

**Thriving, Surviving, or Drowning? The Disconnect Between ELLs and their Mainstream
Teachers and Peers**

by

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Dedication

For my previous students in class at I.S. 61 Leonardo Da Vinci, specifically classes 6P6 and 6P3.

I am forever grateful for your patience and understanding as we navigated learning together
through a language barrier.

Para mis alumnos anteriores en clase en I.S. 61 Leonardo Da Vinci, concretamente las clases 6P6
y 6P3. Estaré siempre agradecido por su paciencia y comprensión mientras atravesábamos juntos
el aprendizaje a través de la barrera del idioma.

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Abstract

Many mainstream classrooms in the U.S. are not fully equipped to meet the needs of the growing English Language Learner (ELL) population. The goal of this thesis capstone project is to inform pre-service and in-service educators, as well as administrators, about the importance of providing appropriate academic experiences for ELLs. It examines how deficiencies in teacher preparation and the presence of negative implicit biases toward ELLs can impact the language acquisition process, both cognitively and socioculturally. This project emphasizes the urgent needs for effective teacher preparation programs that challenge educators to address their beliefs and attitudes towards ELLs. Findings show a strong correlation between the teacher preparation and teacher beliefs, underscoring that reflecting on self-efficacy and implicit biases is essential for ensuring that ELLs receive equitable and effective educational experiences.

Keywords: TESOL education, teacher preparation programs, attitudes, beliefs, motivations, immigration policies, English language learners.

Chapter 1: Introduction

We are witnessing a mass influx of English Language Learners (ELLs) across New York State and have followed the influx throughout the rest of the country. Immigrants choose America to live in a land of opportunity and strive for the American Dream and as a result, ELLs are the fastest growing population in America's Schools today (National Education Association, 2020). However, most success stories start with a decent education. The issue is that there are not enough Teaching English to Speakers of other languages (TESOL) educators in addition to a massive disconnect between ELLs and their native-English classmates and teachers. The city schools are overcrowded with over 300,000 students at the mercy of overcrowding in New York City Schools, hindering the classroom environment and experience (Press Releases, 2023) and an immense reliance on paraprofessionals for translations and ELLs are most of the time put into mainstream classes without any transitional program provided or funded by the state or federal government to help them adjust and learn foundational English.

In addition, most of the mainstream teachers are not certified or experienced to provide the proper services that these students need to reach language demands in addition to the content objectives. Bilingual paraprofessionals play a key role in supporting the ELLs in the mainstream classroom due to the lack of training mainstream educators have or receive in their pre-service programs and/or their resistance to learn (Pennelle et al., 2023) in addition to most lacking the skill of multilingualism. Thus, teachers need the appropriate preparation and resources to support the students. According to De Courcy (2011), teachers who returned to school to add TESOL qualifications found that teaching ELLs was different from mainstream educations, facing issues with time management and needing to adapt their learning style.

In other words, all mainstream teachers need guidance and training when and if they have ENL students in their classes, so they know how to meet their needs. It is not to say these teachers are “bad” but are facing a changing demographic of American schools that they need to adapt to with the help of further education and professional development and reflective practices. These opportunities enable teachers to focus on their learners by incorporating strategies such as using visuals, providing clear and concise instructions, allowing wait-time, and encouraging group work and first language assistance (e.g., Karim et al., 2020; Quintero & Henderson, 2017).

Indeed, without proper training mainstream educators will face challenges in providing appropriate instruction to the increasing number of ELLs entering their classrooms each year. If these teachers do not receive adequate preparation to teach all students, especially ELLs, we are failing the education system and failing the students who come to America for a better life, which should be enriched with education and opportunities. This issue is so significant because teacher candidates need this preparation now more than ever in America and many veteran teachers are also not prepared to adjust their teaching styles due to negative implicit and explicit feelings and biases toward these students (Ates et al., 2015; Hilliker & Laletina, 2018), which hinders the academic success and integration of ELLs in mainstream classrooms.

Chapter 2 review the literature that explores theoretical understandings of second language acquisition as well as two themes that result in the disconnect between ELLs and their teachers and peers. The literature will portray how teacher education programs are uneven in distribution of preparing mainstream educators to teach ELLs. The second theme, overlapping with the teacher preparation programs curriculum, discusses studies where educators and pre-service educators discover their implicit biases in regard to their beliefs and attitudes toward ELLs and how it impacts their teaching practices when ELLs are present. Reflective practices

implemented into teacher preparation programs are an effective way to resolve the issue and bridge the gap between educators, ELLs, and their peers. Therefore, Chapter 3 then describes a professional development product aimed to address this issue, the second theme, teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and biases against ELLs through reflective questioning, group discussion, videos, and other information regarding the state of U.S. schools and ELLs. Chapter 4 concludes with a recap of the issues, the product, and further implications for student learning, teaching, and further recommendations for research on these issues in the field of TESOL.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This Chapter dives into the critical issues affecting ELLs in mainstream classrooms and their effects on student success. It also explores solutions through enhanced college preparation programs and professional development opportunities. A major concern is the inadequate teacher preparation programs, which often fail to provide proper training on how to include and differentiate instructions for ELLs or expose mainstream classroom pre-service educators to working with ELLs. This leads to the next issue which impacts their implicit bias towards this group where most teachers subconsciously make decisions in their classrooms that counter-benefit ELLs. This is all coming to a head as the ELL population has been one of the fastest growing demographics in U.S. schools for decades now. Before we can understand how these issues impact our ELL students, we must understand the theoretical understanding of the processes of language acquisition.

