

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE EXPERIENCES OF SECONDARY
TEACHERS TRAINED IN CONTENT-ONLY AREAS THROUGHOUT THEIR FIRST YEAR
INSTRUCTING ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

by

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Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe the experiences of first-year, general education content teachers working with ELLs in secondary schools who have limited or no training to do so. The first-year teacher experience was defined as the situations and circumstances of teachers in their introductory year of instruction; their expectations upon entry, the realities of the actual experience, and the concluding reflections following their first year. Schlossberg's transition theory guided this study as it lends itself to capturing the transition process and added information to the body of research on teaching ELLs - more specifically the experiences of teachers' transitions through their first year of teaching in an area where they have little or no training. The central research question guiding this study is: How do secondary education teachers untrained in ESL methods in the southeastern region of the United States describe their first year experiences in content area classrooms with high numbers of ELLs in their classrooms? The guiding questions include: (a) how do participants describe their expectations of their first year of teaching prior to the actual experience, (b) What were the strategies that participants described using in adapting their teaching methods for ELL students throughout their first year, and (c) How do participants describe their planning strategies and processes for their second year of teaching ELL students based on their experiences of their first year? Face-to-face interviews, focus groups, and correspondence letters were used to collect data from which common themes were discovered. Data was analyzed using Moustakas's modified version of Van Kaam's approach to transcendental phenomenology.

Keywords: English as a Second Language (ESL), English language learners (ELLs), content area teaching, mainstream teachers moving in, moving out, moving through, secondary teachers (in their first year), transition theory

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Dedication

Above all else, I give thanks to God for allowing me to be blessed enough to complete this journey. He has given me strength that I never imagine I possessed, and the determination to pursue and attain this degree. He has surrounded me with people who loved, supported, and believed in me throughout this process.

I am beyond thankful for the love, support, and encouragement from my family and friends throughout this project. To my parents: Richard and Barbara, thank you for never doubting that I could do this, and for always being there when I needed to talk, cry, or just run away for a couple of days to work.

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List of Abbreviations

Communicative Method (CLT)

English language learners (ELLs)

English as a second language (ESL)

First Language (L1)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Limited English proficiency (LEP)

Second language (L2)

Total physical response (TPR)

Transitional bilingual education (TBE)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study is to describe the experiences of first year content area teachers that work with English language learners (ELLs) in secondary schools with substantive populations of ELL students (above 15%) within the southeastern region of the United States but are untrained to do so. This first chapter provides background information in relation to the growth in numbers of English Language Learners (ELLs), the history of teacher training in regard to working with ELLs, and the impact due to the lack of training on ELL academic achievement. The chapter explains the researcher's motivation for pursuing the study in the given area and provides reasoning for the choice of framework being used in this study. Additionally, the problem that informs the purpose of the study is explained and the literature serves to emphasize the necessity for more research in regards to the problem statement. The final sections of this chapter include the central and guiding research questions and definitions pertinent to the study. The research questions are presented with accompanying literature grounding the questions in the purpose of the study and the theoretical framework upon which the study is based. The definitions included in this chapter inform the reader of terms pertinent to the study.

Background

ELL students are one of the fastest-growing and lowest-performing student subgroups in America (Sugarman & Lee, 2017). As more and more teachers find themselves teaching students from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, the need for teacher training in instructional methods increases in order to work effectively with this population (de Jong & Harper, 2005). Salerno and Kibler (2013) explained that the new teachers of today, with

growing frequency, are assigned to teach ELLs but need more extensive and effective pedagogical training for working with these students. In fact, a majority of teachers lack the basic foundational knowledge for working with ELLs, even though a large percentage, as many as 88% in one survey cited by Coady, Harper, and de Jong (2016) conducted work with ELLs on a daily basis.

Historical Context

Over the past half-decade, the number of ELLs in the United States has increased dramatically. This expansion of ELL student enrollment leaves mainstream teachers who formerly did not have this student population in their classrooms with higher numbers of ELLs amongst their students (de Oliveria, 2016). This situation leaves mainstream educators the responsibility for teaching all students grade-level content, including all levels of English language learners (ELLs), creating a challenging instructional environment, especially for novice teachers (Russel, 2015).

These growing numbers translate to more ELLs enrolled in mainstream classrooms with teachers who may not have had training to work with this diverse population. Compounding the problem is the fact that few principals or those in administrative positions possess pedagogical expertise or experience with English learners (Russel, 2015). This minimal knowledge of the administration places greater responsibility on district or schools English as a Second Language teachers, who are limited in number. The growth of this population has placed unprecedented demands on schools and has raised important questions about the preparation of mainstream teachers to work with ELLs (de Jong, Harper, & Coady, 2013). Several studies have highlighted the inadequate preparation of general education teachers for teaching ELLs (Abbate-Vaughn, 2008; Curran, 2003; Karabenick & Noda, 2004; Lucas, Villegas, & Freedson-Gonzalez, 2008;

McGraner & Saenz, 2009; Olsen & Jimenez-Silva, 2008; Rosenberry-McKibbin & Brice, 2005).

Various reasons exist for the insufficient preparation of preservice teachers including the lack of state policy surrounding the education of English Language Learners (ELLs), the lack of mandates at universities for courses to effectively work with ELLs, and the lack of training of university staff to work with ELLs. Among the rationale for this insufficient preparation of preservice teachers is the fact that many of the professors who are teaching the methodology classes for education majors do not possess the knowledge or have not obtained this preparation themselves in regards to teaching ELLs (Roy-Campbell, 2013). Therefore, continued learning by professors in this area must occur so that teachers trained as content area (mainstream) teachers can be instructed on research-based methods to impart knowledge and practical ideas about addressing the academic language needs of ELLs because they will inevitably have the responsibility of facilitating ELLs' content learning while also supporting their ongoing English language development (de Oliveria, 2016). Ultimately, policy actors and educational stakeholders at schools and universities must examine their roles in the development of teachers as agents of change of policy regarding effectively educating ELL students (Heineke & Cameron, 2013).

Social Context

Although the focus of this study was on the experiences of teachers who work with ELLs, it is important to note that the teachers are not the only people affected when they enter a classroom untrained to address the needs of all students, specifically ELLs. ELL student academic progress, state-mandated testing scores of schools, and school staff members are affected when teachers are unprepared to teach ELLs (Sampson & Collins, 2012). Due to the rapid growth of the ELL population and the fact that teacher training has not kept pace, districts

across the country are buckling under the weight of educating ELL students who do not demonstrate proficiency in academic areas (Sampson & Collins, 2012). Also, this lack of trained teachers to work with ELL students may prevent ELLs from taking more advanced coursework instead placing them in ELL-specialized courses, which may have negative effects due to lack of instructional rigor (Dabach, 2015). Because teachers and schools are held accountable for the academic performance of ELL students, the lack of adequate preparation for mainstream teachers in instructing ELLs is alarming (McGraner & Saenz, 2009). Findings from this study may assist in creating teacher training programs to work with ELLs, which may in turn help close the academic progress or achievement gaps between ELLs and their non-ELL peers.

Theoretical Perspective

The theoretical lens through which the researcher will view this study is based on Schlossberg's (1981, 2011) transition theory. Schlossberg (1981) defined a transition as any event or non-event that results in a changed relationship, routine, assumption, or role. The individual experiencing it defines the transition and that person's perception plays a key role in the transition itself. The basic stages of transition described by Chickering and Schlossberg (2002) include moving in, moving through, and moving out. The journey through the teachers' first year was explained using these three stages of transition. Moving in was reflected as the teacher's beginning the first year as an educator, moving through will constitute the first year teaching experiences, and finally, moving out was the reflective piece illustrated at the end of the teacher's first year as a classroom teacher.

Research has been conducted on teacher preparation and student achievement (Goldhaber, Liddle, & Theobald, 2014; Henry et al., 2013; Salerno, & Kibler, 2013) and has focused on professional development for working with ELLs for teachers after they have already

experienced the classroom (Berg, Petrón, & Greybeck, 2012; de Jong et al., 2013; Peter, Markham, & Frey, 2012), but no research exists on those teachers entering the classroom for the first time with limited or no preparation for working with ELL students. Teachers in mainstream classrooms are responsible for ELL student education. Unfortunately, many mainstream teachers, especially at the secondary level, are largely untrained to work with ELL students (Durgunoglu & Hughes 2010). Reeves (2008) noted, “Markedly absent in the research are mainstream teacher perspectives on ELL inclusion. The experiences of secondary teachers, in particular, have received little research attention” (p. 131).

Several studies pertaining to educators and administrators utilizing Schlossberg’s (1981, 2011) transition theory have been conducted (Castro & Bauml, 2009; Hartzell, Williams, & Nelson, 1994) as well as one additional study on the transition from campus to the classroom (Oshrat-Fink, 2014), but to date no any studies have been conducted using the transition theory focusing on first-year teacher experiences. This study proposes to fill the gap in the research by describing the transitioning experiences of first-year secondary school content teachers who have instructed ELLs throughout their first-year teaching assignments but were never trained in ELL teaching methods.

Situation to Self

As part of a phenomenological perspective, a researcher must address their personal biases. Working with English Language learners has been a part of my experience as an educator for over half of my teaching career. Taking this into consideration, I will have to continually monitor my own voice and opinions as I reflect upon the interviews of my participants in this study.

As a classroom teacher, I always felt all my students could learn. I worked diligently to

reach each child at his or her level and then provided instruction to pull them forward based on methodology learned in education courses, professional development sessions, guidance from mentor teachers, and at times through pure experimentation with a variety of these. When I first began teaching, my classroom was neither ethnically nor linguistically diverse. The dynamics of my classroom began to shift in the second and third years of my teaching career as students from Mexico who predominantly spoke Spanish began to arrive in our district. I did not speak Spanish at that time; however, this language barrier did not change my philosophical beliefs that all students can learn, and so I was determined to grow these students in whatever methods I could find.

I turned to my mentor teachers for guidance in regard to teaching these students but found that they were as unprepared to teach them as I was. In certain cases, I found that students were isolated from their English-speaking peers and given coloring papers to complete. I was astounded and angry to see this happening, and I was determined not to fall into these practices as I knew these children could learn. I was an educator, and I just had to figure out how to teach them. I made it my priority to find ways to reach these students regardless of the language barriers and my lack of training. This was not an easy task, but little by little my English language learners (ELLs) began to learn from me in English, and amazingly I began to learn some Spanish from them as well.

These early teaching experiences led me to the field of teaching ELLs, and this work has become my passion in education. As an educator, I believe it is our duty to serve and teach every student regardless of race, creed, educational experiences, special needs, or language differences. I realize that educators are taxed with an incredibly challenging job, but I also believe that students are the most important commodities educators have.

This research is intended to give me and other higher education administrators information in regards to first year teaching experiences with ELLs. Universities are not training teachers to meet the varied demands placed upon them depending on where they are employed to teach. Creswell (2013) described these philosophical assumptions as the belief that reality is constructed through our lived experiences. Although the basic duties of a teacher may be the same in every school, each teacher will have experiences that shape them as an educator in varying ways. This in turn will allow teachers to have varied perceptions in regard to teaching as a result of their lived experiences. It is the essence of these lived experiences of teachers that I endeavor to describe in this study.

Problem Statement

Effectively addressing the language and literacy needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students is of critical concern for educators as achievement gaps persist between white middle-class and students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in almost every content area (Orgeta, Luft, & Wong, 2013). Additionally, both federal and state mandates enforce accountability measures for all students including English language learners (ELLs), leading to frustration for mainstream classroom teachers, the majority who are untrained to work with ELLs. Currently only about 12.5% of U.S. teachers have received eight or more hours of training to teach ELLs (Berg et al., 2012). Furthermore, based on current research, mainstream teachers are receiving little to no coursework during their teacher preparation programs (DelliCarpini & Alonso 2014; Hutchinson, 2012; Roy-Campbell, 2013). Although research in the area of multilingual classrooms and effective teaching methods of English as a second language (ESL) teachers have become a high priority due to the increasing number of ELLs and the continuing achievement gaps between them and their non-ELL peers, markedly absent is the

research on the effective ways to prepare content area teachers, especially secondary content teachers, to work with ELLs (DelliCarpini & Alonso, 2014). The problem is lack exists of qualitative research studies on the experiences of novice secondary teachers instructing ELLs in content areas without prior training (Daniel, 2008); therefore, more research must be added to the literature to provide additional insight on this important topic.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the experiences of first-year, secondary school content teachers having worked with ELLs in middle and high schools with substantive populations of ELL students (preferably above 15%) but may have limited or no training to do so (Abbate-Vaughn, 2008; Curran, 2003; Karabenick & Noda, 2004; Lucas et al., 2008; McGraner & Saenz, 2009; Olsen & Jimenez-Silva, 2008; Rosenberry-McKibbin & Brice, 2005). Participants' pedagogical training and experience was assessed by using a survey to determine the degree of training the participant may have in regard to working with diverse populations, specifically ELLs. At this stage in the research, first-year teacher experience was defined as the situations and circumstances of teachers in their introductory year of instructing student. Schlossberg's (2011) transition theory was used as a structure to portray the teachers' expectations upon entering, the realities of the actual experience, and the reflections on the experiences at the conclusion of their first year. Schlossberg's (1981, 2011) transition theory guided this study as it lends itself to capturing the transition process and may add information to the body of research in relation to teaching ELLs, more specifically the experiences of teachers' transitions through their first year of teaching in an area where they have not received specialized training.

Significance of the Study

Considering the significant gap between the educational performance of ELL and non-ELL students, only about 25 % of ELLs score at or above basic levels in the fourth grade (Sampson & Collins, 2012), and most mainstream teachers lack basic foundational knowledge related to instructing ELLs despite the fact that as many as 88% teach ELLs (de Jong et al., 2013), this study may be significant in many ways. This phenomenological study may have both empirical and practical significance for higher educational facilities, professors of teacher pedagogy, and preservice teachers. Lucas et al. (2008) explained that most teachers do not have preservice coursework that combines building language and content at the same time. This is crucial for the effective instruction of ELLs; universities and education professors need to understand the dire need for these skills in regard to classroom teachers.

