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Yune Kim Tran

George Fox University, ytran@georgefox.edu

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Professional Development and Teacher Efficacy: Contexts of What, When, and How in Serving ELLs

Yune Kim Tran

George Fox University, U.S.A.

Abstract

The increasing numbers of ELLs (English Language Learners) in U.S. classrooms has prioritized into building quality teacher education programs for teachers so that they have the pedagogical tools necessary to support their students. A continued focus with professional development at the local, state, and national level has gained momentum to ensure that mainstream teachers have appropriate cultural competence skills and research-based practices to meet students' diverse linguistic and academic needs. This mixed method study on 144 PK-12 teachers with five or less years of experience highlighted the importance of teachers' perceptions and efficacy beliefs in working with ELLs. Five in-depth cases illustrated a support for professional development in creating high efficacious behaviors for teaching ELLs. Additionally, a quantitative finding augmented teacher narratives to reveal a statistical significance in efficacy beliefs for teachers who received adequate in-service professional development as opposed to teachers who were not afforded those opportunities.

Keywords: teacher efficacy; professional development; ELLs.

INTRODUCTION

In the last 30 years, the student demographic population of the United States has not only been an enclave of diverse cultures from around the world but also it has experienced significant changes. One major shift is the number of English Language Learners (ELLs) enrolled in United States' schools. According to the National Center of Education Statistics (2014), the percentage of public school students in the United States who were ELLs was higher in school year 2011–12 (9.1 percent, or an estimated 4.4 million students) than in 2002–03 (8.7 percent, or an estimated 4.1 million students). Additionally, from 2002–2011, the reading achievement gap between ELLs and their native speaking peers on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) have also widened with 36 points at the 4th-grade level and 44 points at the 8th-grade level between the two groups (NCES, 2011). Representing a heterogeneous group of students, an estimated five percent of ELLs experience difficulty speaking English, have varied assets, socio-economic backgrounds, immigration status, schooling experiences, and unique language diversity. While the majority of ELLs speak Spanish as their native language, there are over 450 languages that are spoken by ELL students in the United States (Kindler, 2002).

The demographic reality of students from various backgrounds and cultural experiences in the United States has posed unique challenges and opportunities for the teachers who serve them. One such challenge is whether current educational systems are raising standards and building teacher capacity to support ELL needs. The American Association for Employment in Education (2005) found that a certain degree of teacher shortage in the areas of Bilingual Education and English as-a-Second Language (ESL) exist nationwide with many ELLs currently being taught in mainstream classrooms with teachers who feel ill-prepared without the acquired skills related to ESL pedagogy. Given the current demographic shifts in student population, it is likely that mainstream teachers will encounter at least one student in the classroom whose native language is not English. The challenge for these teachers is not only to

teach academic content and raise academic achievement, but also to develop students' English proficiency while maintaining high expectations. The prevailing research suggests that teachers who are working with ELLs need preparation and expertise in instructional practices since they serve as critical components in improving success (Gersten & Baker, 2000; Menken & Antunez, 2001). Moreover, when teachers have good preparation and specialized training with pedagogical tools through their credential programs and professional development experiences, they develop a higher sense of efficacy in working with ELLs (Tellez & Waxman, 2005).

Grant and Wong (2003) reported certain recommendations provided by the Center for Research on Education, Diversity, and Excellence (CREDE) that are essential in helping teachers establish good teaching practices to enhance ELLs' educational experiences and success. The five CREDE standards include: *joint productivity*, *language development*, *making meaning for students by contextualizing teaching and curriculum*, *teaching complex thinking*, and *teaching through conversation*.

The first CREDE standard, *joint productivity*, involves teachers designing instruction that focuses on experts and novices working together to achieve a common product or goal. Additionally, teachers need to allow students multiple opportunities to talk about their work as it is completed. The second CREDE standard is *language development* through meaningful and purposeful conversations that promote listening, speaking, reading, and writing across the curriculum and through the school day. The third CREDE standard is *making meaning for students by contextualizing teaching and curriculum* in the experiences and skills of students' homes and communities. Teachers engage students with the instruction for new language to occur through building background and connecting with their prior experiences and what they have learned from their homes, community, and school. The fourth CREDE standard, *teaching complex thinking*, stresses the importance of developing higher-order thinking skills and challenging activities for ELLs rather than repetition and rote memorization. The final CREDE standard, *teaching through conversation*, emphasizes instructional conversations where

students have opportunities to share their ideas and dialogue about academic content with their peers.

While Grant and Wong (2003) emphasized that these standards provide a framework of possibilities for teacher education programs to consider, they are not exhaustive or ensure that ELLs' needs are sufficiently met. In-service still teachers need high-quality professional development to strengthen their pedagogical skills while improving their cultural competence and attitudes to continually support ELLs (Antunez, 2002; Ballantyne, et. al, 2008). Furthermore, they need ongoing support to develop their understandings of the instructional practices necessary for both language and content learning to occur. In this way, teachers can become language-aware practitioners while working to refine their practice (Fortune & Tedick, 2008).