Theoretical Understanding of the Processes of Language Acquisition

To understand the issues in Bilingual and TESOL Education, it is important to first understand the factors which promote and lead to language acquisition in the first place. For decades, linguists and researchers have explored the field of language learning and acquisition and developed theories on how the process unfolds for language learners. This section explores Krashen's (1985) affective filter hypothesis, Swain's (1985) comprehensible output hypothesis, and Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural perspectives. Below, I discuss each theory, highlighting their significance in language learning.

Krashen's (1985) affective filter argues an individual's emotional state such as anxiety and low self-esteem affects their ability to learn a new language. This affective filter- an imaginary barrier- can hinder the intake of new language information. In contrast, Krashen

believes that when learners feel relaxed and confident, the affective level is lowered, making second language acquisition more effective. This understanding has important implications for teachers. According to Wright (2010):

Even though the student is exposed to input, anxiety, low self-esteem, or a sense that he or she is not a potential member of the group that speaks the language -the affective filter- will keep it out. Thus, a major goal in language teaching and learning is to “lower” the affective filter to maximize comprehensible input. (p. 54)

That is, students’ emotions can be affected by classroom decisions and pedagogical practices that teachers use, which are often influenced by their preparation courses and their implicit biases that they subconsciously have toward their students. Another related cognitive theory is Swain (1985) comprehensible output hypothesis, which suggests that forcing language learners to speak and produce language orally allows them to see their limitations in their language proficiency and act on it by finding other means of acquiring more language. This process is related to the issues of teacher preparation and beliefs and attitudes towards ELLs because when creating lessons, it is important that teachers are aware of this theory of language learning so they can implement entry points for comprehensible input and output such as differentiated instruction, native language support, turn-and-talks, and think-pair-shares.

In contrast to these cognitive theories on language learning and teaching, social and cultural perspectives play a major role in language development. Vygotsky (1978) sociocultural theory (SCT) emphasizes that learning is a social activity, and knowledge is constructed through interaction and collaboration with more knowledgeable others. A key concept of SCT is the zone of proximal development (ZPD) that describes the difference between what a learner can do without help and what they can achieve with support from more knowledgeable others. In the

context of teaching ELLs, teachers need to have knowledge of language learning strategies. This knowledge should be acquired through their teacher preparation programs with a focus on applying these strategies specifically to language learning. Teacher should also know how to facilitate interactions among ELLs. These interactions can help learners produce comprehensible output and learn from comprehensible input from their peers.

Fundamentally, understanding cognitive and sociocultural theories of learning is crucial for educators of ELLs. Such an understanding not only offers a holistic approach for teacher preparation programs but also equips educators with effective strategies to better support the development of ELLs.

Issues with Teacher Preparation Programs

Teacher preparation programs' main objectives are to ensure that the needs of all learners are met in the classroom when they become certified. In these programs, in-service teachers are provided with knowledge and skills needed to adapt to the evolving demographics and pedagogy practices through instruction and field experience (student teaching). For instance, the Colorado's Growing Great Teachers Act emphasizes that "high-quality teaching is the linchpin for effective, high-quality education in the schools of the state. To be an excellent, effective educator, an individual must receive comprehensive, rigorous, and effective training in the art and science of teaching and in the skills and subjects that the individual will teach" (Colorado Department of Higher Education, 2020).

With this said, teaching ELLs requires different skills and content knowledge than teaching mainstream students. However, this is where a disconnect is created because though ELLs are in many mainstream classrooms across the country, knowledgeable and experienced mainstream teachers lack proper education in teaching these ELLs due to the faults and

inequalities in teacher preparation programs as well as in-service professional development opportunities in varying instances. Karim et al., (2020) conducted a study with pre-service teachers in Bangladesh to inform teacher preparation programs and field experiences coordinators on the preparation these students have on educating ELLs. Their experiences and attitudes were examined based on their results of the Teacher Demographic Questionnaire (TDQ) and the Culturally Responsive Teacher Self-Efficacy scale (CRTSES). This study revealed that though many of the participants felt field experience was the most beneficial in preparing them to work with ELLs and that culturally responsive teaching was touched on in their programs, many felt confused on where they stood in being prepared to teach ELLs in their mainstream classrooms (Karim et al., 2020, p. 16). Given that this study was done outside of the United States, it serves as an example and more of a vision for what American students in teacher preparation programs should look and feel like when reflecting on their pre-service and in-service experiences with ELLs.

