could look at data from this study and come to the same conclusion (Burkholder et al., 2020). I described the study in detail. Participants' interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim by listening to recordings several times to ensure accuracy. No follow-up interviews were needed. The reflexive journal that I kept was used during each interview to limit my own personal biases while following the interview protocol. Participants were asked the same questions throughout all interviews. Themes in the study were compared to the conceptual framework and the current research literature, so I was able to validate my findings.

Confirmability

Confirmability is the degree to which the findings of a study are determined by the participants and not influenced by the researcher's bias or interest (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Burkholder et al. (2020) stated that keeping a reflective journal helped the researcher avoid bias because the researcher examines and clarifies their personal biases and identifies ways to improve their practice. To ensure the confirmability of this study, I used a reflective journal to avoid personal bias. I reviewed my interview questions, and a panel of experts reviewed them for confirmability.

Ethical Procedures

The actual document in the IRB application, which was the agreement to gain access to participants or data, was Informed Consent. To promote informed consent,

participants were provided an explanation of the purpose of the study and all ethical procedures that were in place, including confidentiality. Additionally, the consent form outlined the goals, timeline, and methodology of the study and provided a statement that participation was voluntary. Participants could withdraw at any time, listed any potential risks and benefits, and described how the results were utilized and disseminated. Permission to record and transcribe the interview was also obtained prior to the interview.

I adhered to all requirements of the Walden University IRB. I had completed the required CITI training for IRB. There were numerous requirements outlined in a Manual provided by the IRB that applied to all sites that I used because participants were accessible through publicly available email addresses and met the criteria of the study. One of the ethical procedures necessary for a study involves maintaining participant confidentiality. Therefore, during coding, each participant was assigned a number. All identifiable information was kept separate from the interview transcript, and only codes were used in the dissertation. A $20 electronic Amazon gift card was given to volunteers to acknowledge their contribution. Volunteers' privacy was secured via password protection, and any physical data was secured inside a locked cabinet.

Written informed consent was obtained from the volunteers by responding, "I consent," when the interviewer sent them the informed consent form via email. According to Babbie (2017), ethics is often associated with morality or what is considered right, and in social research, there are specific agreements that are honored. I used Walden University's required consent forms, ensuring participants willingly volunteered for the study.

The information they provided remained confidential, and any identifiers were removed from the transcription of the data. I took various measures to ensure that the procedures used in conducting this basic qualitative study with open ended interview questions were ethical.

Summary

The purpose of this basic qualitative research study was to explore the perceptions of urban primary grade teachers regarding the challenges they encounter when teaching ELLs and what they need to successfully teach primary grade ELLs in urban schools. In this chapter, I described the research design and rationale, explained the role of the researcher, and addressed the methodology. Additionally, I discussed the participant selection process, the instrumentation process, procedures for recruitment, participation, data collection, and analysis, the issue of trustworthiness, and the ethical procedure I took to ensure the protection of the subjects and the reliability of the study. In Chapter 4, I present my data collection process, analysis process, and present findings of the study.

Chapter 4: Introduction

The purpose of this basic qualitative research study was to explore the perceptions

of urban primary grade teachers regarding the challenges they encounter when teaching

ELLs and what they need to successfully teach primary grade ELLs in urban schools.

Data were collected from urban primary grade teachers in the mid-Atlantic region of the

United States with at least 60% enrollment of ESOL students. To accomplish this

purpose, I established two research questions to guide the study:

RQ1: What are the perceptions of urban primary grade teachers regarding the

successes and challenges they encounter when teaching ELLs?

RQ2: What do urban primary grade teachers need to address the challenges they

encounter when teaching ELLs?

Participants were recruited through educators' social media groups, publicly available

email addresses, and snowball strategies in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States.

In Chapter 4, I present the setting, data collection, data analysis, evidence of

trustworthiness, and a summary of the participant's answers to the research questions.

Setting

Participants for this study met criteria of the study. Each participant was a full-time

teacher of ELLs in one of three urban districts with at least 60% enrollment of ESOL

students in an urban school primary grade school. All teachers were employed in Title 1

schools. Students were back in school after the COVID-19 isolation order was removed,

and there was an increase in diverse languages and cultures with limited resources to

address ELL learning needs in each individual classroom (see National Center for

Education Statistics, 2022; Ramírez et al., 2018). These organizational or unique conditions affected participants' experience at the time of the study, which might have influenced the interpretation of the study results. Three sites where primary grade teacher participants were recruited from were designated as A, B, and C. Alphanumeric coding was assigned to each teacher. The reason for the selection of multiple sites was to allow analysis across settings; qualitative research involves exploring and gaining detailed information about the experiences and perceptions of research participants. So, a rigorous qualitative data analysis that involved the selection of multiple sites was necessary to avoid inadequate and superficial analysis (see Saldaña, 2021; Younas et al., 2022).

Participant Demographics

A total of 12 primary grade teachers from three urban school districts throughout the mid-Atlantic region of the United States who met all criteria participated in the study. All 12 teachers participated in audio recorded interviews. Nine general education teachers and three ESOL teachers expounded on their perception of the challenges they faced when teaching primary grade ELLs. Data analysis consisted of coding to identify patterns, categories, and themes that addressed the research question. I also used a reflective journal to document the interview to avoid my personal bias (see Burkholder et al., 2020). Each teacher has an alphanumeric code which identifies the school district as A, B, or C (school districts were located throughout the mid-Atlantic United States. Table 1 displays the assigned number to each participant, the district the teacher was from, the years of teaching experience, the grade each participant taught, and the gender of the participant.

