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First grade teachers' perceptions of and expectations for ELL students

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Abstract

First Grade Teachers' Perceptions of and Expectations for ELL Students

by

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M. Ed. State University of West Georgia, 1992

B. A. State University of West Georgia, 1969

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

Educational disparities exist between English language learners (ELLs) and native English-speaking students. Evidence suggests that, by fourth grade, 35% of ELLs, compared to their native English-speaking peers, are behind in math, and 47% are behind in reading. There is also evidence to suggest that these lower achievement scores are impacted by teachers' perceptions of and expectations for ELL students. Guided by the theories of interpersonal expectancy and self-fulfilling prophecy, this study examined first grade teachers' perceptions of and expectations for their ELL students in a small southern U.S. town. Using a case study approach, data were collected through interviews, observations, and a qualitative questionnaire. Data were analyzed by comparing and contrasting emergent themes, with similar themes being combined as a method of data reduction. Findings from this study indicated that the teachers did not see their ELL students as inferior to their native English-speaking peers. Students were viewed as similarly capable as any other student in the classroom and are expected to reach the same level of achievement as their native English-speaking peers. Teachers generally expressed the need for more training to address ELL learning styles and communicate more effectively with parents. Teachers, administrators, and parents would be interested in the findings of this study, and this study may motivate teachers and administrators to consider how their perceptions of and expectations for ELL students are linked to effective and equitable curriculum and instruction for these students. The implication for social change is that examining equitable instruction of ELL students will enhance these students' chances to compete for good jobs and be productive citizens of the local community.

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Dedication

This research study is dedicated to my precious sons, James (wife Cathy) and Jason (wife Emma), and my precious little angels—my grandchildren, Logan, Landon, Parker, and Anna Beth. They are my reason for living. They give meaning to my life on earth. They have had little of my time and attention during my pursuit of this degree; yet, they have stood by me and have freely given encouragement and praise. Had it not been for their patience and understanding during all the weekends I was unable to spend with them, my perseverance would not have been as strong. I appreciate with all my heart their support and prayers for my successful completion of this enormous task.

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Section 1: Introduction to the Study

The number of English Language Learners (ELLs) in the United States has grown to record levels (Batalova, Fix, & Murray, 2007). From 1994 to 2005, the limited English proficient (LEP) population in the United States grew more than 60% and by the year 2025, 25% of students may be Hispanic (American Federation of Teachers [AFT], 2004; Batalova et al., 2007; Padrón, Waxman, & Rivera, 2002), comprising the largest minority group in the United States (Batalova et al., 2007).

The increase in ELL students has been evident in the state of Georgia, where the current study takes place. Between 2000 and 2006, the state of Georgia was ranked fifth in the United States in terms of its increase in foreign-born people (Terrazas, Batalova, & Fan, 2008). According to the United States Department of Education (2006), Georgia's ELL population grew more than 200% between the years of 1994 to 2005. Research focusing on teachers' perceptions of and expectations for ELLs will be helpful in increasing knowledge about this growing population of students. Teachers' perceptions of and expectations may affect how ELLs feel about themselves and ultimately how much these students learn. Because this population is growing, we should study teachers' perceptions of these students. ELL children often do poorly in school. Even though evidence suggests that teachers' perceptions may be linked to students' achievement, this relationship has not been explicitly studied in regard to ELL children.

The lives of the growing population of ELL children are often changing, as their families may relocate frequently for the purpose of making a living (Wainer, 2006). Unsure of the future and their new surroundings in a different country, ELL children

want assurance that their teachers hold in esteem their individual cultures and languages (Gray & Fleischman, 2004; Miller & Endo, 2004; Nieto, 2003; Verdugo & Flores, 2007). In many cases, however, teachers are already handling many responsibilities (Reeves, 2006; Rumberger & Gándara, 2004) and may not have the time or energy to expend the particular needs of their ELL students. As they begin school in United States schools, these children speak and often act differently from native English-speaking students (Aronson & Steele, 2005; Brock et al., 2006; Delgado-Gaitan, 2001; Rist, 1970; Trumbull & Pacheco, 2005). Because of the differences between ELL students and non-ELL students, teachers may experience negative perceptions, low expectations, and differential treatment of ELL children (Villegas, 2007; Weinstein, Gregory, & Strambler, 2004).

Research on teacher expectations for ELLs suggests the possibility that negative expectations can affect ELL children's self-concepts and perceived abilities to achieve the same as native English-speaking students (Batalova et al., 2007; Delgado-Gaitan, 2001; Hite & Evans, 2006; Trumbull & Pacheco, 2005). Likewise, Aronson and Steele (2005) declared "how a student construes the way he or she is viewed and treated by others matters a lot…. these perceptions can exert a profound influence on intellectual confidence and ultimately upon a student's academic self-concept" (p. 437). Indeed, low expectations and differential treatment of students may be a significant factor in the educational disparities between ELLs and native English-speaking students (Batalova et al., 2007; Nieto, 2003; Klump & McNeir, 2005). Examining possible causes for this disparity, including teachers' perceptions of students' academic success, is important for

schools as they strive to provide equal treatment for all students. More equitable treatment by teachers may help reduce disparities and promote academic achievement for all learners.

According to the Alliance for Excellent Education's (2007) report on the literacy crisis involving ELL children, growing numbers of ELLs are not reaching acceptable academic levels and are among the country's lowest-performing students. The National Center for Educational Statistics (2005) reported that only 4% of eighth grade ELL students were proficient in reading, while 31% of the total population of eighth graders were proficient in reading. In addition, on the 2007 National Assessment of Educational Progress, ELLs in fourth grade scored 36 points below English-speaking students in reading and 25 points below in math (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2005).

Because teachers' low expectations and differential treatment of students may add to the achievement gap between ELLs and mainstream English-speaking students (Batalova et al., 2007; Nieto, 2003; Trumbull & Pacheco, 2005), research on educating ELLs must examine classroom teachers' perceptions of and expectations for their ELL students. Improving teachers' expectations for and treatment of ELL students may result in positive social change and greater justice for a diverse society. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine classroom teachers' perceptions of and expectations for their ELL students. Although there are classroom teachers who hold high expectations for all their students, including ELLs, some classroom teachers may harbor negative perceptions of and expectations for students who represent other cultures. This examination may provide insight into what teachers' perceptions of and expectations are for their ELL

children. The hope of this study is that a connection will be found between teacher perceptions of ELL students and ELL student performances. An additional hope is that the findings from the current study will provide suggestions for ways that teachers can maintain appropriate perceptions of and expectations for ELL children.

Nature of the Study and Research Questions

To examine teachers' perceptions of and expectations for ELL students, a case study approach was used. A case study calls for examining a contemporary, rather than a historical phenomenon, within specified boundaries (Hatch, 2002). The experiences described and analyzed in the present study are the perceptions and expectations shared by first grade teachers in one southern elementary school. Creswell (2007) posited that case study research "involves the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system" (p. 73). First grade classroom teachers who teach ELL students will be interviewed, observed, and given a qualitative questionnaire to get an in-depth understanding of teachers' perceptions of and expectations for the ELL children they teach. During one-on-one interviews, research questions will focus on teachers' shared perceptions of and expectations for ELL students. The overarching questions addressed in this study are: What are first grade teachers' shared perceptions of the ELL students in their classrooms and what are teachers' expectations for the ELL students in their classrooms? The objectives of the proposed research include an examination of the following: (a) classroom teachers' perceptions of and expectations for ELL students, (b) challenges faced by classroom teachers of ELL students, and (c) classroom teachers' perceptions of the amount and quality of training they have received to teach ELL

children. The nature of the study and the study's research questions will be discussed in more detail in section 3.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study will be to examine first grade classroom teachers' shared perceptions of and expectations for their ELL students. Examining this topic may lead to increased knowledge about how teachers' perceptions of and expectations may develop, change, and potentially impact the community.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study will be guided by the interpersonal expectancy and self-fulfilling prophecy theories. Interpersonal expectancy refers to one person's expectations for another person (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968). ELL students' feelings about their academic capabilities may be linked to the academic potential envisioned for them by their classroom teachers. Students may unconsciously bring about a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy by their response to teachers' expectations and treatment (Aronson, 2004; Boyes, 2004; Jussim & Harber, 2005).

The way that teachers behave towards ELLs may impact students' self-concept and their capacity to learn (Rist, 1970; Rosenthal, 2002; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968). Teachers can instill in ELL students a feeling of inferiority to their native English-speaking peers (Lindsey, Roberts, & CampbellJones, 2004; Nieto, 2002; Sleeter & Grant, 2003). They may surmise that children from other cultures are incapable of learning to the same extent as native English speakers (Aronson, 2004; McIntyre, Kyle, Cheng-Ting, Kraemer, & Parr, 2008; Landsman, 2004; Sleeter & Grant, 2003). Research suggests that

some educators perceive ELLs as inferior students simply because these students speak, look, or act differently and come from a different culture (Klump & McNeir, 2005; Landsman, 2004; Sleeter & Grant, 2003; Wainer, 2006). If teachers suggest in some way that ELL children possess inferior intelligence, such opinions may serve as a self-fulfilling prophecy for the ELL children. The self-fulfilling prophecy refers to the idea that students achieve to the level that others expect them to reach. Teachers' negative views of these students may somehow prevent ELLs from attaining their highest potential (Landsman, 2004; Lucina & Sowa, 2005; Sleeter & Grant, 2003; Trumbull & Pacheco, 2005). Contrarily, teacher perceptions of value and praise, directed toward ELL children, may help these children to achieve more than they had expected of themselves.

Low expectations and differential treatment may damage ELLs' self-esteem by making these students feel less capable than native English-speaking students (Landsman, 2004; Wainer, 2006). Aronson's (2004) research suggested that people's beliefs about their own cognitive capacity may be impacted by others' perceptions of them. This research informs the current study, which will explore teachers' perceptions of the ability of their ELL students to achieve academically. When children think that other people consider them to be intellectually inferior, these children may even begin to doubt themselves and their capacity to achieve academically (Aronson, 2004; Rist, 1970; Spindler, 1987; Wolcott, 1974). Spindler (1987) suggested that when teachers degrade students' culture and language, students' confidence and desire to learn is diminished. Wolcott (1974) depicted the relationship between ELL students and teachers as analogous to that between an enemy (teacher) and captive (student); students feel as

though they being held in captivity and their educational lives controlled by their teachers. If Wolcott's analogy represents the typical classroom teacher-ELL relationship, this scenario creates an atmosphere detrimental to ELLs' learning.

Alternatively, teachers' high expectations for ELLs may increase students' achievement (Brock et al., 2006; Rist, 1970; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968; Rumberger & Gándara, 2004), perhaps because students feel better about their own capabilities or because they do not want to see their teacher disappointed. For those students expected to do well, teachers may work harder to promote learning (Harris & Rosenthal, 1985; Villegas & Lucas, 2007). ELLs may attain more academic progress when teachers have the same high expectations of them as they have for native English speakers (Aronson, 2004; Hite & Evans, 2006; Rumberger & Gándara, 2004). Nieto (2003) noted that "teachers who care about, mentor, and guide their students can have a dramatic impact on their futures" (p. 9). The current study was grounded in the idea that the way teachers view ELLs' academic capabilities may influence how these students perceive their own abilities and ultimately how they will perform academically. Students may unconsciously live up to their teachers' expectations, thus making worthy of study the concept of interpersonal expectancy as it relates to ELLs in the mainstream classroom.

Operational Definitions of Terms

Several terms will be used throughout this study. For the purpose of clarifying terms for the reader, the operational definitions are given below.

Achievement gap: A term that refers to the academic deficiencies between ELL students and their native English-speaking peers (Goldenberg, 2008).

Bounded system: The case selected for study is bounded by time and place and has interrelated parts that make up the whole (Stake, 2006).

Case: The object or focus of the study, such as an event, process, program, or several people (Stake, 2006).

C*ollaborative group*: A group of teachers who participate together in authentic, professional behavior that includes "openly sharing failures and mistakes" (Marzano, 2003, p. 61) and constructively analyzing teaching practices.

Cultural proficiency: Refers to "honoring the differences among cultures, seeing diversity as a benefit, and interacting knowledgeably and respectfully among a variety of cultural groups" (Lindsey et al., 2005, p. 54).

Culture: The systems of values, beliefs, and ways of knowing that guide communities of people in their daily lives (Trumbull & Pacheco, 2005).

Culturally responsive teaching: Teaching to meet the cultural needs of students (Freeman, 2008).

Diversity: In relation to school populations, this term refers to culture, language, race, ethnicity, and many other aspects of human identity; it applies to a group that has people from many different backgrounds and refers to the entire population, not just those perceived to be "different" (Trumbull & Pacheco, 2005, pp. 13-14).

Dominant group: Those defined as a majority group on the basis of their race or ethnicity, and who historically have had greater advantages, access, and power in society. In U.S. schools, the dominant group is often characterized as white, middle-class students and teachers (Trumbull & Pacheco, 2005, p. 15).

ELL students: ELL is an acronym for the term English language learners and refers to those students for whom English is not the first language of communication (Giambo & Szechsi, 2005).

English-speaking peers: Those students whose native language is English and who do not speak a language other than English in the home setting (Freeman, 2004).

Interpersonal expectancy: Refers to the phenomenon that people appear to reach the potential level that others set for them (Rist, 1970; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968).

Mainstream teachers: Teachers who teach in the regular classroom and use English as the language of instruction (Carrasquillo & Rodriguez, 2002).

Stereotypes: Mental pictures that simplify thinking about other people who are different; these mental pictures produce expectations about what people are like and how they will behave (Aronson, 2004).

Teachers' perceptions: How teachers view their ELL students' abilities to achieve academically; it relates to teachers' seeing these students as contributors or as deficits to the school community (Nieto, 2003).

Teachers' expectations: Internalized beliefs that teachers have for their ELLs vis à vis native English-speaking students (Nieto, 2002).

Assumptions

Assumptions about the study include the expectation that all participants will give honest, in-depth answers. The assumption is also made that participants will not give responses based on what they think I want to hear, even though I am an English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) teacher.

Additionally, as the participants represent the predominantly Caucasian, female, and middle class teachers in the entire school, it is assumed that the findings will be generalizable to the school's teacher population. For this reason, teachers who did not participate in the current study can be assumed to have the same basic expectations for ELLs as the teachers who did participate in the study.

Finally, the assumption exists that "all research is value laden and includes the value systems" of the participants (Creswell, 2003, p. 247). Researchers are the ones who interpret the data, but other interpretations may be given (Briggs & Coleman, 2007; Hatch, 2002). Therefore, apprising the reader of any personal biases and interests about the research topic is an imperative duty for researchers (Creswell, 2003), as these biases or perceptions provide an interpretation of the data that may not be shared by other researchers or readers.

Limitations

Because study participants are comprised of only first grade Caucasian female teachers in a small southern town, findings may not be generalizable to male teachers, to multicultural faculties, to other grade levels, or to schools in other areas of the state or country. The results cannot be applied to schools with lower or higher percentages of ELL students than are present in the school used in this study. The findings may also not be applicable to schools whose first grade teachers have had substantial training working with diverse student populations.

Further, the accounts given by participants may be affected in some ways. For example, teachers may not take the time to thoroughly think through interview answers

because of high stress and demands of teaching-related responsibilities. Educators may also be embarrassed to admit that their expectations are low for some or all ELL students. For example, educators may not be completely honest and admit that they have different expectations for Latino students as compared to Asian students or different expectations for Asian students as compared to Indian students.

Scope

The scope of this study will include all first grade teachers in one specific elementary school in the southern part of the United States. The purpose of this study will be to explore first grade classroom teachers' shared perceptions of and expectations for their ELL students. Examining teachers' perceptions of and expectations may lead to strategies for addressing different beliefs and decrease educational disparities. The study will also examine the basis of teachers' negative perceptions of and expectations, ways to address the issue of different expectations, and the impact on society of different perceptions of and expectations for ELL children. Four first grade teachers comprise the first grade staff in the research setting. However, using a small number of participants was suggested by researchers as beneficial for gathering richer and more profound information from participants (Creswell, 2007; Lasso & Soto, 2005, Merriam & Associates, 2002). I am persuaded that, because this group of teachers has taught ELL students, they will be able to give adequate information to answer the research questions.

Delimitations

Teachers of levels lower or higher than first grade were not included as participants. Including male teachers or teachers from other cultures was not feasible,

because all first grade teachers in the particular school being studied are female Caucasian Americans.

Significance of the Study

The study is significant because it focuses on teachers' shared perceptions of and expectations for ELL students, which may either promote or impede ELLs' achievement. This problem impacts society in a small southern town because of the self-fulfilling prophecy that students tend to live up to teachers' expectations (Aronson, 2004; Brock et al., 2006; Rist, 1970; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968; Rumberger & Gándara, 2004). If teachers' perceptions of ELL children do impact students' success, these students' adult lives as contributing workers, family members, and citizens in this town may also ultimately be affected (Goldenberg, 2008; Lasso & Soto, 2005).

Interacting with students in a positive way, which includes exhibiting high expectations for these students, may affect the amount of information that students are able to learn (Hite & Evans, 2006; Lindsey et al., 2005; Reed & Railsback, 2003; Wainer, 2006). If teachers have high expectations for ELL students, these students may develop high expectations for themselves. This kind of positive learning environment is vital for learning and can increase ELLs' chances for success (Colombo, 2005; Guest & Dawson, 2003; Tinajero, 2006; Verdugo & Flores, 2007).

ELLs frequently connect personal aspirations to achieve in school to their teachers' encouragement and high expectations for success (Ferguson, 2002; Nieto, 2005). Indeed, some research on educating multicultural children suggests that teacher expectations, rather than teaching strategies, may be a more important determinant factor

in ELL students' academic success (Brock et al., 2006; Landsman, 2004; Lindsey et al., 2005; Lucina & Sowa, 2005; Trumbull & Pacheco, 2005). Students' beliefs in their own abilities appear to increase as their teachers' perceptions of and expectations become more positive (Aronson & Steele, 2005; Landsman, 2004; Lucina & Sowa, 2005; Reed & Railsback, 2003). However, time is limited for teachers to significantly help these children. Rumberger and Gándara (2004) posited that a "critical window of opportunity" (p. 2051) exists during which time young children are eager to learn. Teachers must seize the opportunity and exhibit high expectations for these students before the eagerness to learn diminishes (Rumberger & Gándara, 2004).

This study is significant in that it will generate knowledge about teaching ELL students, provide information for teachers to apply this knowledge professionally, and impact the school community through its findings. Hargreaves (2005) stated that "only teaching is expected to create the human skills and capacities that will enable individuals and organizations to survive and succeed in today's knowledge society" (p. 9). Through reflection, examination, and discussion of personal beliefs, teachers will become more aware of how they interact with their ELL students (Lucina & Sowa, 2005; Nieto, 2000, 2003a; Verdugo & Flores, 2007). Because the nature of this study focuses on teachers' self-reflection about equitable expectations for ELLs, this study may contribute to positive social change in the local community for these students and their teachers. Valuing equality and maintaining that all students should receive equitable chances to succeed in the workplace may help to promote social justice and democracy in society (Crowther, Kaagan, Ferguson, & Hann, 2002; Lalas, 2007; Lindsey et al., 2005; Spring,

2005; Trueba, 1992). If teachers view the various cultures as valuable elements of the local community, others in the community may develop a greater propensity to see life from different viewpoints (Cochran-Smith, 2003; Freedman, 2001). The result may be an increase in cross-cultural awareness. Viewing other cultures as assets rather than liabilities helps a local community to create an eclectic pool of knowledge and resources that benefit all of its citizens.

Transition Statement

Along with the growth in ELL student population comes the challenge of making education equitable for these children (Banks, 2001; Nieto, 2000; Spring, 2005). If teachers are unprepared to teach these students, providing equitable education for all students will be difficult (Howard, 2007; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007; Solomon, Lalas, & Franklin, 2006). Because under-preparedness to teach ELLs may influence teachers' perceptions of and expectations for these students, the study will also explore teacher training in this area and how teachers might maintain positive perceptions of and expectations for ELL students. Raising expectations, overcoming stereotypic perceptions, and learning how to interact with ELL students may contribute to increased overall achievement for ELL students. As a result, the achievement gap between ELL children and native English-speaking students may narrow, making society a more just and equitable place where all cultures are valued. Section 1 has presented a summary of the research literature related to the topic of teachers' perceptions of and expectations for ELL students. The conceptual framework of interpersonal expectancy and the self-fulfilling prophecy was provided in addition to the problem, purpose, and significance of

the study. The remaining sections will further explore and elaborate on the phenomenon of teachers' shared perceptions of and expectations for ELL students. Section 2 will review research and literature related to the conceptual framework of the study. It will also include literature related to the use of different methodologies considered for investigating the topic. Included also is a review of literature on the impact of interpersonal expectancy as it relates to classroom teachers perceptions of and expectations for ELL students. Section 3 will provide a description and justification of how the research design fits the problem examined. Additionally, section 3 will present the context of the study, ethical precautions taken, rationale for selecting participants, my relationship to the participants and to the data, and an explanation of data collection procedures and analysis. Section 4 will present the results of the study, and section 5 will summarize interpretations of the research findings, put forth the implications for practice and social change, and offer recommendations for further study.

Section 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this study was to examine first grade classroom teachers' perceptions of and expectations for their ELL students. The content of the literature review includes a presentation of current research related to the focus of the research. The review is organized around theoretical and empirical research on: (a) the impact of classroom teachers' perceptions of and expectations for ELL students, (b) the challenges faced by teachers of ELL students, and (c) teachers' perceptions of professional training to teach ELL students.

The strategy used for searching the literature consisted of examining sources on mainstream teachers' perceptions, expectations, interactions, and differential treatment of ELL children. Peer-reviewed journals, Walden materials received during the course of the doctoral study, current home and school library resources, as well as journal articles and books available through the Walden Library and Questia were explored to find information on the topic.

In searching the literature on the research topic, terms used were: *case study approach*, *qualitative research*, *English language learners*, *classroom teachers' expectations for ELL students*, *interpersonal expectancy theory*, *stereotypes of other cultures*, *teachers' differential treatment of ELL students*, *training for classroom teachers of ELL students*, *equitable education for ELL students*, *achievement gap*, *dropout rate for ELL students*, *providing equitable education for ELL students*, *collaborative teacher learning*, and *developing relationships with parents of ELL students*

Teachers' Perceptions of and Expectations for ELL Students

Teachers' Stereotypic Perceptions of and Low Expectations for ELL Students

Teachers who are unfamiliar with teaching children from cultures different from their own may have perceptions based on misinformation and stereotypes about these children. Teachers may have difficulty accepting of other cultures until they become aware that they have these feelings.

Before teachers are able to address negative perceptions, however, they must first engage in self-examination to assess if negative perceptions exist (Banks et al., 2001; Lucina & Sowa, 2005; Nieto, 2000; Spindler, 1987). Examined in Ndura's (2004) qualitative study of 34 in-service teachers in a multicultural class is the concept that classroom teachers must evaluate personal perceptions of their own culture before they are able to adequately assess their perceptions of and expectations for people from other cultures. The study is grounded in Hones's (1999) and Marshall's (2002) idea that people must first understand their own culture before they can understand and accept that of others. The main research question in Ndura's study asked participants to describe how they viewed their own culture and how this view impacted the way in which participants related to people from other cultures. The author found that participants are often so involved in everyday life that they may be unaware of how they feel about their own cultures; even though they may be proud of their cultures, they consider them to be simply normal and nothing special. Ndura also noted that some participants held negative views of other cultures and how various cultural differences, such as lack of eye contact from some cultures, were annoying to the teachers.

Although Ndura's (2004) information is obtained through in-service teachers' written reports on cultural identities, the study does relate to the present study. Like the present study, it implies that teachers' must be willing to examine their personal beliefs about their own cultures to unearth sources of negative perceptions of ELL children. Only then can they begin to change negative perceptions of these students. Therefore, Ndura's research provides support for the importance of examining the topic of teachers' perceptions of and expectations for ELL students.

Various studies, including those by Landsman (2004), Lucina and Sowa (2005), and Nieto (2000), have provided insight into the factors shaping teachers' perceptions of their culturally different students. Lucina and Sowa's (2005) study focused on Sleeter's (2001) concept that a growing difference exists between teachers' cultures and the cultures of the children they teach. The purpose of this study was to help Caucasian, middle-class teacher candidates develop ways to work with students from various cultures. The results of the online discussions with teachers indicated that the teacher candidates knew little about other cultures and thus their view of multicultural students may be very limited. This study supports the present study's research on how teachers' negative views of diverse students may be defined by teachers' lack of knowledge about other cultures. The findings help substantiate the importance of training teachers in the present school setting, which continues to grow in diversity.