Much research has assessed current and future teachers on their experiences in their pre-service and in-service learning programs and experience regarding their readiness, or lack thereof, to work with ELLs. Results varied across different states and years the studies were conducted. These results vary depending on geographic location and year. However, they do show an increase in attention to these issues in TESOL. For example, Coady et al. (2016) conducted interviews, surveys, and observations of two teachers from the same preparation program that had varying years of experience at the time the study was completed found that though their confidence was high on the matter, their instructional practices they implemented had foundations of effective general education practices in response to the cultural and linguistic needs of their ELL students. This portrays evidence of false pretenses of readiness to meet the

needs of English Language Learners due to misconceptions that teaching ELLs best practices are congruent with best practices in the mainstream classroom. Likewise, Quintero and Henderson's (2017) study on teacher preparation programs in six states with large Spanish-speaking populations revealed a high degree of variation in EL teacher training across institutions. According to Quintero and Henderson (2017), "the level of preparation among new teachers to support ELs is uneven, at best." In a sense, uneven distribution of teacher preparation suggests generational challenges for the equity and equality of opportunity of ELLs.

Consistently, preservice teachers need to develop the knowledge and skills that will enable them to fully realize the potential of inclusive classrooms. This is an issue that can only be resolved in TESOL-related teacher trainings or programs and why implementation of these skills is essential for an effective teacher preparation program. Teacher preparation programs serving future mainstream educators do not adequately prepare these mainstream educators for a time when ELLs are in their classrooms, adding to the disconnect between the teacher and language learners. Coady et al. (2016) concluded that inclusion of few isolated ESL courses in the requirements for graduation is not sufficient to meet the needs of ELLs. For instance, "ESL teacher competencies must be addressed systematically throughout the program, with the rationale and application of specific second language development strategies considered across the curriculum. ESL knowledge and skills must be strategically integrated with other core teaching and learning experiences..." (Courcy, 2011, p. 363). This suggests the disconnect between the education programs and the reality of English Language Learner experiences in the mainstream classroom. When the pedagogy classes are isolated from the curriculum, the inclusion of ELLs instruction into the mainstream classroom becomes inorganic for the classroom environment. To be more thorough, as mentioned above, it would be more effective to

incorporate educating all learners into the methods classes of general education since ELLs enter mainstream classrooms just as special education students do. This supports how the seclusion of ESL Preparation in teacher preparation programs does not support teachers seamlessly implementing best practices for ELLs in their mainstream classrooms. Because these strategies and practices are often taught as an isolated situation and more of a one-two class requirement to become certified rather than true preparation.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, demographics are changing in American schools even in areas traditionally unaffected, the enrollment of ELLs is consistently increasing. This highlights the need for qualified teachers to help meet the needs for teachers to enter the classroom prepared to teach the students who will assuredly be there. As the number of ELLs increases in our classrooms, teachers must be able to accommodate them to abide by the law of equal opportunity education as well as the basic human right to education. This Equal Opportunities Act states, “the policy of the United States that all children enrolled in public schools are entitled to equal educational opportunity without regard to race, color, sex, or national origin; and that the neighborhood is the appropriate basis for determining public school assignments (93rd Congress). This demonstrates the need, by law, teacher preparation for both new teachers and in-service teachers is crucial to maintain equal opportunity education in the United States Education System. This issue is significant because pre-service teachers are building the foundation for their teaching practices which overlaps with the theme of the impact of teacher beliefs and practices which also set the foundation for their methodology in their classrooms and will be discussed in the next part of chapter two.

Incorporating reflective practices into teacher preparation programs are just as important as language theory and pedagogy in teacher preparation programs to make effective teachers.

According to Harrison and Lakin (2018) education programs need to incorporate more proactive stance on TESOL and bilingual education in their curriculum in order to prepare future educators for the time where they need to teach ELLs inclusively in the mainstream classroom. This study portrays evidence of the gap between teachers and English Language Learners and how and why this gap exists and how to fix it as its aim is to evaluate and test mainstream teachers implicit and explicit biases' using the IAT-EL, the Implicit Association Test-EL on 197 participants.

Reflective practices during teacher preparation programs are clearly just as significant as learning teaching strategies for ELLs itself and should be implemented within the curriculum of pre-service education for all teachers, not just those in TESOL programs to effectively teach inclusively for the benefit of the ELLs as they continue to be immersed in American classrooms each year.

Additionally, Courcy et al.'s (2011) findings demonstrate consistencies between high performing educators with ELLs and experiences with ELLs. The results revealed differences between the self-efficacy of teachers with and without exposure to ELLs in their earlier field experiences. As a result, they suggest that combining culturally and linguistically diverse coursework and field experience into curriculum for teacher certifications, it will make mainstream educators better equipped to meet the needs of ELLs by providing them with the knowledge and abilities they need to implement strategies and accommodations that ELLs need to help them have access to the content they are expected to learn and know. This evidence highlights the importance of experience and reflection in preservice learning to best meet the sociocultural standards and needs of ELLs to promote language acquisition.