Table 1
Research Participants Demographics

Research participants	Years of teaching experience	Current grade being taught	Gender
KT1A	2	Kindergarten	F
KT2B	22	Kindergarten	F
KT3C	8	Kindergarten	F
1T1A	3	First grade	F
1T2B	5	First grade	M
1T3C	12	First grade	F
2T1A	4	Second grade	F
2T2B	2	Second grade	F
2T3C	2	Second grade	F
ET1A	1	ESOL K-2	F
ET2B	2	ESOL K-2	F
ET3C	2	ESOL K-2	F

Data Collection

A total of 12 digitally audio recorded interviews were conducted using an

interview protocol described in Chapter 3. The data collection process took 3 months.

Participants were offered a range of dates and times to choose for their interview. Each

participant was interviewed once, and the length of each interview lasted between 40-60

minutes. Each participant was asked the same series of questions to ensure the reliability

of the data (see Shenton, 2004). At the beginning of each interview, participants were

reminded of my appreciation for their time and interest in participating in my study. I

began each interview by collecting demographic information to obtain participants'

number of years teaching ELL students. Immediately after each interview, I took notes on

my thoughts and feelings about each interview in a reflective journal to help manage any

personal bias. Interviews were conducted via Zoom using the audio recording feature

(Shenton, 2004). Before concluding each participant interview, I made sure there were no

additional questions. I also reminded them that they could reach out to me anytime if they

had any additional thoughts or questions. The audio recordings from each interview were reviewed numerous times for accuracy (Shafay et al., 2022). Each participant was assigned an alphanumeric code to maintain confidentiality. Recordings and transcripts from the interviews were stored on my password protected computer. Saldaña's (2021) data collection guidelines identified in Chapter 3 were followed. There were no unexpected issues that took place during the collection process.

Data Analysis

In this study, I chose to use descriptive coding; as Saldaña (2021) explained, it is proper for all types of qualitative data, especially novice researchers. Data analysis consisted of coding to identify patterns, categories, and themes that addressed the research question. Semistructured interviews were conducted with 12 primary grade teachers. After all the data were collected, I reviewed the transcripts of the audio recoded interview multiple times to ensure accuracy. I made corrections if the Zoom transcription tool transcribed a word or phrase incorrectly. These transcriptions allowed me to analyze participants' comments line by line. Saldaña recommended rereading the transcripts for accuracy. I read each transcript, sentence by sentence, three times. I then listened three times to the digital recordings and compared the words I heard with the transcription to be certain they were accurate. I compared the transcripts and observation sheets to make sure they were aligned with field notes. Saldaña recommended that the coding should be carried out in two cycles: open coding and a priori coding.

First Cycle Coding (Open Coding)

Saldaña (2021) stated that descriptive codes are important to be topical. Once the transcriptions were ready to be coded, I started with first cycle coding or open coding. I highlighted keywords, phrases, and ideas. I bolded phrases that could be used as quotes. In this phase, I searched the transcripts line by line for significant details and repetitive phrases and concepts. I highlighted the open codes in yellow. After highlighting 43 codes, I grouped the codes by similarity of patterns, ideas, and terminology (see Saldaña, 2021). After I indexed my codes, I asked a second person to look at the transcripts and the list of codes for any missed concepts or biases in my selection of codes. Maintaining an audit trail and reflecting upon the data helped maintain the trustworthiness of the study. Reflexivity helps with the internal validity and trustworthiness of the study (Saldaña, 2021). I have included a sample of open codes with the participants' alphanumeric code and an excerpt from the participant. This is provided in Table 2

Table 2
Samples of Open Coding

Open codes	Participant identifier	Excerpt
Support	1T2B	"I would like some kind of visual supports just having the resources to make that happen."
	2T3C	"I think a lot of challenges are just not having additional support staff."
Small group	KT1A	"We do a lot of small group work. So, they want to know what their peers are talking about in these small group activities that we do."
Google Translate	2T3C	"I would probably use Google translate to help make sure I comprehend the point that the students are trying to comprehend.

Second Cycle Coding (A Priori Coding)

The second coding cycle consisted of initial coding. Initial coding is an inductive process to draw raw data from interview transcripts into codes (Saldaña, 2021). A priori code uses a pre-established coding system called a coding frame before the real coding process begins (Saldaña, 2021). The predetermined codes were based on the conceptual framework, which was the seven principles of second language learning by Gupta (2019; know your student and their motivation to learn the second language, create a welcoming classroom environment, build background knowledge, provide comprehensible input by building vocabulary, include frequent opportunities for interaction and discussion, use multiple modalities during instruction, and conduct ongoing review and assessment) and relevant literature in the field of ELL. I read and listened to each interview transcript multiple times before coding. I highlighted the text from the transcript in yellow and bolded important phrases from the excerpts.

Each of the seven principles of second language learning and current relevant literature in the field made up the conceptual framework. The conceptual framework supported the development of the interview questions. I read through each transcript five times to make sure that I was familiar with the data, ensured accuracy, and gathered the experiences and thought processes of the participants. During this process, I assigned an alphanumeric code to each participant to avoid the disclosure of participants' identities and maintain confidentiality. For example, – 1T1A stands for 1st grade, teacher one, school A; ET3C stands for ESOL teacher 3, school C; KT1A stands for kindergarten teacher 1, school A; and 2T2 B

stands for 2nd grade teacher 2, school B. A detailed coding scheme is included in

Appendix E. However, I have included a sample of a priori coding with the

participants' alphanumeric codes and an excerpt from their interviews.