The continual increase of the ELL population, combined with the growing popularity of inclusion in mainstream classrooms, many times due to lack of funding, has brought a larger number of teachers with little or no ESL training in contact with language minority students (Molle, 2013). To date, relatively little attention has been given to the essential standards, knowledge, and skills that general education teachers ought to possess in order to provide effective instruction to ELLs placed in their classrooms (Sampson & Collins, 2012). As of 2008 only four states had specific coursework or certification requirements for all teachers who teach ELLs (Ballantyne, Sanderman, & Levy, 2008).

For educational facilities and higher education in general, this study may guide structure for the creation of undergraduate courses aimed at mainstream teachers. For preservice teachers, it may assist them in choosing courses that will provide necessary skills for working with ELLs before being placed in their personal classrooms. Finally, it may also provide information to

universities regarding the importance of preparing mainstream secondary teacher candidates for working with ELLs and additional coursework to be added to basic pedagogy for all classroom teachers.

This study is grounded in relevant work on the topics of novice teachers (Orgeta, Luft, & Wong, 2013; Tygret, 2018) and instructing ELLs (DiCerbo, Anstrom, Baker, & Rivera, 2014; Franquiz & Salinas, 2013). The results of this study may also have theoretical significance which may extend the body of research using Schlossberg's (1981, 2011) transition theory as a lens through which to describe the experiences of the first-year teachers included in this study as they transition from preservice teachers with no ELL experience to completion of their first year of educational instruction. Additionally, it will provide a description of the teachers' experiences moving into, moving through, and moving out of this transitional experience. Currently, no studies exist using Schlossberg's (1981, 2011) transition theory to describe first year teacher transition experiences.

Research Questions

This study focused on the experiences of first-year, content area secondary school teachers who have not been trained to instruct ELLs but have been placed in classrooms where they have to teach ELLs regardless of their lack of training. A transcendental phenomenological research design and approach was utilized for this study, and it was guided by Schlossberg's (1981, 2011) transition theory. The goal of this study was to better understand the transition process and categories (individual, relationship, and work) experienced by the participants in their first year of teaching (Anderson, Goodman, & Schlossberg, 2012). Data was collected directly from participants who experienced the phenomenon in the form of interviews, focus groups, and personal letters to address the following research questions.

Central Research Question

How do secondary education teachers untrained in ESL methods in secondary schools located in the southeastern region of the U.S. describe their first-year teaching experiences in content area classrooms with high numbers of ELLs in their classrooms? Berg et al. (2012), Coady, Harper, and de Jong (2016), the Education Commission of the States (2014), and Salerno and Kibler (2013) have reported that secondary teachers continue to be faced with the challenge of educating ELLs with little or no training. The central question may give insight from secondary content area teachers who have experienced the phenomenon of working with ELLs in their classrooms without any formal training.

Sub-Question One

How do participants describe their expectations of their first year of teaching prior to the actual experience? Chickering and Schlossberg (2002) focused on three types of transitions that one can experience; anticipated, unanticipated, and nonevents. This question sought to explore the anticipated and possible unanticipated transitions participants may have experienced. Novice teachers may have had expectations about what their first year of teaching might include. This question helped the researcher explore the expectations and actuality of the transitions that participants may have experienced upon entering their first year as educators.

Sub-Question Two

What are the strategies participants described using to adapt their teaching methods for ELL students throughout their first year? This question is based on the coping references (4 S) situation, self, support, and strategies (Chickering & Schlossberg, 2002), as well as how teachers implement strategies to adapt their teaching methods for English language learners (ELLs). Based on this part of Schlossberg's theory, as participants move through the transition, they will

have to find a support system and learn new strategies to deal with the experience. Although most teachers work with ELLs in the U.S., little documentation exists about how teachers adapt their instructional practices to support ELLs (Daniel & Pray, 2017). According to several educational researchers, few studies have examined how practicing teachers learn about and implement instructional strategies for ELLs (Bunch, 2013; de Jong, Harper, & Coady, 2013; Lucas & Grinberg, 2008). This second question served to inform the researcher about practices utilized throughout the teacher's first year with ELL students.

Sub-Question Three

How do participants describe their planning strategies and processes for their second year of teaching ELL students based on their first-year experiences? This question sought to describe the “moving out” phase of the transition regarding the participants' first year of teaching and shed light on the participants' reflections and insights from their first year of teaching ELLs. Coping is part of the transition theory (Schlossberg, 1981), and this question focused on how the participants reflected on their first year of teaching in order to implement coping strategies for the ensuing year of teaching. Since learning to be a teacher happens gradually, takes place through actually engaging in the practice of teaching, and requires one to actively reflect on his/her practice (Daniel & Pray, 2017), this third question served to encompass the learned experiences and thoughts of the teacher in regards to his/her first year.

Definitions

The terms and definitions below are pertinent to this study and are representative of the terminology utilized in relation to the literature used to address the topic, theoretical framework, or chosen research design.

1. *ELL (English Language Learner)* – An ELL is an active learner of the English language

who may benefit from various types of language support programs. This term is used mainly in the U.S. to describe K-12 students (National Council of Teachers of English, 2008).

2. *Moving in* – Moving in is the first stage in regards to Schlossberg’s (1981) transition theory. During this stage, the participant will become familiar with new roles, relationships, and routines (Anderson et al., 2012).
3. *Moving through* – Anderson et al. (2012) explained that people experiencing the moving through stage are those who “know the ropes.” In relation to the participants in this study, it would be an expectation that teachers would already know what they needed to before entering the classroom in regards to teaching pedagogy.
4. *Moving out* – Moving out is the period of transition when one’s experience with a series of transitions ends and they begin to look toward the next experience; in most cases this occurs last in the transition theory (Anderson et al., 2012).
5. *Transition* – According to Schlossberg (1981), a transition consists of events or non-events that cause people to change their assumptions about themselves and the world around them and requires a change in one’s behavior in relation to the new viewpoint.

Summary

As the demands on educators and schools continues to grow through state and federal mandates, and the common core curriculum, teachers are faced with the responsibility of educating all students regardless of their level of specialized training. Due to the increasing number of ELL students in U.S. schools, it is imperative that teacher education programs include effective ELL instructional strategies for all teachers (Ballantyne et al., 2008). As the number of ELLs continues to grow, universities and colleges need to find ways to improve the training for

new teachers who will end up with ELL students in their classrooms (Salerno & Kibler, 2013). This qualitative study aimed to describe the experiences of first-year, secondary level educators who were not trained to work with ELLs but were required to do so regardless of their lack of training and experience with ELL students.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

This chapter provides an overview of the literature and information directly related to Schlossberg's (1989) transition theory, which was used to guide this research study. The chapter begins with a brief discussion on organizational theories and explains the transition theory in depth then relates how this theory is implemented in the study. Related literature included in this chapter relays information on first year teachers and their belief systems including their beliefs about English language learners. A history of second language learning methods and current programs used when instructing English language learners (ELLs) is incorporated within the chapter as well. Federal laws, state guidelines, and information about teacher candidate training programs are detailed. Finally, this chapter concludes with a summary of the content and aim to establish the gap in the literature, which this study attempted to fill.

Theoretical Framework

Theories relating to processes by which individuals learn to adapt to the entry into new organizations or careers (i.e., organizational socialization, career development, socialization stage models, and life-space theory of career development) have been developed in attempts to better understand the transition experiences of new employees. Of these previously stated theories, the organizational socialization model (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979) was developed to aid in the understanding of the unique experiences of college graduates. This three-part framework (anticipation, adjustment, and achievement) draws on the commonalities found in socialization stage models proposed by Feldman (1976), Louis (1980), Porter, Lawler, and Hackman (1975), Schein (1978), and Wanous (1992) and incorporates concepts from established career development and transition theories (Schlossberg, 1989).

Several theoretical perspectives under the umbrella of organizational socialization have been developed to further the understanding of transition experiences of new employees (Wendlandt & Rochlen, 2008). However, Schlossberg's (1981) transition theory details the actual process of individuals experiencing these life changes. The stages of Schlossberg's transition theory were used in this study to view the stages of the phenomenon of experiences of first year teachers working with ELL students.

Schlossberg (1981) defined transition as "an event or non-event that results in a change of assumptions about oneself and the world and thus requires a corresponding change in one's behavior and relationships" (p. 5). These events or non-events can result in one of three transition types. According to Anderson, Goodman, and Schlossberg (2012), the three forms of transition include anticipated transitions, unanticipated transitions, and non-event transitions. Anticipated transitions include those events that are predictable and expected in one's life such as marriage, the birth of a first child, a child leaving home, starting a first job, and retiring.

Unanticipated transitions include nonscheduled events that are not predictable in one's life (Schlossberg, 1981). These transitions are events that occur unexpectedly and may be disruptive to one's routine or life. Some unanticipated transitions include being fired, laid off, or demoted; separation or divorce from a spouse; or death or illness of a spouse or child. Unanticipated transitions present unique challenges that can be very different from anticipated transitions. When transitions are anticipated and planned, they are often self-initiated and made with ample time to consider multiple options (Fouad & Bynner, 2008). Non-event transitions are those events that an individual had expected to occur but that did not happen, thereby altering one's life, such as not getting married, not receiving an expected promotion, not becoming a parent, not being able to change a career path when wanting to do so, and not being able to retire

as expected.

Depending on one's perspective, an anticipated change for one person may in reality be an unanticipated change for another. Regardless of which type of transition one experiences, each transition has an impact on a person. The person's appraisal of the transition will determine the impact it has upon one's life, the challenges it may present, and the meaning that the transition will hold for them (Anderson et al., 2012).

As reported by Schlossberg, Lynch, and Chickering (1989), the process of transitioning roles, relationships, routines, and assumptions takes time and can elicit various feelings and reactions. For each person that undergoes a transition, it is not the event or non-event itself that is most important but its impact on the person who is experiencing it. In order to understand the meaning of a transition for a particular individual, one must examine the type of transition, the perspective of the individual undergoing the transition, the context of the transition, and the impact the transition will have on the individual's life (Anderson et al., 2012).

Although the onset of a transition may be identifiable or linked to one particular event or non-event, transitions are actually a process over time (Anderson et al., 2012). Anderson et al. (2012) identified four major factors that influence the ability of one to cope during a transition. These four factors are referred to as the 4 S System or the 4 S's and include the following four variables: the situation variable, the self-variable, the support variable, and the strategies variable (Anderson et al., 2012; Schlossberg, 1989; Schlossberg et al., 1989). Situation refers to the individual's situation at the time of the transition, the individual's view (positive or negative) of the transition, and the individual's perception about their control of the transition. Self refers to what the individual brings to the transition, the person's inner strength at the time of the transition (in the case of teachers this may be their self-efficacy). A person's self also refers to

their coping mechanisms, outlook in regard to the transition, commitment and values, and resiliency in regard to the transition. Rodin (1990) related Bandura's self-efficacy theory to the self-factor in Schlossberg's 4 S System. Much like self in the 4 S System, self-efficacy depends on one's beliefs in their own ability to cause an intended event to occur and to carry out the necessary steps to successfully navigate the event. Supports include the available resources to the individual at the time of the transition. This may include (but is not limited to) family and friendship supports, work and community supports, and training or prior experiences that may help the person regarding the transition. Strategies are the responses by the individual experiencing the transition that modify, control meaning, and responses that help the individual manage any stress experienced after the transition has occurred. According to Schlossberg (2011), "a person who uses lots of strategies will be better able to cope [with transitions]" (p. 161).

Anderson et al. (2012) and Schlossberg (1989) explained transitions in three steps. These three steps include moving in, moving through, and moving out. The first stage of any transition can be considered as either moving in or moving out. Anderson et al. (2012) considered this first stage in regards to both moving in or moving out dependent on the perception of the individual experiencing the transition. In order to explain each step specifically, and for the use in this particular study, the three steps in the transition theory were described in the sequence of moving in as the first step, moving through as the second step, and moving out as the third and final step in the transition.

Moving in is considered the point at which the individual moves into a new transition (Anderson et al., 2012). At the moving in stage, the individual needs to become familiar with their new roles, relationships, and expectations in relation to the new system formed by the

transition process. For the sake of this study, moving in was examined by asking each participant to describe their expectations of their first year of teaching prior to the actual experience. This question will probe the expectations of the new situation, new roles and responsibilities, and assumptions of the participants prior to and during the process of moving in to the transition of their first year of teaching ELLs.

Moving through is when the person progressing through the transition is at a point where they “know the ropes” (Anderson et al. 2012, p. 57). The moving through stage can occur over a long period of time in transitions experienced by adults. In the proposed study, moving through was considered the time over which the participants learn their new roles and responsibilities, reflect on their own strengths that carried them through the transition, and reflect on the strategies employed on the journey through the transition. Participants were asked to share the strategies they used in adapting their teaching methods for ELL students throughout their first year. This description of strategies will serve as a gathering method for information in relation to the moving through stage of the transition.

Moving out occurs at the end of one transition and may mark the beginning of moving into another (new) transition (Anderson et al., 2012). In this research study, moving out was considered the end of the first year of teaching for the participants. Participants were asked to describe their planning strategies and processes for their second year of teaching ELL students based on their experiences of their first year. This will allow participants to reflect on practices and strategies implemented and what worked or did not work during their yearlong transition.

Related Literature

This section will provide literature and information relevant to the study. The section will provide a framework for the reader to facilitate understanding of the research. The literature

included in this section will build background knowledge and link the historical aspects of English language learning to the necessity in today's educational system for instructors who are prepared to meet the needs of the linguistically diverse student population in schools today. The following section will review relevant theory and instructional methods regarding English as a Second Language programs for English Language learners.

