Elementary Teachers’ Perspectives on their Level of Preparation to Teach English Language Learners in their Regular Classroom

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Abstract

English Language Learners (ELLs) are students who are learning English as the language of instruction, while simultaneously learning academic content. As elementary teachers now commonly have ELLs in their regular classrooms, the range of unique needs possessed by those students has drastically changed the demands on instructors in terms of their preparedness to teach ELLs. According to the scope of literature, the effectiveness of Ontario faculties of education preparing teachers to work with ELLs remains unclear. The present research study focused on the perspectives of a small sample of elementary teachers with regards to their level of preparedness to teach ELLs in the Greater Toronto Area. Through semi-structured interviews, one English as a Second Language (ESL) instructor and one Early Childhood Educator (ECE) shared their experiences of having taught ELLs. Findings indicate that there is a crucial need to better prepare future elementary teachers to work with ELLs.

Key words: English Language Learners (ELLs), English as a Second Language (ESL), Support, Preparation, Professional Development
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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.0 Research Context

From the perspective of a native English speaker, imagine that you not only have to learn Mandarin as the language of instruction, but you simultaneously have to learn academic content in reading, art, mathematics, science, or social studies – all also conducted in Mandarin. This is what the American education community refers to as the double job of many students in elementary schools (Carrier, 2005). In Ontario, the escalating immigration trends continue to contribute to the linguistic and cultural diversity of elementary schools (Webster & Valeo, 2011). Over the past ten years, the number of elementary schools with high ELL populations increased to 72% compared to 53% in 2003 (People for Education, 2011); Statistics Canada predicts that this percentage will continue to increase over the years to come (Capacities Building Series, 2013). As a result, it is now very common for elementary teachers to have ELLs in their regular classrooms (Carrier, 2005; Harper & de Jong, 2005; Webster & Valeo, 2011).

According to the Ontario Ministry of Education (2008), ELLs are students who are simultaneously learning English as the language of instruction while learning academic content. Calderon et al. (2011) stated, “They are children whose English proficiency is too limited to allow them to benefit fully from instruction in English” (p.104). Carrier (2005) emphasized that “while it takes one to three years for ELLs to develop conversational proficiency in English, they need five to seven years to develop academic English” (p. 5). This clearly highlights that while ELLs have a variety of strengths from their linguistic and cultural backgrounds, such striking diversity is also an indication of the range of their unique needs and challenges in the classroom (Webster & Valeo, 2011). However, while effective teaching practices for native English speakers are often meaningful and relevant for educating ELLs, it is only good to a certain
degree (Harper & de Jong, 2005; de Oliveira, 2011; Webster & Valeo, 2011). Therefore, the placements of ELLs in regular classrooms raise important questions with regards to the preparation of teachers to work with ELLs.

1.1 Research Problem

According to Commins and Miramontes (2006), teachers are adequately prepared to understand diversity especially in terms of celebrations and the appreciation or acceptance of differences. That said, Harper & de Jong (2005) have argued that the explicit attention to linguistic diversity and the challenges that come with it are often ignored, leading to teachers perpetuating misconceptions about teaching ELLs. What is even more interesting is that many researchers (Harper & de Jong, 2005; de Oliveira, 2011; Webster & Valeo, 2011) outline the need to better prepare future teachers to work with ELLs. For example, Webster & Valeo (2011) explain that “studies have concluded that teachers graduating from education programs do not have the strategies necessary for simultaneous support of both academic content development and English language growth” (p. 106). De Oliveira (2011) also notes that public school educators lack or have minimal and inadequate professional development to work with groups of culturally and linguistically diverse students. They essentially indicate that in-service teachers are also in need of better preparation. Other studies have focused on the challenges that teachers face, stating that it can become extremely challenging and frustrating for teachers to teach ELLs when they receive little training and preparation to meet the educational needs of ELLs in their classroom (Carrier, 2005; Calderon et al., 2011). De Oliveira (2011) comments:
Many pre-service and in-service teachers not only need to learn strategies to work with ELLs...these considerations are relevant in the context of teacher preparation as teachers’ attitudes are likely to impact what and whether ELLs learn. (p.59)

Many Ontario faculties of education are addressing this crucial need to better prepare future teachers for ELLs in the regular classroom (Webster & Valeo, 2011) but the effectiveness of that preparation remains unclear. With the percentage of ELLs in some Ontario elementary schools as high as 92% (People for Education, 2013), the key question that needs answering is whether elementary teachers are in fact being or have been prepared to meet the needs of ELLs in regular classrooms.

1.2 Purpose of Study

My personal experiences as an ELL, coupled with my desire to pursue teaching, have both contributed to making this issue one of great interest to me. Through the lenses of a researcher, I have found it meaningful to explore the issue around teachers’ preparation to meet the educational needs of ELLs because I was an ELL myself. The purpose of this study is to examine the experiences and the perspectives of elementary teachers with regards to teaching ELLs. In addition, conducting this study was critical to my own professional development, as it has helped close gaps personally, intellectually and professionally. As a current teacher candidate myself, I have not taken a course specific to ELL education or ELL instruction. Thus, I question my own preparedness to meet the educational needs of the future ELLs in my classroom. Intellectually, I gained insights from it, as much of the research-based information on this topic shows a gap between teacher education programs and the challenges that teachers face with regards to meeting the needs of ELLs in today’s classrooms (Webster & Valeo, 2011). Professionally, as an
aspiring elementary teacher, my experiences will likely lead me to positively or negatively impact what and whether ELL students in my future classroom will learn and reach their maximum learning potential (De Oliveira, 2011). However, through conducting this research study, I hope to learn more and thereby ensure I have a positive impact on my students.

1.3 Research Questions

To fulfill the purpose of this research study, I articulated the following primary research question: **How does a small sample of elementary teachers perceive their level of preparation to teach ELLs in their regular classroom?** I also examined the following three sub-questions:

- How do these teachers feel about their experiences teaching ELLs in their regular classrooms?
- Do these teachers use ELL instructional strategies to meet the needs of ELLs in their classrooms?
- Do Ontario education programs and Ontario public schools provide the support necessary to help teachers support ELLs’ simultaneous academic content development and English-language growth?
1.4 Background of the Researcher

Although I have no experience teaching or working with ELLs, I do recall a particular experience as an ELL when I was an undergraduate student. When I arrived in Canada, I took a six-month English immersion program which prepared me to attend university. Unfortunately, I experienced a verbal and physical altercation with my roommate that completely changed my experience as a learner. I recall my roommate asking me to look for “the mop” as we were cleaning up our residence unit. I asked her, “What is a mop?” She got extremely frustrated and yelled back at me, “How can you not know what a mop is? Are you kidding me?” That was the first time I had heard that expression ‘Are you kidding me?’ and I am glad I did not question her about its meaning. She then proceeded to call me ‘stupid’ and communicated to me that I did not belong in the academic program. Of course, I knew what a mop was; I just did not know the word for it in English. The feeling that someone would call me stupid, despite all the efforts I was putting into passing my courses, infuriated me. Thus, I began my journey walking in the shoes of an ELL.