Given these recommendations, the purpose of this research study was twofold: a) extract how teachers' perceptions of their preparation and efficacy beliefs support their abilities in working with ELLs and b) understand the context of professional development in developing teachers' efficacy. Teachers' perceptions were considered through self-perception and self-efficacy theories. The research questions were: 1) What perceptions of preparedness and instructional practices are employed by teachers of ELL students? 2) How does professional development relate to teacher self-efficacy in the context of serving ELL students effectively?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Teacher preparation programs at the national, state, and local level vary widely on the specific policies they develop to address the ELL student population including the various capacities that district in-service experiences provide to support teachers in meeting students' needs. Past and new studies have documented that to better serve ELLs within our current PK-12 school model, teacher education programs should help develop teachers' knowledge, skills, and dispositions to address the

linguistic and cultural diversity represented in their classrooms (deJong & Harper, 2005; Quezada & Alfaro, 2012). Research has documented that the knowledge base of teachers of ELLs should include competencies from these areas: second language acquisition, teaching diverse learners, culture and pragmatic language use, curriculum and instruction, assessment, technology, and community contexts (Abedi, et al., 2003; Ballantyne, et al., 2008; Banks, 2000; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1995).

A Framework for Teaching ELLs

Effective teachers of ELLs must draw on a broad range of knowledge to include special language-related knowledge and pedagogical competence since ELLs are learning English and content simultaneously. Grasping foundational second language acquisition principles is vital (deJong & Harper, 2005; Samway & McKeon, 2007) with conceptual understandings in linguistic pedagogical practices and scaffolding techniques to include: (a) conversational language proficiency and academic language proficiency are fundamentally different (Cummins, 2000); (b) second language learners need access to comprehensible input that is beyond their level of competence (Krashen, 2003); (c) ELLs need opportunities for social interaction to foster their development in conversational and academic English (Vygostky, 1978; Wong-Fillmore & Snow, 2005); (d) ELLs who are proficient in their native language are more likely to achieve parity with native-English speaking peers than those who are less proficient in their native language (Cummins, 2000; Thomas & Collier, 2002); (e) safe, supportive classroom environments that reduce the affective filter are crucial in promoting ELLs second language learning (Krashen, 2003; Verplaetse & Migliacci, 2008); (f) explicit instruction on linguistic form and function is important for second language development (Schleppergrell, 2004); and (g) a variety of scaffolding techniques (i.e. wait time, visuals, direct vocabulary instruction) that allow for an integration of academic content with purposeful language instruction (Echevarria, et al., 2004; Lucas, et al., 2008; Walqui, 2008). For scaffolds to occur effectively, teachers must pedagogically have expertise in: the familiarity with students' linguistic

and academic backgrounds; the understanding of the language demands that are conducive to the learning tasks that are expected; and the skills for using appropriate scaffolding so that ELLs can participate successfully in those tasks (Lucas, et al., 2008).

Freeman and Johnson (1998) had broadened the field to address what teachers of ELLs should know and be able to do with support from key areas of knowledge to include in the discipline the personal and social contexts of teaching itself within theory and practice by posing three broad families of the knowledge-base: the nature of the teacher-learner (Kennedy, 1991); the nature of schools and schooling drawing on Lortie's (1975) concept of the *apprenticeship of observation*; and the nature of teaching which includes pedagogical subject matter, content, and curricular learning through Shulman's framework (1986; 1987). Content knowledge is not only the understanding of facts in a domain but also the structures of the subject matter. Teachers need to be competent in explaining why a concept is worth knowing, its relation to other concepts, and its integrations within discipline and throughout other content matter. Secondly, within pedagogical content knowledge, Shulman (1987) emphasized the importance of teachers to articulate the content so that it is comprehensible to others by accommodating to students' varied ages and backgrounds. By doing so, teachers need to have the knowledge of purposeful strategies to organize understanding for their students. Finally, teachers need curricular knowledge to comprehend instructional materials that are the *material medica* of pedagogy where teachers are able to draw various strategies to extend or adjust for students' understanding within content while utilizing curricular alternatives for integration of other disciplines. From this perspective, pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) is most critical because of the interaction between content and pedagogy where teachers learn to organize, represent, and adapt curriculum to serve the varied abilities and diverse interests of students (Grossman, 1990; Shulman, 1986; 1987). Development of these pedagogical skills allow for teaching that has deep and conceptual understandings essential to transforming those skills into sound instruction for student learning and success (Grossman, 2005; Shulman,

2004).

Professional Development for Teachers of ELLs

High quality professional development that is ongoing and teacher-driven is necessary to improve the education of linguistically and diverse students (Tucker, et al., 2005). Borko (2004) emphasized a professional development model that fosters teachers' rich pedagogical knowledge in the area that they teach and critical for teacher learning. Highlighting the situative perspective, teacher learning occurs in an environment taught within an *integrated professional culture* for new teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Grossman & Thompson, 2004) and socially organized around activities with these key features: the program, the teachers who are the learners, the facilitator who guides the teachers, and the context where the professional development occurs—all of which can vary depending on the needs of the learners (Hord, 2004).

Furthermore, authentic professional training for teachers of ELLs should be purposeful with clear guidelines and include diverse options to allow for: (a) opportunities to talk about and (“do”) subject matter, (b) opportunities to talk about students and leaning; and (c) opportunities to talk about teaching (Wilson & Berne, 1999). Peer coaching between mainstream and ESL teachers has been a successful alternative (Galbraith & Anstrom, 1995) since these types of experiences enhance teacher capacity for more successful outcomes in teaching ELLs (Davison, 2006) resulting in environments where teacher talk and curriculum discourses evaluate problems, describe issues, and find solutions to better serve students. Finally, Gandara, et al. (2005) found professional development that specifically supported teacher needs around second language methodologies and culturally responsive linguistic practices with hands-on instruction to bridge prior knowledge (Tellez & Waxman, 2005) to new content for ELLs are particularly beneficial.