History of English as a Second Language (ESL) Instructional Methods and Theories

Since the 1940s, the definitive solution to successful ESL instruction has been discovered numerous times (Taber, 2006). From that time and throughout the present day, numerous methodologies exist from expert theorists who may or may not have had first-hand experience at learning a second language. Prior to the 19th century, second-language instruction was based on the Classical Method of teaching Latin and Greek. In this Classical Method, lessons were based on repetition drills, vocabulary drills that taught words out-of-context and reading and translation of ancient texts.

As early as the 1800's, the method known as the Grammar-Translation Method was utilized to teach second languages. This method had the longest-standing usage, reaching into the 1960s even though many theorists claim that it has no academic status due to the fact that it is not a research-based method (Taber, 2006). The Grammar-Translation Method emphasized the memorization of lists of isolated vocabulary, translations of literary passages from the target language into the native language, identification of synonyms and antonyms, creating sentences with new vocabulary, and written compositions in the target language. Teaching or usage of spoken language or pronunciation does not exist associated with this method, limiting the comprehension of oral language and eliminating opportunities to produce any spoken communication in the target language. The effects of this method can still be observed in some

English language learners (ELLs) who have studied English as a foreign language in their native countries. These ELLs are often able to read and write English but have had no practice or experiences in listening and speaking with the English language.

The first theory-based methods of second language instruction began with François Gouin with the Series Method in the mid-19th century (Taber, 2006). Gouin's theory of language acquisition was developed by his own failure to learn German after spending an entire year in the country studying the language in seclusion. After discovering that his three-year-old nephew had become fluent in French in the year that he had failed to learn German, he decided to observe toddlers in the process of acquiring language. Essentially, the Series Method was based on the theory that one could learn a second language by recreating conditions in which children learn a first language.

The Direct Method (1880-1930), developed by Charles Berlitz in the late 1800s, has been recognized by second language theorists as the first real method of language teaching (Taber, 2006). Berlitz believed, as did Gouin, that a second language could be learned in the same way children learn their first language; that is directly and without explanations of grammatical points and using only the target language (Taber, 2006). This method was in stark contrast to the Grammar Translation Method; in fact, no grammar point or explanations were used. The main objectives in the Direct Method were speaking and listening comprehension, and only the target language was used in this method placing correct usage and pronunciation as the key features.

The Audiolingual Method (1940-1960) was first known as the "Army Method" as it was used by the military during the Second World War when it became evident that the majority of Americans were monolingual (Taber, 2006). The main purpose of the Audiolingual Method was to teach the student how to communicate. Lessons were based on drill and extensive

conversation practice in the target language. Individual structures were introduced one at a time and practice was via repetition drill. As with Berlitz's Direct Method, grammar explanations were minimal, and students were expected to learn these structures by inductive analogy.

During the 1960s and 1970s, several other English as a second language theories were introduced. David Ausubel (1963), influenced by Piaget and other cognitive psychologists, introduced cognitive language learning. Ausubel theorized that what a learner already knows has the greatest impact on learning. This thinking ruled out rote learning methods in favor of meaningful or relevant instructional methods. Ausubel's theoretical assumptions were linked to Piaget's theory of the application of schema or prior knowledge to the learning of new material as an assimilative process (Atherton, 2005; Piaget, 1970). Piaget's theory can be used to describe the concept of assimilation in relation to learning a second language that is linguistically similar to one's native language (Caccavale, 2007). The creation of connections by the learner can be considered a form of cognitive problem solving. The learning of a new language that is not linguistically similar to the learner's native language may be considered more of an accommodative process (Caccavale, 2007). According to Piaget (1970), accommodation is the process of cognitively making room for new information in the brain without having any prior knowledge or schema to link the new language to. Accommodation therefore increases the learner's knowledge by modifying the structural schemata to account for new experiences (Piaget, 1970).

Charles Curran developed the idea of community language learning approach in 1972, which used a counselor-client approach to language learning. Community language learning eliminated any sense of challenge or risk-taking for the learner, theoretically allowing him/her to learn the second language without application of effort. The teacher/counselor's job is to

translate and facilitate learning activities, eliminating environmental factors that may inhibit the learner's progress. Later, this theory expanded upon in the early 1980s by Stephen Krashen's affective filter theory (Taber, 2006).

In 1979, Georgi Lozanov introduced suggestopedia, which relies on imagery, music, relaxation, dim lighting, and role play to learn vocabulary from the instructor. This theory claims that when the learner's mind and body are relaxed, the brain will absorb knowledge without effort. Each of these methodologies was short lived and branded designer methods of second-language teaching (Brown, 2000).

Total physical response (TPR) was introduced as early as 1965 by James Asher and has many similarities with the aforementioned direct method theory of Francois Gouin (Taber, 2006). The idea behind TPR comes from the notion that children learning their native language appear to listen and react physically long before they speak; therefore, second language learners might learn a target language in the same manner. This method is still used in classrooms today but is most effective with beginning-level students who have no knowledge of the target language (Taber, 2006). TPR requires students to listen and then respond physically to a request or command. Asher believed that students should not be pressured to express themselves in the target language, and that TPR allows the student to express his knowledge and understanding without an oral response.

In 1983, Stephen Krashen and Tracy Terrell introduced the theory and application of the natural approach (Taber, 2006). Krashen and Terrell believed that the "silent period" in which a student may not be ready to produce oral language should be honored. They believed that students would begin to speak naturally when they felt comfortable and confident in their ability and their environment. The natural approach classroom is teacher centered. It is the teacher's

responsibility to provide comprehensible input and sufficient additional information, allowing the students to acquire rather than consciously learn the target language.

The most recent of ESL methods is the communicative method (CLT), which made its entrance in the 1990s. In the CLT method grammar is not taught, instead teachers guide second language students to proficiency through presentation, practice, and production (Taber, 2006). Students are given time to practice the language through situational dialogues that are structured by the teacher. Due to the lack of structure of this particular method, many administrators and teachers have found alternate ways to instruct ELLs.

Although second-language learning has developed over its long history and the days of rote learning and memorization, work is still needed to develop effective methods of teaching ELLs. Since the late 1990s and into current day teaching of ELLs, a more eclectic approach has been utilized to teach ELLs. By using these eclectic approaches, teachers are allowed to implement effective elements from many methods that work in their classrooms. Teachers are able to take the best ideas from theorists throughout the history of second language learning and incorporate them with techniques that work effectively for their students. No one specific method has been developed or discovered that is best suited to all English language learner students or classroom situations. Of the aforementioned theories, one in particular has received a great deal of attention from the second language learning community; this theory is known as the natural approach theory and was published by Krashen and Terrell. The natural approach theory is supported by Krashen's notorious monitor model of language acquisition (Taber, 2006).

Krashen

Since the 1980s, Krashen has been widely known and recognized for his theory of second language acquisition. Krashen's theory has and continues to largely impact all areas of second

language research and teaching practices (Schultz, 2005). Krashen's theory of second language acquisition consists of five main hypotheses including; the Acquisition-learning hypothesis, the monitor hypothesis, the natural order hypothesis, the input hypothesis, and the affective filter hypothesis.

The focal point of Krashen's Theory of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) is his distinction between language acquisition and language learning. Other SLA researchers have recognized this distinction as perhaps the most important conceptualization in the field of SLA. This clarification between language acquisition and language learning may have led to the most productive second language acquisition model developed thus far (Tollefson, Jacobs, & Selipsky, 1983).

Acquisition-learning hypothesis. The first of Krashen's hypotheses, the acquisition-learning hypothesis, is the most widely known amongst linguists and language practitioners (Schultz, 2005). Krashen (1988) claimed that there are two separate systems of second language performance, acquisition and learning. Acquisition occurs when language is acquired through repeated exposure in natural settings, much like the process by which young children acquire their native language. Acquisition of second language requires meaningful interaction in the target language through the use of natural communication practices (Krashen, 1988).

In the second portion of the acquisition-learning hypothesis, the learned-system is the product of formal instruction (Schultz, 2005). This learning system is a conscious process resulting in knowledge about language and language structures such as grammatical rules. Krashen (1982) distinguished between acquisition and language by explaining that learning a language implies knowing the rules, being conscious of them, and being able to discuss them.

According to Krashen (1981), the development of learned competence and acquired

competence in second language are disparate. Language learning is accomplished through the formal instruction of rules, patterns, and conventions of the language; allowing the learner to consciously apply their knowledge gained through study. Language acquisition develops exclusively through exposure to language that is understandable and meaningful to the learner, Krashen (1981) termed this type of language comprehensible input (Tricomi, 1986).

Monitor hypothesis. The monitor hypothesis explains the relationship between acquisition and learning as well as defining the influence that learning has on acquisition. Krashen (1982) claimed that the acquisition system serves as the utterance initiator when learning a second language, allowing the learner to produce words, phrases, and sentences at will, whereas the monitor system works as a planning (pre-utterance) or correcting (post-utterance) function. Therefore, the monitor hypothesis posits that the acquisition system is responsible for initiating normal, fluent speech utterances, while the learning system works as a monitor to alter or correct second language utterances. Any competence developed through learning or the Monitor as Krashen (1981) refers to it, can be used to modify language generated by acquired language competence. The use of monitoring is limited in second language acquisition as it can only be utilized when there is sufficient time allowed, the rules have been learned, and the learner is focused on the proper form of the language (Tricomi, 1986).

Natural order hypothesis. Based on research findings (Dulay & Burt, 1974; Fathman, 1975; Krashen, 1988; Makino, 1980;), the natural order hypothesis suggests that the acquisition of grammatical structures follows a natural order dependent on the given language. These similarities could not be proven under every condition, and therefore should not be utilized as a guide for instruction in second language learning/teaching. Although Krashen (1982) reported statistically significant similarities to support the natural order hypothesis, he also rejected the

idea of using grammatical sequencing in language acquisition.

Input hypothesis. The input hypothesis focuses solely on the acquisition of second language and not on the learning of second language. This hypothesis posits that second language learners move along a developmental continuum by receiving comprehensible input. This comprehensible input is defined as second language input just beyond the learner's current second language competence in terms of complexity (Mitchell & Myles, 2004). Krashen (1982) claimed that in order for second language learners to move from one stage to the next, input must be one level above the learner's current comprehension. Therefore, if the learner's current level of understanding and competence is i , then the comprehensible input for that learner would be $i + 1$. Krashen also explained that input that is too simple, has already been acquired, or is too advanced ($i + 2/3/4$) will not be useful for second language acquisition.

The input hypothesis runs counter to the more generally-acknowledged pedagogical approaches utilized in second language and foreign language teaching. Whereas in formal language courses structures are taught first and then practice of those structures follows, the input hypothesis claims just the opposite. Krashen's (1982) input hypothesis posits that students acquiring a second language gain an understanding of the language through comprehensible input and as a result of this understanding, acquire the language structures. Since not all second language learners are at the same level of linguistic competence, a formal instructional syllabus does not lend itself to the acquisition process. Krashen suggested that natural communicative input is the most important element for second language acquisition to occur, allowing each learner some $i + 1$ input appropriate for his/her current stage of linguistic competence.

Affective filter hypothesis. Krashen's (1981) affective filter hypothesis encompasses a number of affective variables that may potentially play a role in second language learning.

These affective variables include: motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety. Dulay and Burt (1974), Krashen, and Stevick (1976) showed positive results that second language learners with high motivation to learn and high-self confidence levels tend to acquire a second language more easily. Learners with high levels of anxiety form a mental block that prevents comprehensible input from being used for acquisition (Krashen, 1981). Essentially, the affective filter hypothesis claims that when the second language learner's affective filter is high or up, it impedes language acquisition. Therefore, second language learners with a low affective filter, those with a high self-esteem, positive motivation, and a low-level of anxiety may acquire a second language more easily than their peers who have a higher affective filter.

Second language learning methods have evolved and improved since the days of rote learning. Still, a great deal more needs to be discovered in regards to closing the educational gap between English language learners and their native English-speaking peers. It is imperative that schools and districts implement research-based programs that provide the most effective educational structures for their English language learners.

Programs for English Language Learners

In an effort to meet the educational needs of English language learners (ELLs), school districts have adopted a variety of programs to provide instruction in ESL. Many of the programs are as diverse from one another as the students are (McKeon, 1987). The types of programs available in certain regions may differ in relation to the population of the students in the area. Even amongst the three dominant categories of education programs for ELLs, immersion, bilingual education, and submersion, there are numerous variations of each dependent on school district and state policies regarding the education of ELLs. It is important for districts and school administrators to review the research on specific programs for ELLs to

determine which type of program should be implemented based on the population of English Language learner student demographics.

Immersion. Language immersion is a method of teaching language, usually a second language (L2), in which the target language is used as both curriculum content and media of instruction (Baker, 2006). There are three basic levels of entry into language immersion education. They are divided into age categories as follows: Early immersion includes students that begin second language learning from the age of five or six; middle immersion includes students that begin second language learning from the age of nine or 10; and late immersion which includes students that begin second language learning between the ages of 11 to 14. Success with acquisition of a second language can vary depending on several factors, but in general, research has shown that early immersion in a second language is preferable to late immersion (Pacific Policy Research Center, 2010).

The three types of immersion found in the literature include total, partial, and two-way immersion. Each of these immersion methods has differing goals, and not all of them use the student's native language to facilitate instruction. In total immersion programs, almost 100% of the school day is spent in the second language. This means that almost all content subjects will be taught in the L2. In United States schools, this means that all instruction would occur in English, regardless of the language proficiency of the students. Partial immersion programs vary in their L2 emphasis, but most programs spend about half of the class instructional time in the target language. In this type of program, 50% of the student's day may be taught in the target language or L2, while the other 50% would be instruction in the student's native language.

The third immersion method, two-way immersion, is the one that has become the most popular in United States schools. This model of immersion can also be referred to as bilingual

immersion, two-way bilingual, and two-way dual language immersion bilingual (Pacific Policy Research Center, 2010). Two-way immersion programs vary greatly yet share three key characteristics; instruction in two languages (bilingual education), usage of one language at a time for instruction, and peer-to-peer facilitated language sharing (Pacific Policy Research Center, 2010).