These findings suggest the importance of tackling the disparities between ELLs and their teachers in the name of their beliefs and their preparation to teach them. Teachers need to

develop skills and strategies for connecting with students whose backgrounds may be vastly different from their own (Ates et al., 2015). To bridge the gap that exists between the majority educators and the minority students. Though there does need to be more research done on the topic, what has been done has shown that:

CN-incorporated instruction produced an authentic and meaningful context in which students became more willing to see the positive aspects of having a diverse teacher who had a different background from their own- much like diverse students they are going to have in their own future classroom. (Ates et al., 2015, p. 10)

This will help support and resolve the issue as educators using these CN reflective narratives will continue to bridge the gap generationally between different cultures in the education system because it helps everyone become more aware of their culture and experiences, including the teacher and how it shapes their teaching and learning as it shows to be an effective instructional tool, benefitting English Language Learners.

Teacher Attitudes, Beliefs, and Motivation

In addition to the pedagogical faults in teacher preparation courses, other factors impact language acquisition in the classroom such as teachers' attitudes, values, and beliefs towards ELLs. Studies show that these have significant impacts on the decisions they make regarding their teaching practices. This is especially true for teachers with minority students, which consequently adds to the disconnect mentioned above, that can lead to detrimental impacts on the performance and success of ELLs. Culture shock and the process of acculturation can have significant drawbacks on the education of ELLs. Therefore, this disconnect can often make adjusting to their new culture much more difficult. As educators, it is our job to bridge this disconnect for the betterment of the language learners' education.

While working with the ELLs population, it is important to reflect on personal and implicit biases. Educators often mirror teaching practices parallel to their experiences as a student. It is a major contributing factor that requires self-reflection on the part of educators to ensure ELLs' academic and social needs are met in the mainstream classroom. A lot of this reflective practice tends to take place in pre-service teacher programs that tend to TESOL education appropriately. However, in-service teachers need to participate too as their "norm" in their classrooms continues to change and they need to adapt their practices. Hilliker and Laletina, (2018) found that "although teachers have a different depth of understanding of English Language Learners linguistic experiences, they all shared the viewpoint that language is a barrier for English Language Learners in general and need extra support..." (p. 37). In this study, the number of educators looking to return to school to become certified in TESOL was evaluated. Results showed that professional developments and further education courses were the best way to close the gap between mainstream educators and their ELL students because of the lack of experience, knowledge, and misguided beliefs about their learning abilities and cultural lifestyles.

This is where and why the evolving culturally responsive teaching (CRT) practices focus a lot on teachers' reflections of themselves and their practices and how they can be adapted to meet all students today and beyond. CRT refers to teaching practices that connect and relate to students' cultures and lived experiences which also helps bridge the connection between the students and their teacher (Rucker, 2019). Likewise, Leletina et al (2018) found that the teachers who had more experience working with the ELL population, had a more complex understanding of the "cultural norms" of their students' lifestyles and how they impacted their learning with respect to their identities. Reflecting just on why the student is in the mainstream classroom and

their academic needs is not sufficient to meet their needs. The disconnect between the educators, ELLs, and their native English-speaking peers is widely cultural and for one educator to make that connection they must be open minded, reflect on their beliefs towards these students and motivated to do the work to meet their needs in a culturally responsive way. It is also important to get to know the students' cultural differences and share your own as an educator to promote inclusivity and tolerance in the classroom.

ELLs continue to be the fastest growing student population in American schools, as The U.S. retained a minority-majority school population with a 51% English language learner (EL) growth rate in public schools overshadowing a low 7% increase of the non-ELs in 2018 (Harrison & Lakin, 2018). According to the National Education Association (2020), “By 2025, 1 out of 4 children in classrooms across the nation will be an English language learner (ELL) student.” Consequently, “The percentage of public-school students in the United States who were ELs increased overall between fall 2011 (9.4 percent, or 4.6 million students) and fall 2021 (10.6 percent, or 5.3 million students)” (NCES, 2024). This poses as a new and challenging task for educators, including pre-service educators, and both new and veteran in-service educators meeting a new demographic with new educational needs. As immigration is used as a political tool in recent elections, the increase in ELLs in the mainstream classes are met with educators with opposing views and beliefs about these students which is a significant disadvantage for some students who do not have their teacher’s support.

The politics around ELLs in the mainstream classroom and the language disparities are not the only concepts that educators need to reflect on to better serve the population. In fact, Hilliker and Laletina (2018) found that because teachers lack the background knowledge needed to identify what happens in their classroom with ELLs, it leaves them with contradictory ideas

about educating this demographic. They appear to contradict the relationship with culture, language, student motivation, and family involvement which negatively impact the ELL students' learning as it extends the gap between teacher and student. This evidence shows that CN-Incorporated Instruction (Cultural Narrative) benefited the teachers in the programs, as discussed in Ates et al., (2015) mentioned above about the issues in Teacher Preparation Programs above. The study said that following the CN-Incorporated instruction, end-of-semester course evaluations produced positive feedback as comments were expressed appreciatively and that students' education was made more meaningful, especially in the field of TESOL, a depth not achievable with just a textbook or article read as part of the class curriculum and discussion. By building this cultural connection with the students brings a sense of tolerance and understanding into each person, positively changing their beliefs and attitudes towards others that are different from themselves. Just imagine the impact this would have on the diverse population itself if teachers were more aware of their cultural narratives and shared them with students and allowed students to share with them back. Not only does this reflective practice prove to support teachers practices in their instructional choices, but it also made their education more meaningful which translates into how they can make learning meaningful to their students.