Axial Coding and Categorization

Axial coding was used to identify relationships among the a priori code and open

codes. I reviewed and examined the categories to ensure they were accurate and

appropriate. I organized the codes into categories based on their similarities. Three

themes emerged. I documented the categories and codes in a codebook and used the

collected information to search for patterns in the categories. I counted the frequency of

words or phrases identified as codes in the interview transcripts. I arranged the codes into

various categories to discover connections between the data and research questions (see

Saldaña, 2021).

Table 3
Samples of Axial Codes

Category/Axial code	A prior code	Identifier	Excerpt
Inclusive classroom	-labeling -accommodation -small group -Google translate - use multiple modalities	1T3C	"My class has at least seven different languages that the students speak, so some we have mandarin speaking Portuguese, Spanish, Arabic, Chinese, Farsi, some different languages, and sometimes some different language…. So I label classroom objects in their native language."
Language support	-picture -visual -videos - build vocabulary	KT1A	"Breaking down the parts of the word like that. Other ways to build vocabulary. Oh, no breakdown vocabulary. We write the word down, and we always put a picture so that the student can see the word as well as the picture."

Developing Themes

A theme is a phrase or sentence describing what the data said about the code

(Saldaña, 2021). I used inductive analysis to determine the themes. I reviewed the themes

again to make sure that what I had collected did support each theme. I spent an extensive

amount of time verifying each theme to make sure they were logical and supported by the

data. After coding the data collected from all participants, the themes were developed

based on the predetermined codes, the predetermined categories, and the raw data. I

looked for ways to link the patterns together. The themes contained descriptive details

related to the categories. I then developed the data analysis report presenting the results.

There were no discrepant data; therefore, this did not impact data analysis. The data

analysis process contained 43 codes, organized into 10 categories, and grouped into three

themes. Once this process was completed, findings emerged. At this time, I completed

the member checking process by sending participants a two-page summary of my

findings and requested that they provide feedback via email. As participants responded, I

thanked them for their contribution and sent them their gift cards electronically.

Table 4
Samples of Themes

Category	Themes
Communication issues	Theme 1: Teachers encounter multiple successes teaching ELLs when they implement effective strategies as the use of technology, teaching strategies (scaffolding, modeling, small group
Technology	instruction, labeling, etc.), interactive activities, differentiated instruction, accommodation to
Welcoming classroom environment	execute instruction, creative classroom and collaborative teaching (RQ1)
Teaching Strategies	Theme 2: Teachers encounter a range of challenges
Multicultural classroom	in multilingual classrooms when teaching ELLs
Home and school	with multiple languages in a single classroom and
Connection	home and school connections as the major challenges in teaching ELLs (RQ1)
Resources; Professional development;	Theme 3: Teachers need resources to support their
Language support	teaching practices with ELLs. Resources include relevant professional development; more classroom language support staff (RQ2).

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility is crucial in a research study; it is the measure of truth in research findings. (Babbie, 2017). Maintaining the creditability of my research study assisted in adding trustworthiness. I implemented member checking (see Babbie, 2017), and data saturation was reached. The same comments were heard over and over again), which increased the study's credibility. A semistructured interview protocol was used (see Appendix A). I interviewed a total of 12 primary grade teachers. I used validation strategies (see Ravith & Carl, 2015). I collected data by audio-recoding interviews with a transcription reader inside a meeting room.

Credibility

I followed Shenton (2004) to ensure that my study is aligned. Credibility is the measure of truth in research findings. In other words, the credibility of a research study is the confidence that the findings are true. I spent time making sure participants shared their honest feedback by using strategies like preparing a list of interview questions in advance (Appendix A), reviewing participants' credentials, keeping the interview conversations professional, explaining the interview process to the participants, asking interview questions in the same order, restating participant's responses for clarity before asking the following question and allowing each participant to share any other information related to the study. I emailed each participant with their respective interview transcript to agree or disagree with the data. All participants confirmed and agreed to the validity of the transcript.

Transferability

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), transferability shows that the findings have applicability in another context. The extent to which individuals reading the findings identify with the outcomes or data from a particular study and feel findings can be applied to their programs (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Shenton, 2004). To ensure transferability, I provided a thick description of data and context (Ravitch & Carl, 2016) and deliberated variation in the selection of participants to establish transferability. I have provided a detailed and rich account of the perceptions of primary grade teachers who teach ELLs. Other researchers who wish to follow this study have a detailed description of the data collection and analysis processes and will be supported for further future research. The themes that emerged from the data were directly related to the responses of my participants.

Dependability

Dependability is useful for qualitative research. I ensured the reliability and dependability of this study by exploring and acknowledging how my potential biases map to my interpretation of data. I used a journal to categorize and check data between all primary grades, kindergarten, first grade, second grade, and ESOL teachers. To maintain dependability, I used rigorous data collection techniques and procedures such as the data from each participant was structurally coded to compile words, phrases, and ideas that are repeatedly shared as they pertain to the content or concept from my research and interview questions combined (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Confirmability

Confirmability is the degree to which the findings of a study are determined by the participants and not influenced by the researcher's bias or interest (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To ensure the confirmability of this study, I used reflexivity to keep my biases from affecting any part of my research by keeping a research journal where I documented my views, concerns, any problems that I encountered, and new knowledge that I gained during my research process, as well as an audit trail (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I ensured that my findings were supported by the data I collected. I evaluated whether my findings were shaped by the respondent and not influenced by my interests, motivations, and biases (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To enhance the confirmability of my study, I supported the connection between the findings.