Bilingual education programs. Even before the United States officially became a nation, it was a multi-lingual country. The Native Americans had their own languages as did the people arriving from other countries around the world to colonize America. Bilingual education, as a matter of law, has been around in some form or another since 1839 (Education Corner, 2019). Ohio was one of the first states to authorize bilingual German-English education in the public school system. By the end of the 19th century, about 12 other states had followed Ohio by passing laws to allow bilingual education in other languages including Polish, Czech, Spanish, Norwegian, French, and Cherokee (Education Corner, 2019).

Following World War I, fears of loyalty and patriotism began prompting most states to adopt English-only laws designed to Americanize anyone currently living in the United States. By the early 1920's, bilingual education in the United States almost ceased to exist (Education Corner, 2019). In 1906, the Nationality Act in Texas designated English as the official language of instruction and required that all immigrants speak English to be eligible for education (Nieto, 2010). Instruction in schools was in English and immigrant students had to conform to the mainstream English language or be left behind their English speaking peers.

With the continual influx of immigrants after World War II, bilingual education became more and more popular. In 1967, the U.S. passed a bill known as the Bilingual Educational Act. This bill funded bilingual education programs throughout the country, stating that many children

were not able to understand their teacher's instructions in English (Nieto, 2010). This Bilingual Educational Act characterized bilingual education as one that allows students to advance through their educational careers more successfully with the assistance of their native language (Nieto, 2010).

Currently, bilingual education is used in schools across the United States, through varying types of programs for differing reasons depending on the student population. Some bilingual institutions aim to teach English to non-native English speakers using both the native language and English as teaching mediums. Other bilingual programs enroll both non-native English and native English speakers with the goal of bilingualism and biliteracy for both the English speakers and the students who speak the target language utilized as the medium for part of the instructional day.

Bilingual education is the process of instructing students in two languages and the use of those two languages as mediums of instruction for any part, or all, of the school curriculum (Anderson & Boyer, 1970). In order to be considered a bilingual program, both content (math, science, or social studies) instruction and the delivery of the content must occur in two languages (Baker & Prys-Jones, 1998). Due to such broad definitions and the diversity across the United States in regard to the needs and expectations of students, the particularities of bilingual educational programs can vary greatly in design, implementation, and development (Pacific Policy Research Center, 2010).

May (2008) synthesized over 40 years of research and literature on immersive bilingual education into meaningful categories that highlight broad agreements among researchers. The first general rule about these programs is that they can be either subtractive or additive. A program is considered subtractive if it promotes monolingual learning in the dominant language,

either losing or replacing one language with another. An immersion program is considered additive if it promotes bilingualism and biliteracy over the long term learning of the student by adding another language to the student's existing repertoire (May, 2008). May also categorized bilingual programs into four distinct models; transitional, maintenance, enrichment, and heritage.

Transitional. Transitional bilingual education (TBE) most often begins in kindergarten or elementary school. The student's first language is used as the method of instruction for the first year or two of the student's formal education. The aim of transitional bilingual education is to leave the students' first language (L1) capabilities behind and develop only their L2 linguistic and academic proficiencies (May, 2008). Transitional bilingual programs are bilingual at first, but the actual goal is eventual monolingual teaching and learning in the dominant language, allowing no growth in the students' L1; therefore, this method is considered a subtractive bilingual program.

Transitional bilingual education programs are taught in the students' native language until their English becomes strong enough to participate fully in a mainstream, English-only classroom (Rolstad, Mahoney, & Glass, 2005). Transitional bilingual education classrooms generally begin at the kindergarten level with all content instruction in the students' native language. As students progress in their English abilities and move upward through the grade levels, content may be presented by subject area in either English or the native language dependent on the students' ability or in both languages where applicable. Scaffolding of the information in both languages may be utilized until the students have a better understanding of the academic language of the content area being presented. As students gain academic language in each content area, the scaffolding in the native language is removed. The end goal of TBE is the utilization of English for all academic subjects and the removal of the native language.

Maintenance. Maintenance bilingual programs do not involve progressive development or the extension of the minority language. This type of program is designed to maintain the student's first language and is therefore considered an additive type of bilingual immersion program. The student's first language (L1), and by extension their sense of cultural identity, is affirmed by the program (May, 2008). In some maintenance programs the L2 may begin at an early phase (as much as 50% of the instructional day), but the focus during the early years is on L1 proficiency and academic achievement using the L1 (May, 2008). Due to student participation in maintenance programs for a longer period of time than the transitional bilingual method, maintenance programs are sometimes called late exit programs. According to Cummins (2000), a maintenance bilingual program aims to form a solid academic base in the students' L1, which then facilitates acquisition of literacy in the L2. The final goal of a maintenance bilingual immersion program is bilingualism and biliteracy. However, because the L1 is not emphasized or developed beyond a certain point in order to place emphasis on the L2 development, the bilingualism and biliteracy of the student may be limited (Pacific Policy Research Center, 2010).

Enrichment. Enrichment bilingual education focuses on teaching student's academic proficiency through the medium of a second language where upon literacy in the second language can be attained (Pacific Policy Research Center, 2010). Like with maintenance programs, the end goal is biliteracy and bilingualism. In addition to this, enrichment bilingual education strives for the maintenance of the minority language and culture. In schools across the United States, these programs may be identified as any of the following; two-way immersion, two-way bilingual, or dual-language programs. Regardless of the terminology (called dual language here), the goal and basic set up of each of these programs is the fairly similar.

In certain areas of the United States where there are dominant populations of students

who speak a language other than English as their native language, dual language (the use of two languages) programs have emerged. In dual language programs, students are taught for a predetermined percentage of the day in their native language and in English for the remainder of the school day. The essential ideology of dual language is that students are taught in English 50% of the day and the native language for 50% of the day. Dual language programs enroll native, non-minority English speakers that want to learn the target language of the minority in which content is instructed, creating a balance between the two instructional language populations and ensuring a substantive population of students for attendance purposes. The technical definition of a dual language program is one that is an enrichment education program that fosters language equity and is organized with the goals of bilingualism and biliteracy for all children, language minority and mainstream students alike (Torres-Guzman, 2002).

Heritage. Heritage bilingual programs are used in strategic ways to recover a lost or endangered language (Pacific Policy Research Center, 2010). Heritage language programs overlap both enrichment and maintenance bilingual programs. Goals include bilingualism and biliteracy, but the aim is predominantly the rejuvenation of an indigenous language, therefore the heritage language can take priority depending on the design of the program.

Submersion Majority Language Programs

The aims of submersion-type language programs are in direct opposition to the aforementioned Bilingual Education programs. Although the Supreme Court ruling in the *Lau v. Nichols* (1974) case found that complete submersion violated the civil rights of language-minority students, there are still many programs utilized in schools today that the goal is to minimize the use of the student's native language. Many programs for English language learners place students with limited English proficiency (LEP) in classrooms with no first language

support. These programs range from total immersion to sheltered instruction, but each program is taught exclusively in English. The goal of these programs is complete monolingualism with academic literacy in English as the main objective. The types of programs outlined in this section will provide the reader with a more thorough understanding of the different methodologies implemented by schools that have ELL students depending on the predominant language population.

Total immersion. In total immersion programs, LEP students are placed in classroom in which the language of instruction is only English, and the majority if not all of the peers in the classroom are native English speakers (Deveau & Bang, 2004). The lessons are conducted entirely in English, and there is not support for the limited English proficient student in his or her first language. Ideally, students will acquire the second language (English) in a natural manner just as they did with their native language by being surrounded by people who speak the language, essentially by being immersed in an English language environment.

English as a second language. ESL is a program that provides separate instruction to students who are considered limited English proficient. These programs are designed to facilitate language and content learning in a smaller setting. Students may be pulled out of the mainstream classroom to be given extra help by an ESL specialist. ESL specialists are trained to provided structured materials and specific instructional methods that scaffold the language to allow students access to content knowledge (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2017). Ideally, the student will develop English language skills without falling behind their academic peers in the school-based curriculum.

The English as a second language approach is a program in which English language learner (ELL) students are placed in mainstream English-only classrooms for the majority of the

day. They are provided with concentrated instruction aimed at ESL for a portion of the each day (Rolstad, Mahoney, & Glass, 2005). The predetermined time allotted to each ELL student in and ESL classroom is dependent on the language proficiency of the student as well as the number of ESL teachers present at the school. In the English as a second language method, English is the only language of instruction implemented. The ESL teacher uses various strategies to help students learn the basics of the English language, the rules of grammar, necessary terms and phrases, and some academic vocabulary. Native languages are not necessary when using the English as a second language method of instruction.

An ESL-certified teacher generally provides this concentrated ESL portion of instruction, and most students are pulled out of the mainstream classroom during this targeted instruction time. Most schools have one or two ESL-certified teachers to instruct ELLs for small portions of the day. The remainder of the day is spent with the mainstream or classroom teacher who may or may not have been trained to work with linguistically-diverse students.

Sheltered English instruction. Sheltered English instruction or content-based English as a second language program promotes proficiency in English while learning content in an all-English setting (Echevarria et al., 2017). In a sheltered English instructional classroom, students may be from various linguistic and cultural backgrounds as they are all learning content in English. The instruction in a sheltered classroom is adapted to the students' English language proficiencies, and scaffolding techniques such as visual aides, graphic representations of content concepts, and even first language support is used if available. The goal is to teach language through content concepts, allowing students with limited English proficiencies access to content concepts at the correct grade level by the use of scaffolding and differentiated teaching strategies.

Teacher Preparation for Classroom (Mainstream) Teachers of English Language Learners

Two major trends have accentuated the necessity for preparing all teachers to instruct culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students (Lucas & Grinberg, 2008; Lucas & Villegas, 2011). Primarily the growth explosion in the number of students learning English as a second (or third) language has created a major impact in United States schools; along with the incredible growth between 1990 and 2010 of students classified as LEP in the U.S. (Chat Editors, 2009). According to Pandya, Batalova, & McHugh (2011), the population of LEP students increased by 80% nationwide, with growth levels of more than 200% in the states of Alabama, Washington, Utah, South Carolina, Nebraska, Tennessee, Arkansas, Georgia, North Carolina, and Nevada.

The other issues intensifying the need to prepare teachers to work with these diverse learners are the educational policies (which began in 1980) that have placed great urgency and prominence on accountability standards and testing scores. The passing of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) in 2002, and the current revisions of this act, Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in 2015, place more attention on the progress of ELL students both in language proficiency and content knowledge growth, in turn placing more scrutiny on the instruction of the classroom teacher (Lucas & Villegas, 2011). Researchers including Abedi (2004), Solano-Flores and Trumbell (2003) have expressed the absurdity of measuring the English proficiency in reading, writing, and math of students who are by legal definition not proficient in English. However, the laws that are currently in place maintain that the classroom teacher carries the majority of the accountability for the students' growth in his/her classroom regardless of English language proficiency.

Classroom teachers are given the responsibility to teach language and content to English language learners (ELLs) with the expectation that these students will pass state-mandated, end-

of-year tests at a proficient level (Leavitt, 2013). de Jong and Harper (2005) showed that these teachers typically lack training to work with ELLs, including lack of explicit knowledge of linguistic and cultural needs of ELLs, making their presence in the mainstream classroom a challenge for teachers. Newman, Samimy, and Romstedt (2010) found that only 26% of teachers surveyed had taken a college course on teaching ELLs, and only 45% had participated in professional development on working with ELLs. Due to the growing numbers of ELLs and their low performance relative to their non-ELL peers, educators need specific training to improve the academic outcomes for this high-risk population of students. In order to improve teacher effectiveness with ELLs, consistent and specific guidelines in the areas of oral language, academic language, and cultural needs of ELLs need to be addressed by state regulations and teacher preparation programs and certification exams as well as through professional development for teachers of ELL students (Sampson & Collins, 2012).

Statistics

An estimated 25% of children in America are from immigrant families and live in households where a language other than English is spoken (Sampson & Collins, 2012). These children are entering America's schools, generating classrooms where teachers must be properly prepared to teach this culturally- and linguistically- diverse population of students.

Unfortunately, the majority of mainstream teachers have had little or no training and are unprepared in the instruction of ELLs (Gandara, Maxwell-Jolly, & Driscoll, 2005). In fact, Karabenick and Noda (2004) reported that despite the fact that 88% of the teachers they had surveyed had taught ELLs, they lacked the basic foundational knowledge about the issues (cultural, linguistic, etc.) that ELLs bring to the classroom. Reeves (2008) reflected that of all secondary teachers in math classes in the United States, only 12.5% received eight or more hours

of recent training to teach students with limited English proficiency. Considering the amplification in the number of ELLs in classrooms across the United States and the lack of qualified specialist being employed by districts due to continued budget cuts, it is logical for mainstream teachers to be trained during preservice teaching courses in methods that will assist them in reaching ELL students. Unfortunately, there are currently no specific laws or determinations placed upon universities and higher education institutions to enforce the need for courses directed at teaching English language learners for students training to become classroom teachers.

Teacher Preparation Guidelines

Federal law governs the education of English language learners (ELLs) at the highest level. States are free to determine additional qualifications and certifications of educators who teach ELLs or they may use the federal guidelines, which states:

School districts must provide research-based professional development to any teachers, administrators, and staff who work with ELLs. The training must focus on methods for working with ELLs and be long and enough and offered frequently enough to have a positive and lasting impact. (Education Commission of the States, 2014)

If states decide to abide by the federal regulations only, the state governs the activities by each school district to ensure the following of the restrictions of the federal law, allowing the state to interpret guidelines as they see fit.