De Oliveira (2011) has outlined that teachers’ attitudes and beliefs about ELLs can negate their lack of empathy for ELLs’ experiences and backgrounds. She also emphasizes that teachers bring to the classroom preconceived attitudes, misconceptions, and biases about ELLs which can inhibit their learning. Through the process of reflection, my experience as an ELL even outside of the classroom affected my academic potential as well as my social experience, but mostly my confidence. It goes to highlight that there is an unmet need to address the challenges that ELLs face in different educational contexts (e.g., in the classroom, at recess, in the community).
1.5 Overview

This research study is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 contains the introduction to the entire research study. It includes the purpose of the study, the research questions, as well as the experiences that brought me to be involved in this study. In Chapter 2, I review the literature in the areas of ELL instruction (i.e., ELL’s needs; ESL acquisition; instructional strategies for ELLs; preparation and professional development for teachers that work with ELLs). Chapter 3 provides the study’s methodology. It includes information about participants, the data collection instruments, the data analysis and the limitations and strengths within the methodology. In Chapter 4, I report the findings from the data analysis process, and discuss the different themes in relation to the literature. Finally, Chapter 5 is an overview of the key findings and their significance to the study. References and a list of appendices follow at the end.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

The purpose of this study is to examine the perspectives of elementary teachers with regards to their experiences to teaching ELLs. Thus, I have read and examined the scope of relating literature and present in this chapter the themes and key findings pertinent to my research question. In addition, I address relevant sub-topics, such as the experiences and the difficulties faced by teachers of ELLs; as well as their preparedness in regards to meeting the needs of ELLs. Although there is extensive published research on the instruction of ELLs – and despite my personal belief that the knowledge of others’ experiences in these contexts accounts for a significant part on how to best be prepared to teach ELLs – there are relatively few articles focusing on teachers’ personal experiences with regards to teaching ELLs themselves. I conclude the chapter by identifying the gaps in the core of the body of the literature on ELL instruction to demonstrate how my research will contribute to this existing literature. The literature review provides researched-based information describing the following key topics: Defining English Language Learners (ELLs); Teachers’ Perceptions about Working with ELLs; Supporting ELLs; and Experiences Working with ELLs.

2.1 Challenges and Needs of ELLs

From the scope of the literature, most researchers assert that the key challenge faced by ELLs is attributed to the process of second language acquisition (Carrier, 2005; Calderon et al., 2011; Harper & de Jong, 2011; Nguyen, 2012). When it comes to second language acquisition, it is essential to know that there are two types of English proficiency (Ontario Ministry of
On one hand, there is what Carrier (2005) refers as the conversational English proficiency and the Ontario Ministry of Education (2008) refers as the Everyday English Proficiency. This type of English proficiency encompasses any communication skills that ELLs can easily master (2008, p.12), including during conversations or any interpersonal communications; it enables ELLs to interact comfortably with their teachers, peers and individuals outside the school. On the other hand, there is also academic English proficiency. Academic English, which is more difficult to acquire, refers to using a language to understand concepts at the core of education (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2008).

Researchers such as Carrier (2005) and Harper & de Jong (2011) have conducted insightful work as well. For any teacher or even student-researcher interested in the field of teaching ELLs, they provide a wealth of research-based information, and commonly point out the issue of language acquisition. Carrier (2005) discusses one key issue for teaching ELLs in academic classrooms. She argues that most teachers seriously underestimate how long it takes to fully develop academic language skills, because they mistakenly believe that English conversational proficiency is equivalent to academic English proficiency, both in terms of time acquisition and language development. She states that it takes one to three years for ELLs to develop conversational proficiency in English, whereas they need five to seven years to develop academic English.

On a related note, Harper & de Jong (2011) have given a comprehensive explanation of the linguistic implications of understanding the difference between first-language (L1) and second-language (L2) learning in order to have effective ELL teaching practices in classrooms. They provide insight into the needs of ELLs in their everyday school experience, and the support they need in oral language, content areas and literacy needs such as reading and writing. They argue:
Too much reliance on the similarities between L1 and L2 development may overlook the impact of differences between L1 and L2 learning on effective oral language and literacy development and academic achievement for ELLs (2011, p.103).

I found that their article held a meaningful place in the body of the literature, as it is the only one that extensively provided information on the importance for teachers to understand the second language acquisition process.

To summarize, when it comes to the dynamics of ELLs and teachers in a regular classroom, the literature suggests that it is essential to understand that ELLs must master two distinct forms of the English language. Such a task in itself reveals that ELLs need to receive support in order to successfully develop English-language skills. On the other hand, teachers face the challenge of understanding the process of second language acquisition in order to effectively support ELLs. So, when the needs of ELLs and the challenge faced by teachers are not successfully dealt with, instructional interaction between teachers and ELLs becomes time-consuming, frustrating and discouraging rather than dynamic (Carrier, 2005; Harper & de Jong, 2011; Webster & Valeo, 2011). Nonetheless, to understand the challenges and needs of both ELLs and teachers, one must also look into how teachers perceive instructing ELLs.

2.2 Teachers’ Perceptions about Working with ELLs

Teacher’s Attitudes and Beliefs

Within the scope of literature that I examined, many researchers recognize studies conducted about teachers’ perceptive of ELLs (Yoon, 2008; de Oliveira, 2011; Thomas, 2011; Webster & Valeo, 2011). One reference in particular was most meaningful to me, as it was critically pertinent to the purpose of my study. Fu (1995) provides crucial insights about teachers’ attitudes and beliefs about ELLs. As a student researcher and a teacher candidate, I was appalled to learn
teachers perceived working with ELLs to be a frustrating task, and that they did not want ELLs in their classrooms (Fu, 1995). In fact, teachers believed that English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers should be the only teachers appropriate and responsible for ELLs whereas regular teachers should only be appropriate and responsible for mainstream students. According to Yoon, Fu explains that this issue is attributed to teachers only focusing on ELLs’ linguistic needs. Already in this literature review, we addressed that ELLs learn English as a new language while learning new academic content in English. Thus, it is alarming that many teachers focus on their acquisition of the English oral language, since it leads them to overlook their focus to teach ELLs academic content. To me, this indicates a lack of accountability on the teachers’ parts, as they do not take full responsibly for the learning of ELLs, in spite of the fact that ELLs spend most of their school day in those teachers’ classrooms.