<div align="center">

Results

</div>

In this study, I explored urban primary grade teachers' perception on urban teachers' perceptions of their challenges teaching primary grade English language learners and what they need to successfully teach ELLs. In this section, I share the results of the data collected through the interviews with 12 urban primary grade teachers in which I asked twelve open ended interview questions. The interview questions I developed were designed using the conceptual framework to answer the research questions (see Appendix A). In addition to asking the semi structured questions, I asked follow up questions as needed during the interviews to ensure that I had a clear understanding of the participants' responses.

The findings from this basic qualitative study were identified and developed from the themes that emerged during the data analysis process.

In this section, I present the results of my two research questions:

RQ 1: What are the perceptions of urban primary grade teachers regarding the successes and challenges they encounter when teaching ELLs?

RQ 2: What do urban primary grade teachers need to address the challenges they encounter when teaching ELLs?

While analyzing the data, three themes developed that answered the two research questions:

- Theme 1: Teachers encounter multiple successes teaching ELLs when they implement effective strategies

- Theme 2: Teachers encounter a range of challenges in multilingual classrooms when teaching ELLs

- Theme 3: Teachers need resources to support their teaching practices with ELLs

The following sections will include my discussion of each theme, including summaries, analyses, and quotes from participants in response to my interview questions.

Theme 1: Teachers Encounter Multiple Successes Teaching ELLs when they Implement Effective Strategies

Theme 1 addressed RQ1. Participants enthusiastically identified successes in teaching ELLs when using effective strategies to address challenges they faced while teaching ELLs. These strategies included building a welcoming classroom environment and using a smart board and other technological devices. Teachers discussed

implementing effective teaching strategies like scaffolding, modeling, small group instruction, labeling, interactive activities, differentiated instruction, sound wall, total physical response (TPR), peer teaching, and using the appropriate accommodations for ELLs with disabilities.

All 12 participants believed that a welcoming classroom environment would promote ELLs' motivation to learn the English Language. Teacher 2T1A said,

I create a welcoming classroom environment pretty much by the way I greet the students with labeling. Labeling is a big part. Making sure that they see that they're seen in their own language, making sure that they recognize something that they can make [a] connection to.

Teacher ET2B added,

I take time to develop relationships with my students. I think that's important, just letting and taking the time to get to know the student. Their learning, style, a little bit about their, you know, home life. I really, you know, take an interest in the student for who they are, and I think that's very effective at really, you know, motivating this student to learn English.

Teacher 1T3C added,

My class has at least seven different languages that the students speak. We have Mandarin, Portuguese, Spanish, Arabic, Chinese, Farsi, [and] some different languages, and sometimes some different languages, and sometimes they're coming, and it's so just foreign to them. So, I label classroom objects in their native language.

Teacher KT1A said,

I provide comprehensible input by having talked about the words, written it down,

have a picture there for the student, and then we talk about, you know, how to say

it in English and in Spanish for our Spanish speaking students, and I think it

works out really well.

And teacher 1T2B shared,

One young student from Ghana, and you know they enjoyed seeing drums in the

classroom, so we had drums in the classroom. The Spanish speaking students, or I

had students from Algeria that you know we'll celebrate Ramadan and make

lanterns, so I feel like cultural connections and just normalizing like that… it feels

like there's a positive regard for also students.

Teacher 1T2B stated, "I just like to include those cultural pieces from a place that

a student would call home." Teacher 1T1A shared, "…just incorporating things that are

familiar to them. For instance, flags, like I will have flags of South America different

countries in the classroom. I'll have books in my library that are in English and Spanish,

things like that."

And teacher ET3C mentioned that,

I make sure I get like a flag that could be outside of someone's house. Like the 3

by 5-foot flags of every country of a student. I serve so they know that they are

part of this room [and] that it's not just about them learning English, but Spanish

as well. Most of my students speak Spanish, so I keep saying Spanish, but they

that's who they are. As a person. They are Spanish speakers. It's part of their

identity. We don't want them to lose their Spanish. They are just here to learn English, so I never want them to think they have to like completely to assimilate. But rather, we want to give them the tools to be able to work within the building within the school system and to gain both of those language skills.

Teacher ET1A stated, "I use scaffolding, modeling, small group instruction, labeling, interactive activities, differentiated instruction, sound wall, and total physical response (TPR) to execute instruction." Teacher KT1A said, "I have my ELL students doing a lot of small group and pair work. Where they can engage in conversations with their peers so they can get practice listening and speaking in English." In addition, Teacher 2T2B mentioned that "in small groups, I think it is important as well and just giving them the opportunity to become more familiar with the language, especially using visuals with the ELLs." Teacher 1T3C said, "I like to put the English words up around the classroom again with pictures to label the classroom, to label the environment have very print rich. Friendly environment, the print rich environment around the room," Teachers expressed the need for intensive training on teaching strategies for teaching ELLs.

Teacher 2T1A said,

Some of the successes that I've experienced is once the accommodation is in place; you're realizing that students, and when I say an accommodation, I mean just good in some of the instructions in the child's native language and getting some of the items in the room labeled with the child's native language. And always partnering them with someone. They're always students who've been in the country prior to the new students you receive in second grade. So, you wanna

partner them with other students who might be fluent in their native language as well as English, and then they can be a partner to help them when they're lost in the instruction process. And you're also making sure that you know, where I see success is the child able to complete an assignment on their own.