The current information available on the training, procedures, preparation courses, and certification requirements for preservice teachers in regards to instruction of ELLs is insufficient in the literature. Research has shown that the number of teachers who are specifically trained to teach English language learners is low, and teacher education programs offer little to no

pedagogical instruction in regards to teaching ELLs to general education teacher candidates (Kissau & Algozzine, 2015; Rashidi & Moghadam, 2014). Furthermore, there are extensive inconsistencies across the states in the requirements of knowledge and skills teachers should have in the instruction of ELLs for all teachers as part of their initial certification (Sampson & Collins, 2012). Currently only 12 states have specific coursework required, a few additional states giving only a general reference to the needs of ELLs in the classroom, and the remaining 33 states have no requirements beyond the federal laws for instructing ELLs (Education Commission of the States, 2014).

Sampson and Collins (2014) reported:

A multisubject elementary school teacher candidate, for example, may be required to take courses in child development, English language arts, math, science, social studies, art, behavior management, and assessment, but not in the pedagogy of teaching ELLs.

Without specific required coursework relating to the unique learning needs of ELLs, teachers will not be able to teach these students adequately. (p. 8)

The majority of teacher preparation programs do not offer courses directly related to teaching ELL students. Universities may offer coursework in cultural diversity or working with diverse populations, but these courses do not teach education candidates how to effectively instruct ELL students.

A consensus based on recent research has implied that general education teachers should have certain skills in order to effectively teach English language learners (Bunch, 2013; Sampson & Collins, 2012). Three substantive elements that teachers should have knowledge of include:

- A working knowledge and understanding of language as a system and the role of the components of language and speech, including sounds, grammar, meaning,

coherence, communicative strategies, and social conventions.

- A working knowledge of academic language and the specific language used for instruction. Teachers must also have knowledge of the language used for cognitively demanding tasks typically found content and assessment materials. An understanding by teachers of the difference between conversational language and academic language is crucial as well.
- Teachers must have a working knowledge and understanding of the role that culture plays in language and academic development. Teachers must comprehend that a student's culture may affect the ELLs' classroom participation and performance in certain ways.

Despite research suggesting these critical components, it appears that few preservice teacher programs include these components.

First-Year Teachers

Studies by Fantilli and McDougall (2009), Farrell (2016), and Olson and Osborne (1991) used the terms novice and first-year teachers interchangeably. However, other researchers labeled beginning and novice teachers as those who have been teaching for five years or less (Ingersol & Smith, 2004). For the purpose of this research study, first-year teachers were defined as teachers who are currently teaching in their first year or teachers who have completed their first year in a stand-alone classroom. Essentially, this study will focus on first- and second-year teachers and their reflections on their transition experiences of the first year teaching in their own classroom.

Teacher Beliefs Fostered by Experiences

The literature states that teacher beliefs come from three sources: personal experiences,

experiences with schooling and knowledge, and experience with formal knowledge (both in school subjects and in pedagogical knowledge) (Richardson, 1996). These personal teaching beliefs can be powerful and can serve as filter for a teacher's actual teaching experience in their own classroom (Richardson, 1996). Personal experiences are those aspects of one's life that contribute to an individual's worldview. These aspects may include one's beliefs about themselves in relation to others, one's perception of the relationship between school and society, and other personal, familiar, and cultural understandings. School-based experiences consist of the years of observational experiences (13-14 years) that each teacher brings with them prior to their entrance to the teaching profession (Lortie, 1975). These observations throughout an individuals' educational journey influence a teacher's beliefs about what it means to be a teacher. Formal knowledge includes the pedagogical knowledge and content knowledge, which generally is acquired during a teacher preparation program. It is important to note that teachers may present formal knowledge in different methods dependent upon an individual's beliefs.

Personal experiences. Personal experiences by teachers such as time spent abroad, time spent with diverse populations, experiences with English language learners, and even bilingualism may confer a deeper understanding of methods to teach linguistically-diverse students (Flores & Smith, 2009; Suriel & Atwater, 2012). Byrnes, Kiger, and Manning (1997) claimed that teachers' attitudes towards diverse language learners might also result from regional differences. Those teachers who were raised where there is a large linguistic-minority population and have had personal experiences with diverse linguistic populations will hold more positive views toward students from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

Experience based on schooling and knowledge. Experience based on schooling and knowledge potentially comes from the experiences teachers had in their own classrooms while

enrolled in elementary, middle, and high school. Teachers who attended culturally- and linguistically-diverse schools appear to hold a more positive outlook on language diversity (Flores & Smith, 2009). Experiences with teachers who were culturally aware and accepting of cultural and linguistic diversity may also be a factor in shaping the beliefs and attitudes of teachers.

Experience based on formal knowledge. Teachers' experience with formal knowledge is classified as their subject and pedagogical knowledge (Richardson, 1996). This knowledge comes from courses taken both throughout their childhood education and their preparation courses in college. General education teachers have been found to perceive English language learners (ELLs) as more taxing or burdensome than those who speak English (Cooney & Akintude, 1999; Yoon, 2008), furthering the need for training and experience with ELLs in preservice teacher education courses.

Suriel and Atwater (2012) determined that experience and training to work with culturally- and linguistically-diverse learners along with an experience where they identified as a marginalized "cultural other" was critical in developing teachers capable of creating highly-multicultural, integrated curricula for diverse learners. Flores and Smith (2009) found the factors that appear to have the greatest influence on beliefs and teaching practices in relation to English language learners come from preparation and years of experience in the classroom. Each of these studies indicate that aside from consistent exposure to multicultural pedagogy, prospective new teachers need opportunities and experiences that will allow them to explore their beliefs while interacting in meaningful ways with differing ethnic and cultural students and people.

How Teacher Backgrounds Influence Beliefs About ELLs

Educators' one-size-fits-all instructional practices, regardless of students' cultural and

linguistic diversity and their differences in academic and background, maintain the achievement gap between English language learners and their non-English language learner peers (Abedi & Lord, 2001). Research has found that teacher beliefs about particular groups of students are the most significant factors in teacher classroom practices (Agudelo-Valderrama, 2008; Aguirre & Speer, 1999; Beswick, 2007). Findings indicate that a teacher's native language, ethnicity, experiences, and education influence beliefs that impact work with English language learners (Cahnmann & Remillard, 2002; Llurda & Lasagabaster, 2010; McLeman & Fernandes, 2012).

Culturally-responsive teaching centers on the fact that culture and language are a part of education and cannot be separated from teaching and learning. Ultimately, teachers' instructional decisions are influenced by their beliefs, which are framed by their experiences (Gay, 2010). Consequently, teachers' instructional decisions influence the effectiveness of their instruction, leading to skillfulness in meeting the academic and language needs of ELLs.

Summary

This chapter presents a review of the current literature relevant to first-year teachers' beliefs, the lack of training for general education teacher candidates in English as a second language methodologies, the needs of English language learners, and a brief history of second language learning methods and programs currently used in U.S. schools. Although research has been done on multilingual classrooms and effective teaching methods for teaching ELLs, markedly absent is the research on preparing content teachers, especially secondary content teachers, to work with ELLs (DelliCarpini & Alonso, 2014; Hutchinson, 2012; Roy-Campbell, 2013). Understanding the experiences of first-year teachers is critical because without the knowledge of these experiences, there can be no forward movement in the preparation of preservice teachers in the most effective methods for the instruction of ELLs.

This gap in the literature presents the need to further explore secondary content teachers' first-year experiences with ELLs. The proposed study will explore teachers' experiences using the following four research questions: (a) How do secondary content teachers describe their first year experiences working with ELLs? (b) How do these teachers describe their expectations prior to their first year of teaching? (c) What strategies did they implement with ELLs in their first year of teaching? (d) How did the teachers' planning strategies change based on their first year experiences with ELLs? Addressing these questions may contribute to a more complete picture of the training needs of content area teachers in respect to the needs of English language learners in the mainstream classroom.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the experiences of first year secondary school content teachers that work with ELLs in middle and high schools in the southeastern region of the U.S. with substantive populations of ELL students (preferably above 15%) but are untrained to do so. Moustakas (1994) claimed that “transcendental science” (p. 43) emanated from the dissatisfaction with philosophies of science based solely on material things, a science that excluded human experiences. Transcendental phenomenology therefore deals with the study of how individuals perceive experiences and objects. The perception that an individual has of an event or an object is most important in transcendental phenomenology because humans gain knowledge through self-evidence and one’s own experiences (Moustakas, 1994). In transcendental phenomenology, the explanation of an experience and its meanings as they are perceived by those experiencing the phenomenon are the main focal points in grasping the “essence of the experience” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 49).

Chapter Three aims to provide a comprehensive explanation of the design of the research study, the process for choosing the participants and setting, and a brief description of the procedures being utilized. Additionally, descriptions of the data collection and analysis processes are included in this chapter as well as the researcher’s plan to ensure trustworthiness of the study. This chapter concludes with a description of the methods being employed regarding ethical considerations.

Design

This study used a qualitative method as it aims to provide a detailed description of the experiences of the participants involved in the study. A qualitative approach was best suited to

this study as it utilized textual data gathered from open-ended questions in an attempt to gain understanding of human action based on a common phenomenon as opposed to analyzing numerical data used in quantitative studies (Schwandt, 2007). Since this study focused on the perspectives of teachers in their first year of teaching as a common phenomenon, a qualitative research approach was appropriate to utilize (Creswell, 2013). A phenomenological design was appropriate for this study, as it focused on and examined the everyday lived experiences from the individual participant's point of view (Patton, 2015; Schwandt, 2007). Qualitative phenomenological studies focus on experiences described by those who are or have been involved in the phenomenon and the meaning of those experiences from the participant's point of view (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994; Simon & Goes, 2011).

There are two approaches to phenomenology, hermeneutical and transcendental. Hermeneutic phenomenological research is oriented toward lived experiences and uses the researcher's background knowledge and understanding about the phenomenon to interpret the results of the study itself. A hermeneutical approach asks the researcher to engage in self-reflection in order to explicitly link the ways in which their position or experience links to the phenomenon being researched (Laverty, 2003). Transcendental phenomenology requires that the researcher reflects on his or her biases and prior experience as well but to a different end. In transcendental phenomenological research, the researcher must bracket out his or her own experiences in order to view the phenomenon from the perspectives of the participants. This research study utilized the lived experiences of the participants to provide an understanding of the phenomenon and does not intend to use any comparison to former experiences of the researcher. Due to the fact that a researcher, with common bonds to instructing both ELL students and teachers in ELL strategies will conduct the study, *epoche* (Husserl, 1983) was used

to bracket out personal judgments, perceptions, and attitudes (Moustakas, 1994) on this topic. Therefore, a transcendental phenomenological approach and process and not a hermeneutical one was used to carry out this study.

Research Questions

This research intended to seek the perspective of secondary education teachers who have not received undergraduate training in English as a Second Language (ESL) methods, in regards to their first year teaching experiences in content area classrooms with high numbers of ELLs.

SQ1: How do participants describe their expectations of their first year of teaching prior to the actual experience?

SQ2: What were the strategies that participants described using in adapting their teaching methods for ELL students throughout their first year?

SQ3: How do participants describe their planning strategies and processes for their second year of teaching ELL students based on their experiences of their first year?

Setting

The proposed sites for this study consisted of up to five middle and/or high schools located in at least three districts within the southeastern region of the United States. Each secondary institution potentially had at least a 15% to 20% concentration of ELL students. The schools were chosen based upon the number of ELLs enrolled (the higher the numbers, the better); also, the researcher looked for schools that had a considerable number of newly certified teachers. Both rural and urban sites were utilized as necessary. Schools having less than 20% of the population being ELLs may have also been chosen as long as content teachers selected for the study have high concentrations (15%-20%) of ELL students in their classroom. The most important factors in choosing a site was the number of ELLs concentrated in a content classroom

and the number of qualifying teachers who meet criteria for participation (potentially three to four teachers) in the given location.

Participants

The 11 participants in this study were selected using purposeful sampling in order to choose “information-rich” cases in respect to the purpose of the study (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007, p. 178). More specifically, criterion sampling was used to ensure that all participants had experience of the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 2013). Selection of teachers was carried out based primarily on the grade taught and number of years of service. The most critical requirements for participants in a phenomenological study was that they have experienced the phenomenon being studied, they had interest in the outcome of the study, and they were willing to be participants in the study (Moustakas, 1994). The participants were secondary content teachers completing their first or second year of teaching. Each participant also had experienced the phenomenon of teaching English language learners prior to being trained in strategies and methods to do so.

Participants needed to either be employed in their first year as a classroom teacher or have completed only one full year and be employed as a second-year instructor as information collected was based on the teacher’s first year of instructional experiences only. Also important in the selection of participants was the structure of their class, specifically the number of ELL students they taught throughout their first year of teaching. Finally the participants should have had no training in educational pedagogy specifically related to ELLs. The training and educational experience was determined through a questionnaire, which included questions to gauge what types and extent of training, preservice teacher experiences, and student teacher experiences the potential participants have had prior to their first year of teaching.

Sample size potentially consisted of 10 to 15 participants, and interviews continued until data saturation was achieved. A phenomenological study could potentially have more participants; however, the selection of the number of participants was based on recommendations by Creswell (2013) of five to 25 participants, Dukes (1984) of at least 10, and Kuzel (1992) and Morse's (1994) recommendation of six to eight. Since data saturation is not necessarily based on the number of participants but on the depth of the data (Burmeister & Aitken, 2012), interviews were conducted until there was sufficient information to replicate the study, there was no new information to obtain, and when further coding was no longer feasible (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Data saturation is defined by Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) as the point in data collection when new information causes little or no change to code or theme identification.

Ideally but not necessarily, in order to limit the amount of travel for the researcher and/or the participants there were to be three teachers from each of four to five schools included in the study. Demographics such as race, gender, and age were not factors in selecting participants for this study as indicated by the questionnaire below. Participants were determined by their prior experience and training or lack thereof with ELLs.