Fortunately, reflective practices are making their way into the curriculum of teacher preparation programs nation-wide. Thomas SC Farrell conducted a research review from 2009-2014 encouraging the reflective practice in the field of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) and for TESOL educators rising in popularity in teacher preparation programs of all content and skill areas. Previously, he reflected, not much has been presented on studying reflective practice. However, Farrell (2016) found that subconsciously, teachers form

their instructional practices based on their implicit beliefs and conceptions of their students as well as their philosophies driving their many actions taken in the classroom.

This shows how the impact of implicit biases and attitudes toward ELLs impacts language learning because the teacher is subconsciously not choosing the instructional strategies and materials to support ELLs making them feel unseen and reluctant to produce comprehensible output and receive comprehensible input. Furthermore, through his holistic approach to research in Farrell's earlier reports, a progressive move on reflective practices addressing teachers' and teacher candidates' beliefs, attitudes, and values towards ELLs to make for a more welcoming experience for them was found. The findings showed a significant increase in interest with studies on this issue growing from only 6 studies in 2009 to 23 in 2014, suggesting a trend toward encouraging TESOL teachers to adopt reflective practice (Farrell, 2016). This is proven true as the previous source mentioned dated in 2015. This is consistent with the growth of the ELL population growth which consequently demonstrates that the efforts to implement more effective practices in teacher preparation programs has to do with the need for more qualified teachers in schools for the benefit of ELLs.

A survey by Richards (2023) explored how teacher identity influences and contributes to their understanding and practices in TESOL Education, demonstrating the significant role that both teacher and learner identities influences the educational approaches, beliefs, attitudes, motivation, and classroom practices including the use of English. The findings highlighted the importance of integrating identity into teacher education courses. As Richards states:

This survey has sought to remind us of the powerful role identity plays in the experiences of teachers, learners and student teachers in TESOL and how it is in turn shaped by these experiences. Many of the professional activities we make use of in both pre-service and

in-service teacher education are appropriate places in which a focus on identity can be included, such as critical incident analysis, peer observation, journal writing, group problem solving, narratives, case studies, peer coaching and participation in online forums.

This survey proves the importance of reflective practices of educators in the field of TESOL or other fields where ELLS may be or become present in their classrooms as it impacts the students' sociocultural role and identity in the classroom. There are many ways to incorporate these practices into education curriculums that will have a profound impact on their attitudes and beliefs and in turn their practices with the ELLs. It is extremely important that educator's partake in these reflective practices to ensure that they can provide ELLs with the best possible education.

Access to education comes in phases for ELLs as they often experience a silent time where they are still unfamiliar with their surroundings. To navigate this period, building relationships and having access to the material, or as Krashen (1982) named it, comprehensible input. One way to reach the child effectively is through building relationships with them, even with the language barrier, the attempt gives the students something to work with. For example, it is increasingly important to establish programs in schools and school cultures that are demographically changing to support ESOL and bilingual students. This is important to necessary to create fairness and equal opportunities for all students and should be taken seriously as the school attitudes also depend on those at the state and national levels who create and fund the policies that effect the program developments for ELLs (Harrison & Lakin., 2018). This proves how teachers' beliefs and values have an impact on the language learning process for

ELLs and how crucial it is for teachers to reflect and adjust their beliefs and values while teaching and preparing to teach ELLs.

Educators naturally have beliefs both professional and personal beliefs that may agree or differ with each other. Nonetheless, these beliefs influence the decisions they make in teaching mainstream and language learners in their own classrooms. This can create inequality and inequity for those language learners and regardless of the language barrier, they will be able to sense their teachers' beliefs, both positive and negative, and respond accordingly. How any child feels in any class often determines their effort and progress in that classroom. Most studies consist of interviewing teachers and observing their teaching practices. However, Harrison and Lakin (2018) reported that there are limitations to interviews and self-report tools in assessing teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards ELLs because of the potential for answers to be swayed based on what the participant wants to reveal compared to their true feelings and beliefs. Therefore, anonymity is crucial in these studies to ensure true and accurate results.

Additionally, they used a test. The implicit association test is a latency-based computerized test meaning it not only assesses answers but also participants' reaction time related to nominal and attitudinal terminologies. The more swiftly or slowly a respondent categorizes the terms into their appropriate constructs indicates an implicit attitude about that construct" (Harrison & Lakin, 2018). The test is formulated as such because when asking people to reflect on their beliefs and values regarding a specific group of people, in this case ELLS, people feel embarrassed to express their thoughts when brought to their attention if they have a negative connotation to them. As a result, they may stretch their truth to "not look bad" or face the reality of their beliefs and values.