Theme 2: Teachers Encounter a Range of Challenges in Multilingual Classrooms when Teaching ELLs

Theme 2 addressed RQ1. Participants identified a range of challenges they faced when teaching ELLs. Language barriers, communication issues, and multicultural classrooms were the major challenges in teaching ELLs (RQ1). All 12 participants expressed the challenges they faced related to the language barrier. Teachers found that Google Translate is not accurate in translation; sending erroneous messages to parents could be devasting. Teacher 2T2B shared that her multicultural classroom with seven languages: Chinese, Mandarin, Portuguese, Russian, Persian, Spanish, and English have been challenging, and she relied on Google Translate to communicate. Teacher KTIA relied on pictures, visuals, labels, and videos. ET1A said, "So, some challenges may be [the] language barrier. It's hard for a lot of teachers to handle, not being able to communicate with a student in their primary language." Teacher 1T1A said, "I think as far as challenges, there is obviously a language barrier, but I made it a point to learn the basics so that I could communicate with students." Teacher KT2B said she used Timekettle translator earbuds; she explained,

Timekettle is an earbud, and I just put one side in my ear, you will take the other

earbud, and put it in their [student's] ear, and then, if say you were speaking

Spanish to me, it would translate to English to me, and it worked really well. But

you have to have a good Internet connection.

Teacher ET2B explained that,

English language learners don't always have the support and resources at home

to help them learn English, and I think that provides like a challenge for those

students when they go home not to be able to complete homework because they

don't have someone at home that can help them do the homework. So they

themselves can't do it, which can be a challenge for them because then they're not

getting that extra, you know, I guess, work in that in a particular content area. So,

I think that's definitely a challenge for when you're working with ELLs as a

teacher. And also, yeah, like as an ESOL teacher, not only a content teacher but

an ESOL teacher, too. I tried my best to provide the families with, you know,

resources and things that they could do to help their child at home.

Teacher 1T3C stated,

I would say it is very challenging communicating in the beginning of the year.

It's challenging that they are kind of as a general Ed teacher; they're kind of held

to the same standard as other students who are speaking English in the home. So,

communicating with parents is a challenge and translating, and then they can

always do their homework in the beginning like working with the parents

throughout the year, and kind of helping to set them up for success.

Overall, the teachers shared the challenges they experienced when supporting ELLs.

Theme 3: Teachers Need Resources to Support Their Teaching Practices with ELLs

Theme 3 addressed RQ 2. Participants identified the resources they needed to support ELLs' educational needs. The resources included more language support staff in inclusive classrooms, ELL friendly curriculum, intensive professional development on modeling, scaffolding, labeling, differentiated instruction, small group instruction, total physical response (TPR), and appropriate use of technology for ELLs.

Teacher KT2B emphasized the need for language support staff in ELL classrooms. She said,

I think every classroom should have a teacher and ESOL teacher, or at least every grade brand. This is the first year I've ever had an ESOL teacher pull out every week. Once a week, they pull out. Our kids in kindergarten never get any help for ELL Students in this in that way, like getting pulled out. We're pushed in, even if they push in. It's very sporadic in my district.

All 12 participants believed that the general curriculum should be made accessible to ELLs. Teacher ET3C stated, "…but if a teacher isn't trained in ESOL or have any type of courses on how to make the curriculum accessible or understand the levels that students are screened and placed in, it can be very challenging." Teacher 2T3C added,

I wish there are more diversity in the curriculum that we're able to provide students meaning like being able to have an option to provide it in a different language like via technology is that whatever be possible to help make it more

accessible to other students.

All participants agreed that primary grade teachers need training on how to make the general curriculum accessible to all ELLs. Teacher ET2B expressed the insufficient technological support for ELL families. She stated, "Internet is not always accessible to ELL parents at home. As a result, ELLs face challenges completing their homework." Teachers believed that providing home Internet access to all students would be helpful. All 12 participants expressed the need for training on teaching strategies. Teacher ET2B said,

I absolutely believe that in the beginning of the year, there should be some type of professional development provided to content teachers. Whether it's like you know elementary middle school. I feel like there they should be provided with professional development on some of these things that I kind of mentioned today. Not only some of those things but like strategies and ways that they can reach and help their ELLs learn in the classroom and make the learning more accessible for them. So, I definitely think that professional development in this area is definitely lacking, based upon the number of the increase in the amount of English language learners we have in the United States every year.

Teacher KT3C added,

I feel that many teachers are a little hesitant. If they haven't been trained on working with ELLs. I feel like in kindergarten, a lot of the basic concepts are going to be addressed that will help with learning the language just as it is the beginning foundation for learning is for teaching non ELLs.

Teacher KT1A said,

Opportunities for professional development for in collaborating with the ESOL

teachers. [It] is important like I said, also if they have opportunities to collaborate

with the students' families as well as much as they can. And then if they can

maybe try to learn a few words of the students. I remember having professional

development where all teachers talked about what it was like to be an ELL

student.

And Teacher KT2B said, "There is a lot of professional development, but they

hardly ever talk about ESOL learners. But I'm just really curious." Teacher 1T2B

expressed his unpreparedness to teach ELLs due to lack of professional training on

teacher effectiveness to teach ELLs. He said,

I don't think I'm doing a very good job, to be honest; again, in my teacher

preparation, I didn't have anything specific to teaching ELL students. I've had

professional development, but I don't think it's enough to meet the needs of ELL

students.

From the data analysis, it is evident that the three teams answered the research questions

and there are no discrepancy casas.