After receiving Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, the first round of participants were chosen through sampling procedures beginning with criterion and culminating with purposive. The criterion sampling was used to identify potential participants who have experienced the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). I contacted the districts' human resource departments first by phone to access proper contact information; thereafter the contact person was contacted by email in order to identify teachers in their first and second year of teaching. Once school locations were determined and after permission was received from the district, a letter describing the proposed study and requirements was sent to school administrators via

county (school) email to identify teachers who may be candidates for participation in the study. Once the potential participants were identified by the administration, an email briefly describing the proposed study was shared with those teachers identified by the principal via school email. Also included in this email was a questionnaire confirming consent to participate in the proposed study if specific criterion was met along with some potential questions to determine participants based on criteria:

1. If you meet the criteria for this study, and understanding that participation is voluntary, and that you are free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason and without cost, do you voluntarily agree to take part in this study?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
2. What subject (content) area do you teach?
 - a. English (Language Arts)
 - b. Math
 - c. Science
 - d. History
 - e. Elective
3. What grade level do you teach?
 - a. 9
 - b. 10
 - c. 11
 - d. 12
4. Have you ever had any courses that deal with teaching linguistically and/or culturally

diverse students such as one of the following: Methods and Materials for ELL Education, Foundations of ELL Education, Educational Linguistics and Second Language Acquisition, TESOL Courses, Assessment of ELL Students?

- a. Yes
 - b. No
5. How long have you been teaching in a full-time position?
- a. Less than one year
 - b. One year
 - c. Between one and two years
6. Would you be willing to participate in a follow up interview and focus groups?
- a. Yes
 - b. No

After the criterion sampling was complete, the participants were purposively selected from the pool of participants gathered in the criterion sampling. Purposive sampling was used to invite and recruit participants who have had experiences relevant to the research question (Schwandt, 2007). According to Patton (2015), purposeful sampling is the process of selecting a small number of information-rich cases, allowing the researcher access to in depth inquiry of a phenomenon.

Procedures

This study began only after the researcher received approval from the IRB of Liberty University (Appendix A). Potential districts were contacted in letter form (Appendix B) via email, and proper permission was acquired from each of the schools within the district(s) that employ participating teachers. Once approval was secured through Liberty University's IRB and

the schools involved in the study, teachers who meet the criteria (determined by a short demographic questionnaire which was sent via school email to all first- and second- year secondary level teachers within the school/district) and agreed to participate in the study were given an informed consent form to sign (Appendix C). After participants were selected, the researcher collected information through the use of semi-structured open-ended interviews, focus group sessions, and letters written by participants. Participants were emailed or contacted via phone call to schedule times for interviews and focus groups. Focus groups were conducted through online methods due to the participants' proximity and availability to meet. All interviews and focus groups were audio recorded and transcribed by a paid professional transcriptionist, and letters were collected from each participant. Throughout the gathering of data, the researcher wrote in a journal to reduce personal bias by bracketing. Memoing was ongoing throughout data collections (Creswell, 2013), and all data was backed up using a password-protected online data analysis and research program. Data collection continued until saturation was achieved (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994).

The Researcher's Role

As the human instrument in this proposed qualitative study, I remained ethical, unbiased, and responsible. This encompassed the maintenance of ethical behavior throughout the research process, ensuring the safety and confidentiality of human participants, and being honest about how I fit into the research. As a qualitative researcher, one should describe relevant aspects of self, including any biases and assumptions, expectations, and experiences to qualify one's own ability to conduct the research (Greenbank, 2003).

As a former classroom teacher who entered the teaching profession with no knowledge of pedagogy dealing with English language learners, I had to find ways to involve, encourage, and

most importantly teach ELLs beginning in my second year as a classroom teacher. At the point in my career when this occurred, there was no ESL teacher in the school where I worked, and I was receiving students as frequently as every few weeks who did not speak a word of English. Although I was never trained to work with ELL students, I found ways to include these students in all aspects of the classroom, but unfortunately not all of my teaching peers were able to do the same.

Following 10 years of classroom teaching, I found that I loved working with ELL students and earned my licensure as an ESL teacher. During this time I received specialized training for working with ELLs. I realized how much more of an effective teacher I would have been in the classroom if I had been trained to work with ELLs prior to entering the teaching profession 10 years prior. During my eight years as an ESL teacher, I worked closely with classroom teachers always trying to help them to learn and to incorporate effective teaching strategies for their ELL students.

Currently as a lead English language (EL) teacher, I train teachers who work with ELLs on a daily basis. I encounter numerous teachers, both novice and veterans, who have no prior training in working with ELL students but are expected to teach and move them forward academically regardless of their preparation. This experience has inspired my desire to pursue this phenomenological study describing first-year teacher experiences in teaching ELL students with no pedagogical training. Utilizing the transcendental phenomenological design, I was able to bracket my own personal beliefs and experiences so that they will not interfere with the study and its outcomes. Although I will have no connection with the participant teachers in this particular study, I am intrigued to discover how the experiences of teachers in differing locations of the southeastern region of the United States with education from varied institutions compares

with the experiences of the teachers I work with on a daily basis.

Data Collection

This qualitative study used a transcendental phenomenological research design to describe first-year, secondary content teachers' experiences in teaching ELLs without any prior training in this area. A questionnaire was used first to determine eligibility criteria for the study. The information from the questionnaire was used strictly to identify potential participants. After participants were identified, semi-structured interviews consisting of open-ended questions were used to allow for deeper probing when additional information was needed by the researcher (Gall et al., 2007). When all interviews were completed and recordings were transcribed, focus groups were used to obtain the participants' perceptions (Gall et al., 2007) of the emerging themes in the data. Focus group meetings and discussions were audio recorded as well. The final piece of data that was collected was a letter written by each participant to a new teacher giving advice to this teacher as to how to navigate his/her first year of teaching.

Questionnaires were used first as they determined participant eligibility. Interviews were used as the first recorded piece of data so that the participants' experiences were shared with the researcher. As the researcher analyzed the data and began to code for themes and categories, the focus groups were used to allow participants to give input on the developing themes and categories. The final piece of data was the letter; this gave the researcher further information about the participants' experiences and potentially allowed the participants to reflect more thoroughly on their first-year experiences.

Interviews

Qualitative interviews are an ideal method for extracting information from participants

such as personal experiences, in-depth information, and knowledge or beliefs (Lecompte & Schensul, 2010). Interviews were open-ended and face-to-face, using a semi-structured approach used to allow for deeper probing when and if there is additional information needed by the researcher (Gall et al., 2007). It was not necessary to conduct any follow-up interviews to clarify or gather further information for the researcher (Creswell, 2013). Each interview was transcribed by a professional transcription service.

The first set of questions was designed to obtain information pertaining to the educational background (pedagogy) of the participants. The following set of questions was shaped by the literature and theoretical framework of the study. The interview questions were as follows:

Standardized Open-Ended Interview Questions

1. There are many different reasons that people become teachers. Tell me about your decision to become a teacher.
2. Tell me a little about your educational background.
 - a. What type of program were you enrolled in at your university?
 - b. What areas are you certified to teach?
 - c. What is your experience with traveling abroad during your years at university?
3. What do you think most helped to prepare you for your first year of teaching?
4. What are your personal strengths as a teacher?
5. What are your instructional strengths as a teacher?
6. Have you ever taken classes to learn another language? If so what language, and how many years of education do you have?
7. Everyone's first year of teaching is memorable. Tell me about your first year of teaching. Describe the moments that made your first year the most memorable. Were there any

- moments that stood out more than others?
8. Describe your experiences teaching content to English language learners during your first year of teaching. Did the number of ELLs affect your teaching methods?
 9. Explain how the number of ELLs in your classroom affected the atmosphere of the class. What strategies did you incorporate to help integrate ELL students into the classroom?
 10. When entering your first year of teaching, describe how you felt when you were hired for this position. Did you have any specific concerns?
 11. Upon being hired as a full-time teacher for the first time, explain how you imagined yourself as a teacher. What were the expectations you had? What instructional skills did you feel you had in order to be a successful teacher?
 12. Describe the strategies that you employed throughout your first year of teaching. How did those teaching strategies work for teaching ELLs?
 13. Were you involved in any professional development specifically for working with your ELL students? If so, how did this professional development change your teaching methods with ELLs? If not, was there any other method of gaining strategies for working with these students?
 14. How did you modify (if at all) your teaching methods and strategies for working with ELLs during your first year of teaching?
 15. Since completing your first year of teaching, what strategies do you feel you gained for working with ELLs?
 16. Describe some of the teaching strategies that you tried with your ELLs during your first year. Which ones were successful, which were not?
 17. When considering your second year of teaching ELL students, what are some strategies

that you will try to implement into your teaching methods?

18. What else you would like to tell me about your experiences during your first year regarding teaching ELL students? What should I have asked you that I did not ask?

19. If needed, what would the best way for me to contact you for a follow-up or clarifying interview?

Questions one through six have been designed to obtain information pertaining to the educational background (pedagogy) of the participants. These questions are general information questions aimed at gathering background information (Patton, 2015). These questions were asked in order to determine the position of the respondent in relation to the other participants in the study.

Questions seven through nine are feeling questions. Patton (2015) explained that feeling questions aim at capturing the feeling responses of people to experiences. These three questions have been designed to capture the participants' feelings about their first-year experiences in the classroom and the effect that the English language learners had on their teaching and the classroom atmosphere.

Questions 10 and 11 are opinion questions (Patton, 2015), and was utilized to determine what the participants' expectations and beliefs were prior to their experience as a first year educator. These two questions also address the moving in stage of Schlossberg's (2011) theory. Schlossberg's transition theory describes the moving in stage as the expectations of the experience prior to the actual occurrence. These questions were designed to capture the expectations, possible trepidations, and imaginings of the participants in advance of the start of their first year of instructional practice.

Questions 12 through 14 were designed to gain information about the experiences and

strategies gained throughout the participants' first year of instruction. Schlossberg (2011) described the moving through portion of her theory as those strategies and experiences that a person encounters while moving through the particular phenomenon. These questions were designed to gather insight into the participants' yearlong journey and how the practices they learned and utilized affected their teaching methodology in their first year of instruction.

Questions 15 through 17 focus on moving forward from the first to second year of instruction. Participants' were expected to reflect on what methods were successful in their first year and explain those that they would potentially carry with them into the second year. Schlossberg's (2011) theory classifies this as moving out of the experience.

Question 18 is a final question allowing the participant to add any final information they may not have been able to during the interview process based on the context of the questions (Patton, 2015). This final question may potentially contribute data that the researcher had not thought of pursuing (Patton, 2015). Question 19 was used for the purpose of determining the willingness of the participant to be contacted for follow up or additional questioning at a later date.

Focus Groups

According to Patton (2015), focus groups can provide a method of checks and balances to weed out extreme or false perspectives of the researcher. Focus groups were used when all interviews were completed, recordings transcribed and analyzed, and member checks completed, in order to create follow-up questions for the focus group based on the data. Focus groups were used to obtain the participants' perceptions (Gall et al., 2007) of the emerging themes in the data thus far. Focus group meetings and discussions were audio recorded as well. Due to the fact that schools were located in differing parts of the state, Zoom (a web-based video meeting

application) was utilized to conduct focus groups.

Open-Ended Questions for Focus Group

1. Compared to your expectations about teaching before entering the classroom, what are your expectations now based on your experiences thus far?
2. How do you feel about your experiences (up to this point) with English Language Learners (ELLs) in your first year of teaching?
3. What were the experiences of teaching ELLs that you would describe as positive experiences?
4. What were the experiences of teaching ELLs that you would describe as negative experiences?
5. What types of training do you feel would be beneficial for preservice teachers in educational preparation courses?
6. What do you wish you had known about instructing ELLs before you entered the classroom?
7. What would you like to share with the group about your experiences in your first year of teaching regarding ELL students?
8. What would you advise professors to address in their courses in relation to training teachers to work with linguistically diverse populations?
9. How might your experiences been different if you had been trained in methods to work with linguistically diverse populations?
10. What do you feel was the most beneficial instructional strategy you gained during your first year of instruction in regards to teaching linguistically diverse students?

Questions one through four were designed to capture the first two of the three stages of

Schlossberg's (2011) transition theory in relation to the phenomenon experienced by the participants. The first question relates to the participants' expectations before the experience, or the moving in stage. The second through the fourth question ask for information related to the moving through stage. These questions focus on the experiences during the school year and whether they were positive or negative in the participants' views.

Questions five through 10 are questions aimed at the reflections of the participants. These questions demonstrate the third stage of Schlossberg's (2011) transition theory, moving out. After the participants have already experienced the phenomenon, they are asked to reflect on their experiences and share information about them as well as providing input in regards to what methodology they believe may have been beneficial prior to entering their first year of instruction.

Letters

Individuals who can provide relevant descriptions of an experience are primarily those who have experienced it (Polkinghorne, 2005). Therefore, I decided that having participants write a letter to upcoming first-year teachers based on their own first year experiences working with ELLs would provide a strong method to give a self-account. Participants were able to reflect on the practices and experiences of their first year in regard to working with ELLs although they lacked the training to do so. Data collected from these letters/reflections were combined with the data collected from interview and focus groups and used to clarify meaning and patterns.

Data Analysis

Data collected were analyzed using Moustakas's (1994) modified version of Van Kaam's approach to transcendental phenomenology. The process began with the researcher bracketing out (epoche) personal experiences and perceptions in relation to working with ELL students and

teachers of ELLs. After the researcher used the epoche method to identify and address and prejudices or preconceived ideas, she moved on to the phenomenological reduction of the data.

The data were reduced using Moustakas' (1994) steps of phenomenological reduction. starting with bracketing and then moving on to horizontalizing the data to ensure equal value for each statement gathered. Through the process of reading, rereading, analyzing, and coding the data, clustering horizons into themes was completed. These clustered and labeled pieces of data are the core themes of the experience and were given a thematic label (Moustakas, 1994).

All interviews and focus groups were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim, by a paid professional transcriptionist. Transcripts were analyzed to determine any invariant or repetitive data; these data were reduced and/or eliminated (Moustakas, 1994). The remaining essential constituents were utilized to determine core and secondary themes of the experience. Comparing them to the complete transcription record then validated essential constituents and themes; this was done to ensure relevancy to the participants' experiences (Moustakas, 1994, p. 121).