In addition to examining preconceived ideas that influence teacher's feelings about their ELL students, exploring if teachers' attitudes differ for the various cultures represented by these students is essential. Research has been conducted on this topic.

Rubie-Davies, Hattie, and Hamilton (2006) affirmed the possibility that teachers' perceptions of and expectations for various cultural groups may vary. The authors' quantitative study of 21 primary teachers from different schools in New Zealand examined how teachers' expectations differed for the ethnic groups of children in reading. Research questions asked were: Do teachers' expectations differ for various ethnic groups? If they differ, do teachers' expectations align with students' social class and academic achievement? How accurate are teachers' judgments of student performance for various ethnic groups? Findings revealed that teachers' expectations for one ethnic group (Maori students) were apparently lower than were teachers' expectations for the other ethnic groups (New Zealand students, Pacific Island students, and Asian students) involved in the study. Maori children performed at the same level as other ethnic groups at the beginning of the year but scored lower than the other ethnic groups at the end of the year ($p < .001$-$.004$); thus, the authors surmised that teachers' lower expectations may have resulted in a self-fulfilling prophecy for the Maori students.

The Rubie-Davies, Hattie, and Hamilton (2006) study is not the same as the present study, as these authors' research revolves around teachers' expectations of various ethnic rather than linguistic groups. It does, however, pertain to the present study in that it points out the importance of teachers' expectations in students' academic achievement. Like the present study, it suggests the possibility that teachers' low expectations and stereotypes may result in a self-fulfilling prophecy in which students achieve to the level that others expect for them. The fact that this study took place in a

country other than the United States reveals the global need to address educational issues related to minority and ELL students.

Another study on how teachers view various cultural groups was that of Walker, Shafer, and Iiams (2004). The authors conducted a mixed-methods study of mainstream teachers' in 28 schools, including 422 K-12 students and 6 ELL teachers, about their attitudes towards ELL students. The ELL population in this study was mainly from migrant families. Research questions focused on the nature of classroom teachers' attitudes, factors that influenced attitudes, and demographic effects on these attitudes. Walker et al. also examined contributing factors such as teachers' prior experiences with ELL students and years of teaching experience. The purpose of the study was to aid in staff development that would address negative attitudes about students who are linguistically different. The study concluded that regardless of teachers' demographic characteristics, the majority of participants held negative attitudes towards their ELL students, which had an effect on ELLs' desire to learn; in fact, 70% (n= 288) did not want ELL students in their class. Teachers in the study expressed frustration about not having the time, energy, and training to teach ELLs. This study highlighted the significance of inadequate training for mainstream classroom teachers of ELL students. The authors suggested the need for more substantial teacher training in this area.

This study relates to the proposed study in that it focuses on teachers' attitudes towards ELLs and the effect that negative perceptions may have on these students. On the other hand, teachers in Walker et al.'s (2004) study taught students who were mostly from migrant families. In the community in which the present study takes place, most of

the ELL children do not come from migrant families and thus do not move from place to place as much as ELLs who come from migrant families.

In line with Walker et al. (2004), Herzog's (2007) study focused on teachers' perceptions of and expectations for their ELL students. The conceptual framework of this study was based on the sociocultural theory of Gutiérrez, Baquedano-Lopez, and Turner (1997), which refers to the relationship between ELLs' cultural and linguistic backgrounds and their learning. Herzog's qualitative study examined the beliefs of three elementary teachers who were perceived by others in the school community to be successful teachers of ELL students. Research questions asked teachers to describe several aspects of their teaching, including their perceptions of the language and culture of their ELL students, the instructional strategies used to teach ELLs, and the challenges presented when teaching ELL students. Herzog found that teachers' perceptions of ELLs did not prevent them from having high expectations for ELLs' academic achievement. Teachers did not believe that being an ELL student made these children academically inferior to English-speaking students. Teachers noted that challenges related to teaching ELLs included how being labeled an ELL student may result in the student's being tracked through school. Another difficulty was preparing ELLs for standardized tests and showing students how to critically assess test questions.

Herzog's (2007) study relates to the present study in that it explores the topic of teachers' perceptions of students from various cultural and linguistic backgrounds; however, the participants in Herzog's research were considered successful teachers of ELLs. Teachers' success may have been due to their attitudes being the same for all

students, including ELLs. The present study seeks only to describe what teachers' perceptions of and expectations are exclusively for teaching ELLs, regardless of teachers' success with educating ELL students. Perhaps Herzog's study could be expanded to include both kinds of teachers—those deemed to be successful and those who do not feel successful teaching ELLs. A comparison of the two groups might shed light on the characteristics of each group and which of these characteristics, if any, may contribute to teachers' success in teaching ELL students.

Impact of Teachers' Perceptions of and Expectations for ELL Students

Research on teachers' stereotypes and expectations for ELLs implies that students' sense of ability may increase or decrease in proportion to teachers' perceptions of and expectations of these students; this association results in a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy. Literature exploring this concept includes that of Merton (1948), Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968), and Rist (1970).

Merton's (1948) qualitative study discussed teachers' expectations and stereotypes and how these perceptions may materialize into a self-fulfilling prophecy for their students. Rosenthal and Jacobson's (1968) study also suggested that teachers' expectations may dictate students' academic achievement. Rosenthal and Jacobson found that what teachers expect of their students does matter and can significantly impact students' academic achievement either positively or negatively. Rist's (1970) study of a Black kindergarten teacher found that the teacher, based solely on her personal perceptions of the students in her classroom, determined which ones were academically capable of succeeding and which ones were not. Her perceptions of the students

determined her interactions with those students. As a result of the teachers' perceptions, some students became successful, while others developed low self-esteem and failed to live up to their academic potential. These studies corroborated the idea that what teachers expect for their students may bring the self-fulfilling prophecy to fruition. When teachers expect students to reach a particular level of success, whether positive or negative, students are likely to perform at that level. For this reason, examining students' perceptions of stereotypes about themselves is important.

McKown and Weinstein's quantitative study (2003) of 202 children, ranging from ages 6 to 10, examined the age at which multicultural children became aware of stereotypes about themselves and how these children responded to testing that was influenced by stereotypical ideas of other cultures. The authors concluded that "ethnic stereotypes about students' academic ability can lead to self-fulfilling prophecies" (p. 500). If children are aware of others cultural stereotypes of them, these children's academic performance on tests and other intellectual activities may be negatively impacted. McKown and Weinstein found that by the time they reach third grade, most children are consciously aware of and influenced by stereotypes. The authors noted that "46% of children from stigmatized groups reported broadly-held stereotypes by age eight" (p. 510). Further investigation of these children through qualitative methods, such as in-depth interviews, could have provided further insight into the topic of children's perceptions of stereotypes about their individual cultures.

Unlike the present study's concentration on ELL students, McKown and Weinstein's (2003) study focused on children from all minorities. However, the results

may easily be applied to ELL students as a group, bearing out the idea that teachers' stereotypes of these children may influence students' academic performance, thus opening the door to the self-fulfilling prophecy for these children. Additionally, McKown and Weinstein gathered data from students in order to examine children's perceptions of how they are stereotyped by others; however, the present study will examine whether teachers hold possible stereotypic thoughts about children from other cultures.

As suggested by McKown and Weinstein (2003), teachers' stereotypes about ELLs may influence how ELL children feel about their capacity to learn. Madon et al. (2001) also proposed that teachers' stereotypical views of ELLs may result in a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy for these students. However, the authors suggested that teachers' perceptions of their students may not easily influence students' self-perceptions, as suggested by McKown and Weinstein; rather, teachers' perceptions of students' abilities may serve to weaken the self-fulfilling prophecy for some students. Based on the concept originally supported by Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968) that teachers' expectations can significantly influence children's academic performance, Madon et al.'s study sought to examine the effects of teachers' expectations on their ELL students. The researchers administered a quantitative survey to 108 teachers and 1,692 students in 108 sixth-grade public school math classrooms at the beginning and at the end of the school year. The aim was to understand the validity of this self-fulfilling prophecy in a sixth-grade math classroom's teachers and students, determining if students changed the way they viewed their abilities according to how others saw them was additionally considered.

Madon et al.'s (2001) study sought to determine if the concept of self-fulfilling prophecy and students' verification of their own abilities happened concurrently, given that teachers and students have information about students' prior test scores. Research questions for teachers centered on how capable at math they considered their students (a mixed ethnic group consisting mostly of Caucasian students); further questions probed how these students ranked according to the other students in the classroom. Students were posed questions asking them about their perceived ability in math and how they ranked themselves in relation to the others in their classrooms. Madon et al. found that students with positive perceptions of their own academic abilities were not as likely to fall prey to the self-fulfilling prophecy ($p < .05$). On the contrary, the relationship between the self-fulfilling prophecy and students self-perceptions may be stronger if students, along with their teachers, hold negative views of students' abilities.

As opposed to the current study, Madon et al.'s (2001) study was conducted with participants representing all ethnicities, including native English speakers. The study was also performed at a higher grade level and concentrated only on math students. Because it concentrates on an older group of students, Madon et al.'s study does not take into account the difficulties faced by first grade students who are just beginning their education and are more susceptible to how others think about and treat them. At such as young age, these students are often unable to rebuff the influences of negative perceptions and treatment. The present study, on the other hand, pertains exclusively to ELL students and classroom teachers who teach all subject areas, not just math, to their ELL students. Some of Madon et al.'s research is applicable to the present study in that it

sheds light on the relationship between the self-fulfilling prophecy and its influence on students' perceptions of their abilities.

Because of the potential of the self-fulfilling prophecy coming to life for ELL students, research on equitable education has supported the need for teachers to examine their perceptions of these students (Rivera-Goba & Nieto, 2007). The phenomenological qualitative study of Rivera-Goba and Nieto (2007) described how Latina students in a nursing program perceived their experiences in nursing school. The authors advocated for culturally responsive teaching that accepts and values the contributions of other cultures on the United States society. Based on the role model theory of Banks (1995) and Ouellette's (1998) theory linking self-esteem to positive identification with one's ethnic background, the study discussed the impact of teachers' stereotypical thinking towards Latino students. Rivera-Goba and Nieto sustained that, in order to develop positive cultural identities, minority students need role models who possess the same cultural backgrounds as themselves. Research participants, including 17 Latina recently-graduated nursing students, were queried about their perceptions of their educational experiences in a European American nursing school and how these views impacted them personally and educationally. Further, participants were asked to tell how nursing programs could be improved to be more culturally responsive to Latina nursing students. The research findings revealed that students were sometimes negatively influenced by others' stereotypes of their looks, culture, or language. Consequently, these students often experienced feelings of being alone and inferior in cognitive skills; they felt forced to work extra hard to prove their capabilities.

Unlike the present study, which involves young students, Rivera-Goba and Nieto's (2007) study focused on the educational experiences of adult students. However, both studies are related in that they emphasize the importance of teachers' perceptions of and stereotypical thinking about students who represent different cultures. Beliefs, negative or positive, can influence a person's self-esteem and personal perception of ability, regardless of age or educational setting.

Teachers' perceptions of and expectations for their ELLs can undoubtedly impact students' self-esteem. Tatum's (2004) study addressed how teachers' perceptions of and expectations for African American students' affected these students' self-esteem from childhood through adulthood. Based on Cross's (1971) concept of how people develop an identity of their particular race, Tatum's qualitative study examined how racial identity develops. The study of 24 African American college students revolved around these students' perceptions of growing up in neighborhoods and attending college in environments that were almost exclusively European American. Research questions asked participants how they see themselves, how they developed their identities, and how their identities were influenced by the experiences they had in an almost exclusively European American atmosphere. Tatum found that students' perceptions of their experiences substantially impacted how these students viewed themselves. All participants had at one time experienced teachers' low expectations of them based on their ethnicity as opposed to their actual abilities. These students had also encountered stereotypical perceptions of their race, and these perceptions continued to decrease their self-esteem.

Tatum's (2004) research relates to the present study in that it discussed the impact of teachers' negative perceptions of and expectations for minority students. Though Tatum's study focused on college students, her study and the present study emphasized how negative attitudes towards minority students may influence students' self-esteem throughout their lifetimes.

Challenges of Teaching ELL Students

As more culturally and linguistically diverse students enter the United States, teachers are faced with challenges involved with teaching these students (Newmann, 2002). Classroom teachers of ELLs may be concerned about insufficient knowledge of students' culture and instructional strategies for teaching ELLs. They may also be anxious about how to incorporate this type of information into a curriculum that is more equitable for all students.

Focusing on the problem of ensuring equitable education for all students, Sleeter (2008) conducted a qualitative case study in which she described some of the forces behind today's current educational practices. The study was based on differentiating between the concepts of corporatocracy and democracy in education. Sleeter cited Woodruff's (2005) philosophy that people in the United States are perplexed about what democracy is. The author pointed out that political policies enacted over the past few years have changed. Rather than focusing on providing democratic school environments, there has been a push to create a corporatic society that is guided by government control and the desire for monetary profits. For this reason, teachers face the challenge of creating a democratic classroom that serves the needs of all students, including ELLs. At

the same time, however, teachers are forced to be subservient to test score accountability; they are thus limited in their time and efforts to incorporate culturally-related teaching strategies and content that may be unrelated to standardized test content.

The purpose of Sleeter's (2008) study was to examine what teachers perceive as the challenge of simultaneously creating a democratic classroom environment and teaching the material that students are required to know for standardized tests. Participants included one middle school teachers and one second grade teacher. Participants were asked questions related to the problems they encountered in instituting democracy in a system in which the focus was on test scores. Sleeter found that a significant difference exists between the concept of democracy and the way in which schools practice democracy in the United States. Teachers want to provide a democratic environment that encompasses the needs of all students; yet, they are often forced to be subservient to the pressure of covering the material their students will see on standardized tests. Sleeter's study helped to increase the knowledge about the problem of democracy versus test score accountability. Public schools are compelled to address the conflict between the two concepts in an age of growing student diversity.

Sleeter's (2008) research is different from the present study, as it centers on the complicated struggle that teachers face when teaching in today's educational system that is grounded in a corporatic philosophy. However, like the present study, the research does offer insight into the many challenges faced by teachers of ELLs. Among these challenges is ensuring democratic, culturally responsive education while teaching in a society guided by a profit-making mentality.

Some research has drawn attention to these challenges. Batt's (2008) mixed methods study highlighted challenges to improving education for ELL students. Participants, 106 educators at an Idaho Association for Bilingual Education conference and 55 of the states' multi grade level teachers of ELL students, were questioned about these challenges for the purpose of developing more effective classroom teacher training in this area. Study questions included: (1) What are the greatest challenges impeding effective education for the state's ELLs? (2) What areas of professional development are needed to overcome these challenges? Batt found that teachers were concerned about inadequate training in ELL-related matters. Teachers needed more knowledge about students' culture and proper instructional strategies for these students. This study is different from the present study in that it involves ESOL teachers rather than non-ESOL teachers. It does connect to the present study, however, in that it supports the importance of training classroom teachers in the area of cultural knowledge and skills needed for teaching ELL students.

In addition to Batt's (2008) study, research on the challenges faced by classroom teachers of ELLs was conducted by de Oliveira and Athanases (2007). This qualitative study emphasized the need for better preparing classroom teachers to deal with issues related to ELL students. Conceptual framework for the study included that of Merino, Martin, and Pryor (2001), who asserted that classroom teachers should be advocates for their ELL students. In this study, participants cited challenges to teaching ELLs, such as how to obtain challenging, quality materials to meet the different levels of language proficiency, and ensuring that other students treated ELLs with respect. The study

examined how teachers in a teacher preparation school were trained to advocate for their ELLs by ensuring equity for these students, including quality classroom materials and a supportive, non-prejudicial environment. Data were obtained from 38 K-12 teachers who participated in focus group discussions. The teachers were asked how they advocated for their ELL students and what challenges they met when advocating for these students. De Oliveira and Athanases found that these teachers advocated for their ELLs by creating welcoming classroom environments; for example, students were allowed to draw pictures or use their native languages to communicate. Participants also made their instruction relevant to students' culture, thus allowing students to make connections between their cultural backgrounds and their learning in the classroom. Challenges that faced these teachers as they worked in advocating for their ELLs included the large amount of time needed to adequately prepare lessons reflecting diversity. Teachers strove to meet this challenge, however, by interacting with students and parents after school and by exhibiting high expectations for these students' academic success.

De Oliveira and Athanases's (2007) study is different from the present study in that it involved the use of focus groups, rather than in-depth interviews and observations. De Oliveira and Athanases (2007) also used a participant sample of teachers who had received training about how to meet the challenges of teaching linguistically diverse students. To enhance knowledge on this topic, my suggestion is that the researchers design another study using a comparative group of teachers who have not had the benefit of this type of training; the results may shed light on how these groups compare and what characteristics contribute to success in teaching ELLs. In addition to focusing on

teachers' expectations as does the present study, De Oliveira and Athanases (2007) takes discussion of the topic a step further by noting the importance of advocacy for ELLs as an added component to exhibiting high expectations for ELLs.

Another study regarding the challenges involved with teaching ELLs was done by Lee, Butler, and Tippins (2007). The authors conducted a qualitative case study of one first grade teacher to discover how classroom teachers can best help their diverse groups of students. Research questions asked teachers what knowledge and skills they needed in order to teach ELL children effectively. Lee, Butler, and Tippins' study is based on the concept set forth by Tirri, Husu, and Kananen (1999), van Driel, Beijaard, and Verloop (2001). This concept alleges that teachers' beliefs about diversity result from their own personal experiences in life. Challenges for classroom teachers' of ELL students were delineated by the participant, along with suggestions about how to address these problems. The teacher participant noted that an inability to communicate effectively with both ELLs and their parents can often present a challenge to teachers. Another challenge, according to this participant, was modifying the curriculum to reach the varied academic levels of ELLs within the classroom, as some of these children enter first grade with much more knowledge than do others. The study participant also alluded to the lack of cultural knowledge about ELLs as a barrier to helping students achieve academically. As a way to confront these challenges, the participant recommended that the teacher be persistent in establishing parental communication, provide ample hands-on learning opportunities for ELL students, and ensure an environment that is welcoming and that values other cultures.

Unlike the present study, which involves four teacher participants, Lee and al.'s (2007) research was limited to only one teacher's perceptions. The challenges faced by this participant may be those generally encountered by classroom teachers of ELL students. The knowledge gained from this study helps support the focus of the present study, which implies a need for training classroom teachers in the area of cultural knowledge and in the use of instruction that will make learning more comprehensible for ELL children.

Cho and Reich's (2008) study also highlighted the challenges of teaching ELL students. This quantitative exploratory study surveyed 33 high school social studies teachers for the purpose of determining these teachers' perceptions of the accommodations they use for ELL students, the challenges they face in teaching these students, and the areas in which they feel more training is needed for teachers of ELLs. The authors related their study to that of Duff's (2001) study which emphasized the importance of teachers' cultural knowledge and strategies to modify instruction for ELL students. As a result of the study, Cho and Reich found that the majority of teachers (54.5%) indicated a need for more knowledge about instructing ELL students. These teachers cited as their greatest challenges: students' lack of background knowledge, lack of sufficient time to work with these students, and a need for more training in understanding students' cultures and instructing these students in a culturally responsive manner. Even though classroom teachers encounter some of these challenges as part of daily teaching, confronting these issues may be even more difficult when teaching ELLs,

who possess cultural and linguistic characteristics different from those of native English-speaking students.

Several differences can be found between Cho and Reich's (2008) study and the present study. Cho and Reich's research addressed the challenges of multiclass high school teachers from various schools, whereas the present study will focus on first grade teachers who teach only one class in only one school. Even though a wide gap can be found between the ages of the students involved, Cho and Reich's research bears out the possibility that teachers of all age levels may be facing similar challenges, among them the need for more training in culturally responsive teaching. Like Cho and Reich's study, the present study aims at describing teachers' perceptions of and expectations for ELL students and the challenges and difficulties teachers confront when teaching these students.

Other research on challenges faced by classroom teachers of ELLs included Curtin's (2005) qualitative study, which described experiences of recently mainstreamed ELLs and teachers' challenges when teaching these students. Mainstreamed students are those who have received regular help from the ESOL teacher at the school but have exited the ESOL program and been placed in the mainstream classroom for the entire day. The author used as the basis of her study the concept of culturally responsive teaching as outlined by Dreikurs (1972) and Banks (2002). Participants included 6 regular classroom middle school teachers. Research questions asked teachers what they thought to be ELLs' challenges as they come into the regular classroom, and what they considered to be effective pedagogical methods for helping ELLs learn. Teachers were

also asked what school and district policies had been enacted to improve education for ELL students. Curtin concluded that teachers who used cooperative and interactive learning are those who understand and demonstrate more culturally competent teaching.

As opposed to the present study that involves very young first grade children in a small rural town, Curtin's (2005) study took place in a middle school situated in an expansive Texas school district. The student population consisted of a much larger percentage of ELLs than that of the present study, in which teacher participants have few ELL students. Furthermore, before entering the mainstream classroom setting, ELL students in this study spent at least two years in very supportive learning taught by ESOL teachers and entered the mainstream classroom only upon approval of their ESOL teachers. Therefore, this kind of environment for ELL students could have affected the results of the research. It would seem logical that classroom teachers' expectations for ELLs would be more positive if these students entered their classrooms more prepared for academic achievement than those children who are not as well prepared. Additionally, Curtin's study implied that the length of teaching experience may impact teachers' expectations for their ELL students. Veteran teachers exemplified a warmer, more interactive teaching style, whereas newer teachers appeared to be less helpful and understanding of their ELL mainstreamed students. The present study, on the other hand, focuses mainly on teacher participants' expectations for their ELLs and not on the relationship between years of teaching experience and expectations for ELLs. Even though the two studies differ in context, they are related in their efforts to elicit information about teachers' expectations for ELL students. As is the case with the present

research, Curtin's research strengthened the need for more examination of teachers' expectations for ELL students and the necessity of training teachers how to interact with their ELLs.

Teachers' Perceptions of Professional Training to Teach Effectively ELL Students

Research on training teachers to address ELL-related matters has indicated that teachers desire more knowledge in the area of culturally responsive teaching. Among researchers who have explored this topic is Rivera (2005). His qualitative study of four elementary school teachers focused on how teachers' views of ELL students influenced instructional strategies used with these students. Rivera asked questions related to classroom teachers' perceptions of their ELLs and how these perceptions influenced the ways teachers interacted with, instructed, integrated culture, and viewed training in this area. The conceptual framework for this study was based on the idea of culturally responsive teaching as espoused by Ladson-Billings (1994). This concept points out that teachers increase their ELLs' learning when the students' culture is integrated into instruction. Rivera pointed out that teachers' failing to integrate students' culture and holding low expectations for ELLs may cause these students to do poorly academically. The author found that all four participants in the study experienced a desire and need for more training in being culturally responsive teachers.

This study differs from the present study in that teacher participants in Rivera's (2005) study taught classrooms consisting mostly of ELL students, whereas the present study will use participants whose ELL students make up only a small percentage of the class. Teachers' expectations for ELLs may be influenced by the number of ELLs in their

classrooms. Participants in Rivera's study, who taught classes with an ELL majority, may have perceived ELL students differently from teachers who will participate in the present study. Additionally, participants in Rivera's study represented second through fifth grade, whereas the present study concentrates only on teachers of first grade students; the issues may be somewhat different for teachers of first grade students, who are just beginning their education. Similarities between Rivera's study and the present study are evident. Research in both studies suggests that learning about ELLs' culture will enable teachers to integrate this knowledge into pedagogical strategies that appeal to the various cultures in their classrooms.