Relationship to Teacher Efficacy

Given that professional development has been shown to improve performance for in-service teachers, examining teachers' self-efficacy may

be helpful in determining the motivational construct behind these behaviors when used with ELLs. Additionally, teachers' self-perceptions affect their attitudes and the instructional decisions they make in meeting the diverse needs of their students (Enderlin-Lampe, 2002). As such, self-perception and self-efficacy theories were used to evaluate teacher efficacy and its relationship to professional development.

According to historical views of Bem (1972), there are ways in which individuals decide on their own attitudes and feelings from observing their behaviors in various situations, being aware of themselves, and thinking about themselves. These ways of thinking are the basis of self-perception theory used to explain how individuals develop perceptions of themselves and consider most important when thinking about themselves in their appraisals (Hattie, 1992). The attainment of self-perceptions from these salient characteristics would vary; thus, affecting how they perceive preparation experiences for carrying out instructional behaviors. Self-efficacy theory was used to understand teachers' self-reported responses in controlling situations and employing instructional practices for ELLs. Research has suggested that a positive relationship between instructional effectiveness and self-efficacy exists when teachers feel confident about their craft and alter their behaviors to benefit student learning (Goddard, et al., 2004; Woolfolk Hoy, et al., 1990). Rooted in Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory as the notion to succeed in one's ability, teacher self-efficacy includes four sources of efficacy expectations: mastery experiences; physiological and emotional states; vicarious experiences; and social persuasion. Mastery experiences are powerful sources of efficacy information raising beliefs affecting how teachers perceive themselves to create welcoming environments for their students while the school setting itself can serve as a social influence especially for new teachers to facilitate teachers' competence, identity, and ability to affect student learning positively (Parkison, 2008; Woolfolk Hoy, 2000). Such consequences that influence teachers' efficacy can include the profession's value in society, a sense of internal/external locus of control and maturation in the field, and the perceived ability/nonability to directly influence student learning.

Strong teacher efficacy is often related to effective classroom behaviors, (Stein & Wang, 1988) positive student outcomes, (Woolfolk Hoy & Spero, 2005) and the perceived ability to work with students from diverse backgrounds including ELL students. For teachers with high self-efficacy, they often perceive difficult situations and tasks as something to be mastered rather than avoiding them. As such, efficacious teachers are more likely to organize their own behaviors in teaching ELLs that allows for (1) confidence in their teaching strategies, (2) expectations of success in themselves and their students, (3) innovations in their pedagogical practices, (4) satisfaction in their jobs, (5) well-managed classrooms with purpose and control, and (6) invitations for students to participate with democratic decision making (Goddard, et al., 2004; Shore, 2004; Woolfolk Hoy, 2000; Woolfolk Hoy, et al., 1990).

Finally, studies have found that perceptions of instructional efficacy among teachers are affected by more specialized certification, greater professional development hours especially during in-service teaching, and teaching experience (Gandara, et al, 2005; Goddard, et al., 2004; Tshannen-Moran, et al., 1998). Ross and Bruce (2007) suggested that confidence in implementation of the knowledge gained during staff development seminars was correlated to increased levels of teacher efficacy. As a result, teachers who are afforded professional development opportunities directly related to ELLs are more likely to report higher levels of efficacy in their instructional roles. Another study by Powell-Moman and Brown-Schild (2011) found increased scores of teachers' self-efficacy for inquiry-based teaching after participating in a two-year in-service program. A recent study by Dixon, Yssel, McConnell and Hardin (2014) found that teachers who received greater professional development hours in differentiation of instruction developed higher self-efficacy. A glance of these studies indicated that a clear link exists between professional development and teacher efficacy. Thus, this research study takes honors the literature of the past on professional development and relates it to teachers' efficacy within ESL contexts.

METHODOLOGY

This study utilized a mixed method called Concurrent Triangulation Strategy (Creswell, 2003) composed of both quantitative and qualitative approaches given the strengths and weaknesses of the two paradigms (Johnson & Christensen, 2004). In the quantitative phase, the researcher created an adapted questionnaire for new teachers (those with five or fewer years of experience) to address teachers' knowledge and perceptions in their pre-service course experience as well as teachers' efficacy beliefs during their in-service experience in relation to ESL methodologies, professional development, and cultural/linguistic diversity. The researcher obtained electronic permission to adapt and extend from the original questionnaire (K. Fuller, Personal Communication, November 19, 2010) that surveyed alternatively certified teachers' attitudes for ELLs. The new instrument was developed with open and closed-ended items including a 30-*likert* scale item that measured participants' perception and efficacy. These items were grouped into four categories: culture, teaching strategies, teaching behaviors, and assessment practices respectively. Internal consistency reliability was calculated for preparedness items as 0.979 and efficacy items as 0.9782 using Cronbach's alpha in SPSS demonstrating a high inter-correlation between items. The qualitative phase included a more in-depth case study with a select group of teachers in interviews and classroom observations so that richer details of teachers' experiences can be recorded in a real-life context resulting in more descriptive data (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2008).