Summary

In Chapter 4, I provided the results of data collection and analysis utilizing the

results of the study to answer the following research questions:

RQ 1: What are the perceptions of urban primary grade teachers regarding the

successes and challenges they encounter when teaching ELLs?

RQ 2: What do urban primary grade teachers need to address the challenges they encounter when teaching ELLs?

I used a basic qualitative design to explore both research questions, and my findings resulted in three themes. The 12 research participants shared that the challenges they encountered when teaching ELL included language barriers, inadequate training, insufficient resources, and home support concerns. Participant recommendations included the provision of relevant professional development to prepare ELL teachers to meet the educational needs of ELLs, celebrating the ELLs, and making the curriculum accessible to ELLs. In Chapter 5, I review the interpretation of findings, limitations of the study, recommendations, implications, and the potential for positive social change. Finally, I provide a conclusion and close the chapter with the reflection of the study.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of urban primary grade teachers regarding the challenges they encounter when teaching ELLs and what they need to successfully teach primary grade ELLs in urban schools. Data were collected from one on one semistructured Zoom interviews with 12 primary school teachers from mid-Atlantic region of the United States. Participants shared their experiences and perceptions on the challenges they encounter to meet the learning needs of ELL students and the resources they need. All 12 participants in this basic qualitative research study gave insightful information about their struggle when teaching ELL students.

A total of three themes emerged during data analysis to address the two research questions: Theme 1: Teachers encounter multiple successes teaching ELLs when they implement effective strategies. Theme 2: Teachers encounter a range of challenges in multilingual classrooms when teaching ELLs. Theme 3: Teachers need resources to support their teaching practices with ELLs. The first two themes addressed RQ1, which explored primary grade teachers' perceptions of the successes and challenges they faced to meet the learning needs of ELL students. The last theme addressed RQ2, which explored what primary grade teachers need to effectively meet the learning needs of ELLs.

Interpretation of The Findings

After IRB approval, I started the data collection process. Data findings and interpretations were developed from analysis of data collected during one on one semi structured Zoom interviews. The literature review and the conceptual framework of

Gupta's (2019) principles and practices for teaching English language learners were instrumental in my interpretations of data. The conceptual framework was used as a connection tool for linking the themes and framing the findings of the study. I reviewed the current literature in Chapter 2, and all of the literature was relevant to the three themes that emerged from the participants' perceptions regarding ELL students. The results of my research are a direct reflection of the conceptual framework and the current (within the past 5 years) relevant literature in the field. These concepts can be applied to the framework.

RQ1: Theme 1 Related to Past Literature

RQ1 explored urban primary grade teachers' perception regarding the successes and challenges they encounter when teaching ELLs. Theme 1 emerged from RQ1. Participants identified successes in teaching ELLs when using effective strategies to address challenges they faced while teaching ELLs. Teachers discussed implementing effective teaching strategies like scaffolding, modeling, small group instruction, labeling, interactive activities, differentiated instruction, sound wall, TPR, peer teaching, and using the appropriate accommodations for ELLs with disabilities. Participants also perceived success as creating a welcoming classroom environment. Most participants described a welcoming classroom environment as a classroom that is organized with brightly labeled classroom objects in ELL students' native language. Research shows that creating a classroom that celebrates strength rather than focusing on perceived language and content deficits initiates and cultivates trusting relationships with ELL students and parents (Ridley et al., 2019). Researchers also added that a culturally stimulating environment

and effective early literacy teaching strategies influence the success of ELLs (Chahin et al., 2023).

Primary grade teacher ET1A used scaffolding, modeling, small group instruction, labeling, interactive activities, differentiated instruction, sound wall, and TPR to execute the instruction. Researchers stated differentiated instruction is essential to ELL academic success and that it is the responsibility of every school district to identify eligible ELLs and provide for the necessary needs of the ELLs (Gallardo et al., 2020; Petray et al., 2021). Xie (2021) recommended TPR for teaching young ELLs because it can effectively arouse students' enthusiasm, evoke ELL students' interest to learn English, enhance motivation, build up self-confidence to learn English, promote a positive attitude toward learning, and develop young ELL initial ability to use English in daily communication. TPR activities involve the use of pictures, flashcards, songs, storytelling, role plays, and rhymes. It plays a vital role in young ELLs' language acquisition.

Participants also identified collaborative teaching as an effective teaching strategy. Teacher KT1A reported that the more teachers collaborate, the better it will be for the ELL students. Classroom interaction and collaborative learning promote the practice of speaking English (Comstock et al., 2023). In addition, Xie (2021) expressed the need for the teacher to provide adequate opportunities for young ELLs to practice the targeted academic language. The classroom teacher can effectively access ELLs' understanding of a subject matter when they are involved in activities that allow them to use the targeted language. Li and Peters (2020) emphasized that instructional accommodations play important roles in ELL learning outcomes.

RQ1: Theme 2 Related to Past Literature

RQ1 explored urban primary grade teachers' perception regarding the successes and challenges they encounter when teaching ELLs. The second theme also emerged from RQ1. Participants identified some major challenges they encountered when teaching ELLs. The challenges included language barriers, communication issues, and limited access to resources. This theme was based on the consistent reporting of participants regarding the challenges they encountered when teaching ELLs. Language barriers leave ELLs confused, and the participants reported that they were challenged to teach ELL students in a single classroom serving students whose home languages were diverse (see Li & Peters, 2020; Okhremtchouk & Sellu, 2019; Viesca et al., 2019). Thus, the increase in the number of ELL students with diverse languages in a single classroom and the greater demands on primary grade teachers to meet the learning needs of ELLs was challenging (Gillon, 2023). The challenges primary grade teachers encounterd when communicating with ELLs made instruction in the classroom difficult. Participants expressed concern about the challenges they encountered when communicating with ELLs. Teacher 2T2B shared that she has seven languages in her multicultural classroom: Chinese, Mandarin, Portuguese, Russian, Persian, Spanish, and English. She also mentioned that Google Translate is not always accurate; miscommunication even poses more challenges.