Yoon (2008) conducted a qualitative research study that took into account both teachers and ELLs perspectives on the influence of teachers’ roles and pedagogies on the positioning of ELLs in the regular classroom. He argues that teachers’ perspectives of their roles and pedagogical practices are correlated to ELLs’ participatory behaviorism in the classroom. Yoon chose the positioning theory to conduct his study; he explains that his choice will help him make sense of teachers’ positioning regarding ELLs. He also explains that in return, it will help teachers understand that their positioning may limit ELLs’ learning opportunities. In that respect, I found that Yoon conducted his research adequately, as his findings align with his argument. Three teachers participated in his research: Mrs. Young (Grade 6), Mr. Brown (Grade 6) and Mrs. Taylor. In addition, six ELLs participated in the study (two students from each class).

The article’s analysis shows that Yoon (2008) categorized his findings into three sections. First, the teacher-participants stated beliefs; then, the teacher-participants teaching practices; and
finally, ELL students’ participatory behaviorism. First and foremost, Mrs. Young’s stated beliefs attested that she perceived herself as a responsible teacher of children, including ELLs. As observed and analyzed by Yoon, her teaching practices were resourceful and powerful enough to meet the needs of ELLs in her classroom. As for the ELL participants, they positioned themselves as active students in Mrs. Young’s classroom. Furthermore, Yoon emphasizes that the ELLs’ positioning positively changed over the course of the study, when their Native-English speaking peers positioned themselves to be friendly and interactive with them. Yoon also observed that ELLs in Mrs. Young’s class were powerful because they were more active and engaged than their English peers. Unlike Mrs. Young, Mr. Brown’s teaching role and beliefs did not include English-language learning, as he declared, “I have never seen myself as an ESL teacher” (p.8). When it comes to Mr. Brown’s teaching practices, Yoon discusses that they were unintentionally mono-culturally American. As for the ELL participants, Yoon reports that the analysis of his data show that they were usually nervous in the classroom. They positioned themselves as “powerless”, which Yoon points out to be related to timid interactions with their classroom peers (Yoon, 2008, p. 510). As Yoon stated:

> The findings of this study show that the teachers’ pedagogical approaches and their interactions with the ELLs were based on their positioning of themselves as teachers for all students, as teachers for regular education students, or as teachers for a single subject. The teachers’ different approaches were connected to the ELLs different participatory behaviors in the classroom contexts that positioned them as powerful, strong students or as powerless, poor students. Even highly interactive classroom contexts with hidden power relations inadvertently positioned the ELLs as isolated (Yoon, 2008, p.515).

Yoon also (2008) highlights that due to the limitations of his study, further research is needed to support the correlation between teachers’ attitudes and beliefs about ELLs, and ELLs’
learning development and behaviors in the classroom. However, I find connections between Yoon’s findings and the findings of Thomas’s (2011) research study about elementary teachers’ experiences working with ELLs. Thomas found that teachers’ attitudes and beliefs strongly correlate with the effectiveness of their instruction and their students’ learning outcomes. De Oliveira (2011) adds that teachers’ attitudes are likely to impact not only what ELLs learn, but also whether ELLs learn. Therefore, Yoon’s (2008) work definitely augments the knowledge of anyone interested in the field of teaching ELLs. It also encourages pre-service and in-service teachers to adopt positive attitudes and beliefs towards ELLs, as we learned that it is in fact a reflection on ourselves and not the ELLs.

In summary, the articles and research presented have suggested that teachers’ positioning (that is, their beliefs, attitudes and approaches to teaching to ELLs) strongly impact ELLs’ academic achievement and behavior in the classroom. Furthermore, the positive positioning of an ELL in a regular classroom can relate to how non-ELLs interact with them. Finally, teachers’ lack of preparation for instructing ELLs leads to diverse misconceptions about them. From the literature, we know that teachers’ perceptions and beliefs are important and vital to their preparation (Yoon, 2008; de Oliveira, 2011; Thomas, 2011); however, merely having a positive attitude is insufficient. Therefore, in order for teachers to increase ELLs’ academic achievement, it is essential for them to equip themselves with effective strategies to (Thomas, 2011).

*English as a Second Language (ESL) Teachers*

We began this chapter with how the Ontario Ministry of Education (2008) defines the two jobs of an ELL: learning English as a new language of instruction, while simultaneously learning
new academic content. Carrier (2005) emphasizes that because ELLs have to perform these two tasks by default, it means that they have to work harder than their native English-speaking peers (Carrier, 2005). Carrier suggests that a way for teachers to accommodate ELLs regarding that issue is for them to become partners with ESL teachers.

Nguyen (2012) is also another researcher that supports Carrier’s suggestion. One section of Nguyen’s research outlines the collaboration model where individuals (general educators, special education teachers, staff and administrators and parents) work together to achieve appropriate learning experiences for ELLs and ELLs with Learning Disabilities (LD). However, I found that her point of view is not sufficiently informative to support how collaborative teaching between teachers and ESL teachers will help support ELLs in the classroom. Carrier (2005), on the other hand, better supports her argument. She states that ELLs spend a surprising small amount of time in ESL classrooms with an ESL specialist teacher. Calderon et al. (2011) outlines that in elementary schools, among Grades Kindergarten to five, it is common practice to pull out ELLs for a thirty-minute ESL lesson. They spend the remainder of their school day in regular classrooms, in which they are taught academic content such as math, science, language and social studies in English (Carrier, 2005). Carrier recognizes that ESL time instruction is critical, but she argues that it also reduces the amount of time spent in the content classroom. Thus, she points out how important it is for content teachers and ESL teachers to work together.

2.3 Instructional Strategies

There is a myriad of information about pedagogical and instructional support to equip pre-service and in-service elementary teachers to be prepared to instruct ELLs. To name a few, teachers employ instructional teaching strategies like scaffolding, modeling input and output
(Carrier, 2005; Calderon et al., 2011; Harper & de Jong, 2011; de Oliveira, 2011; Song et al., 2014); integrating language, culture, and content (de Oliveira, 2011; Song et al., 2014); assessment (Harper & de Jong, 2011; as cited in Thomas, 2011); collaboration with parents, family and ESL teachers (Carrier, 2005; Nguyen, 2012); and language development (Carrier, 2005; Calderon et al., 2011; Harper & de Jong, 2011). Although informative, this aspect of the literature was not pertinent to my research question. I could not help but critically think that the need for teachers to be effectively prepared to teach ELLs was fundamentally still unmet. Therefore, the solution could not possibly lie in that existing research-based information focusing on instructional strategies. Carrier (2005) makes an excellent point when she states that the volume of information about ELL instructional strategies is, in fact, overwhelming:

Extracting strategies from books without an understanding of ELLs’ unique language and learning needs is like building a house without understanding the basic principles of construction. Our house may begin to fall apart before we even move in (p.5).

