

Preparing Content Teachers to Teach ELLs in their Classroom

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Abstract

This capstone project aims to support content teachers to be prepared to teach English Language Learners (ELLs) in their classrooms. Many teachers are not prepared to teach their ELLs because teachers feel unprepared, have low self-efficacy, and lack of theoretical knowledge. A review of studies has shown these reasons and causes consequences to the ELLs. Due to content teachers not being prepared, there are studies demonstrating ELLs' academic performances and their self-efficacy have been affected. Solutions to the problem is to get to know your ELLs, implement different instructional strategies, and use additional resources to help support ELLs in the classroom. Recommendations include adding more time to present the professional development sessions, presenting additional series of the professional development throughout the school year, and giving teacher choice on what they need to better support their ELLs.

Keywords: English Language Learners, preparing content teachers, theoretical knowledge, academic performance, self-efficacy

Chapter 1: Introduction

In the U.S., public schools, there is a growing population of English Language Learners (ELLs) all at different levels with some not able to read or write in their native language. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2022), in the fall of 2019, about 10% or 5 million ELLs were in the U.S. public schools compared to the fall of 2010 with 9.2% or 4.5 million ELLs. Like in many school districts, ELLs in my school district are being placed in mainstream classrooms and classroom teachers feel ill prepared to teach and support ELLs in the classroom for several reasons including lack of teachers' preparedness, teacher's self-efficacy, and the lack of theoretical knowledge.

Teacher preparedness is connected with teachers' practical and theoretical knowledge about how to appropriately teach ELLs in the classroom and provide appropriate accommodations. Many teachers have little to no training about teaching ELLs (Deng et al., 2021; Stairs-Davenport, 2021). Thus, professional development sessions that aim at teaching educators about ELLs is crucial. In these sessions, teachers must learn how to support ELLs in their communicative competence and content learning (Deng et al., 2021) and second language acquisition (SLA) theories (Krashen, 1982). Teachers must also learn how to incorporate students' funds of knowledge (FoK) (Moll et al., 1992). Teachers using FoK in the classroom will help ELLs improve their participation and their content learning. For example, home visits and incorporating ELLs' cultural backgrounds into the classroom. Content teachers must know and need to be able to use what they know about ELLs who come to the classroom with diverse cultural backgrounds to appropriately support them. However, teachers' experiences with culturally responsive teaching and diverse setting are very minimal (Cho et al., 2020).

Teacher perceived preparedness is also associated with their self-efficacy based on sense of responsibility for the ELLs' learning, and effectiveness in general teaching practices (Deng et al., 2021). Self-efficacy "refers to one's belief in one's ability to achieve a task" (Kim & Morita-Mullaney, 2020, p. 231). In other words, self-efficacy is about a person's belief about their own abilities accomplishing a goal or task. A classroom teacher now having to teach ELLs can cause a lack of preparation and low self-efficacy. When a teacher shifts to a different setting, competence will most likely reduce and their self-efficacy may be inadequate to overcome the challenges of the new setting (Kim & Morita-Mullaney, 2020).

Teachers' lack of preparedness to support ELLs affect their achievement. ELLs face challenges of learning a new language and developing academic proficiency. These challenges mean ELLs tend to have a lower achievement test scores in reading and mathematics than their peers (Soland & Sandilos, 2021). Without any kind of support for ELLs, the achievement gaps will widen (Johnson & Wells, 2017).

ELLs experience low self-efficacy due to teachers' lack of preparedness. Student self-efficacy is also defined as students' confidence in their ability to achieve an educational goal or outcome (Soland & Sandilos, 2021). Improving ELLs' self-efficacy may help in closing the achievement gaps and it can start from the teachers. If ELLs have negative attitudes or perceive less expectations, it will in turn shape ELLs' academic identity and have low self-efficacy (Soland & Sandilos, 2021).

Thus, the purpose of this paper is to help classroom teachers be prepared to teach ELLs through a professional development session. In Chapter 2, I will review the literature on teachers' lack of preparedness. Chapter 3 will describe a professional development session that I will lead to provide teachers some knowledge about ELLs and how best to support them. I will

share some culturally responsive instruction strategies that teachers can use in their classroom. It is important for teachers to be prepared to support ELLs by expanding their knowledge and skills in culturally and linguistically ways. I also plan to provide resources teachers can use or go to such as an ENL teacher or Blueprint. Chapter 4 will conclude with implications for teaching and learning.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This Chapter includes a review of studies that pertains to the lack of preparedness of content teachers teaching ELLs. The themes emerged from the literature includes teachers' issues with feeling about being prepared to teach ELLs, self-efficacy, and their theoretical knowledge, and students' issues with academic achievement their self-efficacy. Before discussing these themes, I will present the theories of, second language acquisition (SLA), and funds of knowledge (FoK). While SLA theories explain how learners acquire a new language, FoK helps educators understand of a whole student and, their abilities and experiences. Both theories will explain what teachers should and can do to meet the needs of ELLs.

Theories of Second Language Acquisition and Funds of Knowledge

Among second language acquisition theories are Stephen Krashen's (1982) comprehensible input and Swain's (1985) comprehensible output. Krashen (1982) argues learners of a new language need to be exposed to language input (1) that is slightly above their current language level (i). That is, learning a new language is most effective when learners receive comprehensible input represented as ($i + 1$), in order to help students progress with their language development (Ellis, 2020). In a classroom, comprehensible can be done in two ways, linguistic and non-linguistic. Linguistically, teachers can speak at a slower rate and with clear articulation, which gives learners more processing time and helps acquiring the language. Non-linguistically, teachers can use realia and pictures to support language acquisition (Krashen, 1982). Relatedly, the comprehensible output hypothesis (Swain, 1985) posits comprehensible input is not sufficient for learning a language. Swain argues that learners need to produce language and must pay attention to the means of expression. Thus, input and output activities can result in better learning (Ellis, 2020; Lightbrown & Spada, 2013).