DATA SOURCES

Eligible participants in the study included teachers from two local school districts in central Texas with five or fewer years of experience. One district enrolled over 20,000 students and the other an approximate 6,000 students. The researcher selected these districts due to its

differences in size, percentage of ELL students, and staffing of novice teachers. These districts were also part of a larger consortium of schools in the region offering various professional development opportunities to support teachers given the influx of ELL students. The questionnaire that was used included an online email invitation to eligible participants in both districts and narrowed to in-service teachers who had five or less years of experience. Downloadable features from Survey Monkey's and SPSS 19 for Windows Vista allowed the researcher to analyze all survey data. Further analysis included descriptive and inferential statistics while percentages were used to describe closed ended items such as: participants' demographic profile, years of teaching experience, type of certification held, the teacher's main role at the school, the school enrollment size, school locale, the number of ELLs enrolled in the school, whether teacher's had ELL students, and the amount of time spent in professional development activities for ELLs. Means and Standard Deviations were used for the following subscales: (a) perception of teacher's preparedness from course experiences and (b) efficacy beliefs in teaching ELLs.

Once the 144 completed surveys were returned, 20 participant's names that had consented to the second phase of the research were gathered. Of these names, six teachers were chosen to conduct in-depth case studies. The researcher narrowed the final sample to five participants given similarity in two cases. Of the five teachers selected, considerations of independent variables included: age, gender, ethnicity, contextual factors related to current place of employment, number or ELL students in their classrooms, teaching certification, professional development experiences, and self-assessed perception/efficacy ratings. Demographic and teaching profiles that were represented within the five PK-12 cases included: three females, two males, two-identified Latina, three-identified Caucasian ranging from the ages between 24-35, two kindergarten classrooms, one fourth-grade classroom, one sixth grade language-arts, and one high school science class. Table 1 in Appendix A details profiles of each case including teachers' self-reported ratings of perception and efficacy related to teaching ELLs.

Table 1
Analysis of Each Teacher Case

Teacher	Profile	ELL Population	ESL Cert	ELL Professional Development Received in Days	Perception Ratings (Prepared-Very Well Prepared Items)	Efficacy Ratings (Effective-Very Effective Items)
Antonia Perez	30 year-old Latina female, four years experience, Kindergarten Spanish bilingual, traditional undergraduate	19% campus All ELL students	Yes	More than five but less than 10 days	Fairly well prepared-5 Well prepared-24	Effective-29 Very Effective-1
Matthew Thompson	24 year-old Caucasian male, 1 st year teacher, 9 th grade science, traditional undergraduate	2% campus 3 ELL students in classroom	No	Two days	Prepared-2 Fairly well prepared-4 Well prepared-4 Very well prepared-13	Effective-3 Very Effective-5
Thelma Smith	35 year-old Caucasian female, five years experience, 6 th grade language - arts, traditional undergraduate	27.3% campus 4 ELL students	Yes	More than 10 days	Prepared-2 Fairly well prepared-6 Well prepared-18	Effective-15 Very Effective-7
Timothy Jones	25 year-old Caucasian male, 1 st year teacher, fourth grade math, alternative program	34% campus 18 ELL students	No, but has bilingual	Two days	Prepared -12 Fairly prepared-6	Effective-16 Very Effective-1
Lulu Martinez	24 year-old Latina female, 1st year teacher, kindergarten, traditional undergraduate	7.2% campus 1 ELL student	No	More than two days but less than five days	Fairly well prepared-11 Well prepared-3 Very well prepared-16	Very Effective-30

Note: Pseudonyms used for all teachers.

Sources of data from each case also included interview transcriptions and field notes from classroom observations that averaged from one to two hours in length depending on the teacher's grade level and/or content-area taught. Qualitative data were analyzed and coded by the researcher. The NVivo software program was used to input data to allow more manageable analysis given NVivo's labeling and coding features. Themes that were generated evolved around specific methodologies based on the CREDE's Standards (2002) to highlight where teachers showed strengths around the consistency of implementing various ESL strategies.

FINDINGS

Both quantitative (descriptive and inferential statistics) and qualitative procedures were carried out to determine whether teachers' knowledge affect instructional decisions made for ELLs and whether their efficacy beliefs aligned with the strategies that were employed in the classroom for meeting the needs of ELL students. The use of surveys, interviews, classroom observations, and field notes triangulated the data to provide analysis. Two main findings follow to detail the impact of professional development experiences.

Professional Development Experiences that Influenced Teachers' Efficacy

Reflections from professional development experiences showed how each case utilized particular strategies learned to exemplify one or more of the indicated CREDE (2002) standards. Antonia Perez¹ specified that in-service experiences had been the most valuable training in honing her skills for ELLs and emphasized the need for more training on ESL strategies for the continued support of students explaining,

Definitely trainings. I mean it helps you when you have trainings

especially with ESL. And also trainings with your colleagues...those kinds of trainings, ESL strategies. You know, even though we learn it through the college, once you get into the classroom, you need some trainings to refresh. You know the beginning, during, and at the end of how those strategies work. It's definitely essential that we have these kinds of trainings to help us with the population and that will explain where our grades are and how successful our kids will be (Antonia Perez, Interview, March 30, 2011).

Antonia mentioned the importance of having opportunities to participate in professional development based on specific needs of teachers, and that, continual learning was an essential component in improving her skills for the varied needs of students. Antonia's classroom observation data reflected an instructional asset with CREDE standard three in *making meaning for students by contextualizing teaching and curriculum for comprehensible input*. Her emphasis on vocabulary, the use of visuals, repetition, and appropriate speech were evident both in the observation and interview when she noted that particular skills are necessary when teaching ELLs:

We use a lot of visuals. We use speaking, we try to help the use their sounds, pronounce, and teach them how to linguistically say the words if it's not their first language. They need to learn how to pronounce some of the words. We also do it with a lot of visuals, a lot prompting, and repetition. We have to go slow, you can not go too fast with the children. You have them all different ways: to look at it to, to taste it, to feel it, to touch it especially since we don't want to speak Spanish so we have to really emphasize vocabulary which it the main goal (Antonia Perez, Interview, March 30, 2011).