Knowing more about how to integrate students' culture in instruction may help reduce teachers' apprehension about teaching ELL children. For example, Karabenick and Noda's (2004) qualitative study probed 729 teachers of all grade levels about their perceptions and teaching strategies for ELL students. The researchers projected that teachers' perceptions of efficacy in teaching ELL students determined teachers' attitudes towards ELLs; if teachers feel capable in teaching ELLs, they also feel less frustrated when teaching these students. The research is based on the idea that teachers' positive attitudes lead to positive teacher-student interactions, more highly-motivated students, and ultimately to greater student performance. Research questions were aimed at finding out teachers' perceptions and attitudes about teaching ELL students. The research supported the present study's emphasis on investigating teachers' attitudes toward ELLs; however, Karabenick and Noda's study included a look at teachers' acceptance of bilingual education, an element that is not included in the present study. The authors

found that most teachers in this study welcomed having ELLs in their classrooms. Moreover, although many of the participants supported bilingual education and encouraged students' use of their native language in the home, many teachers saw these practices as a hindrance to ELLs' learning English.

Other research exploring the topic of culturally responsive teaching included the work of Athanases and Martin (2006). The authors went a step further, depicting culturally responsive teachers as those who not only integrate students' cultures but also serve as advocates for their ELL students. These authors conducted a mixed methods study of 38 graduates of a teacher training program focused on the preparation of teachers to strive for equality in education. The main research question asked participants their perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of the program in preparing teachers to work with culturally diverse groups of students. The conceptual framework in this study is based on the importance of advocating for equitable education for all students. The findings from this study indicated that 61% of teachers believed that it is important that teachers be taught how to be advocates and how to provide equitable education for their diverse students.

Unlike the present study, participants in the Athaneses and Martin (2006) study represented a multicultural group of teachers, from whom information was gathered mainly in focus group sessions. The fact that the study pertains to teachers' thoughts on advocating for ELL students is related to the present study. If teachers are to be effective teachers of ELL students, it serves as a logical conclusion that they must also be advocates for these students.

Taking the concept of culturally responsive teaching to a higher level, Brock et al. (2006) suggested that teachers literally put themselves in the place of ELL students. According to the authors, a critical aspect of teacher training is cross-cultural learning in which teachers discover the experience of being in a linguistically and culturally different society. Because teachers' noncaring attitudes and low expectations for culturally diverse children may have a major effect on student achievement, the authors asserted that this kind of experience would help teachers to empathize with and more effectively instruct their ELL students. This qualitative study is based on the sociocultural theory of Vygotsky (1978) and the positioning theory presented by Harré and Gillet (1994) and Harré and van Langengrove (1999), which pertain to the social and coconstructed relationships between people. The purpose of Brock et al.'s qualitative study was to explore insights attained by six in-service multi-grade level teachers from the United States after these teachers lived with Costa Rican families for one month.

The aim of Brock et al.'s (2006) research was to discover how teacher participants subsequently perceived their own cultures and their relationships with children in their classrooms who come from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Brock et al. pointed out that, although cross-cultural experiences can result in negative attitudes towards diversity, the experience itself forces participants to examine their own beliefs about other cultures. Knowledge of good instructional strategies is important, yet teachers' perceptions of their culturally diverse students are just as important in promoting students' success. The findings indicated that this cross-cultural experience

served to help teachers reevaluate their perceptions of diverse students and the ways in which they interact with these students.

Even though the Brock et al. (2006) study was done in the context of a real-life foreign culture, the study provides much support for the present study's emphasis on the importance of cultural knowledge and how awareness of others' cultures provides the cultural insight needed to more positively interact with ELL students. It would have been interesting and beneficial if the authors had extended the study to include what happened in teacher participants' classrooms after the study. The study described only how teachers' perceptions changed about their ELL students; yet, the author did not reveal how or if teachers' subsequent teaching practices changed for these children.

As part of the research on the topic of training teachers in ELL-related matters, one final area of research was consulted. This research explored how adult learners learn best. Otway's (2007) phenomenological qualitative study pertained to how classroom teachers of ELL students view professional training to teach ELLs. Otway's study is based on Knowles' (1984) theoretical concept of andragogy, which describes how adult learners acquire knowledge. In order to design teacher training underpinned by how adults learn best, the goal of this study was to examine techniques teachers used for teaching ELLs and how teachers felt about these techniques. Research questions were asked that pertained to teachers' views of previous training they had received to teach ELLs, perceptions of their responsibility in helping ELLs learn, and what instructional strategies they considered to be the most effective. In her findings on teacher training, Otway found that participants wanted and needed more training in how to teach ELL

students, especially in the area of pinpointing students' particular needs. The researcher noted that teachers considered collaboration and communication with others in the school community to be major component in their learning to teach ELLs effectively.

Rather than focusing on teachers' perceptions of and expectations per se for ELLs, Otway's (2007) research appeared to center mostly around the importance of teaching adults in a way that makes learning meaningful for them. Even though Otway's study is unrelated to the present study in this respect, its exploration of teachers' learning needs is closely linked to the present study's examination of teacher training in this area. Further study by Otway might focus on administrative support given these teachers in implementing the training they have received. Regardless of if teachers have been involved in teacher training, they need ongoing modeling and support from the school community in order for any training to be effective.

Summary

For this case study, literature was reviewed that related to classroom teachers' perceptions of and expectations for their ELL students. Consulted also was literature pertaining to how stereotypical perceptions of and expectations may impact students' achievement and thus serve to maintain the achievement gap between ELLs and native English-speaking students. Additionally, literature was presented that discussed challenges as perceived by classroom teachers in educating ELL students; teachers' perceptions of professional staff development related to teaching diverse groups of children was also included. Section 3 presents further elaboration of the research methodology that will be used in this study.

Section 3: Research Method

A case study approach was used as the traditional research design to investigate the problem, because it focuses on exploring an issue within a bounded system, or setting (Creswell, 2007). The purpose is to obtain data that will ultimately present a detailed account of "an event, an activity, a process, or one or more individuals" (Creswell, 2007). A case study approach is appropriate for this study because the aim is to examine one school's first grade teachers' perceptions and thinking of (and about) expectations for ELL students. In the process of gathering information, qualitative researchers use multiple sources of data collection, including interviews, observations, and a qualitative questionnaire. These methods were used to increase understanding about participants' perceptions of and expectations for their ELL students. Results added to the knowledge of how to ensure more equitable education for ELLs and indicated that teachers experience a need for more training in ELL-related matters. Staff development planners may deem the findings useful in training classroom teachers to more effectively solve issues encountered when teaching ELL students.

Research Questions

The objective in this study was to examine first grade classroom teachers' shared perceptions of and expectations about ELL students. Interviews were conducted as one of the basic data collection methods because information obtained from interviews contains "rich and realistic" details (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 2) which reveal a deep understanding of the perspectives of those being studied (Hatch, 2002, p. 91). Observations allow the researcher to watch people go through experiences as they occur

and yield insight into participants' feelings (Hatch, 2002; Johnson & Christensen, 2004; Van Manen, 1990). Questionnaires were used to obtain further information pertaining to teachers' innermost thoughts about teaching ELL students (Mills, 2003). Specific research questions included those relevant to teachers' shared perceptions of and expectations for ELL children. The overarching questions addressed in this study were: What are first grade teachers' shared perceptions of the ELL students in their classrooms and what are teachers' expectations for the ELL students in their classrooms? Subquestions addressed the following:

1. How do first grade teachers interact with their ELL students?
2. How challenges do first grade teachers encounter when teaching ELLs?

Rationale for Qualitative Tradition

A qualitative research design was selected for this type of study for several reasons. First, the aim of a qualitative approach is to capture the social meaning attached to the problem being studied, highlighting how participants feel about the topic and interrelate to the world around them (Hatch, 2002; Merriam & Associates, 2002). Second, a qualitative design focuses on the internal thoughts and views of participants, rather than on numerical variables (Hatch, 2002; Merriam & Associates, 2002). Third, qualitative research can gather rich data in a natural setting where participants live their lives (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). A quantitative design was not considered because such a design can offer only statistical analysis to examine the problem, whereas a qualitative design presents the issues in the light of participants' real-life natural setting. Qualitative research enables the researcher to develop insights and understanding that may be

unobtainable in a quantitative study (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003; Byrne, 2001; Rubin & Rubin, 2005; Trochim, 2006). For this reason, I used a qualitative paradigm to gather information about teachers' perceptions of and expectations for ELL students.

Despite the beneficial aspect of obtaining in-depth information about participants' inner feelings, qualitative research has been criticized for potential threats to quality. For example, the researcher may not be able to sufficiently bracket, or set aside personal feelings about the topic, in order to honestly analyze the obtained data (Hatch, 2002; Merriam & Associates, 2002; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). To address this problem, researchers must continuously keep personal feelings in check and openly acknowledge preconceived notions or biases about the research. Another potential issue that may arise with qualitative research is the lack of a good working relationship with participants. Participants need to know that the researcher empathizes with them and cares about their feelings. Inability to maintain this type of relationship may result in the participant's unwillingness to give sufficient information to answer the research question. As suggested by Hatch, researchers can prevent this problem by creating a friendly and caring bond with participants before research begins and by displaying empathy and respect for participants throughout the study. A problem may also arise from a researcher's inability to establish a balanced rapport with participants. A balance requires researchers to exhibit a respectful relationship with participants, while making sure that the relationship is not so close that data are unable to be objectively collected and analyzed (Hatch, 2002).

The qualitative case study approach was ultimately selected as the approach that will be used to discover teachers' perceptions of and expectations for ELL students. Creswell (2007) recommended conducting a case study, because this type of design focuses on a specific case or occurrence within a given setting, such as a classroom.

Rationale for Choosing a Case Study Method

The case study approach is one of the five qualitative approaches. In this study, it allows for the exploration of processes, activities, and events (Hatch, 2002; Merriam & Associates, 2002; Yin, 2003) related to teaching ELL students.

All five qualitative approaches share some common characteristics, as well as differences in how data is collected. According to Creswell (2007), the approach selected should be the one that most adequately answers the research question. For this study, the appropriateness of each of the various designs was carefully considered. An ethnography focuses on acquiring knowledge about a particular cultural group (Creswell, 2007; Hatch, 2002). Because the focus of the study was on teachers' beliefs and expectations for ELL students rather than on a cultural group per se, an ethnographic method was not used. A narrative approach was also considered but was not be used, as the goal of narrative research is to analyze and understand the life of a single individual (Creswell, 2007). The intent of the present study was to understand perceptions that are common to several teachers rather than focus on the experiences of only one person. For this reason, I used a case study approach in order to learn about a particular issue. According to Stake (2006), a case study can be used to examine commonalities and differences of participants' perspecives about a specific problem (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 2006; Yin, 2003).

A case study approach was selected for this study. Creswell (2007) described a case study as one that "has clearly identifiable cases with boundaries and seeks to provide an in-depth understanding of the cases or a comparison of several cases" (p. 74). There is a gap in the research pertaining to first grade teachers' perceptions of and expectations for ELL students, especially as this scenario pertains to teachers in small town America. A case study allows the researcher to delve into the innermost feelings that are experienced by particular teachers about a specific issue (Creswell, 2007; Hatch, 2002; Merriam & Associates, 2002). Using the information gained from personal interviews, observation, and a qualitative questionnaire, patterns and themes of perceptions of and expectations for ELLs were explored. As a form of qualitative research, a case study approach may be criticized because there are no statistical data to support the findings Rather than being supported by numbers, the findings are supported by participants' words and are given a personal interpretation by the researcher. Furthermore, information received from data collection methods may not be sufficient to support the findings. These problems can be mitigated, however, by persistently reading and analyzing the data to make sure they accurately and adequately answer the research questions (Hatch, 2002).

Context of the Study

The setting for the research study was one southern elementary school in Georgia whose student population included both native English-speaking and ELL students. Georgia has experienced a rapid increase in its ELL student population (Terrazas, Batalova, & Fan, 2008) and has grown more than 200% between the years of 1994 to 2005 (United States Department of Education, 2006). The school selected for study is one

of three in which I instruct ELL students. However, the context of the study was not selected for convenience purposes, as other schools are equally accessible to me. The choice of schools was determined by the fact that the school is centrally located within the community and, as such, the student body encompasses the range of cultural backgrounds represented in this area. Additionally, the school is known for its emphasis on a persistent research into professional development programs that will benefit all students, including ELLs. I understand that I conducted "backyard research," or research within the school setting where I work, (Creswell, 2003; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). Because problems with validity could arise within this context, I took special precautions to ensure that "multiple strategies of validity" were used (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). Methods of checks and balances to promote validity included setting aside personal feelings during the study, member-checking of data accuracy, peer-editing, and using of thick, rich data to describe and interpret the study (Hatch, 2002; Merriam & Associates, 2002).

Before the study began, I obtained consent from the Institutional Review Board (IRB approval number 08-31-09-0367905). I subsequently met individually with the appropriate school personnel, including the superintendent, school principal, and teacher participant to obtain consent from each before conducting the study. I explained the purpose, research procedures, and ways in which the study may benefit the school and community.

To establish rapport with participants, I approached each participant individually to explain the purpose of the study and how it may impact the local community (Hatch,

2002; Rubin & Rubin, 2005) by contributing to the body of knowledge on educating ELL students. Participants were assured of confidentiality and the safeguarding of information. During the study, I maintained rapport with my participants by giving them my full attention during interviews and by expressing empathy with their feelings as needed. Rubin and Rubin noted that the researcher's empathy encourages the respondent to talk and shows a personal interest in what the respondent has to say. On the other hand, there must be a careful balance between the researcher's rapport with the participant's and keeping enough distance to conduct the research in an objective manner. I took care not to become too involved with participants' feelings. By not displaying an over-sympathetic attitude and by conscientiously maintaining my stance as an impartial researcher, I took care not to become too involved with participants' feelings. Using simple head nods in response to what participants said, rather than offering abundant verbal sympathy helped me to prevent over-identification with participants.

Role of the Researcher

For the past eight years, I have been an English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) teacher who has taught ELL students in Georgia. As a result of teaching ELL students exclusively, I developed a love and appreciation for the children and have become an advocate for them. I have personally observed the fears, challenges, and strengths of these children.

Because I was the researcher in this qualitative study, I designed and implemented the interview and observation protocols, as well as the qualitative questionnaire. I was also responsible for collecting, analyzing, and storing the data. As the instrument of data

collection, I continuously reflected on my role and personal viewpoints during the study, as my "biases, values, and interests" (Creswell, 2003, p. 182) had the potential to affect how I interpreted the interviews, observations, and questionnaire and how I made sense of the findings. Creswell (2007) and Moustakas (1994) affirmed that researchers must be persistent in the practice of epoché, or bracketing their personal beliefs and emotions, so that they can look at the data objectively and better understand the true meaning, or essence, of a phenomenon. In order to view the data impartially, I persistently bracketed or set aside my personal stance on the issues and attempted to gather information as objectively as possible. For the purpose of minimizing bias, I wrote down and reflected on my thoughts during the study to determine if any preconceptions on my part were present.

Criteria for Selecting Participants

Because the intent in the present study was to find out how first grade classroom teachers in one southern elementary school perceived their experiences of teaching ELL students, four first grade classroom teachers participants were interviewed and observed. Even though the sample included only four participants, a small participant sample allowed for richer information to be gained for each participant (Hatch; 2002). The aim was to understand what a particular group of people experienced rather than finding out what might be true for many people (Merriam & Associates, 2002). In addition, using a small sample size enabled me to develop rapport with the participants in the study (Lasso & Soto, 2005) and obtain greater and richer information.

The four participants in this study included all first grade teachers within the school who currently teach one or more ELL students in their classrooms. First grade teachers were used as participants because first grade is a crucial year for all students, especially ELLs who must learn the English language simultaneously with basic reading and math skills (Lasso & Soto, 2005). Additionally, I have known these teachers professionally for two years and believed that the information received from them would be honest and adequately substantial to support the research problem. Creswell (2007) pointed out that the researcher needs to choose individuals who are accessible, willing, and able to shed light on the specific phenomenon being explored. Hatch (2002) said that the reason participants are selected is that they have a particular knowledge that will help answer the research questions. Further, Hatch established that participants are selected because they are willing to allow researchers to watch them in their natural environments or talk with them about their perceptions and intentions. The participants for this study were selected because they were willing to take part in the study and because I considered these teachers would yield the best insights about teaching ELL students.

Data Collection Procedures

Interviews, observations, a qualitative questionnaire were used to examine first grade classroom teachers' shared perceptions of and expectations for ELL students.

In-Depth Semi-structured Interviews

In-depth, semi-structured interviews were employed to examine teachers' shared experience of teachers' perceptions of and expectations for ELL students (Creswell, 2003; Dana & Yendol-Silva, 2003; Hatch, 2002). Interviews are beneficial as they

encourage the discussion of the participants' thoughts on a topic (Hatch, 2002). Interviews are a major source of data collection in a qualitative study because they extract from participants substantially descriptive information about the topic (Creswell, 2007; Janesick, 2004; Merriam & Associates, 2002). In-depth, semi-structured interviews were used as the format used to obtain information. This type of interview implies that the research will take place at a set time in a setting other than the classroom, with the researcher asking certain questions and probes to elicit answers about the research topic (Hatch, 2002). Each participant was interviewed for approximately one hour during September, 2009. Before conducting the interviews, a quiet, undisturbed room in which to hold the interviews was secured. Participants were then contacted about the dates and times of interview sessions. The interview schedule can be found in Appendix A. The recording equipment and seating arrangements were prepared ahead of time so that time for gathering information is maximized. Prior to each interview, participants were asked personal questions about themselves and provided with refreshments to put them at ease. An interview of each teacher participant was conducted during a one-hour time frame and was recorded on a Sony digital recorder for later review and analysis. Questions focused on teachers' perceptions of and expectations for ELL students. A list of the interview questions can be found in Appendix B. Teachers were invited to be open, honest, and say whatever they wish about the topic. The interview continued until the topic was "exhausted or saturated," or until participants could offer "no new perspectives on the topic" (Groenewald, 2004, p. 11) of teachers' perceptions of and expectations for ELL students. The digitally-recorded interviews were listened to several times and transcribed

on the same day that they are conducted. The conversations were typed verbatim onto a personal computer, noting teachers' pauses, intonation, and body language in order to get the full effect of the conversations during the analysis process. After the initial interview was transcribed, a follow-up interview was conducted with the interviewees in order to get clarifications of the participants' answers and any further information deemed necessary to answer research questions.

Observations

In addition to interviews, observations are also appropriate data collection methods for case studies (Hatch, 2002; Creswell, 2007). Watching people go through experiences as they occur yields an authentic description of the life experience (Johnson & Christensen, 2004; Van Manen, 1990) and provides a greater depth of information and insight than using interviews alone (Hatch, 2002). In this study, observing first grade teachers in the classroom setting revealed teachers' interactions with their ELL children and was indicative of teachers' perceptions of and expectations for their ELL students. During September, two one-hour classroom observations were conducted in each participant's classroom. Subsequently, information about the observation was recorded on an observation protocol form. The form contained information about participants, settings, and events (Creswell, 2003) for use in analyzing the data. A checklist on the form focused on teachers' interactions and conversations with ELLs during teaching and seatwork. The form also specified the kind and length of help given to ELL students. The observation protocol form can be found in Appendix C.

Qualitative Questionnaire

In addition to interviews, a qualitative questionnaire is also an appropriate data collection method in case studies (Patton, 2002; Trochim, 2006). Because this method enables teachers to express their feelings and insights, a qualitative questionnaire provides rich data (Johnson & Christensen, 2008) about the experience of teaching ELL students. During September, 2009, the qualitative questionnaire was personally delivered to participants so that participants could clarify any questions that had about the questionnaire (Trochim, 2006). Participants were requested to answer the questionnaire within one week and questionnaires were personally collected by me. See Appendix D for a copy of the questionnaire. Information from the questionnaire was triangulated with data gathered from participant interviews and observations.

Data storage. Creswell (2007) attested that storing information can become an ethical problem; improper data storage may result in someone other than the researcher accessing the information and identifying the study participants. To prevent this problem from occurring, data was stored in such a way that did not compromise the confidentiality of participants and the information given during the study. The real names of the participants must not be used, due to the possibility that others may find the data and identify the participants (Hatch, 2002). For this reason, data pertaining to this study was not stored in any way or in any place that could be accessed by anyone other than me. Information pertaining in any way to this study was kept in a locked file cabinet in my home and was inaccessible to any other person.

Data Analysis Strategies

Information for the study was collected via interviews, observations, and a qualitative questionnaire. After all data were collected, a summary of the totality of information was given in a cross-case analysis. In this initial analysis, I examined the themes revealed in the data as a whole, as well as how participants tended to answer the research questions. Following an examination of themes across participants' responses, I examined individual participant data to find the most salient themes.

Data was read several times in order to get a view of the whole picture (Creswell, 2003, 2007; Dana & Yendol-Silva, 2003; Hatch, 2002; Janesick, 2004; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Cross-case analysis of the four individual cases was written up, with patterns and themes highlighted. Creswell (2007) noted that a cross-case analysis allows an examination of themes across cases to provide an in-depth understanding of individual cases or the "comparison of several cases" (p. 74). Each participant's case was written up, focusing on themes unique to each teacher and on noteworthy commonalities between patterns and themes that emerged from all four participants. Similar to ethnography, the case study approach involves a detailed description of the specific case under study. Several data sources, including interviews, observations, and a qualitative questionnaire were used to provide a detailed description of the particular setting. Based on the identification of commonalities, differences, patterns and themes, I developed propositions specific to that setting and context (Creswell, 2007; Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The information was then be reduced to the most salient themes by continuously comparing and contrasting data and combining smaller categories into larger ones (Hatch,

2002; Hite & Evans, 2006; Merriam & Associates, 200; Moustakas, 1994). Categories were coded with codes that related to the research topic of teachers' perceptions of and expectations for ELL students. Not all data collected was relevant to the study and consequently will was not used in the analysis (Hatch, 2002; Mills, 2003). If it is discovered that particular data do not align with the study's purpose, the information should be thrown out and the reason given for why it does not fit (Briggs & Coleman, 2007; Dana & Yendol-Silva, 2003; Hatch, 2002; Janesick, 2004; Mills, 2003). The next step was to determine how the data connected to the topic of teachers' perceptions of and expectations for ELL students. This step involved discussion of significant themes, using quotations from participants to support the interpretation of these themes (Creswell, 2003; Dana & Yendol-Silva, 2003; Janesick, 2004). Hatch (2002) pointed out that having good examples gives the reader "confidence that the researcher's assertions about the topic" (p. 225) are credible. In addition to providing insight about the research topic, excerpts support the researcher's interpretation of themes (Creswell, 2007; Hatch, 2002). These excerpts were analyzed in order to determine what participants' answers mean and how they contributed to answering the research question.

Methods to Address Validity and Minimize Bias and Error

Researchers must convey to readers "the steps taken to check for the accuracy and credibility of their findings" (Creswell, 2003, p. 195). Checking for quality in a research study can be done through several methods, including triangulation, bracketing, member checking, rich description, inclusion of discrepant information, and peer debriefing. In this study, these methods were used to ensure quality and enhance validity:

Triangulation

Triangulation is one strategy to verify data. As opposed to relying on only one source of data collection, triangulation helps support the accuracy of the researcher's interpretations (Creswell, 2003, 2007; Hatch, 2002; Merriam & Associates, 2002; Mills, 2003). Accordingly, the present study used various forms of data collection (interviews, observations, and a qualitative questionnaire) to describe teachers' perceptions of and expectations for their ELL students. Multiple methods helped corroborate the findings and made them more believable for the reader (Creswell, 2003, 2007; Hatch, 2002).

Bracketing

Because researchers play "an active role in the interview" (p. 26), they must be aware that their prior experiences with the phenomenon can affect how they hear or understand information (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). In order to prohibit this type of interference in the present study, personal feelings and beliefs were set aside in order to more objectively judge what participants meant through their words and actions. Additionally, personal biases were clarified, thereby adding credibility to the study and giving readers assurance that the researcher was being open and honest with them (Creswell, 2003).

Member-Checking

Another method of establishing quality in a qualitative study is through member-checking. Having participants verify the accuracy of the findings is important in increasing the study's validity (Hatch, 2002; Creswell, 2007). For this reason, researchers should allow participants to confirm the findings and determine if they represent a true

picture of participants' intended meanings (Briggs & Coleman, 2007; Creswell, 2007; Hatch, 2002; Mills, 2003; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Consequently, I checked with participants to ascertain if they considered the findings to be accurate and congruent with the meanings they were attempting to convey.

Peer-Editing

Research on qualitative studies has recommended peer-editing as a method of ensuring quality (Creswell, 2003, 2007; Janesick, 2004; Mills, 2003; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Peer-editing involves having another person review the study "to see if the account resonates with people other than the researcher" (Creswell, 2003, p. 196). After reporting the findings, a dissertation writing editor was asked to read through the study and check for any confusing or inconsistent narrative.