Funds of Knowledge

Funds of knowledge (FoK) is “historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being” (Moll et al., 1992, p. 133). That is, these funds include social, economic, and productive activities of people in local communities. Researchers have called teachers to use FoK in their classroom to understand ELLs’ experiences, which will help teachers develop their pedagogy and curriculum (Moll et al., 1992). Indeed, Moll et al. (1992) argues that classroom activities and material that incorporate students’ skills and experiences will motivate students and help them learn better. FoK is a way for teachers to know their students beyond the classroom and be able to bring that knowledge as a resource to help provide instruction appropriate for that student (Moll et al., 1992).

Many teachers are unprepared to teach ELLs due to not understanding how ELLs acquire a language. The SLA theories of comprehensible input and comprehensible output describes how an ELL can acquire a second language. This knowledge is beneficial for teachers to understand, in order to provide appropriate instruction to the ELLs. Teachers can provide input (listening and reading) activities as well as output (writing and speaking) activities to support their ELLs. Teachers must also look at how the ELL performs in their classroom, know the “whole” ELL through using their FoK. Teachers can use FoK to help them create appropriate instruction and activities to help support ELLs. Thus, teachers’ use of SLA theories and FoK in the classroom can help them become better prepared to teach their ELLs in the classroom.

Factors Contributing Teachers’ Unpreparedness to Support ELLs

Feeling of Being Unprepared

Content teachers feel unprepared to support ELLs in their classroom at different levels. Stairs-Davenport's (2021), survey of 169 elementary teachers revealed about 68% of teachers felt unprepared to teach ELLs. Content teachers feeling unprepared to teach ELLs do not know where to start. Among these teachers, about 14% of the teachers have expressed of not knowing how to approach teaching ELLs, 29% felt not knowing how to adapt curriculum and assessment for ELLs. Likewise, most of the 126 teachers surveyed in Hiatt and Fairbairn's (2018) study faced a challenge in using a variety of classroom-based assessments to measure progress and learning of ELLs. One of the teachers reported, "there is a huge language barrier so it's difficult for me to know if anything I'm attempting to teach is soaking in at all" and "How do you grade ELs fairly" (Hiatt & Fairbairn, 2018, p. 246). That is, teachers are not sure of ways to support ELLs in their instruction and assessment. In fact, about 26% of the surveyed teachers in Stairs-Davenport's study felt they did not know how to teach ways ELLs can best learn, and many in Hiatt and Fairbairn's felt poor in preparation of ELL strategies. Such challenges may have arisen due to teachers not taking college classes on how to support ELLs. In their survey study of 6,670 teachers examine the preparedness of teachers teaching ELLs. Deng et al. (2021) found out of a four-point scale; 1.84 teachers felt unprepared to teach ELLs. Many of these teachers did not feel prepared to teach ELLs when they did not take any classes during their teacher education programs.

Teachers feel unprepared teaching ELLs when providing less demanding cognitive tasks in their instructional strategies. The analyses of de Araujo's (2017) classroom observations and artifacts of three classrooms and survey and interviews of three mathematics teachers revealed most of the tasks were repetitive and low in cognitive demand. The teachers chose these tasks because they did not know how to provide instruction to ELLs. These low cognitive demand

tasks include memorization and procedures without connections. Similarly, in Hanson-Thomas et al. (2016)'s survey study in Texas of 159 teachers revealed how unprepared they felt teaching ELLs within their instructional strategies. Along with feeling unprepared to instruct ELLs, teachers felt unprepared to provide individual differences to select instructional strategies that facilitate ELL students' cognitive academic language development, -0.345 (Hanson-Thomas et al., 2016).

Thus, most content teachers feel unprepared to teach ELLs in their classroom. In particular, they are not prepared to provide the instruction that uses strategies and tasks that are beneficial for ELLs. Also, they are unprepared to assess ELLs' learning and progress. Another reason for teachers' lack of preparedness is their low self-efficacy, which I discuss below.

Teachers' Low Self-Efficacy

A teachers' low self-efficacy is connected with teachers not being prepared to teach ELLs in their classroom through experience and degree, and instructional strategies. When a teacher believes they are not able to master a task, then they have low self-efficacy. Kim and Morita-Mullaney's survey and interview study of 80 teachers was conducted to examine a teacher's self-efficacy of teaching ELLs based on experience and degree on teaching ELLs. From this study, teachers who had little experience or no degree had the lowest self-efficacy. One teacher with little experience stated, "I use the readings series as a basis and we bring in all kinds of things and stories. I taught 1st grade for 10 years and I've taught every grade up to 6" (Kim & Morita-Mullaney, 2020, p. 246). This statement describes the teacher lowering academic expectations based on her ELLs' low levels of English proficiency, which means the teacher is not providing appropriate instruction for her ELLs. In a similar study, Cho et al. (2020) found when surveying 27 teachers on their self-efficacy in teaching ELLs that most teachers struggled incorporating

their instructional strategies to meet the needs of ELLs. For example, teachers had low self-efficacy when it came to their confidence in developing culturally related context activities (83.9%), and relating the curriculum to students' culture and life needs (80.8%) (Cho et al., 2020). Similarly, Cruz et al.'s (2020) survey study of a bigger sample of 245 teachers on their self-efficacy on instructional strategies.

Teachers do not have confidence making connections of ELLs' cultural background with the instruction. For instance, with a mean score of 69.9, a teacher's self-efficacy on using examples that are familiar to students from diverse cultural backgrounds was the highest on the low range (Cho et al., 2020). That is, a teachers' self-efficacy is low when it comes to using ELLs' background knowledge to help support their instruction. Also, a teacher with low self-efficacy has the notion of doing less language and content to decrease complexity for the ELLs (Kim & Morita-Mullaney, 2020). This doing less is reducing the content and language demands. One teacher who had little experience stated:

“Trying to limit vocabulary or taking some of the words out...I just talked to a teacher, for the ISTEP+ prompt [standardized state test] ...it gives them all these directions and all these examples and going over their head and they are so frustrated, so part of it is eliminating some of the English of it.” (Kim & Morita-Mullaney, 2020, p. 244)

Communicating with ELLs is an important instructional strategy to build relationships and to their understanding of the material. Similarly, Cho et al.'s (2020) study, about 70% of the surveyed teachers demonstrated the lowest self-efficacy in communicating with ELLs, which includes comprehension of instructional material and effective discussions in the classroom. Another result of low self-efficacy was the curriculum contracted out. A teacher would find

resources by googling them and seeing if they worked for the ELLs (Kim & Morita-Mullaney, 2020). A teacher shared,

“because I’ve got a few things from the lead teacher and we use Common Lit- it is free, it is wonderful! It’s a program that’s available on the web and you sign up and you put in your class” (Kim & Morita-Mullaney, 2020, p. 245).