While the authors mentioned above argue that those strategies help teachers effectively prepare to teach ELLs, others counter-argue that these strategies are not good enough to say that teachers are effectively prepared. Instead, they claim that educational shareholders (school boards, administrators, educational programs, general educators, etc.) must recognize that substantial and continuous professional development is what is critical to teachers’ effective preparation and preparedness to instruct and support ELLs in regular classrooms. To support their argument, they focused their research on the experiences of teachers of ELLs and sought to gain insight into their perceptions on their training for teaching ELLs (i.e., professional development) before and during their current occupation.
2.4 Teachers’ Experiences Working with ELLs

In her article, de Oliveira (2011) presents a comprehensive explanation of what appropriate preparation for teaching English Language Learners (ELLs) should be. The author argues that it should not only equip teachers with strategies to effectively meet the needs of ELLs, but it should primarily sensitize them to the difficulties and needs of these students. The article analyzes the answers, reflections and guided discussions of 152 teachers after they participated in a 2-phase math simulation activity in Portuguese (with only phase 2 using ELL strategies). The methodology was very strong and logical, as the participants’ feelings and reactions attest that they were literally in the shoes of language learners. In addition, the data analysis adequately supported the conclusions of the author: Teachers did not know about the ELLs’ difficulties and needs until they experienced the simulation. The simulation, which was a form of receiving professional development, helped model how to use ELL strategies; it also encouraged teachers to incorporate those strategies in their daily lessons. The study demonstrated that teachers who empathize with ELLs because they know what it is like to be an ELL are more prepared to teach them with a different and new informed approach.

Webster & Valeo (2011) present the findings of their qualitative study on primary teachers’ preparation in Ontario. Unlike de Oliveira (2011), Webster & Valeo did not bring any type of development to participants. Their research sought to only bring awareness on the importance of professional development to teaching ELLs. The participants of the study were six recent Primary/Junior graduates from the Bachelor of Education of Southwestern Ontario programs. The methodology consisted of collecting their feelings and perspectives on their faculty of education courses, including ELL and ESL content (e.g., they used open-ended and pre-worded questions, one hour length interviews, post-interview sessions, researchers’ notes). The analysis
of the data collection has led the researchers to conclude that there is a lack of mandatory course courses, lectures and professional sessions based on ELL content. In his qualitative study on elementary teachers’ experiences educating ELLs, Thomas (2011) similarly notes that only one of his nine participants attended a mandatory course about ELL and ESL. The findings of both Thomas (2011) and Webster & Valeo (2011) reveal a pattern of teachers feeling a sense of “uneasiness” (Thomas, 2011) and “unpreparedness” (Webster & Valeo, 2011) to teach ELLs. In addition, teacher-participants all agreed and noted the importance and need for more sufficient professional development to support those teaching ELLs. However, one difference between the two articles is in relation to teachers feeling a sense of readiness to use strategies that are applicable to all students (Webster & Valeo, 2011). Webster & Valeo argue that it is illogical to believe that ELLs’ needs are similar to those of all students. De Oliveira’s (2011) study supports Webster & Valeo argument.

2.5 Summary of the Review of the Literature

Pertinent to the research question are teachers’ experiences in regards to educating ELLs, including how they feel about their self-efficacy and preparedness to meet the needs of ELLs. Although the literature review provided meaningful, powerful and insightful research-based information, I perceived a gap in the Canadian resources about this issue, especially in Ontario schools. I believe that my study will help diminish that gap in the existing literature by proving a more detailed examination of how elementary teachers in Ontario perceive their level of preparation with regards to teaching ELLs.
Chapter 3: Methodology

3.0 Introduction

In Chapter 3, I provide the present study’s research methodology. I first describe the nature of the research and the procedures and instruments of data collection. Secondly, I describe the rationale behind the sampling criteria, the participants and the recruitment. I then explain the data analysis procedures and review the ethical implications pertinent to my study. Before closing this chapter with a brief conclusion, I discuss the methodological limitations and strengths within the study’s methodology.

3.1 Research Approach and Procedures

In order to conduct my research study, I first proceeded with a literature review on ELL education. Through this process, I gained a wealth of knowledge about issues such as ELLs’ challenges in a regular classroom, teachers’ instructional strategies and misconceptions about ELLs, understanding ESL acquisition, and teachers’ preparation and professional development for working with ELLs. This process also led me to select a qualitative research design. According to Brantlinger et al. (2005), a qualitative study is a systematic subjective approach used to describe life experiences and to give them understanding and meaning. I found that this design was the most suitable approach to address all the questions that arose from my literature review. It was also most relevant for the purpose of my study, that is, to explore the phenomenon of teachers’ preparation with regards to ELLs in their classrooms. It also allowed me to understand participants’ point of views and their preparation to work with ELLs, and to obtain rich details and findings from the data collection process (Creswell, 2013).
3.2 Data of Collection

The primary instruments for data collection in this study were semi-structured interviews (see Appendix B for complete interview questions). A semi-structured interview allowed the participants to express their thoughts freely and openly and allowed me to collect data that was reliable and meaningful for this study. I provided the interview protocol to the participants of the research study on the day of the interview to prevent them from over-thinking the questions. Nonetheless, they had prior knowledge on the type and the intent of the study when they provided consent to participate in the study. To allow flexibility during the interview process, I used an interview-guide approach, with open-ended and probing questions that invited the participants to discuss their responses, thoughts, and knowledge about diverse topics (Creswell, 2005). The second instrument for data collection consisted of audio recording and transcribing the interview.

Sampling Criteria

I established three categories of criteria for teachers to participate in this study: (1) School Demographics, (2) ELL Enrollment in the Elementary classroom and (3) Interaction with ELLs. As discussed in Chapter One, immigration trends significantly contribute to the increasing ELL populations in Ontario (Webster & Valeo, 2011); thus school demographics became an important basis for this study. I therefore conducted the study within the public schools in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), which have the highest ELL populations in Ontario: 90% of elementary schools have ELLs. Within those, an average of 13% of students per elementary school are ELLs, and 5% of the GTA schools report that 60% or more of their students are ELLs (People for Education, 2011). It was also imperative that teachers had at least one ELL child enrolled in
their classroom to ensure experience in instructing this population. Additionally, interaction with ELLs over an extended period of time was essential as a criterion because it allowed the teacher participants to speak about personal insights and experiences regarding their preparation for teaching ELLs.