Thick, Rich Data

Using description that is filled with thick, rich data is a characteristic of qualitative research (Creswell, 2007; Hatch, 2002; Merriam & Associates, 2002). Quality is impacted by the amount of thick, rich data gained from interviews (Hatch, 2002). According to Creswell (2007), such description "describes in detail the participants or setting that is being studied" (p. 209). For this reason, the findings of a study should be written so that they take the "readers inside the issues and settings under investigation" (Hatch, 2002, p. 224) and makes them feel as if they are sharing the experiences with participants (Creswell, 2003). Thick, rich description was used in this study to help the reader experience classroom teachers' shared perceptions of and expectations for ELL students.

Ethical Protection of Participants

A qualitative study requires building trust between the researcher and participant, as the research topic deals with very personal, sensitive, and emotional issues (Hatch, 2002). There must be a meaningful and "ongoing social relationship and connectedness between the researcher and participants" for trust to continue and questions to be adequately answered (Janesick, 2004, p. 107). In an interview, for example, participants are more willing to divulge their feelings to someone they feel can be trusted (Lambert et al., 2002). During the course of this study, I strove to develop and maintain a trusting relationship with all participants so that they felt comfortable and willing to engage in the study.

Reciprocity and Research Bargain

Reciprocity refers to mutual giving and can include such actions as the researcher helping out participants in some way in exchange for participants' contributions to the study (Hatch, 2002). Hatch asserted that in qualitative research, participants are often asked to reveal intimate details about their lives and to trust the researchers with sensitive information (pp. 65-66). In return for this information, researchers may not give much of themselves to the participant in the form of ongoing friendship and information after the study is completed; ignoring the participant after the study may be considered an ethical issue. Hatch (2002) and Janesick (2004) emphasized that once the study is over, researchers should not suddenly desert the research setting and sever all ties with participants. Therefore, participants in this study were offered opportunities to review

transcripts and findings, to participate in any future studies on the topic, and to keep in touch with the researcher.

To prevent abruptly-ended relationships and participant resentment from occurring at the end of the study, a research bargain between researcher and participant was in place. This agreement ensured that the researcher met certain obligations to participants and that reciprocity was in place (Hatch, 2002). Research bargains include an explanation of the purpose of the study, what the researcher will be doing when and for how long, means by which research findings will be shared with participants, the fact that participation is voluntary, and a promise of confidentiality (Creswell, 2007; Hatch, 2002; Merriam & Associates, 2002). Confidentiality is one of the most important ethical procedures. Participants were assured that their names and the information would not be revealed to anyone other than the researcher (Creswell, 2007; Hatch, 2002; Janesick, 2004; Merriam & Associates, 2002; Mills, 2003). Confidentiality was maintained by assigning pseudonyms to participants so that their true identities could not be determined by readers.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to determine first grade classroom teachers' shared perceptions of and expectations for their ELL students. Examining teachers' perceptions and expectations provided insight into strategies for addressing stereotypical beliefs and decreasing educational disparities. Data for the study was obtained by conducting of teacher participants an in-depth personal interview, observations, and a qualitative questionnaire. The results of this study added to the body of knowledge about teachers'

perceptions of and expectations for ELL students. The results may be useful to other classroom teachers of ELL students, staff developers who determine where teacher training is needed, and policy makers who are interested in equalizing the achievement gap between ELL students and native English-speaking students.

Section 4: Results and Findings

This section gives an account of the findings. The purpose of the study and the rationale for participant selection is presented. The methods for gathering, recording, and analyzing data are described. The data gathered from each of the participants are presented, followed by a cross-case analysis to examine commonalities and differences in the information obtained from all participants (Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2003). Analysis of the data is presented in a manner that answers the research questions. During analysis, references are made to the conceptual framework and literature review presented in section 2. Actions and recommendations for future research, in addition to the implications for social change, are given in section 5.

Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this case study was to examine first grade teachers' perceptions of and expectations for their ELL students. A secondary purpose was to uncover how first grade classroom teachers perceived the amount and quality of training they had received to effectively teach ELL children. The final purpose of this study was to gather insight into how teachers interact in the mainstream classroom with their ELL students.

Process of Generating, Gathering, and Recording Data

In order to strictly adhere to IRB guidelines, no participants were contacted and no data of any kind was collected until permission from the IRB was received to go ahead with the study. Only then were participants contacted and only then did data collection begin. A Notification of Approval to Conduct Research was sent by the IRB on August

31, 2009. The following day, participants were approached and asked to participate in the study. After obtaining participants' consent, data collection was initiated on September 3, 2009. Data were generated through multiple methods, including one in-depth interview and one follow-up interview, two classroom observations of teacher participants, and a qualitative questionnaire. These methods are capable of gathering highly detailed, adequate data to answer the research questions in this study. I kept up with the data process (where, when, and from whom data were collected) by recording this information in both a research log and on my personal computer. Recording information on both a hard copy (handwritten research log) and on my personal computer ensured that this information was available when needed at either the research setting or at my home.

Because I am an ESOL teacher with a list of ELL students and their teachers, I was able to determine which first grade mainstream teachers taught at least one ELL student in her classroom (all first grade teachers are female). As classroom teachers of ELL students, I assumed these participants had sufficient knowledge to answer the research questions. To enlist four teacher participants, I personally approached each of the potential participants to ask if she would be willing to take part in the study. Fortunately, all four teachers consented to be included in the research. I gave a consent form to each participant, explained the purpose of the study, assured the participant that she has the right to withdraw from the study at any time, and promised complete confidentiality of identifiable information. After each participant read the consent form, I reviewed the terms again and asked the participant if she had any questions about the study or the consent form. Each participant agreed to the terms of the study and signed

the consent form. I took these documents to my residence and locked them in a secure file cabinet to safeguard the information.

Each participant was assigned a pseudonym to protect their identity. As pseudonyms, I chose a name that began with each of the first four letters (P, A, R, and T) of the word "participant." This method of assigning pseudonyms not only helped me remember participants' names but also facilitated my remembering which participants had completed interviews, observations, or questionnaire. After the study was explained and participants signed a consent form, data were obtained from the participants. The ages of these participants ranged from 25 years of age to 54 years of age. Pam is 54 years old; Abby is 25 years old; Rose is 46 years old; and, Tara is 37 years old. As a result of including participants from different ages, I felt confident in receiving comprehensive data that represented various age groups and years of experience.

All participants engaged in the three-phases of data collection: one in-depth and one follow-up interview, two observations, and a qualitative questionnaire. Interviews were held in each participant's room at the end of the school day after all students had left. The only interruptions occurred when the office staff made an occasional announcement over the public address system. Before interviews were conducted, I placed a sign outside the door stating that a private conference was in progress and requesting that no one enter. Interviews with teacher participants lasted approximately one hour. Interview questions followed an interview protocol, and probing questions were posed after each question so that participants could elaborate on their answers. Questions on the interview instrument asked teachers about their perceptions of and

expectations for ELL students in their classrooms and about teachers' reflections on the training they had received to teach ELL children. The entire interview was digitally recorded so that it could be transcribed onto my personal home computer.

Upon returning home on the day of each interview, I transcribed interview responses onto my personal computer. The timeliness of transcription ensured that the information and emotional effects of the interview moments were not forgotten. To cultivate a deeper understanding of each interview, each participant's words were recorded verbatim, along with a parenthetical description of body gestures, emotions, voice tones, pauses, and emphasis on particular words or phrases. I listened multiple times to the recorded interview until I was sure my transcription was an exact replica of the participant's spoken words. In order to make the text easier for readers to understand, I went back and made simple grammatical corrections and eliminated repetitive phrases within the same sentence. These changes were undertaken to clarify the presentation of the results, and not to alter the meaning of participants' words. In addition to transcribing the interview data on my computer, I noted the time, date, and my personal reflections about each interview in a research log. All data recorded in my research log were also typed onto my personal computer for ready access and safekeeping.

Pursuant to transcribing the initial interview, I conducted a follow-up interview session with each participant, giving her the opportunity to verify the accuracy of the interview transcript, offer clarification, and give additional details. The follow-up interview allowed me to ask participants to elaborate on specific questions for which I noticed inadequate responses during the initial interview. For example, in a follow-up

visit with Pam, she excitedly told me that she had recently begun using hand gestures as a strategy to help her ELL students and had found that this strategy was increasing her ELLs' understanding of vocabulary. Additionally, each participant was offered the opportunity to confirm the correctness of her initial interview by reading the completed transcript and listening to the digitally-recorded interview. Three participants looked over the transcribed material to verify its accuracy, but said they did not want to listen to the digitally-recorded interview. One participant stated that she did not have time to review the transcription either by reading it or listening to it and trusted the accuracy of the document.

In addition to interviews, participants were personally handed a qualitative questionnaire to complete at their leisure and asked to return the questionnaire to me within two weeks, which they did. The questions on this instrument referenced specific problems participants encounter when teaching ELL students and asked participants what training lessons or resources they thought would be effective to help them address these problems. I kept track of the data collection by recording in my research log the time and place of each interview and observation, as well as which participants had returned the questionnaire. All data recorded in my research log was also typed into my personal computer for safekeeping and easier access when working at home.

Further data to answer the research questions were obtained through participant observations. Watching teachers interact with their ELL children yielded a clearer picture of participants' perceptions of and expectations for their ELL students. Observations allow the researcher to "see the world through the eyes of those they are studying"

(Hatch, 2002, p. 72). Rather than merely spoken or written information as presented in interviews and questionnaires, observations enabled me to see firsthand how teachers interrelate with their ELLs (Hatch, 2002). I was able to see and hear the frequency with which ELLs were called on to answer questions, the teacher's proximity with her ELL students, personal contact with ELLs, and the tone of voice used by the teacher when speaking with ELLs, The four first grade teachers were observed on two separate days as they taught a Language Arts class containing at least one ELL student. Information from the observations was recorded onto an observation protocol sheet, along with my personal notes and reflections about each observation.

Responses to the questionnaire and notes about observations were relatively brief when compared to the lengthy interview transcriptions. I pondered whether to use an Excel spreadsheet on which to record information received from observation and questionnaire data and a Microsoft Word Table on which to record observational data. After weighing the advantages and disadvantages, I ultimately decided to use Excel for recording all the data from interviews, observations, and questionnaire instruments. A friend who is an expert in the field of technology helped me set up an Excel spreadsheet with the added feature of the "freeze frame command." Using this feature, I could slide the labeled columns to the left in order to see data about each topic in the column immediately after the participant's name. This recording method permitted me to view at one glance the information about a particular topic. Recording data on Excel necessitated first going through the complete set of data and coding them to represent the topic of each research question and subquestion.

Rather than using letter codes to label the data, however, I chose a visual method that used color-coded highlighting to indicate information related to the study questions (see Figure 1). Quotes and excerpts relevant to each category were highlighted. For instance, a green highlighter signified quotes and excerpts in the data that represented teachers' perceptions of ELL students; blue highlight denoted teachers' expectations for their ELLs; information referring to teachers' interactions with ELL students was highlighted in pink; and finally, yellow highlighting designated the challenges teachers face when teaching ELL students. After color-coding the collected information, I recorded the data under the appropriate category (perceptions, expectations, and challenges, and interactions) on the Excel spreadsheet.

Color-Coding the Data		
Color	Description	Details
Green	Teachers' Perceptions	Teachers' Perceptions of their ELL students
Blue	Teachers' Expectations	Teachers' Expectations of their ELL students
Pink	Teachers' Interactions	Teachers' Interactions with ELLs in the Classroom
Yellow	Teachers' Challenges	Challenges of Teaching ELL Students

Figure 1: Color-coding of data in interviews, observations, and questionnaire

I read the data again in its entirety to find themes that surfaced within each category, both from individuals and from participants as a whole. Participants' responses to the interview questions, observations, and questionnaire revealed their perceptions of, expectations for, and interactions with their ELL students. Their responses also uncovered their perceived challenges to teaching ELLs, and the training they desire to

help them address ELL-related problems more effectively. Using the same method set forth in Figure 1, the themes found under each category, or research question, were color-coded. However, to differentiate between categories, which were highlighted by entire sections, I drew a circle around the themes that appeared under each category. Themes that became evident under the category of teachers' perceptions included teachers' view that ELLs are not inferior, and they are just as intelligent and capable as any other student in the classroom. The teachers believe all students learn the same way, regardless of their cultures. The theme of equal capacity to learn surfaced as a theme when teachers expressed their expectations for ELL students. Teachers expect their ELL students to do the same work and reach the same level academically as their native English-speaking students. Observations of the first grade teacher participants revealed insight into how they interact with ELL students. Figure 2 shows how the observation data was coded on the spreadsheet. Recording the data on a spreadsheet allowed me to examine the responses from individual participants converge into thematic codes and categories.

Coding of Observational Data		
Teachers		
Code	Description	Details
Stg	Seating	Where does teacher seat ELLs in the classroom?
Reph/ Rest	Rephrase/ Restate	How often does teacher restate or rephrase information?
H/C	Hints/Clues	Does teacher give ELLs hints and clues when questioning?
BL	Body Language	What is teacher's body language while interacting with ELLs?
PX	Proximity	Does teacher stand or sit close to ELLs during class?
N/C	Nervous/ Comfortable	Does teacher appear nervous or comfortable around ELLs?
ELL Students		
Code	Description	Details
AQ	Apprehension	Do ELLs appear apprehensive when asking questions?
BLQ	Body Language	What is ELLs' body language when asking questions?
AA	Apprehension	Do ELLs appear apprehensive when answering questions?
BLA	Body Language	What is ELL's body language when answering questions?

Figure 2: Coding of observation data

For this study, a case study approach to analysis and interpretation was used. Qualitative researchers recommend reading and rereading the information to make sense of how the data fit together to form a complete picture (Hatch, 2002; Dana & Yendol-Silva, 2003). Upon concluding all data collection, the information from interview transcripts, observations, and the questionnaire was read and reread to determine the overall meaning of the entire set of data (Creswell, 2007; Hatch, 2002; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Because my cognitive skills are most responsive to physical illustrations and diagrams, I conducted my analysis by using colors. I employed various colors of

highlighters to color-code key words or phrases found in participants' responses. Each color represented a particular topic or category on which the study focuses and included the following topics: teachers' perceptions of ELL students, teachers' expectations for ELL students, challenges encountered by first grade teachers of ELLs, and teachers' thoughts about staff development training to teach ELL students. Reading through the data yet again, I determined common, recurrent themes that appeared under each category (Dana & Yendol-Silva, 2003). This time, however, rather than highlighting the entire words or phrases, I drew a circle around the data that related to a particular theme, using the color that corresponded to the category under which the theme belonged. Within the circled theme, I used the same color of highlighter to star pertinent quotes or excerpts that supported that particular theme. Hatch (2002) suggested that, during data analysis, the researcher pinpoint and incorporate the "powerful quotes" (p. 159) that bring in participants' voices. I recorded in my research log where each theme and supporting data occurred. Recorded information included the name of the participant and the question to which the response was given.

The next step was to cut out the color-coded data related to each question and subquestion. I wrote an identifying letter ("P" for Pam, "A" for Abby, etc.) at the top of each cut-out piece of highlighted data to represent the pseudonym of the participant who gave that particular information. I then placed each piece of color-coded data under the corresponding label. After manually laying out all the information in this way, I could easily spot the color-coding and know to which category the data belonged. I generated an Excel spreadsheet on which I typed the category labels (perceptions, expectations,

interactions, and challenges) at the top. Under the labels, I recorded each participant's information relevant to the four categories, along with supporting quotes and excerpts to substantiate the themes found under each topic. Viewing the data on a spreadsheet helped me organize the data and see the individuality of each case, the interrelatedness of the four cases, and the adequacy of information to answer the research questions. Seeing all the data on one page permitted me to more easily see the similarities and differences between all cases. Furthermore, continuously comparing and contrasting data and combining smaller categories helped to reduce the enormous amount of data into the most salient themes (Dana & Yendol-Silva, 2003; Hatch, 2002; Merriam & Associates, 200; Moustakas, 1994).

After examining individual cases and determining the relationship they had with each other, the recorded data for the main research questions and subquestions were summarized and supported by quotes and excerpts from participants. These extracted words from the data increased the trustworthiness of the findings and acknowledged participants' right to be heard in the study (Creswell, 2007; Hatch, 2002). While performing data analysis, I took special care to bracket my personal beliefs and opinions. Bracketing was essential in helping me refrain from attributing my own subjective biases into analyses and inferring meanings which participants did not intend (Hatch, 2002; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). A cross-case analysis was performed first to uncover similarities and differences between cases (Creswell, 2007). A summarization of the data was followed by examining each participant's information separately in order to obtain a view of individual participants' experiences of teaching ELLs.

Patterns and Trends Found in the Data

First Grade Teachers' Perceptions of ELL Students

The data collected from participants revealed that teachers tended to perceive ELL students as capable of learning to the same degree as native English-speaking students; therefore, teachers deemed that any strategy that worked with English-speaking students would work with ELL students. Tammy sustained that she would not plan any differently for her ELLs, "What I do for them, I do it for all my students who need help." Teachers attributed any "inferior" intelligence on the part of ELLs to be these students' lack of knowledge about American culture and vocabulary. On the other hand, teachers saw these students as superior in a way, because the students must put forth extra effort to acquire content knowledge through a new language. Tammy noted that ELLs have to "master a new language while also learning subject-area content."

First Grade Teachers' Expectations for ELL Students

All teachers tended to express the same high expectations for their ELL students as they hold for their native English-speaking students. They considered their ELLs "no different from the other students." Teachers tended to treat their ELLs as "just as capable" of attaining grade level knowledge as anyone else in the class. Rose expected her ELLs to "pass the Criterion-Referenced Competency Test and go to second grade." I inferred from this statement that Rose held the same high expectations for her ELLs as she held for her native English-speaking students. Abby admitted that she may have to lower her expectations just a little but still insisted that she has "across-the-board

expectations for all of my students, because I know they're all capable." Both Rose and Tammy insisted that they have "the same academic expectations for all of my students." High expectations for success were evidenced by teachers' insistence that ELLs work independently during class activities. Teachers did not offer much extra help to their ELLs, expressing confidence that ELLs are as capable as the native English-speaking students in the class. Therefore, these students were expected "to do academic grade level work on their own."

First Grade Teachers' Interactions With Their ELL Students

Observing teachers' interactions with their ELL students disclosed several trends, or patterns, in the data. The data indicated that first grade teachers interact in the same way with their ELLs as they do with their native English-speaking students. There was very little personal contact between teacher participants and their ELL students. Only once did I observe the teacher sit down beside an ELL student to offer extra help and encouragement. Teachers possibly do not see themselves as having enough time to help ELLs individually. They may feel that the extra time spent helping one ELL student may be time they owe to the class as a whole. Therefore, teachers refrain from giving ELLs one-on-one support.

Another pattern that appeared in the data was that classroom teachers seemed reluctant to call on ELL students. Teachers also tended to restate or rephrase information for the class as a whole, and not to ELLs individually. This occurrence was evident throughout all the observations. In addition to restricted use of rephrasing and restating material, teachers presented most information verbally without the use of body language

or visuals to enhance ELLs' comprehension. Maybe teachers did not know what kind of body language to use; or, perhaps they felt they did not have the time to explain ideas and vocabulary using both words and body language. Doing so would take extra time and would decrease the amount of instructional time the teacher needed for whole-class instruction.

Teachers' lack of personal interactions with their ELLs may be the result of several factors. Teachers may feel constrained by time and the responsibility of delivering a specific amount of content material within a short time frame; or, they do not perceive their ELLs as requiring extra help academically. Moreover, perhaps teachers believe ELLs should learn on their own and not rely on others for help. In the teacher's thinking, relying on others may become a crutch for ELLs and prevent these students from developing problem-solving skills. ELLs in all classrooms looked preoccupied, withdrawn, and somewhat intimidated. Students may have appeared preoccupied because they did not understand what is being said, and subconsciously let their minds drift to other places and times in order to keep from being frustrated about what was going on at the moment. Tammy believed that ELL children may experience a range of emotions in the classroom.

> I've really noticed that's why a lot of our Hispanic children are very emotional at the beginning of school, because they come in...and no one speaks their language, and no one looks like them, and so they're scared to death. And so, that's a big challenge, to make them feel comfortable in your classroom so they can start to learn.

Tammy's perceptions may reflect a realistic picture of why ELLs may seem to be shy and occupied with other thoughts. These students may be experiencing low self-esteem because they are "different" from the rest of the children in the class. They may be afraid that their peers will laugh at them because they speak differently or because their skin is a darker color. For fear of appearing different, being scolded for asking questions, or doing anything that might call attention to themselves, these students may become silent and detached from the learning that is taking place. Students from another culture may find it hard to sit still and listen because their preferred cultural learning style is to move around and interact with peers, rather than work independently (Hite & Evans, 2006; Reed & Railsback, 2003).

I also noticed that ELL students rarely asked or answered questions. I wondered why these students participated seemingly very little in class. ELLs may anticipate embarrassment if they give an incorrect answer; or, they may feel that other students would make fun of the way they speak. Another reason could be that ELLs understand little of what is going on. Because they are overwhelmed by the information presented in class, they simply give up and sit back in silence to wait for the time when they can comprehend more.

Challenges of Teaching ELL Students

Certain patterns appeared in the plethora of data concerning the challenges first grade teachers of ELLs face. Most participants either explicitly stated or implied a concern and need for more training. They insisted that the county should be more conscientious about offering training to address the issues involved with educating ELL

children. Rose noted her concern about the lack of training in the county, ”I think that ELL instruction isn’t deemed as important by school districts as is instruction for students with IEPs and those on SST.”

Teachers were consistently concerned and somewhat frustrated about possessing little understanding to teach and interact with ELL students, based on students’ cultural learning styles. There was uncertainty about the most appropriate instructional strategies to use for the cultures represented by their ELL students. Abby commented that “the kind of training needed most is that which helps teachers differentiate instructional strategies for ELLs.” Tammy emphasized that “all teachers who have ELL students need to be educated on the culture of their students. That is the most important, so you know what to expect (of ELL students).”

Another propensity evident in all the data was teachers’ worry over successful communication with ELLs’ parents. A big challenge mentioned frequently by teachers was how to break through the “language barrier” to get parents more involved in helping their children. Rose alluded to the need to “overcome the communication gap that I feel exists with ELL parents.” When asked where challenges occurred in parent communication, Rose said, “Mostly when you send notes home, and things like that; one thing, can they read it, are they interpreting it correctly?” Rose implied that the lack of communication with parents may prevent students from learning what they should. If parents are unable to speak enough of the English language to understand their children’s homework assignments or important information from the teacher, their ELL children may not receive the help that native English-speaking students receive from their parents.

Another trend in the data was teachers' concern for getting all their students, including ELLs, to pass the Criterion-Referenced Competency Test. This apprehension seemed to be an underlying function of the teaching strategies and content throughout the year. For instance, when Pam was asked about her greatest successes teaching ELL students, she claimed it was "when my ELLs met their academic goals and did well on the Criterion-Referenced Competency Test." Rose was happy when "all three ELLs passed the Criterion-Referenced Competency Test in reading and math." Although first grade teachers made little mention of the driving force to meet required grade level standards, most of them referred to the significance and concern of adequately preparing their ELLs to take standardized tests, such as the all-important Criterion-Referenced Competency Test given in the spring. Rose emphasized that, "You're just so working throughout the whole year for the month of April, for the Criterion-Referenced Competency Test."

The obsession of teaching hard and fast so that students can meet grade level standards and pass the CRCT may have influenced how teachers interacted with their students. Teachers are ever mindful that they need to cover the material on the Criterion-Referenced Competency Test. Because students' passing scores on this test are crucial to their individual school's meeting "adequate yearly progress" (AYP), teachers may rush from one activity to another during the year to cram in all the material that will be on this standardized test. Maybe teachers experience such a hectic schedule to get all the material covered that they believe they cannot afford extra time to help ELL students individually. Teachers may be reluctant to stray from instructional strategies that appeal to the class as

a whole. ELLs' low scores would negatively reflect on the classroom teacher's teaching ability. Sleeter (2008), however, posited that teachers face the challenge of creating a democratic classroom to serve all students' needs. Accountability for simultaneously ensuring a democratic classroom and passing test scores may limit teachers' time and effort to incorporate anything else. Teachers may consider fitting in culturally-related teaching strategies and content material unrelated to standardized test content to be too difficult and time-consuming.