Teachers finding and trying resources from the internet to use for ELLs may not be suitable for ELLs. In Cho et al.’s (2020) interviews with the teachers to explain their low self-efficacy, they stated it was due to lack of experience and training.

These findings demonstrate that teachers should be building background knowledge by implementing curriculum that incorporates ELLs’ cultural backgrounds to help build their academic abilities. Many teachers have the least confidence about making instructional materials and discussions that are comprehensible for ELLs. That is due to the lack of understanding of ELLs’ home languages and backgrounds.

Lack of Theoretical Knowledge

Lack of theoretical knowledge about how to teach ELLs exemplifies teacher unpreparedness to appropriately teach ELLs. Many teachers believe ELLs should not use their home language and only speak English (Fredricks & Warriner, 2016; Rizzuto, 2017). Based on SLA theories (Krashen, 1987; Swain, 1985), home language is crucial for ELLs to use to acquire a second language, and thus teachers should support ELLs’ home language within their instruction and materials. Rizzuto’s (2017) analyses of interviews, observations, artifacts and a survey of 10 teachers from the Northeast revealed that seven were concerned with ELLs using their native language in their classrooms. One of the teachers stated she sometimes brings the children’s home language in the classroom but that never was observed or encouraged for any of

the ELLs to use their home language. This teacher understands to include home language in the classroom but does not know how to do so. In a similar study, Fredricks and Warriner (2016) found four mainstream teachers believe ELLs should acquire English first before content can be taught. One teacher reported, “It’s English-only at school. Don’t forget your native tongue, it’s important to remember it, but speak it at home. At school, we are ALL speaking English” (Fredricks & Warriner, 2016, p. 316). Many teachers have an English only rule in their class, which shows that many teachers do not understand the SLA theories to incorporate ELLs’ home language to help acquire a second language. In Shim and Shur’s (2017) interview study of five teachers, one teacher made a point on speaking English only:

I do not allow my students to speak in their home language in class. I offer practical advice to the ELL students who wish to maintain their home language, but allowing students to speak in their home language at school does not help the students learning English. (p. 28)

The interview demonstrated respect and value of an ELL’s home language but no way of implementing the SLA theories to help their learning. Likewise, many teachers believed the reason why ELLs’ learning is limited is due to the use of their home language at school and home. According to Shim and Shur (2017), teachers believed the frequent use of their home language delays the learning of English in which they view as essential for ELLs to succeed academically and lives. Teachers view the use of home language as hinderance to students’ learning and in their learning English.

However, using the ELLs’ home language is beneficial in acquiring a second language and helps them succeed academically. This is a lack of understanding of implementing SLA theories to help support ELLs in the classroom. Similarly, Tandon et al.’s (2017) interview study

of 36 teachers, three teachers (8%) can demonstrate an initial awareness of the process of learning a second language and able to apply it in teaching ELLs. The teachers mention different ideas referencing SLA in their interviews. One teacher stated the idea of code switching between academic and conversational English and discussed about comprehensible input (Tandon, et al., 2017). In Rizzuto's (2017) study, seven teachers thought ELLs should not use their home language in the classrooms, and teachers lacked an understanding of second language acquisition. In addition, seven teachers observed that they could not use the same pedagogical practices with their ELLs as the native English-speaking students (Rizzuto, 2017). This finding suggests that teachers should not be providing the same instruction to the native English-speaking students as to the ELLs. Teachers can provide the same instruction along with using SLA theories to support ELLs. Additionally, teachers need to be sociolinguistic consciousness when it comes to teaching ELLs. Tandon et al. (2017) found only four (11%) teachers showed awareness of sociolinguistic consciousness. This finding means there is a low percentage of teachers that understand how language, culture, and identity are intertwined as well as being aware of language use and language education. Many teachers do not understand how to use the FoK of their ELLs' to help teach ELLs in the classroom. The lack of knowledge of how ELLs acquire a new language is concerning as it directly contradicts how ELLs learn and retain language (Rizzuto, 2017).

Providing appropriate instructional strategies to support ELLs connects with understanding the SLA theories. According to Rizzuto (2017), 70% of the teachers were not pedagogically equipped to appropriately instruct their ELLs. Many teachers do not want to differentiate or accommodate their instruction to meet the needs of ELLs. In contrast, Tandon et al. (2017) found 12 (33%) of teachers are able to use different types of scaffolding strategies

including oral support, pre-teaching vocabulary, visual cues, and graphic organizers. These teachers have an initial awareness of how to incorporate theoretical knowledge into instructional strategies, however, they were not able to put it altogether for the beneficial of ELLs in their learning. Grouping ELLs in a homogenous group can not be beneficial. Rizzuto (2017) found one teacher putting all nine of her ELLs into one homogenous group and gave them all the same books to read, and there was no prior knowledge or pre-reading strategies observed. ELLs benefit from groups that will help them succeed. Having ELLs grouped with their peers who are native English-speaking or with ELLs who have a higher English proficiency level will help them acquire the English language.

Effects of Teacher's Unpreparedness on ELLs

Teachers' feeling ill prepared, low self-efficacy, and lack of theoretical knowledge of ELLs influence ELLs' academic achievement and low self-efficacy. As research shows below, there is an achievement gap between ELLs and non-ELLs (e.g., Johnson & Wells, 2017; Sandilos et al. 2020).

Achievement Performances

In schools, a students' achievement performance is based on assessments. With the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), assessments have become more rigorous, which influence ELLs' performance and progress. According to Johnson and Wells (2017), ELLs are facing challenges such as learning a new language while learning content and will likely experience several years of struggle to keep pace with peers. Within these challenges, ELLs tend to perform below grade level in all content area (Soland & Sandilos, 2020). Nearly half of ELLs in 4th grade and over 70% in 8th grade perform below grade level in math as well as majority of ELLs are below proficient in reading (Soland & Sandilos, 2020). Without the support from

teachers, ELLs will continue to have low achievement performances, therefore, causing gaps to widen between themselves and their peers.