Here, Antonia recalled the use of explicit language structures, visual aids, and extensive modeling as helpful exercises in helping her students learn, build, and develop academic English. Her passion for ELLs and

their success transpired into a classroom that utilized peer interaction to further support CREDE standard one in *joint productivity*. The use of scaffolds to build student's academic language, competency, and success were evident in partnering activities as students observed the live fish during the science lesson, negotiated meaning that culminated into with a journal activity.

In the case of Matthew Thompson², his efficacy ratings were influenced by participating in more than two days of professional training as a new teacher that were related to the use of ESL strategies to support his work with ELL students. Mathew emphasized the value of this experience while stressing the most significant skills for working with ELLs saying,

Directness and improved clarity. I have a tendency of to ask circular logic per say but indirect questions, which may be helpful for more advanced students to broaden their knowledge and make them think deeper about the material. For the students that I teach and for ESL kids in particular, direct questions are going to help me get more out of what we're learning. So I have to watch myself on that and change what I do...understanding that increasing wait time when you ask a question. Most of your population is going to need 10-30 seconds to think about any advance question that you're going to ask them rather than just a yes/no question. For an ESL kid, its going to take maybe an extra 10 seconds to process the language component added on to that wait time to think about the content of it before they respond. I think Knowing and Learning affected me for the ESL kids (Matthew Thompson, Interview, March 30, 2011).

Matthew commented on the crucial ways that improved his efficacy beliefs for ELLs and made it apparent that the experience in Knowing and Learning made it clear that appropriate wait time and higher-order questioning were necessary as he worked with his two ELLs to access the content at a deeper level of understanding. Matthew showed the greatest instructional strength in CREDE standard four in *teaching complex thinking*.

He consistently assisted ELL's student understanding of the lesson objective through think a-louds and encouraged higher-order thinking consistently. A variety of other techniques were also used according to the varied proficiency levels of his ELLs as well as providing them with a platform to inquire, challenge, and make connections to cultural experiences and real-life applications (use some classroom data).

A third case with Timothy Jones³ showed the significance of strong mentoring programs and specific ESL trainings tailored to support new teacher's development and expertise. Timothy's efficacy beliefs included: ineffective in one item; somewhat ineffective in six items; effective in six items; effective in 16 items (i.e., develop a deep sense of cultural knowledge; establish opportunities for students to interact; incorporate cultural values into the classroom; create opportunities for students to practice their oral English; and tap into student's prior knowledge), and very effective in one item (helping students connect new knowledge to prior experiences). When probed about his professional development experiences, he specified the importance of specific learning activities that were applicable to helping him become a better teacher as he noted,

PD (professional development) that I think are the greatest are the ones where they are showing you actual things that you will use actually in class. There's no explanations, there's no abstractions, they are showing you what to use, this is what you do with this, this is what you say to the student, this is how you alter it via this situation or that situation. Real, applicable stuff! (Timothy Jones, Interview, March 24, 2011).

It was evident that Timothy's participation in meaningful professional development increased his efficacy and helped him transition as a new teacher allowing him to demonstrate an instructional strength in carrying out CREDE standard one in *joint productivity*. Frequent opportunities for student interaction to use new knowledge were provided within the measurement activity that occurred during the classroom observation. He provided students with ways to seek clarification on key concepts (i.e.,

partners, think/pair/share) as well as hand-on materials (i.e., rulers, paper, yardstick) including practical math story problems that integrated all language domains of listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Additionally, Lulu Martinez⁴ indicated that she had received more than two days of professional development and felt that she was very effective in 30 of the scale items in her current role to work with ELLs. She further emphasized that it was the participation in the district's four-day ESL Academy that had made the biggest impact in building her confidence, and ultimately, improving her efficacy and pedagogical awareness for ELLs. She indicated this saying,

I think that the ESL Academy here in the district made it more personal. I understood my culture but really it was through the ESL Academy here... that I would really love to teach ELLs now and super excited about it (Lulu Martinez, Interview, March 31, 2011).

Lulu shared that she was able to build her knowledge base in working with ELLs by acquiring the skills learned from the professional development that transpired into a passion for teaching ELLs.

Finally, the case of Thelma Smith⁵ provided a model in understanding how increased exposure to professional development activities greatly impact efficacy beliefs in working with ELLs. Thelma indicated that she had attended more than 10 days of ESL/ELL during her five years of teaching and rated herself as: somewhat effective in eight items; effective in 15 items, and very effective in seven items in her current role supporting ELLs. The seven highest rated items included her abilities to: use a variety of vocabulary strategies in lessons; model appropriate English use; provide oral directions that are clear and appropriate; create opportunities for students to practice their oral English; create opportunities for students to practice their written English; encourage all students to elaborate on their responses; and scaffold instruction to help students understand concepts. After analyzing the different data sources, Thelma best supported CREDE standard two in *language development* and

CREDE standard five in *teaching through conversation*. Her interview and classroom observation indicated a strong emphasis on the importance of teachers to understand the language acquisition process with adequate lesson preparation to embed a variety of strategies such as native language support. She articulated this point saying,

You have to be prepared. I mean if your lesson is not prepared to reach ELL kids, it's not going to do that. It's very explicit, the instruction... One of the things that works really well in my class is I have kids that are varying levels of ELLs, some of them having been exited⁶ already but they still struggle and then I have the newcomers. I'll pair them up and I allow them to talk in my class and even communicate quietly to help each other with directions and instructions and that really helps them. They need that support and it makes them feel confident in the classroom (Thelma Smith, Interview, March 24, 2011).