Further findings in Harrison and Lakin's study (2018) on 422 educators were that 1) attitudes of teachers of ELs showed to be neutral to strongly negative, 2) 70% of these respondents were not interested in having ELs in their classrooms, and 3) 51% would not pursue additional training for working with ELs if it were offered. This illustrates a general understanding that mainstream teachers held slightly negative implicit beliefs about ELLs opposed to their mainstream students. These results demonstrate the disparities among teachers' beliefs and values and their impact on the education system and in turn language learning regarding the efforts in helping and accommodating for ELLs in the classroom learning both language and content demands.

Accordingly, in another mixed-methods study on TESOL Teachers self-efficacy, results pointed to two specific areas in the field to be further researched including the importance of licensure. It suggests that teachers who become licensed in ESL have higher levels of self-efficacy in instruction, curriculum, and assessment for ELs. Furthermore, it suggested that for district and school administrators, these licensed educators have a more comprehensive and cohesive approach and focus within the areas of TESOL that move them forward to improving in those areas (Kim et al., 2020). This proves the importance of and connection between teachers and administrators being self-aware as well as academically aware of the needs of English Language Learners and the deeper state in which they experience schools in another language. It also highlighted the impact of more education for ELLs. There is so much more to teaching ELLs than merely using certain strategies. Language development has a social-emotional component to it that is crucial for opening the gates to second language acquisition. If there were more courses geared toward supporting ELs in these three areas of TESOL throughout all mainstream programs, more teachers would have higher self-efficacy and strive to do and learn

more about their ELs and the ways they can help them reach their learning goals and language targets.

Having a license in ESL should be a requirement of teachers than have English Language Learners in their classroom or have a co-teacher than is specialized in TESOL. On a progressive note, one study above found that:

Districts and universities can work in tandem to identify the core knowledge needed and design carefully aligned professional development opportunities that lead to a more cohesive and congruent corpus of ESL teaching methodology. Current Indiana policy does not encourage nor require this type of partnership between universities and schools, yet some Indiana districts are seeking such school-university partnerships in light of their growing EL communities. (Kim et al., 2020, p.249)

Recognizing the need for change in policy and curriculum as their population of ELLs increases is a step in the right direction to improve TESOL education programs including the reflective practices of self-efficacy, bias, and teaching practices for ELLs.

68 Teachers at all levels of their career who participated in a virtual PD about the cultural understandings of ELLs, Dwomoh et al. (2023). The data reported on the following aspects of TESOL Education based on their experiences with ELLs, both personal and professional. These aspects are reflection on prior knowledge and experiences with Els before the study, language and bilingualism, the need for EL teacher training, deficit perspectives, racism and eurocentrism, and actionable plans. The findings were vast, suggesting that there are potential needs for policy changes in the context of TESOL education and toward the training and development of educators that center on ELs in teacher education programs. Additionally, they should not only focus on strategies, but on theory-based practices, a crucial component of teacher training.

Among the findings in “actionable plans” is the increase in culturally responsive pedagogy to close the deficits and combat the racism and eurocentrism in the classroom. This would and should take place in the pre-service teaching programs as well as the professional developments that in-service teachers should be required to take or should be provided to staff on development days if there is even as little as one ELLs in the school to ensure the student receives equally opportunity in their education.

In the next chapter, the product that will be described will have the goal of opening the reflection pathways for in-service teachers to become more aware of their implicit biases and the impact they have on their classroom decisions. This awareness is intended to bring their negative implicit biases against ELLs to the forefront so they can face it and adjust it accordingly to provide more positive, and conducive teaching environment for the ELLs in their mainstream classroom consciously.

Chapter 3: Description of the Product & Tool

As mentioned throughout, Professional Development plays a significant role in the fluidity of education as it progresses over time. It serves as the bridge between in-service teachers and new pedagogy practices and theory. Additionally, “professional development, or professional learning, can refer to any kind of ongoing learning opportunity for teachers and other education personnel” (Schwartz 2023). However, teachers often do not see it as such. Therefore, it is important to make professional developments meaningful and relevant just as teachers make their lessons for their students. The professional development tool described below is going to address teachers’ beliefs, values, and feelings toward English language learners through a reflective practice on their education and experience them.

The Product

The professional development will take place in an after-school professional development session that lasts approximately one hour. The goal is to provide teachers with entry points for reflective practices regarding their beliefs and values toward their English Language Learner students, past, present, and future. The session will begin with the platform ‘Mentimeter’ where each teacher will choose the first thing that comes to mind when they think of English Language Learners. This will remain anonymous to ensure honesty in the reflection. As mentioned in chapter two, it is difficult for teachers to come face to face with their bias as it can bring up feelings of guilt and insecurity to admit their thoughts once they are aware of them, especially if they tend to be negative toward the subject which in this case is a specific group of students, English Language Learners. As research suggestion in chapter two, reflective practices are crucial to teaching English Language Learners because beliefs and attitudes towards students

influences teaching practices and decisions which effects the students' second language acquisition.