Teachers being unprepared effects ELLs' achievement performance. In Johnson and Wells' (2017) study, the entire California state public schools state assessments demonstrate across the grade levels 3-11, that only 3% of ELLs exceeded the standard for mathematics and 8% met the standard compared to English only students whereas 17% exceeded and 22% met the standard. Similarly, Sandilos et al.'s (2020) study of 332 students, scored significantly lower than their peers in mathematics, $B = -0.25$. In English language arts achievement, the gap widens. Only 2% of ELLs exceeded the standard and 9% met the standard whereas 20% of English only students exceeded and 31% met the standard (Johnson & Wells, 2017). Sandilos et al. (2020) used a science assessment to address the achievement gap, and ELLs scored significantly lower than their peers, $B = -0.21$. That is, there are achievement gaps throughout the content areas. These findings may suggest that teachers are not well prepared to teach and support their ELLs to achieve academic success.

Achievement gaps can also occur within a period of time through grade levels. Finders et al.'s (2020) study of 18,170 kindergartners who were followed into the third grade. Assessments of reading and mathematics were used to measure achievement between ELLs and their peers. According to Finders (2020), the achievement gaps in math for kindergarten was .14 standard deviations and in third grade was .13 standard deviations. In a similar study of a cohort of 5th grade to 8th grade students in California, Soland and Sandilos (2020) found in math ELLs scored .6 standard deviation lower than their peers. For reading, the achievement gap was .10 standard deviations in kindergarten and .13 standard deviations in third grade (Finders et al., 2020).

Likewise, the ELLs' scores for reading were .65 standard deviations below their peers (Soland & Sandilos, 2020).

These findings suggest the need to close achievement gaps for ELLs. ELLs generally have much lower in math and reading achievement than their peers (Finders et al., 2020; Soland & Sandilos, 2020).

Shim and Shur's (2017) interview study of four middle school and high school ELL students also address achievement gaps due to teacher effectiveness. One student reported, "The class is boring because we don't do anything. She [the teacher] doesn't let us talk. And when we do something, sometimes it's the same thing over and over" (Shim & Shur, 2017, p. 26). In this situation, students are not being challenged cognitively and academically. There is repetition of tasks and instruction from the teachers. When ELLs are not being challenged to learn, their academic success decreases causing gaps in their achievement. In addition, students believe they should tell their stories. One student asserted:

I wish my teachers would let me talk to my friends and do group work...my teachers would rather have me stay quiet and say nothing. When I don't say anything in class, I don't feel like I am learning anything", while another student stated, "I wish we get to talk about and write stories of our own life so that we can talk about our life with other people. (Shim & Shur, 2017, p. 27)

This excerpt shows that teachers are not using SLA to provide learning opportunities for these ELLs. By having instruction connected with their lives will benefit ELLs' academic success. If teachers are unwilling to listen to their ELLs, then the ELLs' learning will be affected, causing a gap in their academics. When ELLs are not provided with the appropriate academic needs, they feel unvalued by their teachers which in turn will lead to achievement gaps (Shim & Shur, 2017).

Some other influences of these gaps can be from the language demands across content areas, not appropriate accommodations for ELLs, and not providing the appropriate supports (Sandilos et al., 2020). Given these achievement gaps, teachers using SLA to appropriately instruct ELLs, will be effective and close the gaps.

ELLs' Low Self-Efficacy

Academics self-efficacy is one cause of ELLs' self-efficacy. In Soland and Sandilos' (2020) survey study of a cohort of 5th to 8th grade students, ELLs scored .23 standard deviations lower than their peers in mathematics self-efficacy. Similarly, Sandilos et al.'s (2020) survey study of 332 students, scored significantly lower in mathematics self-efficacy than their peers, $B = -0.23$. Also, ELLs scored a quarter standard deviation below their peers in reading self-efficacy (Soland & Sandilos, 2020). That is, there is low self-efficacy throughout the content area. These findings suggest with the gaps in academics and their self-efficacy, ELLs can doubt their own intelligence which will cause lack of self-confidence in the content areas and it can cause more gaps in their achievement and harm in their self-efficacy.

Perceptions is another cause of ELLs' low self-efficacy. These perceptions are from ELLs' viewing themselves as a student as well as their insights on how teachers view them. Fredricks and Warriner's (2016) interview study of 12 ELL students reported how they did not like being separate from their peers during the four-hour block. One student stated, it was "low class" and they felt like it gave them a negative status. Two students explained how the four-hour block was low class. One stated, "Cause they teach you what you already learned" and the other student stated, "Cause they didn't pass their assessment" (Fredricks & Warriner, 2016, p. 318). These findings suggest that teachers believe ELLs are low performing students and the ELLs are able to see what the teachers believe, therefore, causes ELLs to have low self-efficacy in the

classroom and they are not able to achieve their academic success. Another student stated he was not good at reading and when asked why, he said, “It’s cause I speak a different language, like Spanish” (Fredricks & Warriner, 2016, p. 318-319). This finding demonstrates how he perceives himself as a learner. The student believes he has limited reading skills because his home language is Spanish in which he sees as a limitation. Negative thoughts and comments will affect ELLs’ self-efficacy to perform academic tasks. It is important for teachers to support ELLs and build their self-efficacy. When teachers support their ELLs in the classroom, ELLs’ self-efficacy will increase.

Solutions

There are solutions that can be used to address the problem of teacher’s unpreparedness. Teachers are not sure of ways to support ELLs in their classroom because many took few or did not take college classes on how to support ELLs (Deng et al., 2021). In addition, teachers are not prepared to provide the instruction that uses strategies and tasks that would be beneficial for ELLs (Stairs-Davenport, 2021). There are college courses teachers could take online to better prepare themselves to teach ELLs. When teachers take the initiative to be better prepared, then teachers will be able to teach ELLs and ELLs will benefit. That is, having teachers becoming better prepared, will also increase teachers’ self-efficacy.