Using the relevant, validated invariant constituents and themes, an individual textural description was created for each of the participants' experience. Verbatim examples from the transcribed data were included here. The next steps in the analysis consisted of creating an individual structural description based on the individual textural description and imaginative variation (Moustakas, 1994) and the creation of a textural-structural description of the meanings and essences of the lived experiences of each participant. Finally, a composite description was be developed based on the meanings and essences of the phenomenon based on the entire group of participants.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness of a study refers to the degree of confidence in the data, the

interpretation of the data, and the methods used ensure the quality of the study (Polit & Beck, 2014). This includes taking measures to establish credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability, of the study. To establish trustworthiness in this study, the researcher used data triangulation, member checks, an audit trail, and explicit note taking and documentation of the analysis of the data.

Credibility

Credibility of the study is analogous to internal validity in quantitative research, and therefore the most important criterion to consider in the study (Polit & Beck, 2014). The credibility of this study was increased by the triangulation of data, which is using multiple sources of data collection (interview, focus groups, correspondence letters) to provide corroborating evidence (Creswell, 2013). Member checks were used to increase credibility by ensuring the representation of the emic perspective of participants (Gall et al., 2007).

Dependability and Confirmability

Dependability refers to the stability of the data over time and the conditions of the study (Polit & Beck, 2014). In this phenomenological research study, an audit trail was used to document the research process (Gall et al., 2007) along with copious note taking during by the researcher during the analysis process and a reflective journal. Confirmability was also increased by the use of an audit trail, researcher bracketing, and peer review of the data findings. Confirmability refers to the degree that findings are consistent and could be reproduced (Polit & Beck, 2014).

Transferability

Transferability refers to the extent to which findings are useful to persons in other settings (Polit & Beck, 2014). In qualitative research, the focus is on the participants and their

story. Researchers support the study's transferability with a rich, detailed description of the context, location, and the people studied, and by being transparent about analysis and trustworthiness (Polit & Beck, 2014). In this study, transferability was established by using description of research context and assumptions central to the research and purposeful sampling for maximum variation of included sites.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations for this study to be addressed began with securing IRB approval from Liberty University and the study sites prior to beginning the data collection process. Informed consent disclosing procedures used and intended use of research findings obtained were signed by participants (Gall et al., 2007). Participant privacy and confidentiality was protected in this study. In a research study privacy is about the actual people involved. Privacy is the control over the extent, timing, and circumstances of sharing oneself with others (University of California Office of Research, 2015). Allowing those persons participating in the study to decide upon a meeting place that is comfortable for them will protect the privacy of participants.

One method by which participant confidentiality was protected was by the use of pseudonyms. Since confidentiality concerns the treatment of information or data that an individual has shared in a relationship based on trust (University of California Office of Research, 2015), that information must not be shared without permission in ways that have not been outlined in the agreed upon disclosure agreement. Data kept electronically were password protected on the researcher's personal computer, and paper documents were kept in a locked cabinet that only the researcher has access to. Following the research study, participants were debriefed on the outcomes and implications of the study as a form of reciprocity for participation

in the study (Creswell, 2013). Reciprocity is part of the ethical process involved in research that helps to build trust and relationships between the researcher and the participants, a type of give-and-take where researchers share results and important information gained through the participants' contributions to the study (Schwandt, 2007).

Summary

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the experiences of first-year secondary school content teachers that work with ELLs in middle and high schools in the southeastern region of the United States with substantive populations of ELL students (preferably above 15%) but are untrained to do so. This chapter provided information including a description of the transcendental phenomenological research design to be used in this study, the selection process for participants and settings for this study as well as the data collection and analysis processes and procedures which were utilized in the study. The final portion of the chapter concludes with steps that the researcher will take to ensure trustworthiness along with the process to ensure ethical protection of the participants.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

This chapter begins with a review of the purpose of this study and the research and guiding questions it endeavored to answer. The chapter introduces the participants who agreed to be a part of the study, using pseudonyms reflective of the participants' personalities and demographics, but still protecting their identities. Results of the analysis are then presented in the form of themes that emerged from the data in direct correlation to the research questions this study is focused on. The chapter concludes with a summary of the study's findings, the expectations and experiences of the first-year teachers, the strategies gained throughout their first year of teaching, and finally their thoughts after completing their initial year as educators.

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the experiences of first-year, secondary school content teachers having worked with English Language Learners (ELLs) in middle and high schools with substantive populations of ELL students (preferably above 15%) but may have had limited or no training to do so (Abbate-Vaughn, 2008; Curran, 2003; Karabenick & Noda, 2004; Lucas, Villegas, & Freedson-Gonzalez, 2008; McGraner & Saenz, 2009; Olsen & Jimenez-Silva, 2008; Rosenberry-McKibbin & Brice, 2005). Using Schlossberg's transition theory as a theoretical framework, this study attempted to find the answer to one central research question and three guiding questions.

The central research question addressed in this study was: *How do secondary education teachers untrained in English as a Second Language (ESL) methods in secondary schools located in the southeastern region of the U.S. describe their first year teaching experiences in content area classrooms with high numbers of ELLs in their classrooms?* The three guiding

questions of this study were:

1. *How do participants describe their expectations of their first year of teaching prior to the actual experience?*
2. *What were the strategies that participants described using in adapting their teaching methods for ELL students throughout their first year?*
3. *How do participants describe their planning strategies and processes for their second year of teaching ELL students based on their experiences of their first year?*

Participants

A selection of 11 teachers participated in this study. Participants were selected using purposeful sampling via a questionnaire shared with target schools. Criterion sampling was then utilized to ensure that each of the participants had experienced the phenomenon. A total of 47 potential participants responded to the initial questionnaire; however, of those potential participants, only 11 fit the criteria for the study.

The participants involved in the study were from varying backgrounds and possessed differing characteristics regarding ethnicity, age, grade levels, and content areas taught, but all participants had less than two years of teaching experience. Eight of the participants were females and three were males. Table 1 displays participant demographics. Pseudonyms were used to ensure the confidentiality of the participants. The 11 participants involved represented teachers from a total of five schools, three middle schools and two high schools. Three of the schools were in urban areas and two were in suburban areas, all were located in southeastern U.S. school districts.

Table 1

Participant Demographic Information

Participant Pseudonym	Participant Age	Years of Teaching Experience	Grade Level(s) Taught	Content Area	Bachelors, Masters, Lateral Entry	First Career	Gender
Amber	25-30	1st year	6-8	Computer Science	Bachelors	No	F
Brian	30-35	1st year	6-8	Physical Education/Health	Bachelors	No	M
Cameron	25-30	2nd year	6-9	Social Studies	Masters	Yes	M
Hannah	20-25	1st year	6-8	Math	Bachelors	Yes	F
Jeanne	60-65	2nd year	9-12	Business	Lateral Entry	No	F
Jessica	25-30	1st year	6-8	English Language Arts/EC	Masters	No	F
Kaitlyn	20-25	2nd year	6-8	Health Science	Lateral Entry	No	F
Kayla	30-35	1st year	6-8	Science	Masters	No	F
Maureen	50-55	2nd year	9	Math	Bachelors	No	F
Megan	20-25	2nd year	9-12	Social Studies	Masters	Yes	F
Tyler	25-30	1st year	9-12	Social Studies	Masters	Yes	M

Amber

Amber was completing her first year of teaching at a middle school with a diverse population. The student population was about 18% Hispanic and 10% Asian. The ELL population was about 13% and consisted of a multicultural mix of students from numerous countries.

Amber was a lateral entry teacher pursuing her master's degree in management and leadership. Her undergraduate degree was in marketing management, but she had former

education and experience in early childhood education. She had her conditional license and was awaiting licensure to teach business and marketing in grades 6-12.

As a lateral entry teacher, Amber did not do student teaching or have a mentor through her program. She explained that she always knew that she wanted to teach. In fact, after earning her associate degree in early childhood education, she was actually enrolled in an undergraduate program for elementary education, but changed her major to marketing management before completing that degree:

I always knew that I wanted to teach or least work with kids, but my goal was always to get into a classroom. So I just ... I've always had a passion for the kids. Even from a really young age, I knew that I wanted to do, so it was kind of a no brainer that that's what I would end up doing.

Amber explained she believes one of the most important things in teaching is building relationships with kids and being very dedicated and committed to her teaching and her students' progress. Upon being hired for her first year, she stated that she imagined herself as a teacher who would create a classroom culture where students felt comfortable and welcome, a safe space for learning. She explained one of the instructional strengths she has is creating curriculum that is both engaging for the students as well as relevant to today's technology and the other courses they are enrolled in.

Brian

Brian had just completed his first year of teaching Physical Education and Health at a culturally and linguistically diverse suburban middle school, where approximately 13% of the students are English language learners. Teaching is his second career. He previously earned his bachelor's degree in Physical Therapy and worked in that field prior to returning to school for his

Physical Education degree. He is currently certified to teach Health and Physical Education for grades K-12.

The desire to become an educator grew from Brian's years coaching at the same school where he currently teaches. He was also feeling stuck in his current position as a Physical Therapist at that time and looking for a change in routine. He communicated where his desire to teach came from in a rather straightforward manner:

I started coaching here about six years ago, seven years ago. I was doing physical therapy at the time, and it just kind of stuck doing that. Didn't really enjoy the routine of it. I enjoyed the money. I made twice as much as I make now, but then I started coaching, and started realizing I could help mostly young boys not be... It's not being dicks because I feel like there's a plague of dickishness in the world, especially with affluent white boys, and I found that two hours a day, five days a week could change the way they acted around people, and if I were in the school I could do a lot more every day.

Brian's feelings when he was hired for his first year as an educator were excitement and a little bit of worry about discipline. He explained he was very strict (for his personality) at the beginning of the year because he knew if he were not, he would lose control. He claimed that personal connections and empathy, which he credits a former bartending job for helping him acquire, are a big part of his teaching style.

Cameron

Cameron was completing his second year of teaching Social Studies. During his first year, he taught at an inner-city high school with a diverse student population, with about 447 students or 30% identifying as Hispanic. The ELL population at Cameron's school was about 10%.

Cameron described his student teaching experience as ‘phenomenal.’ Each of his student teaching and practicum situations took place in urban, high-need, low-performing schools. His experience in undergraduate as a student teacher was at all levels including elementary, middle, and high school. He is certified to teach Social Studies to grades 6-12.

After graduating with his undergraduate degree, Cameron moved back to his home city to pursue a job. He explained that since he was not sure what he wanted to pursue for his master’s degree, it was easier to move back home and have his family’s support. Having been raised in a family of educators, he had a strong foundation as he described in his interview:

So, my decision, I always joke with people that I don't think that I really made the decision. It was just in my blood. My grandfather was a teacher. His mother was a teacher, and my mother started out as an education major before my grandfather, for whatever reason, convinced her to change her major. So just from birth I've just always wanted to be a teacher. Never thought about or explored other career options. But what kept me in the classroom is just working with students and seeing their growth.

Cameron believes that building relationships is a personal strength for him. He works within his school to promote equity and build lasting relationships with his students. Through his teaching he tries to break down barriers and relate student experiences to history, showing students how to think critically about what they are reading and learning about.

Hannah

Hannah had just completed her first-year teaching Math in a culturally and linguistically diverse middle school, where about 12% of the students are English Language Learners. She is certified to teach Elementary Education and Middle School Math grades 6-8. Although Hannah attended a state university as an Elementary Education major, she realized as she was doing her

student teaching at a large urban school district, that she did not wish to teach at the elementary level. Her experience was not a positive one, and this led her away from the area where she is certified, into middle grades education. She is currently licensed to teach Elementary grades K-6 and Math grades 7-9 (through an add-on licensure/praxis exam).

Hannah's mother is a teacher, so she grew up around education and explained that from a young age she wanted to teach. She waived in undergraduate due to doubts about financial stability, but eventually changed her major back to education. She discussed her path to becoming an educator with me:

Well, my mom is a teacher, so I kind of grew up with that. Growing up with the teacher in the house, but I think when I was in second grade I had an elementary school teacher that I missed the last few days of school, so I didn't get to say goodbye to her, and my mom brought me back over the summer to say bye, and I just remember saying, "I want someone to be like, 'I have to see the teacher again.' Or whatever." I kind of strayed from that, and decided the pay and all that, and I tried to go a different route, but I changed my major again. I was like, "I'm just going to go with my gut. I feel like I'm supposed to do this."

When beginning her first year, Hannah wanted to be a teacher her students could relate to and feel comfortable with, while having an understanding that she will push them because she cares about them. She found that she had to navigate the line between being a friend and a teacher very early in her first year of teaching.

Jeanne

Jeanne is a second-year teacher in a suburban high school that enrolls a very diverse population of students each year. About 25% of the school's population is identified as ELL.

The majority of ELLs, about 20%, identify as Hispanic. She teaches Business courses to students in grades 9-12.

Although Jeanne studied education immediately after completing high school, she never completed that degree. She returned to school later in life to earn a degree in business. Teaching is Jeanne's second career. She shared her journey back to becoming an educator with me:

I've always wanted to teach. When I got out of high school, I went to Virginia Tech, and I was in the education program there, and I did not finish my degree. I got married, had babies, all those things. But I always loved teaching. When I opened my stores, I worked through the towns. The town of Brantford, whatever, and I did summer programs for kids. I've always been really attracted to that, and I started taking classes, and I found that I could teach business and marketing. That was really what started it all. I was looking for a different career. That was always something that was really part of my world, training, and coaching, and all of that, with the running, but yeah, that's pretty much why.

Jeanne entered the classroom as a lateral entry teacher, taking education-based courses and teaching at the same time. She has completed all course work and is now waiting for her provisional license in Business and Marketing for grades 6-12. Because she is a lateral entry teacher, she had no student teaching experience. She went from doing a couple of long-term subbing positions while taking courses to get her licensure, to teaching in a classroom as a full-time teacher.