It was noticeable throughout the data that teachers seemed somewhat stressed in their teaching profession. Some of the participants hinted at the tremendous stress they felt due to the heavy emphasis on meeting state and county standards and moving along at a quick pace to the next activity, the next standard. Teachers were concerned about the lack of time to get everything done that they were obligated to do. "Lack of time is certainly a variable. We seem to be inundated with things all of the time now more than ever!" For this reason, altering or including teaching strategies for ELL students may have been considered to be of secondary importance to these teachers.

A Panoramic View of the Data

Yin (2003) pointed out that a cross-case analysis involves searching for themes that are common to all cases examined in the study. For each research question, data from interviews, questionnaire responses, and observations were examined to find relationships between patterns and themes across the entire sample (Creswell, 2007; Hatch, 2002; Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

According to Hatch (2002), patterns refer to occurrences that happen regularly. For instance, participants may consistently respond to specific questions similarly (Hatch, 2002). Relationships indicate how events are linked to each other. For example, there may be a link between what someone does and why they do it (Hatch, 2002). Themes refer to "statements that explain….what something means" (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 57).

In this study, I examined the data recorded on the spreadsheet to examine whether teachers responded similarly to interview questions and questionnaires about their perceptions of and expectations for the ELL students in their classrooms. I also wanted to compare teachers' answers about the challenges they encounter when teaching ELL students. Data from observations were examined to determine if teachers interacted in like manner with their ELL students.

First Grade Teachers' Perceptions of Their ELL Students

A reading of the data obtained from interviews, questionnaires, and observations revealed that teachers commonly perceived their ELLs as having the same academic capability as native English-speaking students. None of the participants openly indicated that they considered the intellectual capabilities of their ELLs to be inferior to those of their native English-speaking students. Describing her perceptions of the ELL students in her classroom, Pam used the words "average" or "above average." These students' "average" abilities meant that they were able to perform at the same level academically as the average native English-speaking students in the class. Pam asserted that "I treat my ELLs the same as all the rest of my students." I assumed that these responses hinged on an underlying defense by Pam against anyone who might suspect that she views ELLs as

inferior to native English-speakers. Like Pam, Abby considered her ELL student as academically capable as native English-speaking students, “I think she’s a pretty regular-functioning, average-functioning student.” On the other hand, Abby may have felt that her ELL was not as smart because she “doesn’t have the background knowledge” that the other students (native English-speaking students) have. Teachers may subconsciously think that a somewhat inferior intelligence results if ELLs do not have the background knowledge similar to that possessed by native English-speaking students. Even though she did not openly express negative perceptions of her ELLs, Rose noted that she taught two ELLs whose ability represented opposite ends of the spectrum. According to Rose, her two ELL students possessed very different academic abilities. One was considered an “average” student. An average student refers to students that are able to learn content material at the same level as the other students in the classroom. The other ELL in Rose’s classroom could not keep up with the other students and, therefore, was considered by the teacher to have a decreased academic ability. Rose’s rationale behind this student’s lack of ability was stemmed from the supposition that only Spanish was spoken in the student’s home, “I...think it depends on whether they’re in a household where there are people who are speaking English, as opposed to a household where everybody’s speaking Spanish and they never hear any English.” Teachers may consider that a lack of English in the home somehow negatively impacts ELLs’ intellectual ability. Conversely, speaking some English in the home would help increase ELL students’ learning capacity in school. This idea may hinge on teachers’ standpoint that English is the only acceptable language to use, and use of a language other than English may somehow decrease students’

academic capability. Furthermore, perhaps teachers perceive their ELLs' intellectual ability to be lower than that of native English-speaking students because of ELLs' lack of the same cultural knowledge that native English-speakers have experienced. Due to their perceptions of ELLs' mental or cultural inadequacy, teachers may label their ELLs as "average." The label of "average" may be a subliminal defense or subconscious cover-up by some teachers to conceal the fact that they gauge their students' capabilities as inferior to those of native English-speaking students.

First Grade Teachers' Expectations for Their ELL Students

The four first grade teachers were interviewed in an initial interview to answer questions about their expectations for their ELL students. Following the initial interview, a follow-up interview was conducted to verify the data transcription. At this time, teachers were offered an opportunity to supply additional information to or clarification of the answers given during the initial interview. Teachers also responded to questions on a questionnaire that supplied further information about their expectations for ELL students. The findings from both the interviews and questionnaire indicated that all participants held high expectations for their ELL students. Teachers answered the question about expectations in a similar manner, insisting that they do not hold different expectations for ELL students simply based on the fact that these students are labeled "ELLs." Abby's description of her ELLs as "regularly-function, average-functioning students" seemed to indicate how participants as a whole envisioned their ELL students. Pam sustained that "I expect the same for my ELLs as I do for all of my students." Tammy affirmed that "I had the same academic expectations for my ELL students as I

had for my English-speaking students. Intelligence is not the barrier. It's the language." Participants held a general consensus that their ELLs are as capable as their native English-speaking peers in attaining grade level skills. Teachers did not see where these students needed a lot of extra help to get to that level; thus, ELLs were usually required to do their work on their own, without extra help from either the teacher or the ELL's peers. Almost nonexistent in observational data were instances in which the first grade teachers offered individual help, such as one-on-one consultation, help from peers, or rephrasing of information. In fact, Pam asked ELLs not to work together because, "I want to know what each student knows individually." In a sorting game activity, Rose went to help an ELL with an activity, but scolded the ELL, "You ought to remember how I told you to do this last week. I already explained it!" Abby stated that her sole ELL student is a "pretty regularly-functioning, average-functioning student". Tammy envisioned her ELL as a good student, noting that the problem she [Tammy] is experiencing this year with her Hispanic student is a rarity for her, "Usually, all the Hispanic children I've dealt with are very eager to learn." Most participants equated their high expectations for ELLs to their belief that these children would be pass the Criterion-Referenced Competency Test (CRCT), which indicates how well students have met the required standards for their particular grade level. When teachers spoke of their expectations for ELLs to pass the Criterion-Referenced Competency Test, inference could easily be made that passing scores on this test were considered the most important goal of the school year for each classroom. Rose mentioned her high expectations for her ELLs in relation to their success on the Criterion-Referenced Competency Test. When asked about her academic

expectations for her ELLs' future, Rose replied without hesitation, "I have the expectations that they will pass the Criterion-Referenced Competency Test and go to second grade." The Criterion-Referenced Competency Test is a standardized test given in April of each year. Results from this test determine if a school meets adequate yearly progress (AYP), according to No Child Left Behind legislation. The test assesses students' achievement in the content areas of reading, English/ Language Arts, and math. Tammy mentioned that she has "the same academic expectations for my ELL students as I have for my English-speaking students. Intelligence is not the barrier. It's the language." In fact, Tammy expressed pride in her ELLs' capability to learn, "They learn their alphabet and how to read, right along with having to learn a new language." She conveyed, however, her concern about the attitudes of others in the county, including teachers. For example, she has seen the "negative perceptions of ELLs and their families that imply that people from Hispanic cultures are somehow inferior." She mentioned that she knows teachers who do not accept and respect the cultures of their ELL students, "Here, I see a lot of people who look down on the Hispanic families. Tammy was offended and hurt by the attitudes she has seen in her current county, sometimes from both the community and from other teachers. She commented that "When I was in X County, I didn't see as much I see here. Here, I see a lot of people who look down on the Hispanic families, and I don't like that because they [Hispanic families] are trying their best to provide for their kids and their families."

First Grade Teacher's Interactions With Their ELL Students

All four teachers were observed twice in their first grade classrooms during their Language Arts class. As a result of watching teachers as they instructed their ELLs, it appears that teachers treat their ELL students in the same manner that they behave towards their native English-speaking students and thus generally do not offer individual help to these students. Abby rephrased information and gave examples to the class as a whole, but not to ELL students per se. Teachers in general did not offer their ELLs extra help on their work. In fact, they appeared to discourage ELLs from working with others to get answers. For example, during a Bingo game activity, when an English-speaking student showed the ELL beside him the answer on the Bingo card, Pam scolded the two students and told them, "I do not want you to work together because I want to know what you know individually." She further stated, "Please do not help your neighbor. I want to see who's listening and who isn't!" Pam was the only participant who allowed one of her ELLs to work with a peer on an assignment. Working with a peer aided the ELL to better understand what he was supposed to be doing. Participants in this study made eye contact with all students, including ELLs. Teachers also showed no difference in the ways they asked and answered questions of their ELLs as opposed to native English-speakers. ELLs were called on few times to answer questions. In Pam's class, ELLs called on to answer questions were given no wait time and no hints to help them answer questions. Rose called on an ELL to spell the word "ants." However, when the student was unable to spell the word by himself, Rose spelled it for him, supplying one letter at a time for him to repeat. In the majority of instances, if an ELL student did not answer immediately, the

teacher went on to ask the same question to another student. I surmised that teachers were hurried to cover content material and did not want to give ELLs extra wait time to answer questions. The teacher could justify this rapidity of questioning by thinking that she was not embarrassing or calling attention to her ELL student. Less time waiting for the ELL to answer meant less time that the rest of the class would be glaring at the student waiting for an answer to the question. Further, teachers could justify their lack of wait time for ELLs' answers by reminding themselves that they had only a short amount of time in which to cover a large amount of material. Hints and clues may not have been given to ELLs individually, because the teachers would then feel obligated to supply hints and clues to all other students, and there would be decreased class time to teach lesson content. Perhaps if teachers acknowledged that ELLs needed extra help, they would often feel obligated to take precious time away from whole-group instruction to give their ELLs the support and help they need to comprehend material. The teachers may have thought it was just easier and faster to tell the students the answers and go on to the next question. Teachers' tone of voice did not appear to be any different for ELLs as for native English-speakers. In the classroom observations of all participants, teachers did not generally give individual help to ELL students. Only once did I see a participant sit down next to her ELL student to offer individual help. Abby sat beside her ELL student to show her how to organize a book she was making. I was not sure why Abby did this and the other participants did not. Perhaps Abby is trying hard to pay special attention to her ELL students because this is her first year teaching ELLs, and she wants the self-satisfaction of knowing she really tried to help her ELL. Or, perhaps Abby was more

inclined to help her ELL because she had only one in her classroom, compared to the two or three that the other participants had in their classrooms. It did not take a lot of extra time to help one, but taking extra time to help two or three students could be problematic by reducing the amount of time the teacher had to teach the class as a whole. Treating ELLs the same as native English-speaking students may have been an effort on the part of teachers to demonstrate that they do hold the same expectations for their ELLs as they have for their other students. On the other hand, refraining from giving one-on-one help to ELLs may be considered a misuse of the teachers' time that could more wisely be spent instructing the class as a whole.

Challenges of Teaching ELL Students

Findings from interview and questionnaire data revealed two major themes related to challenges encountered by first grade teachers of ELL students. All participants indicated that beginning ELL students' and their parents' lack of English created a "barrier" to understanding. Communicating with parents who speak other languages is often problematic for classroom teachers (Gandara, Maxwell-Jolly, and Driscoll, 2005). It was evident throughout the study that communication with ELLs' parents, as well as with students, presents a significant challenge for the first grade teachers. Rose noted a communication obstacle "mostly when I send notes home, and things like that; one thing, can they [parents] read it? Are they interpreting it correctly?" Teachers emphasized that it was difficult to convey information to parents about how to help their children, and that this difficulty may contribute to lack of achievement by ELL students. Teachers wanted to know "how to overcome the communication gap" that exists with ELLs' parents. Abby

indicated that her experiences had been "frustrating because I have somewhat limited communication with ELLs' parents." Tammy determined, "If I could make a change, it would be to receive more education in the Spanish language so we could communicate and bond more."

Participants viewed insufficient training as a challenge to providing effective education to ELL students. They believed that training classroom teachers to teach their ELL students is not considered to be a significant matter by the county. Teachers indicated a need for more training in communicating with parents, developing a greater repertoire of instructional strategies to use with ELL students, and increasing their knowledge about ELLs' cultural learning styles. Linking their problems with parent communication to insufficient preparation to teach ELL students and communicate with ELLs' parents, teachers expressed a desire for ongoing, up-to-date training in this area.

According to Rose, the kind of training needed most would be that which shows her "how to overcome the communication gap that I feel exists with ELL parents." Teachers discussed what they would like to see in the way of training them to be more effective teachers of ELL students. Often mentioned was a need to know how to address lack of communication between teachers and parents that resulted from the language barrier. Tammy's view of training was that it could help in both "communicating with and bonding with parents."

Teachers also alluded to a need for updated training on instructional strategies that would enable them to teach their ELLs' more effectively. Abby asserted that "the kind of training I need most is some that helps me differentiate instructional strategies for ELLs

whose reading ability is low." Only one participant viewed this kind of training as an insignificant, unnecessary factor in successfully teaching ELL students. She has had no training to teach ELL students but insisted that she does not need any, "because it won't add anything, anyway." She claimed that she would "do nothing differently than she already does" for her ELL students. However, in a follow-up interview with this participant, the teacher expressed enthusiasm over how her recent use of body language "to demonstrate the meanings of words" had enhanced her ELLs' comprehension. I inferred that she would now be receptive to training to help her in teaching her ELL students.

Finally, teachers conveyed a desire for training that would help them better understand their ELLs' culture and cultural learning styles. Rose acknowledged that, "I really don't understand their culture a lot. To be honest, I don't have a big huge understanding of any of it!" This comment suggested that maybe there were teaching strategies Rose would use to help her ELLs if she only knew which ones were beneficial. Learning these strategies would involve increased knowledge of ELLs' cultural learning styles. Tammy affirmed the idea that "all teachers who have ELL students need to be educated on the culture of their students. That is most important, so you know what to expect [from these students] and the reasons why some behaviors exist." Understanding their students' cultures would increase teachers' awareness of instructional strategies likely to increase ELLs' comprehension of material. Examples might be the usage of small groups, peer help, and the use of visuals and body language to demonstrate meaning.

View of Individual Participants

The major purpose of the interview and questionnaire instruments was to gather information pertaining to first grade teachers' perceptions of and expectations for ELL students. Secondly, these two instruments were intended to provide understanding about the challenges that first grade teachers face when teaching ELLs. The observation protocol instrument examined first grade teachers' interactions with ELLs during a regular teaching session. Examining the data from all research instruments, I analyzed the cases individually to reveal what teaching ELLs is like for each participant.

First Grade Teachers' Perceptions of Their ELL Students

Pam. Pam is a middle-aged teacher with many years of experience in teaching. Currently, she teaches a first grade class of 26 students, including three ELL children. Her class is run in an organized and strict manner. Pam's quiet, yet authoritative voice lets her children know they are not to make noise or do anything to disturb classroom order. Talking in a low, stern manner, Pam's demeanor demands her students' compliance with classroom rules. Pam vehemently insisted that she is not one who perceives her ELL students "as any different from the native English-speaking students in my classroom." She described them as being "simply fabulous" and "as capable as any other student." To Pam, "all my students learn in the same way," so she saw no need to plan lessons with ELLs' cultural learning styles in mind. After all, she said her ELLs had been "very successful in my classroom", and she "could not remember any particular experience that was better than all the rest." Pam viewed her ELLs as valuable because they all "added something to the classroom," such as multicultural influences and

language. However, Pam appeared very overwhelmed and stressed while talking about her ELL children. Her face looked anxious and tired. Some of her answers to the interview questions were short and almost nondescript. I often had to ask probing questions to elicit more elaboration of her responses. Pam mentioned that she had just been given a long list of things to do and paperwork to fill out by the following week. She made reference to her enormous job responsibilities as being "more than I can deal with," and she was "not about to add anything else to my work load." Perhaps Pam's effort to see her students as the "same" and her adamancy about not needing any training could be a result of the frustration that Pam felt in her job. Maybe she was physically and emotionally stretched to the limit. Pam claimed that she did not see these students any differently from the way she saw her native English-speaking students; therefore, she did not need to use different instructional strategies for her ELLs because "all students are the same." Viewing all students, including ELLs, as the same somehow helped Pam to justify a continuation of the same instructional strategies she has routinely used with the whole class. She would not have to admit that ELLs are different in their cultural learning styles, and she would not feel obligated to take extra time and energy to learn new strategies for these students.

Abby. Abby is a young teacher who teaches only one ELL student in her first grade class of 25 students. Abby has never taught ELL students prior to this school year. This youthful, enthusiastic teacher perceived her ELL students as being as capable as the other students in her classroom. However, she appeared somewhat worried that these students might not be able to keep up with the rest of the class. Abby also perceived her

ELLs as partially limited in their background knowledge. Perhaps this situation is due to students' lack of preparation in kindergarten or to their insufficient knowledge about American culture. At any rate, Abby described her students as those who, even though they "don't have the same background knowledge, they really have a good grasp on the same types of things as other [English-speaking] classmates do." Therefore, Abby viewed her ELLs as being "no different in academic capability as their native English-speaking peers." I believe that Abby genuinely considers her ELL student to be equal both academically and culturally to her native English-speaking students. Perhaps her advocacy for equality, training, and new ideas regarding ELL education may result from the fact that she is a young teacher just starting out in the teaching profession. The stress, pressures, demands, and continuous change that are characteristic of the teaching profession have not had time to take their toll on her energy and enthusiasm for teaching. Because Abby has never taught ELLs before, she may experience a more conscientious awareness of reaching this student. Abby, who has not been beaten down by years of heavy teaching responsibilities, may welcome and view as exciting the challenge of teaching an ELL student. Additionally, having only one ELL in her classroom this year, Abby may feel that she can afford a small amount of extra time for this one student, Conversely, the other first grade teachers may consider the extra time spent with their ELLs as not feasible, because giving extra attention to ELLs would decrease the amount of time needed to help the class as a whole to learn required grade level material.

Rose. Rose's classroom was appropriately decorated to accommodate all the active "Buckaroos" in her classroom. The Buckaroos were comprised of 26 first graders,

including three ELL children. The Old West theme presented an engaging, inviting atmosphere in which students could both work and fantasize at the same time. Rose is a seasoned teacher with almost a quarter of a century experience in the teaching profession. Her calm, yet firm voice commanded the respect of her students. Rose has had several years of previous experience teaching ELL students. She perceived her ELLs as "just as able to do first grade work as all of my other students." She asserted that her ELL children are "absolutely as capable" as the native English-speaking students in her classroom. However, Rose does have some doubt about one of her ELL student's success in first grade, "So I, my expectations are that she will [word emphasized, but with some hesitancy], I do…I have high hopes that she will [be successful]. It's just gonna take more work with her, I believe, than with [the other ELL student] just because they're on two different levels right now." On the other hand, Rose predicted that more remediation might become necessary for her ELLs, "Well, you just have to do some more remediation with them. But it's just because of their language." Rose pointed out that she has always used the same instructional strategies for her ELLs as she does for her other students, "The things I did with the ELL children--they were based on just my experiences as a teacher. Good things that I need to do, that I would do with any child that came in that was at a disadvantage." This statement about ELLs being like "any child" depicted the way that many teachers perceive their ELL students, when in fact, ELLs are different. They represent a different culture with its own learning styles, background knowledge, and attitudes toward school (Trumbull & Pacheco, 2005: Marzano, 2003). Rose believed that her ELLs are intelligent and capable of being successful. She likened their situation

to that of an American going to another country and being lost, incapable of functioning because of the language barrier.

> I just think that they're, they're just in an English-speaking environment, and it would be like me going to Mexico. I would be, you know, I would be the same way they are. Functioning would be difficult because that's not native to me at all. So, they're [ELLs] in this environment, and they're having to learn.

I believe that Rose's example indicated that she understood to some degree the cross-cultural scenario that impacts the lives of her ELL students. With this cross-cultural scenario playing out in her mind, Rose desired to better understand what her ELLs were experiencing as students among those who spoke a different language and lived in a different culture. She could sympathize with the difficulties ELLs and their parents were experiencing in simultaneously learning a new language, learning about a new culture, and functioning in the daily activities of life in a new country. This data informs my study in that it offers evidence that teachers do understand to some degree what ELLs and their families in our county are experiencing. Teachers' may perceive their ELLs as capable of achieving academically but held back to some extent by the English language barrier and insufficient knowledge about American culture. Knowing the challenges these students face may increase teachers' appreciation of the contributions and sacrifices these children make when they come to our schools.

Tammy. Tammy, a well-groomed woman in her late 30's, had previously taught ELLs for several years in another county. In her current class of 26 students, which includes three ELL students, Tammy's loud and clear voice can easily be heard by all her

rowdy group of first graders. Of all the participants in this study, Tammy embodied the most proactive ideas. She was very concerned about educating ELLs in the county and was the most outspoken advocate for ELL students and their parents. Having previously taught in a county with very large numbers of ELL students, Tammy had experienced firsthand the challenges of teaching ELLs, as well as the training provided to meet those challenges. Coming from a district in which ELLs were the majority to a county where the population of ELL students is growing, yet still small, Tammy realizes the significance of helping classroom teachers better understand the problems ELL students and their parents face on a daily basis. She perceived her ELLs to be as intelligent as her native English-speaking students. She believed that "intelligence is not the barrier. It's the language. They learned their alphabet and how to read, right along with learning a new language." In Tammy's opinion, these children deserve a lot of credit, as they are being required to learn both a new language and new material at the same time. Tammy does have, however, one ELL about whom she is very concerned, because this student does not appear to have a desire to learn. According to Tammy, "lack of motivation to learn is something I rarely see in my ELLs, especially the Hispanic children. It's very rare. Usually, all the Hispanic children I've dealt with are very eager to learn. He's the first one I've had that, that just doesn't care about learning at all." Tammy is trying to figure out how to motivate this child, "I try, but I don't know how to persuade him to try to do what he can do; he gives me a hard time. So, I don't know what that deal is."

An outspoken advocate for ELL children and their parents, Tammy is concerned about how other teachers perceive their ELL students and their families. She commented

that, when she taught in her previous county, she did not see the attitudes and negative perceptions that she sees here in this school and county. Even though the following quote is lengthy, I feel that it paints a descriptive picture of how some people in this area, including teachers, may view ELLs and their families.

> Here, I see a lot of people who look down on the Hispanic families and I don't like that, because they're trying their best to provide for their kids and their families. And, what I've learned, just because I have been to these classes [in her previous county], I've been around so many Hispanic families [in her previous county], that I know they want what's best for their kids and they want them to have a better life. And they're doing the best that they can, you know, to get that for those kids. So, when I hear, like people saying, like last year, we had a family who, um, Ms. X [the ESOL teacher] asked for help for because they didn't have food. And, I heard comments made like, "Well, where's that daddy?" and, "Why don't they go back to Mexico where they got family and they can help take care of them." And, I was like, "People! You know, you just…!" You know, the kid's hungry whether the daddy… You know, the daddy was traveling very far for work because, you know, there was no work, so the mother was trying to take care of home while he was traveling to work, and I'm like, "You know, if your husband could not work, if there weren't any jobs here for him because he didn't speak the language or because he didn't have the education or something like that, when you want somebody to help you…!" So, I see a lot of that here in this

community, where they look down on the Hispanics. But, where I came from, where I taught before, it wasn't like that.

Tammy's comments implied a deep concern for how children of diversity in the county's schools are viewed and treated. She lamented over the fact that more training is not provided for the teachers of ELLs in this county. The excerpt informs the research because it represents an underlying perception that many people in our county, including teachers, may have of students whose culture differs from their own. I believe that teachers have an innate desire to view all of their students in an equitable way; yet, because of the cultural environment in which they were brought up, teachers may subconsciously hold stereotypical views of people from other cultures. They may think of people from other cultures as not belonging here. Perhaps secretly, they wish that these people would "go back to Mexico" or wherever it is they came from. They do not envision the possibility that other cultures can enrich the lives of native English-speakers.