**Sampling Procedures and Recruitment**

In researching how well prepared elementary teachers felt to teach ELLs, I recruited Ella and Cella (pseudonyms) to provide their perspectives on their preparation to teach, or on having taught, ELLs in their classrooms. I restricted the recruitment of the participants to a small sample of two elementary teachers that I personally know have at least three years of experience working with ELLs. The first participant is Ella. She has a 5-year experience working with ELLs but she is currently working as an ESL teacher. The second participant is Cella, an Early Childhood Educator who is currently team teaching a Kindergarten class in the Full Day Kindergarten program in the Toronto Public School Board (TDSB).
Participants

Table 1-Participants’ Biographies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Background</th>
<th>ELL Education Experience</th>
<th>Board/Grade Level</th>
<th>ELLs’ Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ella: ESL Teacher</strong></td>
<td>15 years</td>
<td>Primary/Junior Division (previous experience)</td>
<td>Diverse Classroom: Chinese and Arabic speakers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean-born</td>
<td></td>
<td>Private ESL School Adults (current)</td>
<td>Middle class neighborhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100% English</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimal Korean</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cella: Early Childhood Educator (ECE)</strong></td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>Public School Board Primary Division Kindergarten (current)</td>
<td>Diverse Classroom: Arabic, Hindi, Russian, Chinese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canadian-born</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Low/Middle class neighborhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100% English</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimal French</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.3 Data Analysis

Data analysis is an essential phase of the research study, as it is the bridge between extracting information and analyzing that information that will allow me to discuss my findings within the study and help me answer my research questions. As my supervisor noted, there is no “best” and isolated approach with regards to the data analysis process. To name few approaches McNeilly (2012) recommends the following six steps: (1) Read and re-reading transcript; (2) Initial noting; (3) Developing emergent themes; (4) Searching for connections across themes; (5) Moving to the next interview and repeating 1-4; and (6) Looking for patterns across participants. Another
approach is which is guided by (1) first encounter with the text; (2) preliminary themes identified; (3) grouping themes together as clusters; and (4) tabulating themes in a summary table (McNeilly, 2012). Thus, I began the data analysis process using a combination of the two approaches, while simultaneously defining my own personal steps. These consisted of:

- Step 1: Mindfully listening to the audio recording on the day following the interview
- Step 2: Transcribing the data, then saving 4 copies of it (hard copy, email, USB stick and PC)
- Step 3: Send a copy of the transcription to the participant to check accuracy and possibly add new data
- Step 4: Several mindful readings of the transcript while listening to the audio recording
- Step 5: Coding and organizing data

I first transcribed the entire interview using a naturalized transcription (McNeilly, 2012) from which I really transcribed word per word, sound per sound, pause per pause, including hesitations. However, within the first reading of the complete transcript, I understood that the naturalized approach will not be useful during the coding process. When I was reading, it was just difficult to extract insights with all the naturalized elements within the text. Hence, I edited the transcription by mostly using denaturalized transcription (McNeilly, 2012) with a touch of naturalized transcription which I found was efficient, effective and helpful to ease me through the rest of the steps of the data analysis process.

I made the decision to skip step 3 because I could not afford the participant to take the time she needed to take a look at the transcription. Before starting step 4, I practiced doing a coding activity from a sample of another transcript. I found that doing the coding activity gave me an affirmation and confidence with regards to the methodology I used to organize and sort all the data.
from the transcript. Step 4 allowed me to pre-distinguish the different concepts that were arising from listening to the audio tape. I made some anecdotal notes during step 4 as well. Following step 4, my task was to break down data from the transcript and reorganize that data using coding in order to provide a descriptive summary of the categories found within the transcription data (Creswell, 2013).

3.4 Ethical Review Procedure

All phases of this research study will follow the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education’ Master of Teaching Program ethical review procedures prior to conducting the study with the interview process. In compliance with the ethical review procedures, I will ensure and protect the confidentiality as well as the anonymity of the participants that will be recruited. All participants’ names used will be pseudonyms. Prior to the interview process, I will provide participants with a consent letter and form that will inform them about the purpose of my study and their rights to not participate or to withdraw at any moment during or after the interview process. They will be required to read and sign the consent letter and form to get approval to begin the interview process. During the interview process, I will outline my duties to protect their confidentiality throughout and after the interview process. They also have the right to refuse to answer any specific question during the interview. The interview will be audio recorded and their names will be dissociated from their responses during the recording and coding procedures. Please refer to Appendix B for complete consent letter and form.

3.5 Methodological Limitations and Strengths

Owing to the nature of this research, the study has key few limitations and strengths. Firstly, the participants’ educational background is a limitation. As of now, I am only interested in interviewing two teachers and these teachers must be elementary teachers. Thus, the results will only apply to the sample I have chosen and may not be generalizable to the whole population of educators such as secondary teachers and even pre-service elementary and secondary teachers. Secondly, the core of the research study is about the ELL population but I
am not integrating their voice in this study. This is also indicative of the gap within the scope of the literature since there are relatively fewer research based information about ELLs ’perceptions and experiences in the classroom. Another limitation is the size of the sample of participants. In comparison with all the studies I examined during the literature review, I have the smallest sample of participants. As a student researcher relying on qualitative data rather than quantitative is beneficial and a strength of the study; however, the sample is non-randomly chosen, which means that the results and the findings may not be generalizable and only applicable to the sample of participants I recruited. Nevertheless, I believe that the findings will still be strong enough to be indicative and relevant of the effectiveness of the level of teachers’ preparation to meet the needs of ELLs in their classroom. I also wish that I could integrate in my data collection classroom observation. To me, it is very important to provide evidence that ELL instructional strategies are been used in the classroom. Teacher participants may claim they know of them and use them, but “Evidence of absence is evidence of any kind that suggests something is missing or that it does not exist”.

3.6 Concluding Reflection on the Research Process

In conclusion, the methodology to conduct this study is required to obtain the findings relevant for this study. Creating an opportunity for ELL instructors to share their experiences, thoughts and concerns is essential to find answers within the phenomenon of the importance to be prepared to simultaneously support ELLs with the conversational and academic English needs.
Chapter 4: Findings

4.0: Introduction

In Chapter One we learn that elementary teachers now commonly have ELLs in their regular classrooms and the range of unique needs possessed by those students has drastically changed the demands on instructors in terms of their preparedness to teach ELLs. The review of the literature in Chapter Two reveals that teachers’ effective preparation to work with ELLs is unclear. In researching in Chapter Three how well-prepared elementary teachers felt to teach ELLs, I found that Ella and Cella’s perspectives about educating ELLs offered valuable insights, from which emerged three key themes:

1. The lack of ELL content in the curricula and in academic contexts
2. Other means to prepare teachers to become ELL instructors
3. How teachers support ELLs in their classrooms

In this chapter, I report on these key themes and discuss what I learned in relation to the literature. The chapter concludes with a cross-case analysis and a final summary of the key findings based on their relation to my research question and sub-questions.