In Kim and Morita-Mullaney (2020)’s study, teachers with high self-efficacy are able to teach ELLs in their classroom. One teacher stated:

I’m pretty good on my feet, if they need a different explanation, we try to use technology too. If the [classroom elementary] teacher is trying to ask them to write a summary, my students that are at a level 1 or 2, would be asked to orally

tell somebody what they need-so a lot of times, it's in the finished product. (pp. 242-243)

When a teacher has high self-efficacy such as this teacher stated above, then teachers will feel better prepared and be able to better support their ELLs.

For teachers to feel prepared and have high self-efficacy, they can have knowledge about the SLA theories and FoK. Teachers need to understand SLA theories and FoK. One teacher has stated:

It [theory] has to be grounded in her ELL teaching. Language learning is not going to happen overnight, and teaching is not going to happen overnight... There will be more and more ways for me to learn and grow. I'm the type of person, I will never be 100% in this skill. (Kim & Morita-Mullaney, 2020, pp. 243-244)

This teacher explained that teachers need to understand SLA theories and it is not done quickly. In addition, both of these teachers demonstrated their knowledge about the theories and how best to support their ELLs. This stems down to teachers needing to understand the SLA theories and FoK as it is crucial in order to support their ELLs.

As reviewed above, there are effects on ELLs when teachers are unprepared. The achievement gaps need to close, and the ELLs' self-efficacy needs to be built up. ELLs should be challenged cognitively and academically. This relates to the SLA theories where students are using the comprehensible input ($i + 1$) by already having a level of knowledge (i) and being challenged to acquire new knowledge (1) (Krashen, 1982). In addition, students using comprehensible output by writing and speaking will help ELLs acquire the second language thus ELLs becoming successful (Swain, 1985). Teachers need to start viewing their ELLs as students that are able to academically perform. In

turn, ELLs will acquire a high self-efficacy and be able to perform well academically and close the achievement gaps of their peers. As a result, when teachers include listening, reading, writing, and speaking along with challenging ELLs cognitively and academically in their instruction, then teachers will be able to support their ELLs and they will be successful.

Along with SLA theories, teachers need to incorporate FoK into their instruction in order to be prepared to support ELLs. Teachers know to get to know their students in the classroom. This goes for ELLs too. Teachers need to get to know their ELLs as well as understand who they are beyond the classroom. According to Moll et al. (1992), the teacher will know the “whole” student by having knowledge about the student in multiple scores of activities including cultural background, family, language, traditions and customs, holidays, and the communities of where they live. When teachers know their ELLs beyond the classroom, they are able to support ELLs better. Teachers can do home visits to meet their ELLs and their families. It is an opportunity for teachers to get to know their ELLs’ in their own home and start building a relationship. Teachers will be able to provide the appropriate instruction and materials that will accommodate ELLs’ learning and acquiring a language.

Fundamentally, the above reviewed studies show content teachers’ unpreparedness to teach ELLs because teachers are feeling unprepared, have low self-efficacy, and a lack of theoretical knowledge. Research has revealed these reasons contribute to students’ low academic achievement and thus increasing the achievement gaps between ELLs and non-ELLs (e.g. (Finders et al., 2020; Sandilos et al., 2020) and students’ low self-efficacy which is also associated with academic efficacy (e.g. (Fredricks & Warriner, 2016; Soland & Sandilos, 2020).

These findings inform my goals and content of the professional development plan which I describe in Chapter 3. It is designed to help provide content teachers some knowledge about ELLs and how best to support them. I will share some culturally responsive instruction strategies that content teachers can use in their classroom. I also plan to provide resources and materials for teachers.

Chapter 3: Description of the Product and Tools

In this Chapter, I will present a professional development session to help content teachers K-12 be prepared to teach ELLs in their classroom at Southern Cayuga School District. Content teachers are unprepared to teach ELLs in their classroom due to their feeling of unpreparedness, lack of theoretical knowledge, and low self-efficacy. At this school district, I have observed teachers stating they do not know what to do for their ELLs or do not provide the appropriate instruction or materials. I reviewed this problem in following with literature. It is apparent that content teachers do not have the knowledge or appropriate supports for ELLs to teach them in their classroom.

The professional development will take place in the fall right before school starts. This will help content teachers get started for the school year. It will be one session and will take place at Southern Cayuga School District for an hour. The professional development will only be an hour because there will be constraint on time due to teachers being given time to get their classrooms ready. In addition, the professional development is a part of a series of multiple professional development sessions. Again, due to the limited time I would be allowed, I limited the ideas and activities to the basics for teachers to be able to use right away. There is a possibility of continuing with more sessions as the year progresses. The professional development session will be presented in PowerPoint and will provide materials and resources for teachers to take back with them to use in their classroom. First, this professional development session will go over the problem and its consequences of ELLs. This way teachers will have an understanding of the problem. Next, I will present different materials and resources teachers will be able to use in their classroom to be able to teach ELLs with the appropriate supports. Teachers

will begin with completing a survey of how they currently feel about their preparedness on teaching ELLs (Appendix A).

Getting to Know Your ELLs

Teachers should get to know their ELLs but in order to do so, they first need to reflect on their own identity and examine their own values, beliefs, and experiences (Tandon et al., 2017). I would have the teachers think about their own identity and write a few things about themselves on an identity map (Appendix B). Afterwards, I would have teachers share with a partner some of their ideas they have written. I will ask for teachers to share some of their ideas to the whole room. The identity map would include language, family members, favorite things in your home, family traditions, favorite foods, country where your family is from, hobbies, favorite places to visit, favorite movie or book, and pets. This identity map can be used as well for getting to know their ELLs. This is a great way to get to know your ELLs and even having other students learn from one another. In addition, it is a good way to create a welcoming and learning environment for the ELLs.

Another way to get to know your ELLs is creating a fingerprint. ELLs would write different words or phrases about themselves in the shape of a fingerprint. Fingerprints are different from each person. This idea will demonstrate how each student in the classroom is different with all the different types of fingerprints. I would show an example of my fingerprint (Appendix C). I will give teachers about 5-10 minutes on creating their own fingerprint. Again, I will have them share their fingerprints.