First Grade Teachers' Expectations for Their ELL Students

Pam. Pam strongly emphasized that her expectations for the ELL students in her class were "the same as they are for all the other students I teach." She repeatedly remarked, "I treat my ELLs the same as all the rest of my students, because I expect all [word emphasized] of them to do well." The idea of holding each child in her class to the same high standard was one point that Pam wanted to make sure she conveyed. She did not want anyone to think that she held different expectations for ELL students simply because they were labeled "ELL." On the other hand, Pam did not believe that she would have to lower her expectations in any way, because "all children are alike." Pam's refusal

to see her ELL students as different from her other students was unsettling to me. Even though all children are alike in some way, when children come from diverse cultures, their thoughts about life, about education, about relationships, to name a few, are bound to be different (Trumbull & Pacheco, 2005). Thus, in their view of education and the ways in which they learn, ELL children may be different from native English-speaking students (Abedi et al., 2005; Chamot, 2004). Refusing to acknowledge learning differences may prevent teachers from searching for teaching strategies to address the cultural learning styles of their ELL students (Trumbull & Pacheco, 2005; Lucina & Sowa, 2005). Insistence that all students learn similarly may be a subconscious justification by teachers to instruct in the same manner all of the students in their classroom. Teaching all students the same requires less time and effort on the part of teachers in the form of lesson planning and individual instruction. Additionally, seeing all children as "alike" may be a way for teachers to concentrate on only American culture, at the expense of acknowledging and valuing other cultures represented by ELLs in the classroom.

During a Bingo activity in which students had to look for pictures beginning with a particular letter sound, Pam would not let her ELLs seek help from the students sitting beside them and admonished the ELLs if they did so. She said that they "should work on their own and not get answers from their neighbors." Possibly, Pam's insistence that students work on their own without help from others was indicative of her high expectations for all students, regardless of ethnicity. Conversely, if Pam were to admit that her ELLs needed extra help, she would feel compelled to search for ways to help

them; at this time, she could not gather the will or energy to "add anything else to my job demands."

Abby. Abby expected her ELLs to achieve grade level requirements the same as their native English-speaking peers, even though she acknowledged having to "bring my expectations and instruction down a little ways. It's almost as if I need to bring it down just a little bit further for her [the ELL student in her class]." She described her sole ELL student as "a pretty regularly-functioning, average-functioning student." In other words, Abby expected her ELL child to perform academically as well as the average English-speaking students in her classroom. As a prerequisite to learning the material being taught, Abby indicated that students' ability to follow the teacher's instructions is pivotal in students' learning. Abby noted that her ELL student was able to "follow instructions", so communication with her "has not been a problem." Although perhaps untrue, this statement made it seem that Abby was more concerned about the student's ability to follow directions rather than the student's ability to communicate in English. She noted possible causes why ELLs may not reach their potential, such as classroom teachers' inability to communicate to parents the ways to help their children and the general lack of training for classroom teachers in the area of ELL education. Abby labeled herself as "frustrated" because of the problems she encountered as a result of insufficient training. Nevertheless, Abby has "across-the-board, somewhat, expectations for all of my students because I know they're all capable. Abby quickly added that she "meets them all on their own levels." She emphatically stated that she is not going to change her expectations for her ELL student because the student "has the ELL label per se." While she expects her

ELL student to try to achieve the same goals as her English-speaking students, Abby might "modify [the ELL's] work to maybe just a smaller amount if she [the ELL] is having difficulty with it, so I don't frustrate her." Abby insisted that "overall, my expectations are the same thing."

Rose. Rose's experience with ELL students has been limited to Hispanic students. She has never had ELLs of Asian, African, or any other ethnic descent placed in her regular classroom. Because she had taught only Hispanic ELL students, Rose had no other culture with which to compare her expectations for her ELL students. When asked about her expectations for her Hispanic ELL students, Rose was quick to point out, "My expectations are different for Hispanics as opposed to English speaking students only because of the language barrier. However, I do have the same standard for all….that with hard work….Hispanics may have to work harder….they can all be successful." Rose described her expectations for her Hispanic ELL students as "basically the same expectations I have for the rest of the students in my classroom."

Rose attributed her ELLs' difficulty and inability to perform at the same level as native English-speaking students to a lack of English vocabulary and background knowledge of American culture. According to Rose, ELLs "don't have the same vocabulary advantage that the English-speaking children do." If provided with sufficient background knowledge and the vocabulary they need to understand the material, Rose believed her ELL students would be capable of the same level of achievement as the other students in the class. For this reason, Rose asserted that she took special care to get her ELLs to this point.

> I build background thoroughly with the ELL children, because they don't have the knowledge of a lot of things. And, whether it's their environment, their culture, I don't know. But I do go into more depth, building background, just so they do have a total knowledge of what we're talking about. They might not be very familiar with some of that, you know, the way in America that we are.

When asked about the academic potential of her ELLs, Rose affirmed that she believes these students are "absolutely able to meet the requirements of first grade. It's just the lack of their exposure to things." Rose alluded several times to her high hopes that ELLs would pass the Criterion-Referenced Competency Test. Rose expects her ELLs to pass the Criterion-Referenced Competency Test and has high hopes that they will, "He [ELL student] did so well to pass, like I said, he passed the Criterion-Referenced Competency Test in all three areas. Rose perceived her greatest success as helping students meet her expectations of their achieving a passing score on the Criterion-Referenced Competency Test, "to get them to the point that I needed them to be, which was to be successful on the Criterion-Referenced Competency Test." Students' success on the Criterion-Referenced Competency Test can possibly be seen as a reflection on the teacher's ability to teach. Teachers believe that if their students pass the Criterion-Referenced Competency Test, administrators, parents, and others in the school community will regard these teachers as successful and competent. The pass rate for the school as a whole is also pivotal in whether that particular school makes Adequate Yearly Progress. Consequently, teachers' most important goal, whether consciously or

subconsciously, is to ensure that their students pass the Criterion-Referenced Competency Test.

Tammy. Tammy came from a county with a much larger percentage of non-native speakers than exists in the county where this study takes place. Tammy expressed high expectations for her ELL students, "Academically, these kids are gonna be fine." Tammy indicated that ELLs will achieve, and that it is mainly their lack of the English language that holds them back. They're "very capable of doing the work, but sometimes the language, you know, the language is what hinders reading, that kind of thing." When asked specifically to tell me what expectations she holds for ELL children, Tammy responded.

> I have the same academic expectations for all of them. I just do. I've always taught Kindergarten, and I found that, in Kindergarten, they come in, um, and they pick up the language very fast, and, even though they don't speak it as well, they understand it. So, I have always held the same, you know, the same expectations for all of them, whether they were ELL or not ELL. I never have had a situation where my ELL students didn't achieve just as much as my other students did. I always expected the same for my [ELL] kids as the other kids.

Because Tammy has taught mostly very young ELL students, these students' acquisition of English may have occurred at a faster pace than occurs with older children.

Tammy did not plan her lessons differently for her ELL students: "No, I don't plan any different for them. What I do for them, I do it for all my students who are struggling." She noted that the same teaching strategies she uses for her native English

speakers are also appropriate for her ELL students. Because she expects her ELLs to learn in the same way as her other students, she does not alter her lesson plans for them. Research has shown that children learn more when instruction is given that parallels students' cultural learning styles (Trumbull & Pacheco, 2005). Unwillingness to admit that ELLs are different may prevent teachers from acknowledging that ELLs' require instructional strategies that are unlike those used with native English-speaking students (Hite & Evans, 2006; Lucina & Sowa; Solomon et al., 2006). As a result, ELLs may not receive instruction that addresses their cultural learning needs. One teacher sustained that she does use "small group, collaborative learning as a way to address Hispanics' general preference for working together with their peers." However, there was no mention by the other participants of using any type of instruction that was related to ELLs' cultural learning styles.

Additionally, I was somewhat concerned with teachers' belief that ELLs should work independently. Expecting these students to work on their own may not be conducive to their comprehension. I believe that ELLs often need extra help from teachers and their peers to better understand information. As an ESOL teacher, I know that my ELL students often need assistance from others to facilitate understanding of concepts and new material. Furthermore, working with peers is an effective instructional strategy, because other students are often able to explain ideas in a comprehensible way for other children their age (Miller & Endo, 2004; Padrón et al., 2002). I was also concerned with teachers' blanket expectations for their ELL students. As a teacher, I know that not all children, ELLs included, are going to achieve at the same level. Some

ELL students, just as native English-speaking students, may have learning disabilities that prevent them from reaching a particular level of achievement. These children should not feel ashamed of these disabilities, simply because their teacher expects all students to reach the same level of achievement as the "average" native English-speaking student in the classroom. Expecting this kind of achievement from a classroom of diverse children may be an unrealistic goal, because everyone does not have the same academic skills.

First Grade Teacher's Interactions With Their ELL Students?

Pam. Pam was one of the more mature teacher participants. She has been teaching for a number of years. She appeared very stressed and overwhelmed by the responsibilities bestowed upon her in the teaching profession, such as planning lessons, attending meetings, and scheduling parent conferences. Surrounded by a very organized, neatly-arranged classroom environment, Pam was quite strict with her class of 26 students, which included three ELL students. Even though she spoke quietly, her tone was authoritative and demanding. She reprimanded the class several times for talking above what Pam considered to be the acceptable noise level in her classroom. One ELL student looked somewhat intimidated and afraid to move his hands for fear of being chastised. ELL students neither asked nor answered questions during my two observations and seemed somewhat withdrawn and reserved. During a Bingo activity, a native English-speaking student showed an ELL student the correct answer to cover on the Bingo card. Pam admonished both students and told them she did not want them to work together because she wanted to know what they knew individually. She said, "Please do not help your neighbor. I want to see who's listening and who isn't!" My

impression was that Pam did not want anyone to talk or do anything that would detract from the very orderly, structured classroom environment. If the ELL student were allowed to receive assistance from a peer, other students might feel that they have the right to ask their neighbor for help, also. Eventually, there would be a noise level that would disrupt the very quiet, orderly atmosphere of the classroom. I got the impression that Pam was more concerned about maintaining the quiet atmosphere of the classroom than about whether ELL students received the help they needed. As revealed during classroom observations, interactions with her ELLs suggested that Pam expects the same level of achievement from all her students. During observations of her Language Arts classes, I noticed that Pam instructed the class as a whole, without restating or rephrasing questions and answers for ELLs per se. Pam seemed to expect that her ELL students would perform at the same level as native English-speaking students.

Pam's class was also observed during story time. Students sat on the floor in a clustered group and listened as Pam read a story about two animal characters. She asked the class as a whole how characters in the story about community helpers related to their previous experiences with community helpers. Pam did not ask ELLs to respond to this question, perhaps because she assumed that these students did not have the same background knowledge about community workers as did native English-speakers; or maybe Pam felt pushed to get the lesson completed and did not want to take the time to build background knowledge for these students. ELLs often do not have adequate background knowledge to understand the concepts presented in lessons that are created for native English-speaking students (Solomon et al., 2006; Tinajero, 2006). Building

background knowledge for ELL students who have not been exposed to the same experiences as native English-speakers may present a problem for ELLs in areas such as reading (Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007).

Abby. Abby was the youngest of the teacher participants. She displayed enthusiasm about teaching and spoke to her class in a soothing, yet excited tone of voice. Exhibiting a caring personality, Abby made eye contact with her one ELL student, who was surrounded on all sides by native English-speaking students. Tammy's eye contact, as well as her calm, comforting voice helped create an accepting learning environment in which her ELL student could more easily learn. The room also contained a mixture of items that made students feel comfortable, such as adorable stuffed animals and fluffy pillows on the floor. When students are in a comfortable environment and feel that they are accepted and valued, their learning increases (Hite & Evans, 2006; Lasso & Soto, 2005; Oliveira & Athanases, 2007; Reed & Railsback, 2003). During the class activities observed (which included students reading their story silently while they listened to the story being read on a CD and reading sentences on sentence cards), the ELL student was rarely asked to reply to questions. However, the teacher did walk around the room, speaking to each one to offer help and encouragement. Abby's interactions included a non-threatening proximity and eye contact with her ELLs that induced an accepting environment in which these students could feel comfortable learning. On the other hand, questions were rephrased and restated for the entire class, and not for the ELL student per se. The ELL did not have an opportunity to ask the teacher any questions. Even though this student raised her hand a couple of times to respond to a question, she was not called

on to answer. Perhaps Abby did not perceive the ELL as capable of answering and did not want to take the time to ask the student a question and give wait time. Doing so would consume valuable class time. Abby may have assumed that the ELL did not know the answers, and she did not want to embarrass this student by calling on her. The ELL student appeared calm, yet somewhat preoccupied with other thoughts. The student's calmness was likely a result of the comforting and accepting atmosphere in the classroom. The student may have been preoccupied with other thoughts because she did not understand much of what was going on and therefore was tempted to fill her mind with subconscious experiences and events which made sense to her.

Rose. Rose's classroom displayed a very interesting and inviting atmosphere. Done in a western theme, the room was filled with objects and themes related to the wild west of long ago. While observing students engaged in several activities, I could tell that students were actively involved in what they were doing. Rose made eye contact with all students, including her two ELLs, when she asked questions of the class as a whole. She used positive correction with the class, "I appreciate the students who …" Rose made an effort to walk around the room to check on students' work, especially when students were writing their sentences about ants. After finishing an activity in which students wrote a sentence about ants on a sentence strip, students were allowed to go to one of various work stations where they worked with various manipulatives related to language. At one point, the teacher asked an ELL a question and gave little wait time for the student to answer. Perhaps the short amount of time given to ELLs to answer questions could have been due to teachers' thinking that ELLs were not capable of providing the correct

answer. The lack of wait time could also have been a result of teachers' genuinely having the same expectations for ELLs as the teachers have for their native English-speaking students. More wait time can be beneficial for ELLs (Mohr & Mohr, 2007), who may not have the same cultural background as native English-speakers. Rose gave hints and clues to the class as a whole and not to individual ELL students. She checked on ELL's sentence about ants and noticed an incorrectly written word; she asked him to look at the word on his sentence strip and compare it to the one on the board. After checking, the student was able to find his mistake. Rose gave clues and hints ("It's the word 'tear' but starts with an 'h'; it's the word 'hear', yes.") when she asked questions, but did not rephrase or restate questions or statements for ELLs per se. This type of help is probably not very helpful to the ELL students because it does not require the students to use his thinking skills to search for mistakes. When teachers offer too much help, ELLs may begin to lean heavily on this kind of support and fail to develop the capacity to reason out problems on their own. Perhaps a better way to help would be for the teacher to suggest that the student repeatedly read and check one word at a time on the sentence strip against the sentence on the board until he finds his mistake. Another good way to assist the ELL's learning would be to allow the ELL to work with a peer. Working together with peers to pick out and discuss mistakes can facilitate ELLs' acquisition of knowledge (Hite & Evans, 2006; Miller & Endo, 2004; Solomon et al., 2006).

Tammy. Even though she has taught for several years and has had some experience teaching ELL children, this is Tammy's first year teaching first grade

students, which includes three ELL children. Tammy is keenly mindful that she has the responsibility to teach grade level standards before the end of the school year.

During my observations of Tammy's class, students engaged in several activities involving spelling and story comprehension. Group activities entailed the students sitting randomly on the floor. The three ELLs did not sit very close to the teacher. In fact, one ELL sat back a good distance from the front of the group, which was closest to the teacher. ELL students seemed somewhat preoccupied during the group activities. One student gazed around the room at objects on the wall. Another student looked as if she were almost asleep. The third ELL played with his shoelaces. ELLs' preoccupation persisted, despite the sound of Tammy's loud, clear, and authoritative voice as she spoke to her class. Perhaps ELLs did not fully understand the story or the language in which it was told, so they filled their minds with other thoughts. Tammy made eye contact with all students, including the three ELL students in her classroom. Tammy verbally told the story verbally and refrained from using body gestures to illustrate it. She asked students to give the antonyms of several words used in the story. Tammy restated or rephrased questions or answers for the class as a whole, despite apprehensive and confused looks which sometimes appeared on ELLs' faces. The use of body language and visuals, especially when teaching antonyms, would have been beneficial in helping increase ELLs' understanding of these words. Enhancing ELLs' comprehension of concepts and vocabulary often requires the use of visuals, examples, or restating and rephrasing of information (Gray & Fleischman, 2004; Reed & Railsback, 2003; Trumbull & Pacheco, 2005). When one of her ELL students had trouble spelling a word, Tammy said, "I can't

tell you!" She reprimanded this same student several times, including the time the ELL attempted to get spelling answers from a fellow student. Another time, Tammy rebuked the ELL during a group activity for having something in his hand and told him to go put it in the trash can. When the student returned from the trash can, he sat down and angrily scooted to the very back of group, burying his head in his hands. During the spelling test, Tammy sounded out and repeated words for the class as a whole. Without singling out ELLs, Tammy walked around the room and stood closely to all students at one time or another as she called out the spelling words. Tammy's equal monitoring of all students may have been an indication that she expected all students to do well on the test. Tammy's close proximity to students gave the appearance to students that she was there to help them if they needed her. Possibly, Tammy was checking to see if students were keeping up with the words; or, she may have had the subliminal motive of checking to make sure students were not getting answers from other students or from hidden notes.

During my observations of Tammy's class, the ELL students were asked to reply on two different occasions. One ELL was called on to tell the number of sounds in the alphabet, but the student did not know the answer. The teacher did not give him hints or wait time. On another occasion, an ELL was asked to identify a letter of the alphabet. Because the student could not give an answer, Tammy asked an English-speaking student, who did know the answer. Another time, an ELL was the only student in the class who volunteered an answer to one of Tammy's questions. Tammy, possibly inadvertently, did not acknowledge this student's attempt to answer the question and moved on to the next activity. As she displayed various letters and asked the class to

respond with the appropriate letter sound for each letter, Tammy gave hints and clues to the whole class by repeating the sound of the letter. However, she refrained from giving hints and clues to individual ELL students per se. One ELL asked a question, and Tammy replied, “You should know the answer to that question!” After this incident, the ELL did not ask any other question. Perhaps he was afraid that he would be scolded again if he asked for help. Rather than being embarrassed again, he preferred to remain silent.

During another activity in which students put together a little book about “Mr. Ant,” the teacher walked around to inspect students’ books to see if they had put them together correctly. ELL students appeared apprehensive about cutting out their books and getting them in the right order. They often gazed around the room, as if asking for help. Although ELLs’ facial expressions appeared to be a plea for help, these students exhibited a noticeable silence and did not ask any questions. Perhaps they felt uncomfortable doing so because of their lack of English; or, they were afraid of being scolded by the teacher if they did not know the answers. During the storybook activity, some students did not cut out their pages neatly or put them in the right order. Tammy reprimanded a few students, including the ELLs, for not cutting their pages out properly. ELLs did not ask or answer questions. If ELLs do not feel comfortable in the classroom environment, they are less likely to ask questions, and their comprehension may decrease. ELLs must feel free to ask questions as part of the learning process (Hite & Evans, 2006; Lucina & Sowa, 2005).

Challenges of Teaching ELL Students

Pam. Pam, a teacher with quite a few years of experience teaching small children, did not see herself as having any difficulties teaching ELL students. She described these students as "the same as the rest of my students." Because Pam did not consider ELLs' learning styles to be any different from those of native English-speaking students, she did not do "anything differently for them" and did not indicate a need to change any of her instructional strategies "just because I have ELL students in my classroom." Even though she was among the first grade teacher participants who had the greatest proportion of ELL students, Pam saw no need for any kind of training that was designed to specifically to teach ELLs. She fiercely resisted training, noting that "there is no need for training, because it won't add anything!" Pam's drawn, tense expression revealed a person who was overwhelmed with the demands of teaching. I deduced that Pam's reluctance to admit that she needed help with the challenges of educating ELLs stemmed from her inability to emotionally take on more issues than she was presently forced to address.

Abby. As the youngest participant in the study, Abby was well aware of the challenges involved in teaching ELL children in the mainstream classroom. She noted that one of the most difficult aspects of educating ELLs was the task of "teaching these students phonics, reading, and spelling." In the process of teaching this material to her ELL students, Abby was frustrated because of her inability to fully communicate problems to parents and because of her lack of knowledge and training in educating ELL students. Abby described her contact with ELLs' parents as "limited communication." It has not been easy for her to use a mixture of English and Spanish to "explain to parents

how to help their children." Another aspect of teaching ELLs that has been somewhat exasperating for Abby is the lack of training in the area of differentiating instruction for ELL students. When asked what kind of training she believed would be beneficial to her as a first grade teacher of ELL students, Abby responded:

> Uh, maybe different ways to differentiate with ELL students. I know how to differentiate instruction, but being new to first grade, I'm having to bring my expectations and instruction down a little ways. It's almost as if I need to bring it down just a little bit further for her. But, how do I differentiate but find a good place for her at the same time? Let's say we're doing a math or a reading activity. She might get a little jumbled up with reading the directions, even though we discussed them. She might have a little trouble reading it or maybe if I'm doing more remediation with her, and other students were doing acceleration with skills, like how, I mean I don't always want to put her in the bottom category, because that's not necessarily where she needs to be. I'm curious if there are specific strategies that you can do, what you can do to put her in the place that's best suited for her. And, again, it's still the beginning of the year, so it's going to be hard to tell what all of her strengths and all of her weaknesses are so far. But letter recognition is a big thing for her. I don't have that same problem with too many other students, or few. But I'm just—differentiation would be a big thing; I would love to see some examples, maybe even talk with [ESOL teacher's name mentioned here]. Um, I have a Spanish background because I'm Colombian, but I

didn't grow up there. So, it's [pause] difficult for me to be able to make a connection with her on that level.

Abby exhibited a great desire to learn more about teaching and interacting with her ELL student. Being a somewhat new and inexperienced teacher without a repertoire of teaching strategies, Abby understood the value of ongoing teacher training. Training would help first grade teachers keep abreast of ELLs' learning needs and strategies that may relate to these students' different cultural backgrounds. Abby did sometimes use strategies such as placing her ELL in a small group to work in order "to take the pressure off her [the ELL] a little bit and increase her confidence." Yet, Abby readily acknowledged that there is "so much more for me to learn about teaching ELL students."

Rose. When asked about the challenges she faces in teaching ELLs, Rose noted that the most difficult challenge is "the language barrier and communicating with parents, and sometimes even with the children themselves. But mostly when you send notes home and things like that. One thing, can they read it? Are they interpreting it correctly, you know." Contrarily, her best experiences included the times "when parents felt comfortable enough to participate in classroom activities." I asked Rose what she does differently in class for her ELL students. She delineated the strategies that she uses, such as a greater number of "graphic sources sometimes, you know, more pictures, because that seemed to help them [ELL students] more than words. I had extra pictures to explain something just because they don't have the same vocabulary advantage that the English-speaking children do." Laughingly, yet mixed with a hint of embarrassment, Rose

referenced the lack of training she had previously received to prepare her for teaching ELL students.

> Well, this is my [20+] year of teaching. If I've received some [training], it's been so long ago that I can't remember it! I'll be quite honest, um, you know, I probably have received some. I do have a folder of things to help with, 'cause it was ESOL—that was way back when it was ESOL, when I first started teaching. I have materials, but don't remember what [word emphasized] it was and I don't remember where [word emphasized] it was. I definitely have that folder, so it's just been a long [word emphasized] time ago, but not any training recently, within the last ten years, no.

This excerpt from Rose's interview brings to light the great need in the county for training classroom teachers in educating ELL students. As the ELL student population continues to grow, the necessity of providing this training will become even more significant. Our county cannot pretend that classroom teachers of ELLs will function well using the same strategies for all students or that a one-time training session can sufficiently provide information the teacher should know for several years thereafter. Training should be ongoing and should address the challenges that classroom teachers face today (Hite & Evans, 2006; Lucina & Sowa, 2005; Solomon et al., 2006), including how to communicate with parents and how to instruct ELL's according to their cultural learning styles. Despite her lack of training in teaching ELLs, however, Rose stated that she "does not know of any changes" that she would make in her instruction. I believe that teachers know in their hearts that they need and want training; but, they have so many

responsibilities already and do not perceive that there is enough time or energy for additional training.

Tammy. Tammy declared that her most difficult challenge in teaching ELL students was getting her children to master a new language while also learning subject-area content. Tammy said she could understand the frustration these children must feel. She told about the time her ELL students tried to teach her Spanish. It was very difficult for her to pronounce the words "the correct way" and her ELLs would laugh at her. Tammy insisted that, "even as an adult, it was intimidating; so, I could just imagine how children feel learning a new language."

Another challenge that Tammy faced was providing a comfortable and accepting environment in which ELLs could learn. She noted that "a lot of our Hispanic children are very emotional at the beginning of school because they come in at the beginning of the year, and no one speaks their language, and no one looks like them; and so, they're scared to death." Tammy wanted to make these children "feel comfortable so they can start to learn." She described this situation as her "biggest challenge, because when they come and they speak very little English….that's hard, and it's very scary for them [ELLs] to do that."