4.1 Lack of ELL content

Based on the data analysis, Table 4-1 provides an overview of the participants’ experiences related to teaching education programs and teaching practices when working with ELLs. Pertinent to the research study was their experiences in relation to their education programs. Table 1 reveals that none of the participants had taken any courses that focused only on ELL instruction. In Cella’s case, she only completed a course that embedded diversity issues.
Interestingly, her knowledge about key topics related to ELL instruction (i.e., ELL linguistic needs, second language acquisition, diversity issues, practical ELL strategies, etc.) indicated that ELL content was not a focus of the content in the diversity course that she completed.

Surprisingly, despite the fact that she taught in a full-day kindergarten classroom with a high number of ELLs, she did not receive or access any ESL support.

Table 2- Participants’ Experiences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Name</th>
<th>Participant Background</th>
<th>ELL Teaching Preparedness</th>
<th>ELLs’ Characteristics</th>
<th>ELL Teaching Practices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ella (ESL Teacher)</strong></td>
<td>Korean-born 100% English Minimal Korean</td>
<td>TESOL Program: - Lectures - A semester long of practicum Personal: -Conferences -Blogs -Networking</td>
<td>Only ELLs Diverse classroom: Chinese and Arabic speakers Middle-class neighborhood</td>
<td>Common Instructional Strategies ESL Support: Literacy Enrichment Academic Program Reliance on ELLs with stronger English proficiency Little evidence of negative attitudes/feelings/beliefs towards ELLs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cella (ECE)</strong></td>
<td>Canadian-born 100% English Minimal French</td>
<td>“We talked sometimes about diversity issues.”</td>
<td>Mostly ELLs Diverse classroom: Arabic, Hindi, Russian, Chinese Lower-class neighborhood</td>
<td>No ESL support Reliance on ELLs with stronger English proficiency Little evidence of negative attitudes/feelings/beliefs towards ELLs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Unlike Cella, Ella acquired a wealth of knowledge on ELL instruction as part of her TESOL program, where most of her courses embedded some ELL content. However, she also mentioned that what she “got from the conferences and websites [was] actually more practical and useful than some of the courses in [her] program.” Many researchers, such as Harper & de Jong (2011) and Webster & Valeo (2011), would position themselves with Ella, as they advocate that teacher preparedness from faculty programs should integrate mandatory courses focused on ELL needs and ELL instruction. Harper & de Jong explained:

A “just good teaching” approach will simply not be good enough. It encourages a generic approach to teaching that fails to account for two of the most important learner variables affecting ELLs’ school success— their linguistic and cultural diversity. Until ELLs are explicitly included at all levels of educational policy and practice, we can expect them to remain outside the mainstream in educational achievement (2011, p.118).

Similarly, Webster & Valeo commented:

According to the literature, infusing content into existing courses is not in itself enough to prepare PTs for working with ELLs in the classroom… [M]any universities worldwide had begun to infuse content regarding children with special needs; yet the addition of some content is not effective. The infused content must be in-depth and also requires a practical component for optimal effectiveness (2011, p. 115).

These perspectives from the participants are of particular relevance to the research study, as we learn that their level of preparation with regards to their pre-service training is minimal and largely inadequate.

In addition, based on the findings, significantly little has been done to address the participants’ preparedness within their teaching experiences in their respective education programs. As Ella described, her programs:
Had a lot of emphasis on theory, and the theory is interesting, but it wasn’t that helpful in actually preparing me to teach and to prepare lessons and deliver them every single day. And deal with the variety of issues that come up with students of diverse backgrounds and diverse levels. So, the practicum was really helpful. And being able to talk with teachers I met at the conferences and learning from experiences, and seeing the examples of my teachers during practicum were important, too. And learning about other teachers’ experiences through their blog, I think that it reflected a real work of what teaching ELLs is actually about.

With these points in mind, how else can teachers prepare themselves?

4.2 What about English as Second Language (ESL) Support?

We have already established that ELLs have two jobs in the classroom. As stated by Carrier (2005), “[ELLs are] learning a new language while learning new academic content” (p.6). She goes on to suggest that collaboration between elementary teachers and ESL teacher will foster effective support to ELLs’ needs in the classroom. She states:

The ESL teacher can more effectively support the academic language development of our ELLs if we provide them with the main ideas, the content-specific vocabulary, and the sentence structures related to upcoming lessons…When content teachers share this information with the ESL teacher, a link is established for ELLs between what they learn in ESL and what they use in the content classroom. This collaboration between teachers increases the amount of time ELLs spend on content related information, and promotes coordinated instruction for them. (p.6).

However, the perspectives of one participant, Cella, exposed the important issue of funding when it comes to the collaboration model between ESL and regular teachers. Cella explained:

We don’t have any extra support because I don’t think there is any money for extra support; so even if the entire class did not speak English, it would not matter. It will [still be
Her ideas echo the Annual Report on Ontario’s publicly funded schools (2011), which informs us that only 36% of elementary and secondary schools have ESL teachers. In elementary schools, the average ratio of ESL teachers to ELLs is 1:73; and with 10 or more identified ELLs, 77% have a part-time ESL teacher. Nonetheless, this finding reinvigorates the need for teachers to still be prepared to work with ELLs in their classroom.

In a related way, Yoon (2008) talked about the misconception among elementary teachers that ELL education is the responsibility of ESL teachers when he discussed findings from another study:

> The classroom teachers considered the students “deficient” and felt that handling them was a frustrating task. The teachers did not want the students to be in their classroom, and they believe that ESL teachers carries the responsibility for the students’ progress. The classroom teachers did not assume full responsibility for teaching, even though the students spent most of their time in their classroom (p.497)

None of the participants shared having such attitudes towards the ELLs, but this view highlights how the educational demands on teachers to be prepared to teach ELLs have drastically changed.

### 4.3 What about ELL Instructional Strategies?

Both participants could appropriately define ELLs and identify their primary needs. While an in-depth analysis pertaining to strategies specific to teaching ELLs was not significant to the purpose of this study, they both used instructional strategies that are commonly used with English proficient students (cf. Table 1). It was interesting to learn that they did not use any specific instructional, environmental or assessment accommodations. Cella pointed out that it is because “they pick [up] English from their peers at that age.” An interesting finding in the light
of strategies was that struggling ELLs depended on students ELLs that demonstrated significant improvement with their English proficiency.

4.4 Summary of themes

The educational background of in-service teachers provides suggests that future elementary teachers take faculty’s courses that do not infuse a lot of ELL content. This is particularly alarming when there is evidence-based information that teachers now commonly have ELLs in their classroom. Also, there is a crucial need to implement new policies that will permit the funding to have more ESL teachers in schools. As pointed out by both participants, collaboration between ESL teachers and teachers will benefit ELLs academic experiences in the regular classroom. Finally, it is imperative that teachers use instructional (i.e., direct instruction, verbal and visual cuing), environmental (inside and outside the classroom) and assessment (i.e., proximity to teacher, oral responses, more time) to effectively meet the needs of ELLs.