RQ2: Themes Related to Past Literature

Research Question 2 explored what urban primary grade teachers need to address the challenges they encounter when teaching ELLs. Theme 3 emerged from RQ2.

Participants identified the resources they needed to successfully meet the needs of ELL students. Some of the suggested needs for resources such as training, professional development, ELL friendly curriculum, classroom support staff, unlimited access to technology, and providing appropriate accommodation for ELLs. Some of the primary grade teachers explained that ELL students did not get homework help at home because they had limited access to technology and the general curriculum. Research revealed that ELL students will benefit from computer based programs (Gupta, 2019). ET3C mentioned that she connected with ELL families, provided resources, and made the curriculum accessible to ELL students and their families who had no access to the internet or the general curriculum.

Participants reported that an accommodation should be in place to address the challenges they encounter when teaching ELLs. The primary grade teacher, 1T1A, mentioned accommodation for each subject curriculum made accessible for ELL students and their families by nonvirtual cues, labeling, lots of photos, and videos. Owens and Wells (2021) added that mainstream teachers use the wrong accommodation to teach ELL students because of their negative perception and lack of knowledge of ELL education.

Participants reported that they do not feel prepared to meet the educational needs of ELLs due to inadequate professional development to prepare them to successfully teach ELLs. Primary grade teacher 1T3C stated that teachers lacked the necessary professional development to improve their ability to teach ELLs effectively. Li and Peters (2020) found that general education teachers are not receiving training and professional

development to address the needs of their ELL students, so they are not prepared to effectively work with the growing ELL population. More research is needed in this area. ELL students have unique educational needs, and many ELLs in the United States classrooms struggle to access the curriculum (Li & Peters, 2020). In addition, researchers found that general education teachers are not receiving training and professional development to address the needs of their ELL students (Choi et al., 2022; Li & Peters, 2020). Professional training is indeed necessary for increasing teachers' ability to teach ELLs effectively.

Limitations of the Study

Limitations in this study were that all the urban schools have unique characteristics such as demographics of the participants, years of teaching experience, the grade each participant taught, and gender. The findings in this study may not be transferrable to all teachers in urban schools throughout the United States because these primary grade teachers may not teach students who lack the same English language development skills as students in the mid-Atlantic United States. This may limit transferability. In addition, I had a challenge in recruiting teachers from schools with at least 60% ELL enrollment. I choose the criteria of 60% because of the increase in the ELL population throughout the mid-Atlantic states where many schools have the high percentage of ELL students. However, I persevered and was able to use snowballing to recruit 12 participants.

Recommendations

The participants from my study were 12 teachers. I recommend that future researchers conduct this study with school administrators to better understand their perception regarding the challenges primary grade teachers encounter when teaching ELLs, along with relevant professional development opportunities in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States. Teacher professional development is a structured activity for teachers. It is designed to increase or improve their ability to teach effectively (Sims & Fletcher-Wood, 2021). Li and Peters (2020) emphasized that if the nation wants to see ELL students improve learning outcomes, there needs to be greater effort devoted to learning how teachers can be prepared through professional development. The 12 participants stated that they faced challenges and felt the need for relevant training and classroom support to prepare them to teach ELLs effectively.

Implication

This basic qualitative study with interviews was conducted to explore the perceptions of urban primary grade teachers regarding the challenges they encounter when teaching ELLs and what they need to successfully teach primary grade ELLs in urban schools. Further research was conducted with primary grade and ESOL teachers to identify what K-2 primary grade teachers believed they needed to successfully meet the ELLs' learning needs. The results of this study may lead to a positive social change. This study provided valuable information regarding how school administrators, policymakers, and other stakeholders could offer adequate resources, including professional development, that would lead to an increase in the academic performance of ELL

students. School administrators may be motivated to provide adequate training, resources, and support. Stakeholders may agree to provide teachers with the necessary support while embracing multicultural and language diversity as a positive social change. Positive social change resulting from the findings of this study is that teacher perceptions of their challenges to meet the needs of ELL students are known by stakeholders in the mid Atlantic region of the United States, and the stakeholders can then value and support student language needs.

Conclusion

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of urban primary grade teachers regarding the challenges they encounter when teaching ELLs and what they need to successfully teach primary grade ELLs in urban schools. This study's findings were identified with the following three themes that address the research questions, as follows: (1) teachers encounter multiple successes teaching ELLs when they implement principles of English language acquisition, (2) teachers encounter a range of challenges when teaching ELLs in multilingual classrooms, and (3) teachers need resources to support their teaching practices with ELL students.

These themes were developed during the analysis of data from 12 primary grade teacher participants. Based on my findings, which are supported by my conceptual framework and review of literature, teachers need relevant training and resources to effectively teach ELL students and address the challenges they face. Among the challenges that primary grade teachers faced were how they addressed the language barrier and cultural differences with students and their families that influence ELL

students' academic success. Some resources include effective technology, training on cultural awareness, and teaching strategies. Every participant believed the lack of resources presents additional challenges for ELL teachers. Larios and Zetlin (2023) added that educating ELL students requires effective training that will support and guide teachers on how to create a more inclusive learning environment to accommodate ELL students.