Thelma expressed from above that she had the profound ability to accommodate instruction for the varied proficiency levels of ELLs, to differentiate for all her students, and the impact of purposeful instruction for ELLs—tools that were learned from a 30-hour professional development sequence that she had attended as an in-service teacher. These methods influenced her efficacy significantly; therefore, she advocated for continued experiences that honed into specific needs of ELL students saying,

When I took the 30 hours institute at Region 13 was when I really got into that and it was really helpful...We had ESL updates and things like that that were given on campus that you need to know that was really helpful. It kept strategies fresh in your mind...We have a huge ESL population here, so it would be helpful to have someone come in and just say, "Alright, this student is here, we are trying to get him here, here are their goals." You know just to sit down and talk about these kids, specifically on what their learning goals are and what we can be doing as

a campus to get those kids to where they need to be. (Thelma Smith, Interview, March 24, 2011).

Thelma expressed the benefits of an extended professional development experience that influenced her efficacy and abilities in the classroom. She further emphasized the need to align professional development to the school's growing population of ELLs and that teachers had lacked the experience in developing certain strategies that she had gained from her ESL certification. Thus, she advertised for teachers to be afforded similar opportunities so that they can assist their own students to acquire English academic vocabulary effectively while accomplishing school goals.

T-test Data with Professional Development Significance to Teacher Efficacy

Another significant finding that emerged from conducting an Independent Samples T-Test was the difference in time spent and the quality of professional development opportunities offered as reflected from the individual cases. Quantitative variables were converted into nominal variables to compare means between two groups of teachers to determine whether variables such as: ESL courses and teaching certification were statistically significant to teacher's perceptions of their preparedness and whether the amount of professional development was statistically significant to teacher's efficacy ratings. The creation of two groups stemmed from survey responses where teachers indicated the amount of time spent in professional development with ELL/ESL training that ranged from 7.6% as none; 23.7% as less than eight clock hours; 21.4% as between eight to 16 clock hours; 23.7% as more than two days and up to five days; 16.0% as more than five days and up to ten days; and 11.5% as more than ten days. Given the small number of responses for each range, the researcher recoded and renamed the new variable to PD_2Grps, to signify one group as less than two days of professional development (less than 16 hours) and the second group as

more than two days of professional development (more than 16 hours). Means and standard deviations for perception and efficacy items are included in Table 2 showing higher mean averages for all 30 efficacy items as compared to preparation items. Table 3 compared two groups of teachers according to the amount of professional development that they received indicating higher mean averages on efficacy items for teachers who received more than two days of training. Independent Samples T-Test from Table 4 revealed a statistical significance on teachers' ratings of efficacy items between these two groups.

Individual cases augmented this finding to support how professional development experiences extended teachers' competencies and efficacy for working with ELLs. Teachers with an average of more than two days of professional development or the equivalent of 16 hours pertaining to issues with ELLs indicated a greater sense of efficacy than teachers who had acquired less than two days of professional growth for teaching ELLs. Data analysis from the five individual cases provided a lens to determine how the benefits of professional development experiences promoted specific ESL methodologies that were utilized in classrooms to promote teachers' efficacy beliefs overall. Instructional specific ESL strategies that were identified in these five cases included: slowed speech, repetition, highlighted vocabulary, high levels of peer interaction, peer support, visual scaffolds, and clarification of tasks. The researcher used these strategies and aligned them to each of the CREDE (2002) standards to reveal teachers' understandings of ESL pedagogies that were gained from direct professional development experiences within the context of a situative framework.

Table 2
Mean and Standard Deviations of Perceptions and Efficacy Items (1)

	Perception Items N=144 Efficacy Items N=86	Perception Mean	Std. Deviation	Efficacy Mean	Std. Deviation
Develop a deep sense of cultural knowledge.		3.3050	1.40379	4.3882	1.22566
Develop an understanding and sensitivity that appreciates differences as well as similarities.		4.0355	1.31155	4.8023	1.04959
Incorporate cultural values into the curriculum.		3.4965	1.38680	4.3372	1.17434
Include student's home cultures into the classroom.		3.3475	1.49277	4.1860	1.25099
Develop relationships with families.		3.7801	1.53573	4.3953	1.22982
Engage families in educational experiences of their students.		3.5106	1.53817	4.1047	1.27445
Encourage students to use their native language.		3.0922	1.61644	3.8837	1.45859
Tap into student's prior knowledge.		4.1915	1.45364	4.7326	1.03383
Use realia (real-life) objects as a teaching strategy.		4.2695	1.45837	4.7558	1.11604
Help students connect new knowledge to prior experiences.		4.3404	1.38270	4.8353	1.04480
Use a variety of vocabulary strategies in lessons.		4.0780	1.37877	4.5465	1.19466
Use visuals, nonverbal cues, demonstrations, and graphic aids as teaching tools.		4.5035	1.39194	4.7907	1.06402
Use a variety of technologies to assist in student's understanding.		4.1631	1.38164	4.6163	1.11849
Incorporate total physical response (TPR) methods in teaching.		3.5390	1.56076	4.2558	1.37358
Establish opportunities for students to interact.		4.4468	1.33858	5.0116	.95171
Establish opportunities for students to speak to reinforce learning.		4.2624	1.27417	4.8353	1.07844