A further challenge mentioned by Tammy is that ELLs often lack background knowledge that is similar to that possessed by native English-speaking students. Tammy commented that, "I don't think parents know what they need to know to provide them [their ELL children] with the background knowledge, such as vocabulary." For example, some students might ask her what a desk is, and Tammy would answer that "A desk has

four legs." She told how the kids would then say it in Spanish, and that would help them transfer this knowledge into what they know.

Tammy has also had many problems communicating with parents. She conveyed to me her concerns about the school's responsibility to build a bridge between parents and the school. According to Tammy, the county "does not do enough to reach the Hispanic families." She had come from a county that "went over and above to reach ELLs' parents, because they knew that they needed their help with these children." The county offered a lot of programs to help Hispanic parents. Tammy pointed out that she did not think that kind of help is offered in our county, and "as the population's growing, I think they need to start doing it." Tammy gave compelling reasons why she supports this type of training. She commented that "teachers don't know how to deal with ELL students. And then, definitely they don't know how to deal with their parents. And so, I think that they need some training, like what addresses students' cultural needs." Tammy believed that teachers need to be aware "how other cultures feel about things, so we could better understand the kids and the parents and know where they're coming from." She lamented that our county does offer any training like that, even though Tammy maintained that "it is much needed to help teachers better understand their ELL students and parents."

Non-conforming or Discrepant Data

Hatch (2002) emphasized that researchers must systematically strive to unearth data found to be contradictory to the findings. He pointed out that this kind of data must be either "satisfactorily explained or the findings must be changed" (Hatch, 2002, p.

158). After analyzing the totality of the data, some discrepancies were revealed. I expected to find that some teachers held lower expectations for some or all of their ELL students. This scenario did not come to fruition, however. In fact, all participants expressed high expectations for their ELL students and held them to the same high standards that they expect for their native English-speaking students. Even though I was elated to discover equitable expectations among the participants, I found myself second-guessing why these teachers' expectations were the same for all students in their classroom, regardless of ethnicity. I wondered if teachers were cognizant of how a lack of background knowledge about American culture could impact their ELLs' comprehension of material. If not, I pondered if teachers actually understood the importance of offering extra help to these students. I know I must simply be content knowing that the participants at least have a desire to treat their ELLs equitably.

Another expectation was to find that all of the teachers experienced some degree of frustration due to a lack of training in how to teach ELLs effectively. To my surprise, however, one teacher insisted that training classroom teachers in ELL-related matters is unnecessary. Even though this participant was among the first grade teachers with the largest number of ELLs in the classroom, she unwaveringly maintained that she did not see any benefits in training teachers to teach ELL students. She insisted that "all students are alike", implying that what works for one will work for all of them, regardless of culture. She insisted that she "would not change anything" about the way she teaches ELLs, because she felt she was "doing everything I should be doing to help these students." Trumbull and Pacheco (2005) asserted, however, that teachers must not

assume that what works for native English-speaking students will work for their ELL students. These authors emphasized the significance of using teaching strategies that appeal to students' cultural learning styles.

Evidence of Data Quality

As the researcher, I am bound by ethical guidelines to protect the participants in the study and ensure quality of the study. To stay within these guidelines, I refrained from contacting any potential participants or collecting data of any kind until I received approval from my committee and from Walden's Institutional Review Board (IRB). I am aware that participants' rights must be protected. For this reason, I gave a consent form to each participant to sign. Mills (2003) described informed consent as central to research ethics, as it ensures that all subjects retain the freedom "to judge for themselves if the risks are worth taking for the purpose of furthering scientific knowledge" (p. 91). Keeping this right in mind, I explained to participants the information on the consent form. The information included the study's purpose, the data collection process in which each participant would take part, a guarantee of the confidentiality of each participant's information and identity, and assurance that the participant had the option to withdraw from the study at any time without personal or professional repercussions or stigma. I also informed participants of their right and opportunity to verify the accuracy of their interview transcripts.

To enhance the quality of data, various safeguards were applied throughout the study. Data quality was maintained through triangulation of data, bracketing, member-checking, peer-editing, and usage of very descriptive information.

First, the quality of this study was enhanced by using triangulated research methods. Triangulation ensures that multiple methods are used to corroborate the data (Creswell, 2003, 2007; Hatch, 2002). The triangulated methods in this study included interviews, observations, and a qualitative questionnaire. Using a multi-method approach provided me a more ecologically valid assessment of teachers' perceptions and expectations. Further, if each means of data collection yielded basically the same information, I was confident that the emergent themes were in fact representative of participants' perceptions about the study topic.

Another means of increasing quality was to bracket, or set aside (Creswell, 2003; Rubin & Rubin, 2005), my personal biases and feelings so that I could look at what participants said and did, without judging the motives behind their words and actions. Whenever I felt I was slipping back into the role of an ESOL teacher rather than being an objective researcher, I readjusted my thinking so that my perceptions of participants were viewed and recorded without surmising teachers' motives behind the data.

Peer-editing was a further means of ensuring data quality (Creswell, 2003, 2007; Janesick, 2004; Mills, 2003; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). As a peer editor, I chose a fellow ESOL teacher, Anna (pseudonym), to examine the study. My colleague is well-qualified to serve as a peer-reviewer. Having previously taught in another state with high numbers of ELLs in each classroom, Anna is currently employed as an ESOL teacher. She is aware of the issues and challenges that mainstream first grade teachers in the local community may encounter when teaching ELL students. For this reason, she is capable of evaluating the quality of this study. I requested that Anna specifically evaluate the

purpose of the study, the protocol questions, the findings, and the interpretation. She was also asked if she detected any researcher bias in the study.

After reading the study, my colleague gave me constructive feedback. She confirmed the feasibility of the interview and observation protocols to answer the study's research questions; further, she offered advice on what probes might have been more effective for eliciting more elaboration from participants. She questioned me about a particular theme which she noticed in the data collection that she thought should have been in the findings. After some discussion, she and I came to the conclusion that this theme was not one of the most significant ones in the study, and it was ultimately not included in the findings.

Moreover, accuracy of data was assured through member-checking (Briggs & Coleman, 2007; Creswell, 2007; Hatch, 2002; Mills, 2003; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Following the initial in-depth interviews, I checked with each participant to confirm the accuracy of her interview transcription to determine if it portrayed the meaning that the participant intended. All participants who read their individual interview transcriptions stated that the information obtained from them was correctly transcribed.

Finally, I used descriptive language to denote participants' feelings and to interpret the data (Hatch, 2002; Merriam & Associates, 2002). Thick, highly detailed data includes a detailed description of events. As part of the detailed description, direct quotes and excerpts from the information obtained are incorporated. Integrating descriptive details and participants' actual words helps "transport readers to the setting" (Creswell, 2003, p. 196) and permits the reader to share the experiences of both the participants and

perhaps even the ELL students in the classrooms. As a result, a realistic picture of participants' feelings was presented, and the quality of the study was elevated.

Summary

Section 4 presented a summary of the findings from the totality of in-depth interviews, classroom observations, and a qualitative survey. The data yielded insight into classroom teachers' perceptions of and expectations for their ELL students. Information also discussed the challenges that first grade teachers face when teaching ELL students and teachers' perceptions of the need for training related to educating ELL students. Section 5 examines how this study may impact educators and other stakeholders by adding to the knowledge about educating ELL students in the mainstream classroom. The gap in current research on the study topic will be addressed, and recommendations will be offered about the direction in which future research should be directed. Perhaps more understanding about this topic will serve to narrow the achievement gap between ELL students and their native English-speaking peers.

Section 5: Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Why and How the Study Was Done

This study was done because there is a need for more knowledge in the area of educating first grade ELL children. The knowledge can be used by staff development to design training to help first grade teachers of ELLs become more effective teachers of these children. There is a wide achievement gap between ELL children and native English-speaking students (Batalova et al., 2007; Nieto, 2003; Trumbull & Pacheco, 2005). The achievement gap is evident even in early grades. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2007), only 7% of fourth-grade ELLs, compared to 36% of native English speakers, met proficiency levels in English. This disparity sets the stage for ELLs to be unsuccessful in upper grades. In fact, the drop-out rates of Hispanic students have been found to be four times higher than the drop-out rates of native English speaking students (Trumbull & Pacheco, 2005). For this reason, educators must examine ways to help this ever-increasing population of ELL students. The focus of this study was to discover, in one southern elementary school, the nature of first grade teachers' perceptions of and expectations for their ELL students. These findings may help to provide more effective and equitable education for ELL children.

The context of the study was one southern elementary school where all participants teach a mainstream first grade classroom containing at least one ELL student. Information needed to answer research questions was gathered through interviews, observations, and a questionnaire. I believe the data to be a credible portrayal of participants' thoughts and feelings about ELL students and the training (or lack thereof)

these teachers believe is needed to address the education of ELL children. I have confidence that the findings will benefit my fellow teachers and the school community by increasing knowledge and understanding of what it is like to teach ELL students in the local community. By providing more insight into teaching ELL students, the findings will translate into positive social change in the local community.

Information was gathered through triangulated methods that included in-depth interviews, observations, and a qualitative questionnaire. A case study approach allowed me to answer the research questions from the perspective of each individual participant, followed by a cross-case analysis that provided an examination of the similarities and differences found in the complete set of data (Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2003). Assessing the data through a case study approach permitted me to gain a panoramic view of participant's information, followed by an analysis of the data from each individual participant. Significant themes that emerged naturally from the data were coded and categorized. The research instruments sought answers to the following overarching questions: What are first grade teachers' shared perceptions of the ELL students in their classrooms and what are teachers' expectations for the ELL students in their classrooms? Subquestions addressed the following:

1. How do first grade teachers interact with their ELL students?
2. What challenges do first grade teachers encounter when teaching ELLs?

Findings to the research questions revealed the following: The participants in this study do not see their ELL students as inferior to their native English-speaking students. Even though their ELL students represent a different culture, teachers see them as "just as

capable" as any other student in the classroom. Teachers expect their ELLs to reach the same level of achievement as their native English-speakers, because their ELLs are "no different" in their ability to succeed academically. Additionally, teachers interact no differently with their ELL students than they do with their native English-speaking students. Teachers refrain from offering their ELLs extra help or support during class. Finally, teachers generally expressed the need for more training that would enable them to address their ELLs' learning styles and communicate with ELLs' parents in a more effective manner.

Interpretation of Findings

The interview, observation, and questionnaire instruments revealed first grade teachers' perceptions of and expectations for ELL students. Additionally, they provided insight into teachers' interactions with ELL children and teachers' challenges when teaching ELL students. An interpretation of findings will be presented in the following manner: Conclusions will be given, with reference made to the outcomes presented in section 4 and to a larger body of literature on the research topic.

First Grade Teachers' Perceptions of ELL Students

The findings from section 4 revealed that the teachers in school perceive their ELLs as academically equal to English-speaking students in the classroom. If teachers see their ELLs as inferior because of looks, culture, or language, these students may experience feelings of being alone and inferior in cognitive skills (Nieto, 2007). However, the teachers in this study apparently do not perceive their students as inferior to native English-speaking students. Rose commented that her ELLs were "absolutely" as

capable as her other students and that the only difference between the two groups of students is ELLs' lack of the English language. Teachers see their ELLs as "pretty regularly-function, average-functioning students." This statement means that teachers believe their ELLs function at the same level as most native English-speaking students in their classroom. One teacher remarked that "the things I did with the ELL children that I had—it was based on just my experiences as a teacher—good things that I need to do, that I would do with any child." The reason for teachers' expression of positive perceptions of their ELLs may be the result of the teachers' genuine personal belief that all children, regardless of ethnicity or culture, have the capacity to achieve success. Conversely, teachers may believe that if they perceive ELLs to be as academically as capable as native English-speaking students, using the same instructional strategies for all of the students in their class can be warranted. Telling me that they consider ELLs to be no different from native English-speakers in the class may be teachers' self-justification for not spending additional time preparing lesson plans that consider ELLs' cultural learning styles. Even though teachers may rationalize that the same strategies work for all students, research has established the benefits of teaching ELLs according to their cultural learning styles (Padrón et al., 2002; Trumbull & Pacheco, 2005).

First Grade Teachers' Expectations for ELL Students

All first grade teacher participants indicated that they expect the same for their ELL students as they do for their native English-speaking students. Positive expectations can have a significant influence on children's academic performance and future success (Brock et al., 2006; Ferguson, 2002; Hite & Evans, 2006; Nieto, 2002, 2005; Rumberger

& Gándara, 2004). Pam insisted that ELLs “are no different from my other students.” Pam maintained that “I expect my ELLS to do quality work.” Abby expressed “across-the-board” expectations for the students in her classroom. Similar to Pam and Abby, Rose and Tammy expressed high expectations for their ELLs. Teachers' high expectations may stem from a genuine, innate belief that all students, regardless of ethnicity, are academically able to succeed. On the other hand, teachers may be embarrassed to disclose personal expectations that ELLs are incapable of reaching the same academic level as native English-speaking students. As a result, teachers may be taking the stance that they think is "politically correct." Additionally, teachers may subconsciously justify the one-size-fits–all instructional strategies they use for all students, regardless of cultural background. Research has argued, however, that teachers cannot assume that what is effective for native English-speakers will be effective for students of diversity (Trumbull & Pacheco, 2005). ELLs learn differently, depending on their individual cultural learning styles, and their learning will increase if instructional strategies are aligned with these learning styles (Lambert et al., 2002; Trumbull & Pacheco, 2005).

First Grade Teachers Interactions With Their ELL Students

Information obtained through observations permitted a first-hand view of how first grade teachers interact with their ELL students. The findings showed that most of the teachers do not normally spend extra time helping their ELL students. If teachers feel pushed to cover required content material within a specific timeframe, they may not want to acknowledge that ELLs need extra help. Taking additional time to help ELLs would mean less time for teaching required lesson content to the class as a whole. Teachers may

subconsciously hope that ELLs will eventually acquire knowledge on their own without additional help from the teacher. Alternatively, teachers may not offer extra help to ELLs because they believe these students should learn the material the best they can by themselves. Pam reminded her ELLs not to work together because "I want to know what you know individually." Teachers may think that working alone to find the answer strengthens the ELLs' ability to find future answers on their own, without having to rely on others. Teachers may believe that individually searching for answers will create harder-working, more self-reliant ELLs whose success does not depend on others. Additionally, ELLs will not use their lack of English as an excuse to underachieve. During observations, only one participant used the teaching strategy of allowing her ELLs to work together collaboratively. Rose's ELLs were allowed to work with a peer on a cutting and sorting activity. Generally, however, participants reprimanded their ELLs for seeking help from other students. It must be noted that there are some cultures who do not consider working with peers to be unethical or a form of cheating (Reed & Railsback, 2003). Curtin's (2005) study concluded that teachers who use cooperative and interactive learning are those who understand and demonstrate culturally competent teaching. Other research has advocated peer groups as a method to increase ELL students' learning (Hite & Evans, 2006; Solomon et al., 2006). It is probable that if teachers allowed their ELL students to work with a peer, ELLs' academic achievement would increase.

Teachers called on ELL students infrequently to answer questions. ELLs in some of the classes raised their hands several times but were not called on. Perhaps the teacher was trying to give as many opportunities as possible for students to respond and

inadvertently did not realize that she was not including her ELLs. Because of class sizes, which are quite large in this school, it would have been difficult for the teacher to give every student a chance to answer. Not giving ELLs more opportunities to answer could also be interpreted as the teachers' failure to allow ELLs the same chances as native English-speaking students to engage academically. The reasons for not offering Ells more chances to respond may be that teachers do not expect these students to know the answer; thus, the teachers may consider calling on them to be a waste of time.

Teachers did appear to make eye contact with all students in their classrooms. However, only once did I observe a teacher sit down next to and work one-on-one with an ELL student. The other participants did not engage individually with their ELLs. Again, the lack of one-on-one engagement could be due to class size and the probability that teachers are preoccupied with teaching "the standards" and material that will be tested on the Criterion-Referenced Competency Test. Even though I did not ask teachers specifically about the Criterion-Referenced Competency Test, I sensed the importance and urgency for teachers to pack in as much learning as possible so their students would pass this test in the spring. Because of Georgia's emphasis on standardized test scores, teachers may feel that they have only enough time to teach the test material to the class as a whole; they cannot afford the time to help individual students such as ELLs on a regular basis. Sleeter (2008) noted this dilemma, pointing out that teachers face the challenge of creating a democratic classroom while being held accountable for their students' test scores on standardized tests. Even if teachers want to spend more time planning for and

helping their ELLs, they are limited by the push to teach all standardized test material within a short timeframe.

Challenges of Teaching ELL Students

The findings from the information obtained through interviews and the questionnaire illustrated the challenges that arise for first grade teachers of ELL students. Teachers in this study exhibited some degree of frustration over the lack of training they had been given to teach ELL students effectively. Abby needed help with "differentiating instructional strategies for ELLs." Tammy insisted that teachers must be taught "how to deal with ELLs' parents," as well as learn about "students' cultural needs." Karabenick and Noda (2004) asserted that if teachers feel capable in teaching ELLs, they also feel less frustrated when teaching these students.

Overall, teachers expressed a desire to receive more training in ELL-related matters. The main areas of concern for these teachers were: communicating with ELLs' parents, responding to their students' cultural needs, and using the appropriate instructional strategies to aid in their ELLs' comprehension. Research has sustained that an inability to communicate effectively with both ELLs and their parents can often present a challenge to teachers (Lee, Butler, & Tippins, 2007). Teachers in this study appeared very concerned and frustrated about their inability to communicate information to ELLs' parents. Teachers believed that they could help their ELL children be more successful if bridges were built between teachers and ELLs' parents. Tammy was disturbed by her inability to communicate effectively with ELLs' parents, but she lamented that she was unable to receive the training she needed in this area. She pointed

out that "the county does not prepare its teachers in this area," whereas in the other county, "this type of preparation was a must because we knew that we needed their [the parents'] help with these children." Perhaps teachers have not pursued asking the county for help because teachers' time is already limited, with teaching responsibilities and deadlines to meet.

In addition to training in how to involve and communicate with parents, teachers expressed a concern about insufficient knowledge of their ELLs' culture. One participant noted that teachers "need some training…. like what addresses students' cultural needs." Verdugo and Flores (2007) noted that teaching ELL students is made more challenging because of the "inability of educators to understand ELL students and their backgrounds" (p. 168). More training is needed by teachers if they are to understand their students' cultures and instruct these students in a culturally responsive manner (Cho & Reich, 2008; Nieto, 1999, 2005). It is important for classroom teachers to be able to relate students' cultural background to the learning that takes place in the classroom (de Oliveira & Athanases, 2007). I believe that these teachers wanted their ELLs to succeed, but were inhibited by the lack of training they had about their ELLs' culture. They expressed particular concern that they had not received any training in this county. Their aspiration to be more knowledgeable about their students' cultures and learning styles was likely an indication that these teachers genuinely cared about their ELL students. Otway's (2007) study found that participants needed and wanted more training so that they could respond to the particular needs of their ELL students.

It is unclear about the reasons one teacher expressed disdain at any kind of training offered to help teachers effectively teach ELLs. "I have had no training and don't need any," she said, "because it won't add anything. I would do nothing differently for these students than I already do." Disdain for and resistance to training could be a result of one or more factors. First, teachers may see themselves as successful teachers of ELL students because, in their opinion, they know the most effective ways to teach these students. Another reason for resistance to teacher training in this area could be the failure to recognize that internal negative attitudes exist towards ELLs. Teachers may sometimes not realize or be able to address negative attitudes. Self-examination is crucial to discovering how one really perceives ELL students (Banks et al., 2001; Lucina & Sowa, 2005; Nieto, 2000; Spindler, 1987). It is also unclear why, even though most teachers seemed to hunger for more knowledge about ELL-related matters, teachers have not pushed the county to provide them with more training. Perhaps already feeling overwhelmed with professional and personal responsibilities, teachers may be reluctant to actively pursue additional training. Research has frequently alluded to these underlying factors. Walker et al. (2004) found that teachers experience frustration about not having the time, energy, or training to teach ELLs. Others have concurred with this idea, suggesting that teachers are already juggling a heavy load of responsibilities and may not be willing to exert additional time and energy on meeting the needs of their ELL students (Reeves, 2006; Rumberger & Gándara, 2004).

Most of the participants expressed a need for more training because they had little, none, or outdated training to prepare them to teach ELL students. In the process of

gathering the data from all participants, I was stunned to learn that teachers either had formerly received no training in ELL-related matters or either had received training such a long time ago that they forgot what the training was about. Tammy lamented, “It’s been four years since I had training.” Rose remarked that she “has had no training in 10 years.” Abby said she had “never had any training.” In the local community, the amount of training has not kept pace with the growing increase in the ELL population. Moreover, this type of training may not be deemed as significant in the context of the small southern town represented by this study. As Tammy suggested, schools closer to Atlanta with much greater percentages of ELLs are forced to find ways to address ELL educational needs now. If teachers in our county believe they do not have time to add additional training to their already-hectic schedules, they may be reluctant to ask the county for training in this area. Tammy, however, asserted that “if teachers really care about their ELL students, they will make time for the training!” Insufficient training has taken its toll on teachers’ perceptions about their ability to teach ELL students. Even though none of the participants made a statement to this effect, I sensed their self-doubt and embarrassment over the lack of training.

Implications for Social Change

The results of the study have significant implications for social change. Because the United States is a democracy and advocates justice for everyone, any research that helps to improve the status of cultures in this country is beneficial. Researchers have noted that the achievement gap between ELL students and native English-speaking students prohibits an equitable education and therefore equal employment opportunities

in society for these students (Batalova et al., 2007; Nieto, 2003; Trumbull & Pacheco, 2005). Students in non-dominant groups are often "held to lower expectations and implicitly prepared for lower level jobs while their dominant-culture peers are prepared to be the leaders and professionals" (Trumbull & Pacheco, 2005, p. 14). ELLs who do not succeed in school will not go on to college to become prepared for jobs. For example, technology permeates almost every area of the workplace. Because computers are an integral part of the local working community, many of today's jobs require at least a college-level understanding of computer literacy.

Negative repercussion from an inadequate education of ELL students may include a decrease in money for the local community. The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education (2005) predicted that that inequitable education for ELLs may result in adult workers who earn lower salaries and will consequently pay in fewer taxes to support the local community. Short and Fitzsimmons (2007) asserted that "by helping ELLs learn and perform more effectively in the nation's schools, America's educational system and society as a whole will be strengthened and enriched" (p. 42). A concerted effort by all stakeholders in education, including teachers, will enhance ELL' chances to compete for good jobs and be productive citizens in the local community.

The "trickle-down" effect from the findings of this research study will be that policy-makers in my district will have a better idea how to develop new local policies related to ELL education; local school staff developers will better understand what kind of training is needed by first grade classroom teachers of ELLs; classroom teachers of ELL students will have greater awareness and understanding of teaching ELL children;

and, ELL students will experience teachers' positive expectations and instruction that aligns with their individual cultural needs. The bottom line is that ELL students will be the benefactors of teachers' positive perceptions and expectations, which increase their self-esteem and desire to learn. If the high expectations expressed by the teachers in this study are genuine, such perceptions may bring about real social change for this small-town elementary school. The result will be increased opportunity for these students to positively contribute and succeed in the local community.

Recommendations for Action

The results of this study should be used to inform several audiences. Because of the possible impact of inappropriate beliefs and low expectations for ELL children, classroom teachers of ELL students need to be aware of the larger picture presented by the findings. If teachers' beliefs and expectations do impact the academic progress of these children, educators should take heed to address low expectations (ETS, 2005). Staff developers need to provide teachers with access to training in areas related to educating ELL students. Training could include allowing teachers to collaborate with each other to discuss and reflect on ways to help ELL students. I would also recommend peer coaching, in which teachers observe each other in the process of teaching ELLs and subsequently offer suggestions and insight to each other about the effectiveness of observed teaching methods.

A further recommendation is that local policy makers examine the results of the study and determine the kind of educational policies needed to ensure fair and equal treatment of ELL students within our schools. When ELL students receive an effective

and equitable education, they are more likely to become better workers and citizens within the local community (Goldenberg, 2008; Lasso & Soto, 2005).