After the two activities I will debrief with a couple of questions. I will ask what do you think of these activities? And would you use any or both with your ELLs? What about with all of your students? Next, I will discuss how these activities relate to my Chapter 2 literature.

Teachers who create such an environment, will help ELLs succeed academically but it will also build a strong community in the classroom. As discussed in Chapter 2, many teachers do not use culturally responsive strategies to instruct their ELLs (Rizzuto 2017). They were concerned about ELLs using their home language in the classroom. This idea of not being able to use their home language contradicts with the SLA theories. It is crucial for ELLs to use home language to acquire a second language (Krashen, 1982; Swain, 1985). Communication with ELLs is important as an instructional strategy to build relationships. In Cho et al.'s (2020) study, majority of the teachers demonstrated a low self-efficacy when it came to communicating with ELLs. The identity map is a tool to spark communication with the ELLs.

Different Instructional Strategies

Teachers should be providing ELLs different instructional strategies in order for them to succeed; however, that is not the case. Using a variety of strategies helps ELLs acquire the second language as well as succeed academically. According to Hiatt and Fairbairn (2018) and Stairs-Davenport (2019), many teachers felt unprepared to teach ELLs due to not knowing how to use different strategies to support their ELLs.

Different instructional strategies include visuals, which is a way for ELLs to understand the material. That is, visuals are a way to provide comprehensible input for ELLs. As stated by Krashen (1982), learners learn new language when receiving comprehensible input ($i + 1$) by a non-linguistical way through visuals. Visuals can be illustrations, pictures, cartoons, diagrams, Google Slides, videos, or paintings. For example, when they are learning new vocabulary, there should be an image next to the word. As a bonus, have the word in their home language. Again, home language is crucial for acquiring second language. I would have teachers create visuals for

different words and this would take five minutes. I will have teachers share their visuals to the room.

Another instructional strategy is graphic organizers. Graphic organizers make the content more accessible and to display relationships between concepts. In Tandon et al.'s (2017) study, there was a small percentage of teachers that were able to use different types of instructional strategies like graphic organizers. Graphic organizers help break the ideas into smaller chunks for ELLs to comprehend. Some examples of graphic organizers are four square, a concept web, Venn Diagram, and outline with sentence starters. I would show the different examples of graphic organizers. I would have teachers in pairs create a graphic organizer for subject or concept they teach within their grade level. I would give approximately 10-15 minutes to complete and I would ask some teachers to share. Next, we will debrief by asking the teachers could they create graphic organizers to support their ELLs? and do you think any of these graphic organizers could be used for all students?

Next, I will introduce translating materials as an instructional strategy that teachers should be providing for ELLs. Every material should be translated into the ELLs' home language. Translating the materials will help ELLs acquire the second language and succeed academically. Many teachers in Fredricks and Warriner's (2016) study believe ELLs should speak English only. Similarly, Shim and Shur's (2017) reported that many teachers also believed ELLs should speak English and that the use of students' home language interferes with learning a second language. As discussed above, home language is important for acquiring a second language. Therefore, teachers should encourage ELLs to use their home language whenever possible and to be to provide their materials in their home language.

Wrap Up and Intended Outcomes

Teachers will participate in a hypothetical situation activity. I will present two situations, one at a time. Teachers will work in groups for about 5-10 minutes discussing what they would do in that situation. They will write the ideas down on the paper and will share with the rest of the room. After sharing out the ideas of the two situations, I will discuss that if teachers did not know what to do in the situations pertaining with ELLs, that they could go to the ENL teacher as a resource for help. The idea is that the ENL teacher is the greatest resource you can have. ENL teachers have the knowledge, skills, and resources on ELLs. Content teachers should collaborate with the ENL teacher to help provide the appropriate instruction and strategies to meet the needs of the ELLs (Deng et al., 2021).

At the end of the presentation, I will share a few resources for content teachers to look at on their own time. One of the resources is the NYS Education Department website, where there is a section on ELLs that provides more resources for teachers to use. It entails educator resources and parent resources called “Bilingual Education” under the tab “Education Areas”. Another website is Colorin Colorado, which has many articles pertaining to ways a teacher can support their ELLs. There are basics for teachers to help support their ELLs if they are new to teaching, resources on the best strategies to teach ELLs, and how to create a welcoming classroom. Podcasts are another tool to use to find ways to support ELLs in the classroom. The two podcasts I listen to are “Equipping ELLs” and “The ESL Teaching Podcast”. Both podcasts provide strategies teachers can use in the classroom to support their ELLs and welcome ELLs in their classroom. In addition, the podcasts provide the resources that they discuss for you to use.

Overall, there are a several intended outcomes from the professional development. The first and foremost, content teachers are prepared to teach their ELLs in their classroom by using the appropriate supports presented from my presentation. Second outcome is for teachers to

understand the SLA theories and FoK in order to teach their ELLs. Next, for teachers to feel prepared and confident to teach their ELLs.

The activities will help better prepare teachers to teach their ELLs in the classroom. Teachers will be better prepared to teach ELLs, have an understanding of SLA theories and FoK, and have high self-efficacy through this professional development. In turn, by providing the appropriate supports, ELLs' achievement gaps and self-efficacy will greatly improve and they will succeed. At the end, I will have the teachers ask any questions they may have. In addition, teachers will fill out a sheet on how they feel now teaching ELLs, one to two takeaways, anything they might want to learn more, and to provide feedback on the professional development presentation (Appendix D). I would like to hear feedback to better the presentation if needed to make sure teachers are better prepared to teach their ELLs in the classroom.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

This capstone project has explored content teachers being unprepared to teach ELLs in their classroom. Teachers feeling unprepared, having low self-efficacy, and lack of theoretical knowledge are reasons identified and discussed. Based on the identified reasons, they have also caused consequences on ELLs. ELLs' academic performances and their self-efficacy have been affected. In this Chapter, I will first summarize the findings of the project. Then, I will discuss implications for learning and teaching. Next, I will present recommendations and final thoughts.