Table 2
Mean and Standard Deviations of Perceptions and Efficacy Items (2)

	Perception Items N=144	Efficacy Items N=86	Perception Mean	Std. Deviation	Efficacy Mean	Std. Deviation
Adjust the speed of English speech delivery.			3.6596	1.39811	4.5116	1.10341
Model appropriate English use.			4.3121	1.41993	4.9882	1.07453
Provide oral directions that are clear and appropriate.			4.3262	1.34428	4.8372	.93129
Create opportunities for students to practice their oral English.			4.1418	1.38658	4.8118	1.04077
Create opportunities for students to practice their written English.			4.0426	1.46323	4.5581	1.22335
Encourage all students to elaborate on their responses.			4.1631	1.40216	4.7209	1.15454
Scaffold instruction to help students understand concepts.			4.1844	1.44223	4.6353	1.08942
Use a variety of hands-on activities.			4.5035	1.38164	4.9176	1.02599
Incorporate student's responses into lessons.			4.1277	1.40332	4.6024	1.20911
Provide appropriate wait time for students to respond.			4.4539	1.38087	4.7529	1.07909
Encourage students to respond using higher order questioning.			4.1418	1.37623	4.5412	1.19077
Provide appropriate accommodations based on student's language proficiency.			3.6170	1.46219	4.4048	1.16287
Provide various formats of assessments according to student's intelligence and/or learning style.			3.9007	1.43579	4.4471	1.27714
Use a variety of technologies as alternative assessments.			3.5957	1.45886	4.1905	1.32152

Table 3*Professional Development (PD) Mean and Standard Deviation Between Two Groups*

<i>Efficacy Item</i>	ELL-PD Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Develop a deep sense of cultural knowledge.	1.00	42	4.0476	1.37845
	2.00	26	4.8077	1.13205
Include student's home cultures into the classroom.	1.00	42	3.8571	1.31727
	2.00	27	4.6296	1.18153
Tap into student's prior knowledge.	1.00	42	4.4762	1.21451
	2.00	27	5.0000	.78446
Use realia (real-life) objects as a teaching strategy.	1.00	42	4.4048	1.30775
	2.00	27	5.1481	.81824
Incorporate total physical response (TPR) methods in teaching.	1.00	42	3.8333	1.51282
	2.00	27	4.6296	1.11452
Establish opportunities for students to interact.	1.00	42	4.7619	1.10010
	2.00	27	5.2963	.77533
Adjust the speed of English speech delivery.	1.00	42	4.1429	1.18056
	2.00	27	4.8889	1.08604
Provide oral directions that are clear and appropriate.	1.00	42	4.5952	1.10563
	2.00	27	5.0741	.72991
Create opportunities for students to practice their oral English.	1.00	42	4.5476	1.17291
	2.00	27	5.0741	.91676
Create opportunities for students to practice their written English.	1.00	42	4.2381	1.44508
	2.00	27	4.9259	1.03500
Scaffold instruction to help students understand concepts.	1.00	42	4.3810	1.28694
	2.00	26	5.0385	.87090
Use a variety of hands-on activities.	1.00	42	4.6190	1.18841
	2.00	26	5.1923	.80096

*Note: ELL PD Group 1.00=Teachers with less than two days of professional development
ELL PD Group 2.00=Teachers with more than two days of professional development*

Table 4
Independent Samples T-test Comparison

<i>Efficacy Item</i>	F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Develop a deep sense of cultural knowledge.	2.094	.153	-2.360	66	.021
			-2.472	60.748	.016
Include student's home cultures into the classroom.	.650	.423	-2.473	67	.016
			-2.533	59.899	.014
Tap into student's prior knowledge.	5.845	.018	-1.988	67	.051
			-2.177	66.991	.033
Use realia (real-life) objects as a teaching strategy.	5.142	.027	-2.637	67	.010
			-2.904	66.974	.005
Incorporate total physical response (TPR) methods in teaching.	3.440	.068	-2.353	67	.022
			-2.512	65.656	.014
Establish opportunities for students to interact.	1.291	.260	-2.195	67	.032
			-2.364	66.361	.021
Adjust the speed of English speech delivery.	1.545	.218	-2.642	67	.010
			-2.691	58.937	.009
Provide oral directions that are clear and appropriate.	5.665	.020	-1.987	67	.051
			-2.167	66.928	.034
Create opportunities for students to practice their oral English.	3.902	.052	-1.975	67	.052
			-2.083	64.334	.041
Create opportunities for students to practice their written English.	5.012	.029	-2.143	67	.036
			-2.301	66.134	.025
Scaffold instruction to help students understand concepts.	5.362	.024	-2.297	66	.025
			-2.510	65.401	.015
Use a variety of hands-on activities.	3.890	.053	-2.170	66	.034
			-2.374	65.451	.021

Note: Statistical significance at the P-value of .005.

DISCUSSION

As mentioned earlier, teacher's efficacy ratings were influenced by their participation of professional development experiences and findings revealed consistent trends from past literature. Results substantiated prior research conducted on teachers' participation with professional development programs to increase self-efficacy as related to: increased use of inquiry-based practices (Powell-Moman & Brown-Schild, 2011); higher confidence levels (Ross & Bruce, 2007); positive long term teaching

behaviors (Watson, 2006); greater willingness to differentiate instruction (Dixon, et al., 2014); and improving instructional practices with real-world scenarios (Morrison & Estes, 2007). Interestingly, the number of days that teachers participated in professional development represented a crucial finding within quantitative data, but also the five cases indicated instructional benefits in quality professional development that improved their self-efficacy. These benefits not only created pedagogical changes that added to teacher's content knowledge base but also promoted positive thoughts, attitudes, and actions for ELLs. The knowledge and skills gained during professional development opportunities that increased teachers' self-efficacy point to the impetus for the kinds of quality training needed for novice teachers who are developing instructional practices and making immediate changes to classroom behavior (Dresner & Worley, 2006).