How the Results Might Be Disseminated

Results may be disseminated by sending a copy of the study to the school's principal and staff development coordinator. To ensure that the results are made known to teachers in the school, results may be shared in the form of a power point during preservice training for classroom teachers. Information on the power point will include the training needs indicated by teacher participants, including learning how to communicate effectively with ELLs' parents and acquiring knowledge about ELLs' cultural learning styles. To enhance the power point presentation, a brochure will be made available to the teachers. Brochure contents will delineate suggestions for teaching and ELL students and communicating with their parents. Also given will be instructional strategies that are beneficial for ELL students, such as the use of more visuals and body language to teach vocabulary and concepts. Teachers can incorporate these suggestions into their curriculum plans so that ELLs' learning needs are addressed more effectively. In addition to my school, I will share the results of the study with the county's staff development coordinators who are responsible for elementary classroom teachers' training. Guided by the results of this study, coordinators can design beneficial training to address the challenges that classroom teachers encounter when teaching ELL students. I also plan to create a web site for teachers that will offer a continuous flow of information about the study topics, such as effective communication with ELLs' parents, instructional

strategies that may enhance ELLs' comprehension, and general information about various cultures represented in the school.

Recommendations for Future Research

To more thoroughly investigate the effects of teachers' perceptions of and expectations for ELL students, more studies should be done that examine this topic. Recommendations for further, deeper examination include: (a) other possible causes of the achievement gap between ELLs and native English-speaking students, (b) the difference between how teachers from the dominant group perceive ELL students vis à vis how teachers representing other ethnicities perceive ELL students, (c) the role that teachers' prior experiences in teaching ELLs may play in teachers' beliefs and expectations for ELL students, (d) the relationship between teachers' ages and their perceptions of and expectations for ELL students in their classrooms, (e) the difference between the perceptions and expectations of teachers who have a small percentage of ELLs in the classroom and those teachers whose class consists of either a large number or a majority of ELL students, and (f) the impact of teachers' beliefs and expectations for ELL students who are weak in academics to determine if these students respond to teachers' low expectations with decreased effort and achievement, as suggested by Aronson and Steele (2005).

Other aspects of ELL education also require further examination. Aronson and Steele emphasized that students' competence is "both fragile and malleable" (p. 452); how people think about and treat each other can make a significant difference in students' achievement. The authors went on to say that the students "most vulnerable to

stereotypical generalizations may be those who do not have clear academic self-concepts" (p. 450). Consequently, further study should be conducted on how much students' awareness of their own feelings about self-confidence relates to teachers' stereotypical expectations. Perhaps "students' *feelings* of competence" are of greater importance than more overt signs of confidence (Aronson & Steele, p. 450). These are all areas that deserve more research and examination in order to determine the significance of these issues in the education of ELL children.

There is much discussion in the literature concerning the achievement gap at the high school level and the effect of teachers' expectations for young adults. However, research is lacking that examines and gives insight into how first grade teachers perceive their ELLs and what these teachers can do to help their ELL students.

Reflections of the Researcher

Before I could begin to reflect on my own thoughts and perceptions about the study, I felt a hunger to return to the participants and gather even more information than I had already obtained. As a novice gathering data to answer the research questions, I thought to myself, "Perhaps I should have asked participants this or that question." However, I had to make myself stop agonizing over gathering additional information. This situation is analogous to leaving the house and always feeling like I forgot something. Hatch (2002) alluded to this feeling of inadequacy by the researcher.

> Data analysis is like teaching—there is always more you could do. Knowing when to stop…is a judgment call that can be as perplexing as deciding how to start. For every study I have done, I am left with the feeling that only a part of

> what was in the data was ever reported. For virtually every qualitative dissertation I've helped students get through, I have advised students to focus on parts of their data and "let go" of others, saving them for another day, another analysis, another article or book (p. 150).

Consequently, in order to follow Hatch's advice, I ceased to fret over unasked questions and proceeded to concentrate on the information I had gathered.

My personal biases and preconceived ideas about the research topic may have been somewhat formed from an early age. I have felt a love for other languages and cultures since childhood. Fortunate enough to be a teenager during the "Beatlemania" days, I became enthralled with other languages and other cultures. I had a burning desire to travel to other countries and "see what it was like." I saved up my money, a whopping $500 for a plane ride to England. After arriving in London, I found a job and lived on my own, thoroughly enjoying the new sights and different culture. While living in London, I met people from many nationalities—French, German, Spanish, Italian, and Portuguese, to name a few. I was intrigued by the uniqueness of each culture and language. My pursuit of a college major in languages may have emanated from these early experiences. I continued to travel the world, seeking to get a "taste" of each culture and let the excitement of the experience sink deeply into my bones. It was this obsession with experiencing other cultures that led me to become an ESOL teacher. I love interacting with children from other cultures. I eagerly accept the interesting aspects of their cultures and mingle them with my own. My love of learning about other languages and cultures has developed into a feeling of advocacy for my ELL students. I sympathize with the fear

and anxiety ELLs must feel upon arriving in the United States. Even though I have never moved to another country or tried to learn in a foreign school, I did experience when I traveled to Sweden what this awareness of being "different" must be like for ELL students. Riding in the elevator with only Swedish-speaking adults who were laughing, talking, and staring, I could not help but feel that these people were mocking me. Though somewhat faded, this memory surfaces when I am tempted to forget how much assurance and acceptance our ELLs need from their friend, (and sometimes their only friend), the classroom teacher.

Having taught French as a second language for many years and English to Speakers of Other Languages for the past ten years, I have above average appreciation for other cultures. I know the value of these cultures and how they enrich my own life and widen the often-myopic view of others. ELL children over the past years have trusted me as their ESOL teacher to guide them and care for them. As their advocate, as well as their teacher, I want to see these children receive equitable education. Because of my personal feelings about these children, I had to continuously bracket my experiences during this study. A perpetual self-reminder was to set aside preconceived notions before conducting each phase of the study. Putting aside my role as an ESOL teacher, I thought of myself only as a researcher whose aim was to collect data that represented an accurate representation of teachers' experiences teaching ELL students. I feel that I achieved this task and was able to listen to and watch each participant objectively, without allowing personal bias to interfere with the research.

On the other hand, knowing that I am an ESOL teacher may have influenced to some degree the interview responses given by classroom teachers. When I remember a high school student whom I shall call José telling me how much he appreciated my helping him learn English and that his ability to speak English had helped him secure a job, I experience the internal rewards that come from caring about ELL students. Despite participants' knowledge that I am a strong advocate for ELL students, it is my hope that my position as advocate did not affect participants' responses to interview questions or how these teachers interacted with their ELL students during my observations. It is also my belief that emphasizing the significance of the study for participants will make teachers more aware and knowledgeable of the plight of ELL students and the need for addressing educational issues concerning these students.

As a result of the study, I support my ELL students even more than I previously have. Watching these children as they struggle to understand and learn through the medium of English has helped strengthen my determination to change the status quo for these students. I have a wish to make school systems cognizant of the fact that teachers need training that helps them better deal with educating ELL children. After talking with and observing classroom teachers who are confronted with ELL-related issues on a daily basis, I am more sympathetic with the professional needs of these teachers. My sympathy is especially strong for those who indicated a substantial need for more time, collaboration, and training to address the problems involved with teaching ELL students. Teachers cannot rightfully be blamed for inequitable ELL education if these hard-working educators are not provided with time and training needed to prepare them for

this rapidly growing, diverse student population. Additionally, my thinking during the study has evolved from a status quo mentality and tunnel vision about the situation. As a result of this study, I see the issues from a more panoramic, proactive point of view. The larger picture is that schools have the responsibility of providing democratic opportunities for all students to learn. Doing so can enable students of all cultures to contribute to the local community and have an equal chance to succeed in the job market (Nieto, 2000).

Conclusion

A closer look at first grade teachers' perceptions of and expectations for ELL students adds to the knowledge base about how teachers perceive their ELLs in terms of academic achievement. There will be increased understanding for local policy-makers, staff developers, and teachers about what is needed to help first grade teachers more effectively educate their ELLs. The Atlanta Regional Commission (August, 2009) predicted that, by 2040, there will be no majority in the United States; European Americans, African Americans, and those from the Hispanic and other ethnic groups will be almost equal in numbers (June, 2009). Ultimately, Georgia's and the local community's economic welfare depend on the quality of education given to all ethnic groups. Companies are less likely to locate in Georgia and the local region if they cannot find an adequately educated workforce. Inability to attract businesses can negatively affect local economic growth. Children, including ELLs, must receive an education that prepares them for the future in a society that depends on its workers having sufficient knowledge to perform their jobs. In order for students to be receptive to what they are

taught, they must have a positive relationship with the teacher, who serves as a powerful source of motivation (Rothstein-Fisch & Trumbull, 2008). Positive relationships result when teachers hold the concept that ethnic and linguistic differences between themselves and their students can impact their own thoughts and eventually the students they teach (Trumbull & Pacheco, 2005). Teachers can take pride of knowing they have improved their ELLs' status in life. The community may have at one time represented a place that was foreign and not accepting. Now, however, this place is their home, where ELL students have the same chances for success as do their English-speaking peers.

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APPENDIX A: SCHEDULE FOR CONDUCTING INTERVIEWS

September 3, 2009
Rose
3:30-4:30

September 8, 2009
Abby
2:45-3:45

September 9, 2009
Pam
2:30-3:30

September 10, 2009
Tammy
2:30-3:30

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL QUESTIONS

The overarching questions addressed in this study are: What are first grade teachers' perceptions of and what are first grade teachers' expectations for ELL students in their classrooms?

Subquestions include:

1. Can you describe your perceptions of the academic capability of each ELL in your classroom?
2. What are your academic expectations for each ELL student that you teach?
3. What has been your greatest success in teaching ELL students? Explain your answer.
4. What obstacles, if any, do you encounter when teaching ELL students?
5. What has been your greatest challenge in teaching ELL students?
6. Can you describe the content of training you have received to teach ELLs?
7. Can you describe the sufficiency of training you have received to teach ELLs?
8. How have your perceptions of and expectations for ELLs been changed by the training?

APPENDIX C: OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

Participant observations will focus on how teachers interact with their ELL students and will provide insight into teachers' perceptions of teaching ELL students and teachers' expectations for these students.

Date of Observation: _____ Duration of Observation: _____

Study Participant: _____ Observation # _____

Learning Activity Observed: _____

Teacher's Interaction with ELLs

Where ELLs are seated in classroom (back, front, middle of room):

Are ELLs seated in a group or seated randomly among native English-speakers?

Teacher's questions to ELLs:

How teacher's questions are shaped:

Are questions rephrased or restated for ELL's greater understanding?

Does teacher call on ELLs and native English-speaking students a relatively equal number of times?

Teacher's tone of voice:

Teacher's body language when asking questions:

Teacher's use of eye contact:

Proximity of teacher during questioning:

Length of time teacher allows ELLs to answer questions:

Does teacher's supply hints and clues when student stalls?

Teacher's answers to ELLs:

How are teacher's answers shaped?

Does teacher offer examples to aid in greater understanding?

Teacher's tone of voice when answering:

Teacher's body language when answering questions:

Teacher's use of eye contact:

Proximity of teacher during questioning:

Does teacher appear nervous or comfortable when answering questions?

ELLs' questions to teacher:

How ELLs' questions are shaped:

ELLs' presence or absence of apprehension when asking questions:

ELLs' body language when asking questions:

ELLs' answers to teacher:

How ELLs' answers are shaped:

ELLs' presence or absence of apprehension when answering questions:

ELLs' body language when answering questions:

APPENDIX D: QUALITATIVE QUESTIONNAIRE

During the previous school year:

1. What were the most difficult aspects of teaching ELL students?
2. What was one of your best experiences teaching ELL students?
3. What were your experiences with individual cultures represented by ELL students?
4. What were your academic expectations for the future of the individual ELLs you taught?
5. If you had the previous year to do over, what changes would you make in your instruction and interaction with ELLs?
6. What aspect of teaching ELLs would you keep the same?
7. What kind of training is needed most to help classroom teachers who work with ELL students?

APPENDIX E: CONSENT FORM (IRB approval number 08-31-09-0367905)

First Grade Teachers' Perceptions of and Expectations for ELL Students: A Case Study

This study will involve research and will be conducted by Marsha Couch, a doctoral candidate at Walden University. You are invited to participate in this study. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a first grade teacher and are considered to be knowledgeable about teaching English language learners. The duration of your participation in this study will be approximately one to two weeks, depending on unforeseen circumstances or disruptions to scheduled data collection. Look over this consent form and let me know if you have any questions before you accept this invitation to participate in the study.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to discover first grade teachers' perceptions of and expectations for their ELL students.

Procedures:

After consenting to participate in this study, you will be requested to:

1. Participate in one in-depth interviews and one follow-up interview related to perceptions of and expectations for ELL students.
2. Answer a qualitative questionnaire related to teaching ELLs.
3. Be observed during two hour-long sessions in the classroom by the researcher.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in this study is solely voluntary. Continuing participation in the study is also up to you. You may withdraw from the study at any point, without your relationship to the school or to the researcher being affected in any way.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

Participants may benefit by examining and reflecting on their own teaching practices. Participation in this study does not involve any type of risk to you. There are no foreseeable conflicts of interest involved with this study. The benefits from participating in this study include adding to the body of knowledge about teachers' perceptions of ELL students and may ultimately impact the education of ELL children.

Compensation:

Compensation for your time will include a $5 gift certificate to Starbucks, even if you decide to withdraw from the study.

Confidentiality:

Participants' names and information will be kept in complete confidentiality. No identifying data will be included in the study. All information will be preserved in a locked storage file, and the researcher will be the sole person with access to the data.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Marsha Couch. The researcher's faculty advisor is Dr. Lillian Castaneda. I will address any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact the researcher through her e-mail address at marsha.couch@numail.org., 770-251-5837, or the researcher's committee chair, who may be contacted via e-mail at lillian.castaneda@ waldenu.edu., 323-972-1778. The

Research Participant Advocate at Walden University is Dr. Leilani Endicott, you may contact her at 1-800-925-3368, extension 1210, if you have questions about your participation in this study. You will receive a copy of the consent form from the researcher.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information and consent to participate in the study.

Printed Name of Participant: _____

Participant Signature: _____

Signature of Investigator: _____

Researcher: What obstacles, if any, do you encounter when teaching ELL students?

APPENDIX F: CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

Name of Signer: Jacqueline M. Couch

During the course of my activity in collecting data for this research: "First Grade Teachers' Perceptions of and Expectations for English Language Learners." I will have access to information, which is confidential and should not be disclosed. I acknowledge that the information must remain confidential, and that improper disclosure of confidential information can be damaging to the participant.

By signing this Confidentiality Agreement I acknowledge and agree that:

1. I will not disclose or discuss any confidential information with others, including friends or family.
2. I will not in any way divulge, copy, release, sell, loan, alter or destroy any confidential information except as properly authorized.
3. I will not discuss confidential information where others can overhear the conversation. I understand that it is not acceptable to discuss confidential information even if the participant's name is not used.
4. I will not make any unauthorized transmissions, inquiries, modification or purging of confidential information.
5. I agree that my obligations under this agreement will continue after termination of the job that I will perform.
6. I understand that violation of this agreement will have legal implications.
7. I will only access or use systems or devices I'm officially authorized to access and I will not demonstrate the operation or function of systems or devices to unauthorized individuals.

Signing this document, I acknowledge that I have read the agreement and I agree to comply with all the terms and conditions stated above.

Signature: Jacqueline M. Couch Date:

APPENDIX G: LETTER OF COOPERATION FROM PRINCIPAL

August, 2009

Dear Mrs. Darrah:
As a doctoral student at Walden University, I am conducting a research study for my doctoral dissertation entitled A Case Study: First Grade Teachers' Perceptions of and Expectations for ELL Students. The research study will include participation of four first grade classroom teachers who teach ELL students. The study will include (1) one personal, in-depth, digitally-taped interview with teacher participants and one follow-up interview to verify initial interview transcription, (b) a qualitative questionnaire, and (c) two classroom observations. The interviews will take place after school hours to avoid interference and distraction during the school day. The questionnaire will be personally delivered to each participant, who will complete the questionnaire and return the document to the researcher. The observations will take place during a Language Arts class and will be conducted during the school day. Great efforts will be taken to not disturb the teaching activity. Thank you so much for your cooperation with this study.

Sincerely,
Marsha Couch
Ed.D. Student
Walden University

Principal's Electronic Signature: _____
Date: _____

APPENDIX H: SAMPLE TRANSCRIPT DATA

Researcher: What has been your greatest challenge in teaching ELL students?

Participant: When they come and they speak very little English—just communicating with them, the basic things that you need for them to do. That's really hard. That's hard, and it's very scary for them to do that. And, I've really noticed that's why a lot of our Hispanic children are very emotional at the beginning of school because they come in at the beginning of the year, and no one speaks their language, and no one looks like them, and so they're scared to death. And so, that's a big challenge, to make them feel comfortable in your classroom so they can start to learn.

Researcher: What are your thoughts about the sufficiency of ELLs' background knowledge? Do you feel their background knowledge is sufficient?

Participant: No! Oh no! Especially if they've never been in pre-k or something like that! Because I don't think parents know what they need to know to provide them with the background knowledge, such as vocabulary. That's the big thing, is that they don't know the vocabulary. Some of them will ask me, "What does this mean?" and I would tell 'em what it meant, and a lot of the times, they'll say it in Spanish after I tell 'em what it means. My parapro would help me with this. Like the word "desk". They would say, like "Mrs. C, what's a desk, and I would have to explain to them what a desk is. I would say, "A desk has four legs" and then, a lot of the times, they would say it in Spanish. So, that would help them transfer that knowledge into what they know. So, that was pretty amazing that they did that; but, no, they don't have the background knowledge, and it has a lot to do with their language.

Researcher: Can you describe the content of training you have received to teach ELLs?

Participant: I haven't gotten anything here in Z County. I got training when I was in X County. We got a lot. We had, I took a class about poverty, which had a lot to do with ELL students. (Pretend scenario): They gave you a certain amount of money, I can't remember what it was, but you had a certain amount of money and a list of things you had to do with that money. They told us that we needed to put ourselves into their (ELL parents' shoes) to see how things are going on at home, and then our school, you know, we had lots of programs where, (for example), they offered us Spanish classes. One of the girls who worked there who was from Cuba, she taught us Spanish class, and so, you know, we always (emphasized) had things going on like that in our school, where they would come in and give us, I don't know if you would call it training, but just give us knowledge mostly, on Hispanic culture, because that's mostly what we had. Now, we did have, when I first went there, a lot of Cambodians. But, we always had something going on at our school (training).

Researcher: How long ago has that been?

Participant: I've been in this county four years.

Researcher: So, you've never had any training here?

Participant: No

Researcher: So, you would say your training in X County was sufficient, but here, it hasn't been?

Participant: No. But, then, in X County, like I said, the last year I was there, I had 85% ELL student in my class. It got to when I first went to X County we were teaching

Spanish in the classroom. We had a Spanish teacher come in for 30 minutes and teach our class Spanish. And then, when I left, we didn't have Spanish in the classroom—we had English, you know, the ELL teacher came in and did a 30-minute lesson, because most of our class was ELL. So, that was the transition that it (X County) made over the ten years that I was there.

Researcher: What do you think about having some training here, either at the county or school level?

Participant: Well, I think that they need some training, just from my observation, the teachers, they don't know how to deal with the ELL students. And then, definitely they don't know how to deal with their parents. And so, I think that they need some training, like what addresses students' cultural needs.

Researcher: What do you think about teachers having time for training?

Participant: Well, if they wanted to help their ELL students, they would make the time.

Researcher: What do you think would help classroom teachers to best put themselves in place of the ELL students in order to understand what they're going through?

Participant: I can't remember, 'cause it's been so long ago, um, but that thing we did in X County was wonderful. It was just so, I mean, they gave you a packet. (Scenario): Like, if I was a single mother cause my husband was still in Mexico, and I had like 3 kids and $400, and they were gonna pay my electricity bill. And, my electricity bill was like $170, but when I got to the electric company, the lady didn't speak Spanish, and so I was trying to speak English to her 'cause I couldn't speak Spanish. And, she was like, "No español, no español?", cause she couldn't understand. And see, I couldn't go on to my next thing

because you had to go in order. So until she took my money for the electricity bill, I couldn't go on. And, you had a certain amount of time. That was the best thing, 'cause then it put you in their shoes of what they have to deal with, you know, in the everyday things they have to deal with. I don't know if X County did that or if they paid someone to come in and do it. But it was the best thing, 'cause it put us into their shoes. And, then, we had a speaker that came and told us that in the Hispanic culture which is poor people, how we don't understand some of the things that they do. They might have a whole bunch of money, and they would send their kids in $20 to go to the book fair, but then they won't have lunch money or shoes on their feet. But, um, it's just a different culture, and they see things differently, and, you know, that was a really good speaker. But, we were always having good things like that to teach us about how they feel about things, so we could better understand the kids and the parents. But we don't have anything like that here. But, I think we need it because we need to know where they're coming from.

Researcher: How do you perceive teachers' thoughts about how Hispanic parents or students don't care about education, about high achievements?

Participant: Well, when I was in X County, I didn't see as much I see here. Here, I see a lot of people who look down on the Hispanic families and I don't like that because they're trying their best to provide for their kids and their families. And, what I've learned, just because I have been to these classes (in X County), I've been around so many Hispanic families (in X County), that I know they want what's best for their kids and they want them to have a better life. And they're doing the best that they can, you know, to get that for those kids. So, when I hear, like people saying, like last year, we had

a family who, um, Ms. Y asked for help for because they didn't have food. And, I heard comments made like, "Well, where's that daddy?" and, "Why don't they go back to Mexico?" where they got family and they can help take care of them. And, I was like, "People! You know, you just…!" You know, the kid's hungry whether the daddy, you know, the daddy was traveling very far for work because, you know, there was no work, so the mother was trying to take care of home while he was traveling to work, and I'm like, "You know, if your husband could not work, if there weren't any jobs here for him because he didn't speak the language or because he didn't have the education or something like that, when you want somebody to help you…!" So, I see a lot of that here in this community, where they look down on the Hispanics. But, where I came from, where I taught before, it wasn't like that?

Researcher: What are your thoughts about ELLs educational background?

Participant: There is a difference in background knowledge. But, I think that, if they had as much as the rest of 'em (native English-speakers), coming into Kindergarten, they'd probably be on the same level.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Jacqueline M. Couch
E-mail: marshacouch@numail.org

Education:

College/ University	Degree/ Certificate	Dates
Walden University	Ed.S. Teacher Leadership	December 21, 2008
Early Childhood Certification	Early Childhood (P-5)	April 17, 2006
West Georgia RESA	ESOL Endorsement	June 25, 2002
State University of West Georgia	M.Ed. French	1986-1992
Agnes Scott College	French Summer Institute	July, 1987
State University of West Georgia	B.A. French Minor: Spanish, German	1966-1969
Certifications added:	Early Childhood Certification (P-5)	April 17, 2006
	Secondary English	October, 2006

Experiences:

Schools	Subjects/ Levels	Dates
Jefferson Parkway Elementary Welch Elementary East Coweta High School	ESOL (K-12)	2009-present
Jefferson Parkway Elementary Newnan Crossing Elementary East Coweta High School	ESOL (K-12)	2008-2009
Jefferson Parkway Elementary Welch Elementary	ESOL (K-1)	2007-2008
East Coweta High School Central Educational Center	ESOL (9-12)	2006-2007

The Shelnutt Law Firm	Paralegal (Criminal Law)	2005-2006
Newnan Crossing Elementary	ESOL/ EIP (K-5)	2001-2005
Western Elementary	French (1-2)	1999-2001
Alexander High School	French/ English (9-12)	1986-1999
Newnan Christian School	First Grade	1976-1985
Woodbury Academy	French (9-12)	1974-1975
Luthersville Elementary	English (5-7)	1971-1972
The Heritage School	French (5-7)	1970-1971

Educational Activities:

Organized and accompanied High School French students to Europe on several occasions.

Professional Associations:

Professional Association of Georgia Educators 1986-present

Honors:

Full scholarship recipient for M.Ed. program at University of Georgia
Graduated University of West Georgia *summa cum laude*

Skills/ Qualifications:

Microsoft Office, Internet, Research
Fluent in French, functional/ practical Spanish and German