Next, the infamous film named "Immersion," will be played. The film is based on a Latino immigrant named Moises who is struggling to have his academic needs met by his school and their lack of resources. This video has been a part of multiple courses in the TESOL/Bilingual Education Program at The State University of Brockport as part of reflective practices on teacher beliefs, values, efforts, and knowledge of the experiences of ELLs in the mainstream U.S. classrooms. I feel it has certainly changed by views of ELLs experiences in my classrooms for the better and is a very powerful message for mainstream educators to experience themselves.

Following the film, educators will take part in a 'snowball' activity. This activity requires deeper, independent, and shared thoughts on the film and how it relates to their experiences with ELLs and their beliefs and attitudes towards teaching them. The activity, sometimes known as the "snow ball" activity requires participants or students to reflect independently, and then gradually with more peers until it snowballs into a classroom discussion (see appendix B). This activity is a great way to engage teachers in reflective discussions about difficult topics because it allows for a safe space to share and learn from peers and not just the presenter. By learning through their colleagues' thoughts, too, they will feel less alone in their feelings towards ELLs and may open up to new ideas.

In the next activity, the staff will all stand up and in one line next to each other. They will be presented with statements that are designed to portray the disparities and uneven educational preparation and experiences with ELLs in their school/district. Teachers will take one step forward every time a statement applies to their beliefs, values, attitudes, and experiences with English Language Learners. The goal is at the end for teachers to look around and see that they

are not the only ones who feel a certain way or are less or more prepared to serve ELLs than others, and most importantly to get a sense of what programs can do to make these large disparities less detrimental to the education of ELLs. (See appendix C for the prompts)

At this point in the PD, the staff would look around and see that everyone's ideas and experiences working with ELLs is different, but as a staff they need to come together and provide a more cohesive education and environment for their English Language Learners. It serves as a gateway for thoughts about what they currently do in their ELL classrooms, how prepared they feel, and what their attitudes are toward their ELL students and that their colleagues are all in similar situations as them.

This will be followed by a think-pair-share with some colleagues in the room on what they feel would benefit them in their classrooms when teaching ELs. This will serve as a message to their admin to seek out further resources, professional development, or even hire more ENL teachers for the district to support the mainstream classes with co-teachers for ELLs. This is all part of the reflective practices that are crucial to supporting the ELLs. Therefore, as a gift, staff will be provided with mini notebooks and a pen to continue their reflective practices in all areas of their teaching, to become more aware of their decisions and attitudes towards their students and how it influences their teaching practices. While these are handed out, a video on creating a welcoming classroom environment which is most important before trying to teach the language skills and content. The professional development session will end with strategies and resources for teaching ELLs from Colorin' Colorado and a Q & A session to allow educators to use their new, open mind to learn more about how to best support the ELLs in their classroom or where to go to learn more independently.

How the Product Resolves the Problem

Teachers will be more intuitive about their beliefs and values towards ELLs, have more information on how to serve them and see what they are going through on the other side of their classroom. Teachers will be given tools to continue reflective practices after PD. As proven in Harrison and Lakin's (2018) study on the need for prepared educators to meet the growth of ELLs in American classrooms, it is imperative that even in areas where ELLs might not be so prevalent yet, the classrooms need to be prepared to teach them when they do arrive. A solution to this would be to promote teaching practices for the culturally and linguistically diverse students into pre-service teaching programs. These programs should include awareness reflection of their beliefs and attitudes in their training practices to give the pre-service educators an earlier stance on the gaps between their attitudes and their teaching actions (Harrison and Lakin, 2018).

Before teachers can just become effective teachers for ENL students, they need to have mindful practices on their experiences, and beliefs toward them. The goal is teachers will be more inclined to continue their education on English language learning/TESOL beyond the tools given at this PD. Reflecting on different issues related to ELLs and how to successfully teach them is a steppingstone. Therefore, these activities were created to open their minds to the world of TESOL in a different way to create a gateway for success for teachers and students.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

This thesis capstone project has explored two major disparities in Bilingual/TESOL Education. American Schools are welcoming ELLs without the right resources to maintain equal educational opportunities (Hilliker & Laletina, 2018). What was learned here was that majority of educators pre-service and in-service feel they are prepared to serve ELLs in their mainstream classrooms until they are presented with the task and then they do not feel or based on observations of their practices, do not prove to be prepared to teach ELLs inclusively in their ELL practices. Likewise, they subconsciously have negative biases and feelings against ELLs and their belonging in the mainstream classroom and their motivation to further educate themselves on best practices for teaching ELLs as mentioned earlier in Harrison and Lakin (2018).