While theses themes were consistent with much of the research in the literature review, they also revealed that there is no “equilibrium solution” for teachers to measure the effectiveness of their level of preparedness for working with ELLs. Chapter 5 will focus in looking at how the lack of (1) ELL content in faculties of education, (2) ESL support in the classroom and (3) ELL specific instructional strategies ’use, have critical implications in preparing future teachers to effectively work with ELLs.
Chapter 5: Implications

5.0 Introduction

Chapter 4 presented and discussed the findings pertaining to the participants’ perspectives on their preparedness to teach ELLs. This final chapter begins with a discussion of how the literature review in Chapter 2 relates to the findings in Chapter 4. Additionally, I outline the implications from the key findings for the educational community as well as for me as a teacher and a researcher. Thirdly, the chapter makes specific recommendations for the educational community to support ELLs in the classroom. The chapter concludes with thoughts about the present study and its overall impacts.

5.1 Overview of Key Findings and their Significance

Lack of ELL Courses

The present research study found links between the major themes in the literature and the interviewees’ responses, as described in Chapter 4. According to the literature review, many teachers feel that they are not adequately prepared to work with ELLs in their regular classrooms, and there is a crucial need for education programs to do better (de Oliveira, 2011). With regards to the participants’ preparedness to work with ELLs in their regular classrooms, it was essential to examine whether Ontario education programs provided the support necessary to help teachers work with ELLs. Participants’ perspectives on their training programs indicated that ELL content was infused with other courses, and they feel like they learned a lot about diversity. However, one participant stated that the emphasis on theory was not helpful in actually preparing her to teach ELLs, or to face the challenges that arose every day. Consistent with what
is emphasized by Harper & de Jong (2011) and Webster & Valeo (2011), these findings are also crucial indicators that “good teaching practices” are simply not enough to accommodate ELLs’ needs in the classroom. Therefore, the correlation between the literature and the present study’s findings speaks to the need for Ontario teachers’ colleges to actively and adequately train preservice teachers to work with ELLs.

*Lack of ESL Support*

There was also evidence of the value of classroom teachers collaborating with ESL teachers to better meet the needs of ELLs in the regular classroom. The literature revealed that collaboration between elementary classroom teachers and ESL teachers helps foster effective support for ELLs’ needs in the classroom (Fu, 1995; Yoon, 2008). Similarly, it was clear from the interviews that both participants believed in the importance of ESL support, even stating that it was “necessary”. However, the literature review and the findings also diverged on the topic of teachers collaborating with ESL teachers. The literature review focused its emphasis on the need for greater collaboration between schools in ESL institutions, with Yoon suggesting that the lack of support for ELLs is related to a misconception among elementary teachers that ELL education is the responsibility of ESL teachers. In contrast to the literature review, the present findings revealed that the lack of ESL support was attributed by teachers to a lack of support from school boards in terms of funding, not to a lack of collaboration. For instance, on one hand, Ella pointed out that there is a literacy engagement and development program in her school to support ELLs. Although the literature review showed that ELLs need support across all content areas (Carrier, 2005; de Oliveira, 2011; Harper & de Jong 2011; Webster & Valeo 2011), Cella also stated that there is absolutely no extra support and raised the issue of funding for schools to afford ESL.
teachers. Nonetheless, both the correlations and disconnects in regards to ESL support really reinvigorate the need for better funding to provide ESL support in schools.

Strategies

There are several links between the findings and the literature review with regards to instructional strategies to support ELLs in the classroom. Most strategies that arose in the literature review are not only strategies that would help all learners (as opposed to just ELLs), but also specific ESL strategies that help teachers respond to ELLs’ needs. From the findings, Ella and Cella reported using those strategies, including giving ELLs extra time and visual reinforcement, using nonverbal communication, modeling, repeating key points, using differentiated instruction, etc. Another link of particular interest was teachers’ understanding of the positive impact of strong language skills on ELLs’ achievement. Both the researchers in the literature review and the participants in this research study agree that when L1 literacy skills are recognized, it becomes easier for ELLs to achieve greater success in English language acquisition and academic content (Harper & de Jong, 2005; de Oliveira, 2011). Thus, both Ella and Cella emphasized how much they welcomed and encouraged their students to use their native language in the classroom. They perceived this both as a tool for them as teachers, and also as a means by which to represent ELLs’ identities in the classroom. Again, we can note many correlations between the literature review and the responses of the participants.

5.2 Implications

For the Educational Research Community

The results of this research study are consistent with much of the literature, which shows a strong disconnect between teacher education programs and the perceptions and feelings of unpreparedness that current teachers express with respect to meeting the needs of ELLs in
today’s classrooms. This is a good indication that recent graduates and pre-service teachers
might not reach a comfort level that enables them to feel confident in their ability to work with
ELLs, as they should with other children. Since the demands on teachers are changing, for them
to be effectively prepared to work with ELLs, the same changes should be addressed within
education programs from which teachers are prepared to instruct all students.

For the Teacher and the Researcher

This research study has been important to me as a researcher and as a teacher. The present
study showed a gap between teacher education programs and the challenges that teachers face with
regards to meeting the needs of ELLs in today’s classrooms. Through the lens of a researcher, I
believe that exploring further extensions of the present study would be tremendously useful to
fully support ELLs in the classroom. In particular, future research should investigate the question
of how faculties of education should change their training approach to close the gaps and
disconnects when it comes to preparing teachers to have ELLs in their classroom.

Professionally, as an aspiring elementary teacher, my experiences as a researcher positively
impacted what and whether ELL students in my future classroom will learn, and whether they will
be able to reach their maximum learning potential. The implications of the study led me to seek
professional development in order to acquire more linguistic training and an in-depth
understanding of the language acquisition process. For pre-service and in-service teachers – myself
included – I advocate a need for greater ELL content knowledge and practical teaching strategies.

In addition, I have shed a misconception I had about ELLs. As an ELL myself, I thought that
I was similar to children with a learning disability because of the challenges I faced in the
classroom. I now strongly believe that this misconception is a result of a lack of in-depth
knowledge about ELL education. While this research study did not address solutions as to how faculties of education should change, I come away with important recommendations for the educational community to take into consideration.