Additionally, the findings warrant the extension of research from Borko (2004) to accentuate a professional development model for in-service teachers through a situative framework. The five cases supported a model of teacher learning that is best utilized within a focus of content and pedagogy where participants are active in dialogue to practice their new tools within that community. This research also highlighted teachers' need for required trainings that are conducive to ELLs' specific needs; adequate time for implementation of strategies; and applicable experiences tied to strong coherence of objectives to alleviate the frustrations encountered from campus and district-related personnel. Harper, deJong, and Piatt (1998) previously supported this sentiment with the recommendation that quality professional development should be mandatory for all teachers of ELLs where learning opportunities infuse issues pertaining to the academic success of all students. Thus, these types of experiences should permeate throughout the teacher preparation curriculum (Meskill, 2005).

Finally, high efficacy ratings aligned to the instructional decisions made by the five cases to demonstrate support of student outcomes (Faulkner & Reeves, 2000; Wolfolk Hoy & Spero, 2005). Positive ratings were carried out from each case given that these five teachers honed their

teaching abilities from participating in professional development trainings where school or district professionals supported their efficacy behaviors to support ELL's academic proficiency in the classroom. Professional development experiences resulted in increased self-efficacy and the ability to implement current strategies from teachers' pedagogical toolbox in the classroom. These skills emphasized the importance of the sociocultural paradigm from Borg (2003) where second language teacher learning occurred in an environment that was socially negotiated to facilitate selected forms of knowledge that teachers felt were useful in carrying out their work.

LIMITATIONS

This research study utilized strengths from both quantitative and qualitative methods; however, limitations still exist. One such limitation is avoiding researcher's bias. My choice of methodology, personal beliefs, and interpretation of findings are factors accounted for within this bias. Timing of interviews and classroom observations of the five teachers was another limitation since they were administered simultaneously during spring state assessments. Teachers were not only overwhelmed and exhaustive but also the culture of accountability promoted a stressful environment for all stakeholders regardless of the teacher's role, content, or grade level taught. Many of the participants in this study were subjected to national and state assessments, and therefore, their subjectivity on survey responses, interview, or classroom observation could have been compromised with test preparation.

Finally, small retrieval rate is another limitation to the study. An email invitation was sent to over 900 PK-12 teachers who qualified to participate in the study but only 16% of this population responded to the survey, a small sample size that is not representative enough. Thus, attrition to this sample occurred due to non-responses to certain question items that resulted in some missing values from the T-test. Junk and spam email boxes may have caused issues with participation; therefore,

the study should be replicated with a larger sample size both through survey responses and teacher cases. Furthermore, one distinct goal of the survey was to select as many new-to-profession; however, given the budget shortfall with approximately 220 new-to-profession teachers who received news of non-renewal of their contracts when the survey was released, only 11 new teachers participated in the survey.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

This study sheds light into a topic that has been least explored in the literature regarding teachers' perceptions and efficacy beliefs for working with ELLs in the United States. Continued research is necessary in this topic to determine how new and existing teachers feel in their preparation experiences and efficacy for planning and delivering instruction to their ELL students.

Research on teacher candidates' field experiences and student teaching internship may warrant for an area of study. Examining the perceptions of teacher's field experiences and their student teaching is useful in determining the impact of applicable tools learned for ELLs in the context of reframing situative experiences within a teaching and learning framework by following teacher candidates through their first years of teaching.

Finally, the professional development literature regarding teachers' beliefs of the quality and scope of such programs for ELLs needs continued research and study. Given that professional development has been documented to improve teachers' self-efficacy, exploration on teacher's attitudes, knowledge, and skills gained during those opportunities may be necessary to discern better efforts for ELLs' academic success.

CONCLUSION

By profiling these cases and revealing the statistical professional development finding, I have attempted to show the importance of understanding both self-perception and self-efficacy theories when teachers work with ELL students. The sources of efficacy beliefs are critical in improving teacher quality for ELLs and supporting high quality professional development specific to the needs of ELLs. It is within this situated environment that teachers benefit from the shared learning experiences to feel more efficacious in the classroom. The incredible impact on the quality professional and situated learning experiences have shaped teachers' efficacy in carrying out competencies for praxis of social change. Therefore, the study recommends that PK-12 settings continue building teacher capacity by affording various professional development opportunities that promote teacher efficacy. In this way, teachers become more efficacious and confident in designing equitable academic experiences for ELLs while affirming students' identities and making connections to families, culture, and community so that students emerge as the real winners of an American educational system.

Note

¹ Pseudonym

² Pseudonym

³ Pseudonym

⁴ Pseudonym

⁵ Pseudonym

⁶ Students who acquire language proficiency, meet state exit requirements, and no longer receive ESL support services

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Yune Kim Tran is an Assistant Professor at George Fox University where she teaches and directs in the traditional undergraduate teacher education program. She completed her Ph.D. from The University of Texas at Austin.

E-mail: ytran@georgefox.edu

Telephone: +1-503- 554-2878

Postal Address: 414 N. Meridian, Newberg, OR 97132. USA