What can be done to target these issues is to implement more ELL standards-based strategies into teacher preparation programs in mainstream education programs since ELLs join the mainstream classrooms. By implementing ELL practices and theories into mainstream education programs, it closes the gap between teachers, non-ELLs, and ELLs in the classroom through the teachers' better practices. When these strategies are taught cohesively in these preparation programs, it will be easier and more organic to implement in the inclusive classrooms with ELLs and general education students. By continuing to keep these courses separate, it will increase the gap and disparities which is the opposite of what needs to happen to fix the issues explored above.

Additionally, to face the issue of negative implicit biases of teachers towards their ELL student population, what was found to be progressive were reflective practices. Participating in reflective practices such as journaling about lessons and feelings, or team meetings, will help

educators gain a more explicit sense of how they feel about teaching ELLs in their mainstream classroom (Richards, 2023). Therefore, in the PD session, providing opportunities for turn-and-talks, think-pair-shares, and notebooks to continue their teacher reflections in is important in improving teachers' self-efficacy and staying on top of how they treat ELLs through their and the development their lessons and environments for the betterment of all the students that enter their classrooms.

Implications for Student Learning

As mentioned in Chapter 2, when discussing the importance of comprehensible input and output, teachers need to be aware of these theories to implement them into their practices.

Therefore, these theories should be implemented into pre-service education programs.

Additionally, it is important for students to feel seen and valued in their classrooms and they can sense when their teacher feels a certain way or is providing work for them that is within their ZPD, Zone of Proximal Development. In accordance with the teacher preparation programs, as targeted in the product described in Chapter 3, before using strategies just for the sake of using them, it is crucial that teachers face their implicit biases towards ELLs, both positive and negative to provide a space where students can grow and thrive comfortably. Teacher's preparation and reflective practices have lasting impacts on student learning because it shapes the environment the student is expected to learn in.

Implications for Teaching

The ways in which I see teachers (ENL, Bilingual, and non-ENL/Bilingual) benefiting from the concepts and ideas of the above research and product are as follows. First off, with the teacher preparation programs incorporating more inclusive ways to implement teaching ELLs in the mainstream classroom will have a great impact on the students feeling a sense of belonging

in the classroom which will boost their confidence and help their second language acquisition progress as their anxiety and stress levels are reduced. It will also help educators not only feel more prepared but be more prepared as they have more of an idea of what differentiating for ELLs looks like.

Reflective practices are great for any kind of teacher working with any kind of demographic in their classroom. As discussed earlier, every teacher has their professional and personal biases, and this will help them face theirs and reflect on how they can use it to create a more intentional and positive classroom environment more conducive to learning. Reflecting on emotions and feelings towards students and pedagogy practices used in day-to-day lessons can help teachers become more present and intentional in how they choose their classroom activities. This will lead to better choices that are more inclusive for all students and promote more engagement and learning.

Recommendations

Though much research has been done on these issues, there is still a lot of work to be done. As education preparation programs continue to adapt to new standards and educational technologies, it is crucial they adapt to new demographics and make ELL Pedagogy more prevalent in all of the programs. Then, we can study the impact it has on student learning and teacher implications. Not only should these classes incorporate educational philosophy and practices for ELLs but also incorporate more opportunities for reflective practices. This way, educators have a more conscious idea of how to implement these practices efficiently and support ELLs on both cognitive and sociocultural levels.

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Appendix A

The Professional Development Slides

https://www.canva.com/design/DAGMY7w5taU/kV1e-DRQUdPbIPWeLxiD8w/view?utm_content=DAGMY7w5taU&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link&utm_source=recording_view

Appendix B**Snow-Ball Discussion Activity after the Film *Immersion***

<u>Independent Thoughts</u>	<u>Shared Thoughts (Partner Share)</u>
<u>Group Share Thoughts (3-4 People)</u>	<u>Whole-Class Thoughts</u>

Appendix C

Prompts and Questions for On the Line Activity

Teachers, take the given step forward or backward when a statement applies to them:

1. I am fluent in a language other than English. (1 step forward)
2. I have taught ELLs in a class before. (1 step forward)
3. I feel prepared to teach ELLs when they are on my class rosters. (1 step forward)
4. I feel unprepared to teach ELLs when they are on my class rosters. (1 step backward)
5. My education program required one class on teaching ELLs to graduate. (1 step forward)
6. My education program required more than one class on teaching ELLs to graduate. (2 steps forward)
7. My education program did not require any classes on teaching ELLs to graduate. (1 step backward)
8. I have personally sought PD on teaching ELLs or online resources to learn how to meet the needs of ELLs in my classroom. (1 step forward)
9. I believe ELLs should be in mainstream classrooms. (2 steps forward)
10. I believe ELLs should not be in mainstream classrooms. (1 step forward)
11. I differentiate for ELLs when they are in my classroom (2 steps forward)
12. How much I differentiate for ELLs depends on how many there are (1 step backward)
13. I don't feel I have to differentiate for ELLs because I am not certified in TESOL (2 steps backwards)
14. I am aware of culturally responsive teaching and use it in my classroom. (2 steps forwards)
15. I want what is best for all students and want to learn more. (3 steps forwards)