5.3 Recommendations

Harper & de Jong (2005) said it best when they stated: “Until ELLs are explicitly included at all levels of educational policy and practice, we can expect them to remain outside the mainstream in educational achievement” (p.118). Based the findings of this study, there are several recommendations. First, the need for teachers to be adequately prepared to teach ELLs primarily falls on faculty of education programs. As this study explored teachers’ preparedness regarding their training for working with ELLs, the general ELL-infused approach to course work in Ontario faculties of education has failed to provide teachers with the skills that are imperative for them to feel confident and prepared when working with ELLs. To compensate, faculties of education should be able to integrate mandatory ELL courses within their teacher programs. In addition, both teachers surveyed valued their field experiences and practicum placements as opportunities to implement theory realistically. Consequently, these, as well as practical ELL teaching strategies, should not be overlooked. De Oliveira (2011) has stated that preparation for teaching ELLs includes: (a) a strong background and experiences with second language learning principles and practices; (b) knowledge about the differences between conversational language proficiency and academic language proficiency; (c) the importance of access to comprehensible input and opportunities for producing output for meaningful purposes; (d) the role of social interaction for the development of conversational and academic English; (e) the positive impact of strong native language skills on ELLs’ achievement; (f) the necessity of a
welcoming classroom environment for ELLs; and (g) the need for explicit attention to linguistic form and function. Therefore, pre-service and in-service teachers should also recognize the importance of professional development in all these areas, in order to foster their abilities and build their preparation for supporting ELLs.

5.4 Concluding Comments

With the percentage of ELLs in some Ontario elementary schools as high as 92% (People for Education, 2013), this research study sought to examine whether elementary teachers are in fact being or have been prepared to meet the needs of ELLs in regular classrooms. The study presented the results of two semi-structured interviews with two educators, both of whom demonstrated experience teaching ELLs in regular classrooms. The study found that to effectively support ELLs’ learning in the classroom, Ontario faculties of education need to offer full courses on ELL education ELL content instead of infused ELL content with other courses. Indeed, data analysis revealed that participants felt like an infused approach was not helpful in actually preparing them to teach ELLs, or to face the challenges that arose when working with them. Secondly, the findings suggested that while collaboration between elementary teachers and ESL teachers fostered effective support for ELLs’ needs, a strong scarcity of ESL teachers in elementary schools remains due to lack of funding and weak policies to encourage greater collaboration. Finally, it is imperative that teachers use instructional (i.e., direct instruction, verbal and visual cuing), environmental (inside and outside the classroom) and assessment (i.e., proximity to teacher, oral responses, more time) to effectively meet the needs of ELLs.
TEACHERS’ PERSPECTIVES ON THEIR PREPARATION TO TEACH ELLs

References


McNeilly, K. (2012). Beyond the “bedrooms of the nation”: An interpretive phenomenological analysis of Canadian adolescents with lesbian, gay, or bisexual-identified parents, 106-113. Retrieved from https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/handle/1807/34808


Appendix A (Letter of consent and consent form for interviews)

Date:

Dear _______________________________,

My Name is Grace Mabika and I am a student in the Master of Teaching program at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto (OISE/UT). A component of this degree program involves conducting a small-scale qualitative research study. My research will focus on teachers’ preparedness to have English Language Learners (ELLs) in their regular classroom. I am interested in interviewing teachers who have at least one ELL enrolled in their classroom and have experienced teaching ELLs (This includes regular elementary teachers and ESL teachers). I think that your knowledge and experience will provide insights into this topic.

Your participation in this research will involve one 45-60 minute interview, which will be transcribed and audio-recorded. I would be grateful if you would allow me to interview you at a place and time convenient for you, outside of school time. The contents of this interview will be used for my research project, which will include a final paper, as well as informal presentations to my classmates and/or potentially at a research conference or publication. You will be assigned a pseudonym to maintain your anonymity and I will not use your name or any other content that might identify you in my written work, oral presentations, or publications. This information will remain confidential. This data will be stored on my password-protected computer and the only people who will have access to the research data will be my course instructor ________________.

You are free to change your mind about your participation at any time, and to withdraw even after you have consented to participate. You may also choose to decline to answer any specific question. I will destroy the audio recording after the paper has been presented and/or published, which may take up to a maximum of five years after the data has been collected. There are no known risks or benefits to participation, and I will share with you a copy of the transcript to ensure accuracy.
Please sign this consent form, if you agree to be interviewed. The second copy is for your records. I am very grateful for your participation.

Sincerely,
Grace Mabika
647 204 4523
mabikagrace@gmail.com

Course Instructor’s Name: _________________________
Contact Info: ____________________________________

Consent Form

I acknowledge that the topic of this interview has been explained to me and that any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I can withdraw from this research study at any time without penalty.

I have read the letter provided to me by _____________ and agree to participate in an interview for the purposes described. I agree to have the interview audio-recorded.

Signature: _______________________________________
Name: (printed) _____________________________________
Date: ____________________________________________
Appendix B: Interview Questions

Name of the participant: E.K  
Position of the participant: ESL Teacher

School Board: Different  
Name of the School: N/A

Time of the interview: 3pm  
Date: October 12, 2015 (Thanksgiving Holiday)

Section 1: Background Information

1) How long have you been teaching English Language Learners or ELLs?
2) Tell me about your language background.

   Probes:
   - How many languages do you speak?
   - Have you ever acquired or learned language proficiency in an academic setting?

3) Define what does the term “English Language Learner” mean to you?

Section 2: Experiences related to teacher education programs

4) Do you recall taking some faculty of education courses related to ELL education? Were they mandatory or elective courses?

   Probes:
   - If not, how did/do you prepare yourself to teach ELLs?

5) Estimate the amount of time spent on learning about the following topics: ELL learning needs in the classroom; Second Language Acquisition; Diversity issues; Practical ELL strategies; Teacher roles & responsibilities; Conversational vs. Academic English.

6) How would you define your roles and responsibilities with regards to teaching ELLs in a classroom?

Section 3: Experiences related to teaching practices with regards to ELLs

7) What would you say are the primary needs of ELLs in your classroom?
8) How do you develop a relationship with a newly arrived ELL in your classroom?

   Probes:
   - How do you make the child feel comfortable?
   - How do you communicate with them?

9) How do you encourage an ELL to develop a relationship with his/her non-ELL peers?
10) Describe some ELL instruction strategies you use in your classroom to teach academic content
   
   Probes:
   - Why do you use them?
   - If none, do you use the same strategies as non-ELL students? Why?
   - How do you interact with them to give these instructions?

11) How do you know that these strategies are effective on your ELL students?

Section 4: Challenges with regards to working with ELLs

12) What are your expectations of ESL support (ESL teachers; services etc.)?
   
   Probes:
   - Is it available at the schools you taught at? How often do ELLs receive it?
   - Do you think ESL teachers should be responsible for educating ELLs?

13) Have you ever experienced challenges when instructing academic content to ELLs in your classroom? [Please describe one or two specific challenge(s)]
   
   Probes:
   - What and why was it a challenge?
   - How did you overcome it/them? Were you prepared to overcome it/them?
   - Did you use known strategies? Can you prevent them in the future?

Section 5: Barriers/Next Steps

14) With regards to faculties of education programs and schools, how would you rate the level of preparation they provide to pre-service and in-service teachers?

15) What recommendations do you have for faculty of education programs with regards to future teachers working with ELLs in a regular classroom?