Summary

I reviewed various studies examining teachers' lack of preparedness to support ELLs which, has several takeaways. The first takeaway is content teachers do not where to begin when it comes to teaching ELLs and causes them to feel unprepared and have low self-efficacy (Kim & Morita-Mullaney, 2020; Stairs-Davenport, 2021). Content teachers are not sure what instructional strategies they are to use to support ELLs. I found that teachers may not have taken college classes and professional development on how to teach ELLs (Hiatt & Fairbairn, 2018; Stairs-Davenport, 2021). When teachers think they know how to teach their ELLs, they provide ELLs with instruction that is not appropriate. Teachers will give less demanding tasks to ELLs to complete (Kim & Morita-Mullaney, 2020). In addition, teachers have low self-efficacy when trying to include ELLs' cultural backgrounds into instruction (Cho et al., 2020). Therefore, I learned the best way for teachers to feel prepared and acquire a high self-efficacy is to develop a professional development session for content teachers to provide ways to teach their ELLs in their classroom.

Another takeaway is content teachers lack the theoretical knowledge of how ELLs acquire a second language. Many content teachers believe ELLs should not use their home

language as it is a hinderance to their learning (Fredricks & Warriner, 2016; Rizzuto, 2017). If teachers knew more about the SLA theories, they would understand that the home language is crucial to be used as well as using different instructional strategies in the classrooms to acquire a second language. In addition, many content teachers are not using FoK of their ELLs to be able to provide appropriate supports for their ELLs (Tandon et al., 2017). When teachers use FoK and SLA theories in their instruction, ELLs will academically succeed.

The last takeaway is the consequences on ELLs with teachers being unprepared. ELLs' academic performances and their self-efficacy have been affected. ELLs' achievement gaps in academics have widen than their peers (Johnson & Wells, 2017; Sandilos et al., 2020; Soland & Sandilos, 2020). ELLs' have low self-efficacy due to perceptions. ELLs believe teachers have negative thoughts about how they learn (Fredricks & Warriner, 2016). Teachers need to support ELLs and build their self-efficacy. When ELLs have a high self-efficacy, they will academically succeed and will close the achievement gaps.

Implications for Student Learning

Based on this capstone project, ELLs will benefit. One way is ELLs will feel like they belong in the classroom. The classroom environment should be welcoming and including the ELLs' cultural background (Cho et al., 2020; Kim & Morita-Mullaney, 2020). When communicating with ELLs, it will create a feeling of them belonging in the classroom as well as building a relationship. As a result, ELLs will acquire a high self-efficacy. ELLs will not doubt their intelligence and their perceptions of teachers will change. When ELLs see their teacher's perception of them in a positive, supporting way, then their self-efficacy will increase and will play an important role in achievement (Fredricks & Warriner, 2016; Soland & Sandilos, 2020). ELLs having the sense of belonging with a high self-efficacy will lead to another benefit.

The next benefit is ELLs' academic performances will increase. The instruction will be differentiated, and ELLs will receive what they need in order to succeed. Therefore, ELLs will be challenged academically and cognitively, and causing academic success (Shim & Shur, 2017). With the idea of being challenged and having academic success, ELLs' achievement gaps will close. The idea of content teachers providing the appropriate instruction and strategies for ELLs, the ELLs will want to do well academically (Soland & Sandilos, 2020). ELLs' self-efficacy relates to their academic performance, therefore, with a high self-efficacy, the gaps may close. Both the ELLs' self-efficacy and academic performance go hand in hand, and it is important to understand that with a high self-efficacy will mean academic success.

Implications for Teaching

Teachers will benefit from this capstone project as well. All content teachers will benefit from the professional development and tools. Professional development is a way for content teachers to acquire materials, resources, and knowledge to bring back into the classroom (Hiatt & Fairbairn, 2018; Stairs-Davenport, 2021). Content teachers will receive background knowledge about the SLA theories and FoK to help understand how ELLs acquire a second language. Teachers will build the foundation skills and knowledge through professional development (Hiatt & Fairbairn, 2018). In addition, teachers will be presented different materials and resources to help support their ELLs. The materials and resources will provide teachers differentiated instruction and appropriate strategies (Tandon et al., 2017). Content teachers will be able to participate with some of the activities to acquire the understanding how it can be used in the classroom. A couple of examples will be shown to content teachers such as my identity map (Appendix A) and my fingerprint (Appendix B). Content teachers will create an identity map, a fingerprint, visuals, and a graphic organizer to take back as examples to use for their classroom.

After participating in these activities, teachers benefit in how easy it is to create them and how it can be used for all students in the classroom (Hiatt & Fairbairn, 2018). Therefore, teachers will not have more work to do, and students will benefit. Also, it will lead to an increase of student achievement with teachers learning and changing their instruction based on student needs (Rizzuto, 2017). Teachers will benefit in having a relationship with their ELLs. Building a positive relationship with ELLs is important as it will increase their self-efficacy and in achievement (Shim & Shur, 2017; Soland & Sandilos, 2020). Teachers will acquire additional resources that will help support their ELLs with an importance on using an ENL teacher. The benefit of teachers acquiring additional resources is teachers can seek to use them to gain more knowledge and more strategies to better support their ELLs (Deng et al., 2021).

Recommendations

The professional development plan is a good starting point. However, a one-hour professional development session is not enough time for teachers to be prepared to teach their ELLs. This only gives teachers just the basics, but more can be done, and should be done. First, I would ask for more time to give a session to teachers. This could be a few hours or a whole day. As stated previously, this professional development is part of a series therefore, there would be more sessions that would progress from the previous session. I would ask to be able to present these sessions throughout the school year. Teachers will learn more with a professional development that is more than one hour and with multiple sessions.

Along with adding more time to professional development, another recommendation is teacher choice. Gathering from teachers what they need in order to better prepare them to teach their ELLs. At the end of my professional development session, I have teachers complete an exit ticket. In the exit ticket, I ask for teachers to write anything else they would like to learn. That

information can be used to create professional development sessions. This way teachers would be more interested in the professional development sessions since they chose the topic and learn what they need to better support their ELLs. Again, the professional development sessions will allow an appropriate time for teachers to learn.