Every participant believed that to better prepare teachers for teaching ELLs, primary grade teachers need professional development on strategies for teaching ELL: effective technology, cooperative teaching, ESOL teachers, and parent involvement. Findings from this study may lead to positive social change by creating an awareness of teachers' challenges in meeting the learning needs of ELL students and how effectively to meet their learning needs. This will allow stakeholders to plan to effectively address these challenges leading to meeting the learning needs of ELL students in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

Table A: Alignment of Research & Interview Questions & Conceptual Framework

RQ 1: What are the perceptions of urban primary grade teachers regarding the successes and challenges they encounter when teaching ELLs?

RQ 2: What do urban primary grade teachers need to address the challenges they encounter when teaching ELLs?

Conceptual Framework	Interview Questions	RQs
principles of second language learning & teaching	IQ1: Please tell me about your teaching assignment.	RQ1
	IQ2: What are your perceptions of teacher effectiveness in teaching ELLs?	RQ2
Know students' motivation	IQ3: What are your perceptions of successes and challenges teachers encounter when teaching ELLs?	RQ1
Create welcoming classroom	IQ4: Please describe how you build rapport with ELLs and motivate them to learn English.	RQ1 & RQ2
Build background knowledge	IQ5: How do you create a welcoming classroom environment?	
Build vocabulary		RQ2
Design interactive lessons	IQ6: What strategies do you use to build background knowledge about ELL content?	
Use multiple modalities		
Use review and assessment	IQ7: Describe ways that you provide comprehensible input for ELLs by building their vocabulary.	RQ2
	IQ8: Describe how you design interactive lessons to increase student discussions.	RQ2
	IQ9: What modalities do you include in teaching ELLs and in what ways do you include multiple modalities?	RQ2
	Q10: Please give examples of procedures for review and assessment of knowledge and skills.	RQ2
	Q11: Please describe successes and/or challenges in teaching ELLs; and how you overcame challenges, which led to a successful student outcome.	RQ2
	Q12: Please add any other thoughts you would like to include.	RQ2

Appendix B: Interview Protocol for Teachers

Interviewer: _____ Interviewee: _____

Location: _____ Date: _____/____/_____ Time: _____

Pre-Interview Information & Procedures

Purpose: Thank you for your participation today. My name is Justina Chizomam Bigelow, and I am a Ph.D. student at Walden University. This project is in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Ph.D. in Education. The purpose of this interview is to examine your perceptions of the challenges you encounter when working with primary English language learners (ELLs) students and the resources you need to improve your support of students.

Participation and Recording: Thank you for accepting to participate in this interview. If you feel uncomfortable at any time during the interview, you may choose to stop. The audio of the interview will be recorded and is scheduled to last no more than 60 minutes. I would like your permission to audio record this interview, so I can accurately document the information you share. Do you give me consent for me to record this interview session?

Consent and Confidentiality: I have provided you with a consent form prior to the interview. Do you have any questions about the consent form? The data will be managed and stored by only the interviewer, in which the data will remain confidential and transferred to the password-protected online account immediately after this session. All names, locations, and easily identifiable labels will be removed. Your responses will only be used in this study for partial fulfillment of my requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. Your responses will be used to help me better develop my final dissertation components.

Do you have any questions or concerns in relation to the interview and procedures before we begin?

Opening the Interview Session:
Thank you for volunteering to share your perception and experiences about the challenges encountered when working with primary ELL students and the resources teachers need to improve their support of students.

Participant's Background
Please tell me about your teaching assignment.
What are your perceptions of teacher effectiveness in teaching ELLs?
What are your perceptions of teacher challenges when teaching ELLs?

Sample Interview Questions

IQA: How do you create a welcoming classroom environment?

IQB: What strategies do you use to build background knowledge about ELL content?

IQC: Describe ways that you provide comprehensible input for ELLs by building their vocabulary.

Concluding the Interview

Is there anything else you would like to share with me based on your perceptions of the challenges you encounter when teaching primary grade ELLs what you need to teach them?

Thank you for your time and your insights on urban teachers' perceptions of the challenges they encounter when teaching primary grade ELLs. The information you have provided will remain confidential and any identifiers will be removed in the transcription of the data. The data will only be used in my coursework for partial fulfillment of my advanced qualitative course to practice interviewing, transcribing, coding, and analyzing data and will be used to help me better develop my final dissertation components. If you have no additional questions, I would like to thank you again for your participation and please don't hesitate to email or call should you think of any additional information or questions.

Appendix C: Categories and Themes

Category	Theme
Communication issues	Theme 1: Participants identified some major challenges they face when teaching primary ELLs as language barrier, communication issue, multicultural classroom, and home and school connection as the major challenges in teaching ELLs (RQ1)
Welcoming Classroom Environment	
Technology	
Collaborative teaching	Theme 2: Participants identified successful strategies teacher use to address challenges they faced while teaching ELLs as use of smart board and other technological gadgets, teaching strategies like scaffolding, modeling, small group instruction, labeling, interactive activities, differentiated instruction, sound wall, and total physical response (TPR), and accommodation to execute instruction. (RQ2)
Accommodation	
Teaching Strategies Multicultural Classroom	Theme 3: Participants identified what they need to support ELLs educational needs as relevant professional development, welcoming classroom environment, collaborative teaching, and that teachers lacked the necessary professional development to meet the need the academic needs of the ELL students (RQ2)
Home and School Connection	