Final Thoughts

In the public schools, there is a growing population of ELLs, and it is important for ELLs to be supported in the classroom. Content teachers' preparedness in the classroom is crucial to teach their ELLs. Teachers feeling prepared, having high self-efficacy, and the theoretical knowledge will better prepare to teach the ELLs in the classroom. It will also lead to ELLs having increased academic performance and high self-efficacy.

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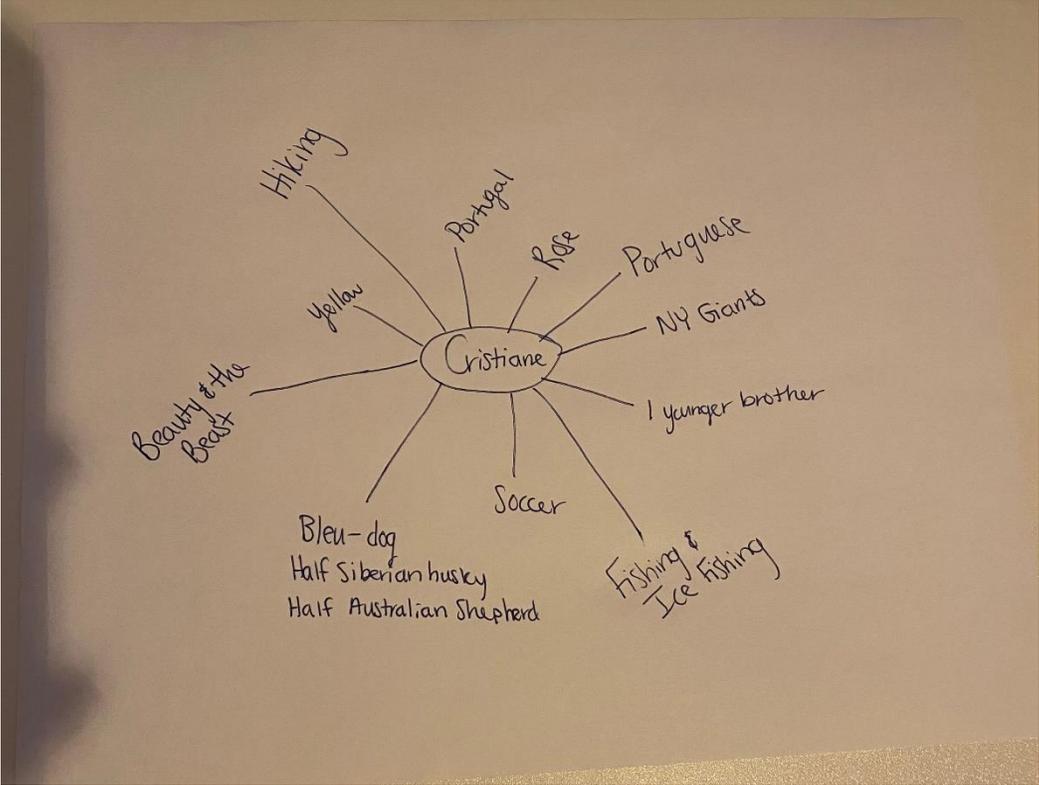
Appendix A

Survey

Survey

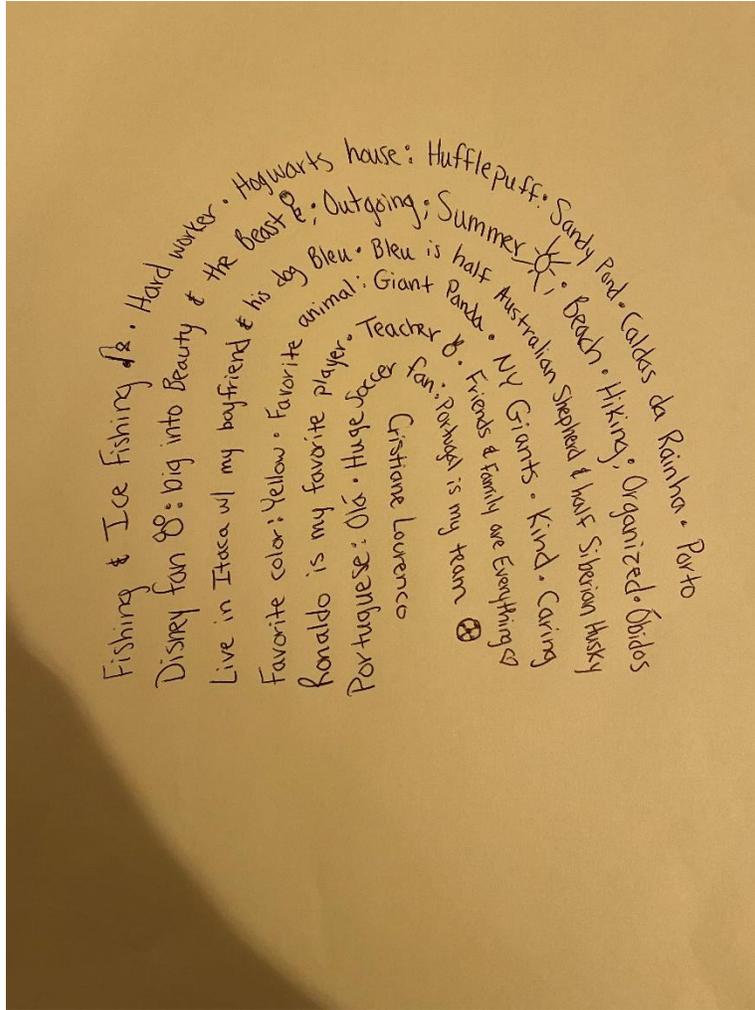
On a scale of 1-5, how do you currently feel about your preparedness on teaching ELLs in your classroom?

Appendix B
My Identity Map



Appendix C

My Fingerprint



Appendix D

Exit Ticket

Exit Ticket

On a scale of 1-5, how do you now feel about your preparedness on teaching ELLs in your classroom?

What are 1-2 takeaways you had from this presentation?

Is there anything you want to learn more about preparing yourself to teach ELLs?

Provide any feedback on the presentation.

Appendix D

Link to Professional Development Presentation Slides

<https://voicethread.com/share/20393366/>