Jeanne believes she has great empathy for the kids and wants to understand them. When being hired for her first year of teaching, she believed it would be quite simple due to her age and life experiences. She soon found out that her way of thinking about her experiences in life was

more of a detriment, because she believed teaching would be simple and she realized it was not.

Jessica

Jessica was completing her first year of teaching at a middle school with a multicultural, linguistically diverse school. The school was considered a city school but was actually located in a rather suburban area. The student population was very diverse with about 10% of the student population being ELLs.

Jessica had completed her undergraduate in Psychology and then went on to pursue her master's degree to teach special education. She had also taken the Praxis to allow her to teach language arts but was waiting on her actual licensure to go through the state. She was currently employed to teach Language Arts to special education students.

Jessica explained that she had many educators in her family and that she was aware from a young age she would need a social profession. She indicated that she kind of 'fell into' the teaching profession. Changing majors several times, with each major still in the education field, she explained how she ended up in special education:

Well, I've always been a very social kind of person, and so I knew I was going to need a social profession, and there's a lot of teachers in my family. When I was a senior in high school, that just seemed like a really good path for me, so I started out with theater education and then I moved to English education, and then I moved to special education.

Jessica is certified to teach Exceptional Children in grades K-12 and English Language Arts grades 6-8. She believes her strengths are building relationships with students and keeping students engaged. Her expectations upon being hired as a first-year teacher included needing to remain aware of herself and not becoming too comfortable with her students.

Kaitlyn

Kaitlyn was in her second year of teaching as a lateral entry teacher but had only taught half a year during the previous school year. She was teaching at an urban middle school with a minority enrollment of 59%, and a Hispanic population of 36%. The only participant interviewed who had never had any interest in becoming a teacher, she was dissatisfied with the job she was working at that time, and she was made aware that she might be qualified to teach. Her pathway to education was completely unexpected, she explained:

Okay. Well, I am a lateral entry teacher, so before becoming a teacher I was actually a certified pharmacy technician working in a hospital. I had no interest in teaching prior; I had kind of just been... I wasn't really happy with my position, what I was doing. Then I became aware of it that I was qualified to teach a health science with my associate degree, and so it kind of just fell in my lap. I was like, "You know what? There's nothing I can't do. I'm not happy with what I am doing," so I became a teacher, and I got my lateral entry courses online to become a certified teacher. I graduated from Guilford Technical Community College with an associate degree in applied science and was a certified pharmacy technician with that degree. Then once I got the position as a teacher, I took continuing education courses through University of Phoenix online.

Kaitlyn is currently still enrolled in education courses through her lateral entry program. With her certification she is able to teach health science at the middle school level, and a couple of other courses at the high school level. She did not have to take the Praxis and was never involved in student teaching as a lateral entry teacher.

Kaitlyn says her willingness to learn is her greatest personal strength as an educator. Reflection and self-adjusting as she learns to teach are an important part of her strengths as well, she claims. Kaitlyn feels that student-centered learning is important, so students can explore and

learn in their own ways. Her expectation of herself as an educator entering her first year of teaching was that she would be well liked for her good sense of humor. She said she soon realized that kids do not think adults are funny.

Kayla

Kayla had just completed her first year teaching middle school Science at a culturally and linguistically diverse school in a suburban area. She had previously worked in the field of animal welfare and had always wanted to be a teacher. She had previously earned dual undergraduate majors in Biology and Anthropology, and most recently completed a master's degree in Education with a strong emphasis on the sciences (I-STEM education). Kayla's journey into education began many years earlier and contained several false starts. She relayed her story:

Well, I'm actually a career changer. So, yeah, it's my first-year teaching. I'm coming from the field of animal welfare and I was working primarily in cat behavior for the most recent job, six years full-time, and then I kept working part-time for a little while. After having kids of my own, I have three young kids, or after I started having kids. After the first one was born, I had always thought about teaching. I also just moved from the New York City area. And, before I even had kids, way back, like 10 years ago, I applied to the New York City teaching fellows two times. I got accepted two times, and then I just didn't go through with that. So, I had felt like it was the time to go into teaching. I was ready for a change, kind of burnt out on my last job for various reasons. So, that's kind of how I landed where I am. It's always been a passion of mine. Even in my last job, anything that involved teaching. So, I did a lot of trainings for volunteers and staff, and I always loved that aspect of my job. So, it's just all those reasons together.

Kayla believes that her personal strengths as a teacher come from her life experiences prior to becoming an educator. She feels that self-reflection is another big strength for her in regard to her teaching career. She says that being able to reflect on and admit her mistakes has helped her improve her instructional methods. In her first year of teaching she wanted to implement differentiated, student-centered instruction, and limit her lecture time.

Maureen

Maureen was in her second year of teaching at a high school in a suburban area. The school has a diverse cultural population and houses a Newcomer center for ELLs from within the district's three high schools. Maureen is certified to teach middle school math, which allows her to teach math to grades 6-8, including the Math 1 course at high school. Included in her course load this year is a double period of Math1 and Math strategies for Newcomer students. Teaching is Maureen's third career, but she claims to have always loved teaching and tried to incorporate education in her former jobs in some form. With many years of career employment behind her, she entered the education field at the age of 50 as a novice teacher:

It's my third career, and I was a systems analyst and then I major gift fundraiser, and I wanted to do a new career, and I always loved teaching and I incorporated that in both my other jobs in some way. I always found a way to put teaching in it of some sort, and we had to move out of the country, so I had to leave my jobs. I had the chance to really, really reflect, and I've always wanted to be a teacher, and that gave me the opportunity to come back, try out school, see if I could do it, and saw that I could do it, and went for it. So, at 50. It was yeah, just the third career.

Maureen believes that her passion and her organizational strategies are her personal strengths as a teacher. She feels that it is important to have high expectations for all of the

students. Her everyday drive stems from her great compassion for the students and wanting to see them succeed.

Megan

Megan was finishing her second year teaching at an urban minority majority high school where 45% of the students identify as Hispanic. She teaches high school history courses and holds a master's degree in Social Studies Education. She is currently certified to teach Social Studies for grades 6-12, as well as English Language Arts for grades 6-9. Her reasoning for becoming a teacher was prior teacher influence and the desire to help others:

Okay, I think for me I was influenced by the teachers that I had. In particular my high school basketball coach was a coach and a teacher, and I remember thinking in my junior year that he had the best job. He got to talk about history which he loved all day and then coach and talk about basketball all night. I was like that would just be the perfect thing for me. I was always somebody who loved helping other people and helping them do their homework and stuff in high school. It took hold as a junior and I always loved history, that was my favorite subject and what I was best at. It made sense, I guess.

Megan believes that she is an empathetic teacher and that she builds good relationships with her students. Her content knowledge is a great asset in differentiating curriculum for her students. She also expressed that she is flexible and open to trying new things when lessons don't go exactly as planned.

Tyler

Tyler had just completed his first year of teaching at a high school with a diverse population and an ELL population of about 20%. His undergraduate degree had been earned in

Archeology and after deciding he wanted to teach, he took master's courses in Education. He is certified to teach Social Studies to grades 6-12. He had actually done his student teaching at the same school where he taught during his first year, giving him a familiar structure to begin his teaching career. Tyler's decision to become a teacher stemmed from very personal, family experiences:

Okay. So my decision to become a teacher, it actually didn't happen until 2015 that I realized that that was what I wanted to do. I always give this story of my "why" at the beginning of the school year. My younger brother suffers from a learning disability ... suffers, has a learning disability. Coming home from school it was really me who had to help my brother throughout school. And in 2015, I got to see him walk across his graduation stage and knowing the impact that I had and seeing him achieve something like that. It impacted me in a way that I wasn't expecting, and it really led me towards, "Okay, I definitely want to become a teacher and be able to help those students that may have these different obstacles in their lives. And I want to see them walk across their high school graduation stage." So that's kind of really why I decided to become a teacher.

Tyler explained that his personal strength as an educator is making connections and building one-on-one relationships with the students. He tries to accomplish this by finding a common interest outside of school and tries to build those relationships from day one. His self-declared instructional strength is using various activities while teaching content to facilitate personal inquiry and collaboration amongst his students.

Results

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the experiences of first-year, secondary school content teachers having worked with ELLs in middle

and high schools with substantive populations of ELL students (preferably above 15%) but may have limited or no training to do so (Abbate-Vaughn, 2008; Curran, 2003; Karabenick & Noda, 2004; Lucas et al., 2008; McGraner & Saenz, 2009; Olsen & Jimenez-Silva, 2008; Rosenberry-McKibbin & Brice, 2005). Participants for this study were selected primarily by purposeful sampling, and then later, to acquire a greater number of participants through snowball sampling based on the relationship the participants had with the phenomenon being researched in the study. Approximately 47 potential participants were contacted. However, only 11 of those who gave responses to the demographic questionnaire were deemed eligible to participate in the study, and interviews were scheduled based on participants' availability.

Participants who completed the demographic questionnaire gave informed consent through that document, as well as prior to the interview through a signed consent form document. Data saturation was reached after the 11 interviews with the participants, and no further recruitment was necessary. The final participants for this study included four high school teachers and seven middle school teachers. These 11 participants were from five different schools, located over three school districts. Included in the study were six teachers who had just completed their first year of teaching, and five teachers who were completing their second year of teaching. Three participants were male and eight were female.

Data was collected via semi-structured interviews, online focus group meetings, and reflective letters from the participants (Appendix D). Interviews took place both in person and via telephone conference calls due to the distance between the participants and me. The online platform Zoom was utilized to conduct focus group meetings due to the distance between participants. Focus group meetings were both video and audio recorded and later transcribed for data analysis purposes. Reflective letters were collected through email due to the distance

between several of the participants and me. Participants were given the opportunity to review their personal transcripts for any changes or corrections; none of the participants changed their documents. After all transcripts and reflective letters were gathered, data analysis was completed revealing three primary themes.

Theme Development

This research study was conducted to discover the experiences of first year secondary education teachers who had been assigned classes with substantive numbers of ELLs, but never trained in their preservice teacher education programs in methods to teach students with limited English proficiency. To collect data, I asked participants to participate in semi-structured interviews, online focus group discussions, and to complete a reflective letter concerning their first year of teaching. As I collected data and it was transcribed, I began to read the transcripts numerous times. As I read, I highlighted manually and used memoing to reflect on the information contained in the transcripts. I kept a journal throughout the process to maintain the process of *epoche*, bracketing my personal opinions and potential biases in relation to the study.

After all documents were gathered and transcriptions were complete, I read and reread each one, manually highlighting and coding by hand commonalities. Finally, transcripts of interview and focus group discussions, as well as the reflective letters written by the participants were uploaded into NVivo 12 Pro and I began to code the data into nodes. As I utilized both the manual coding, and the data nodes created through NVivo 12 Pro to keep the information in an organized manner, I began to decipher several common themes. The three main themes that emerged from the data included the following: relationship building, utilization of strategies, and request for further training. There were multiple subthemes identified within each of the main themes. Table 2 displays the themes and subthemes and frequency of each as identified through

the data analysis procedure.

Table 2

Themes and Subthemes from All Data Sources

Theme	Subtheme	Frequency
Relationship Building	Teacher-to-Student Relationships	28
	Teacher-to-Teacher Relationships	23
Utilization of Strategies with ELLs	Group Work/ Peer Buddy/Partner	79
	Modifications to assignments/Differentiation	58
	Visuals	35
	Translations	33
Request for Further Training	Professional Development	81
	Preservice Teacher Training	36

Relationship building. At the beginning of the data collection process, as I gathered information through interviews, I began to see the repetitive significance of the role of relationship building in most of the novice teachers' responses. During the data analysis process, this was the first theme to emerge in respect to the participant teachers' personal expectations of themselves upon entering their first year of the teaching profession. Megan described how she imagined herself as a teacher going into her first year of instruction:

I hoped I was going to be person the kids could go to and trust and be comfortable with. My expectations for myself ... Ooh. I think that was my main thing. Especially starting out was being an empathetic figure, being a positive role model.

The theme of relationship building encompassed two subthemes, which included teacher-to-student relationships and teacher-to-teacher relationships.

Teacher-to-student relationships. Many first-year teachers enter the profession believing they will build relationships with students not only as teachers, but also as friends. They soon find out that trying to be a ‘pal’ to students is a dangerous path that leads them to rethinking their entire plan for their classroom. Hannah shared her thoughts about this:

Since I’m young, I wanted to be that teacher that they can relate to. I don’t want them to feel like I’m jumping down their throats, and I tried to express that to them, but when I tried that, they started walking all over me obviously. I think I had a loose barrier between friend and teacher. I think that’s maybe how first year teachers are. I had to quickly change that.

Several of the participants relayed some of the same kinds of feelings in regard to wanting to be the “fun teacher”, or the teacher that “all of the kids liked.” Cameron related that he wanted to be the teacher who was “tough but fair.” Each of the teacher participants had their own visions of what kind of relationships they would initially have with their students, but soon realized that those expectations were not always going to create an effective classroom environment. Tyler shared his view about relationships with students in his classroom and classroom management:

Students are tired in the morning, and restless in the afternoon, figure out a management plan and stick to it from day one. The goal is to keep students accountable, but it is also a way for you to build a relationship with the students.

Relationships between teacher and students is an important indicator of an effective classroom, and it appears according to the data collected that the participant teachers developed a knowledge throughout their first year as educators, as to just how important those relationships can be.

Teacher-to-teacher relationships. A few participants throughout the interviews and focus group discussions mentioned the subtheme of teacher-to-teacher relationships. This subtheme however became strikingly evident as I began to analyze the reflective letters the participants wrote after both the interviews and focus group discussions were complete. The letters were to be reflective of the participant teachers' first year of instruction, and a potential source of information for teachers newly entering the field of education.

Maureen shared she found a mentor to help her during her first year, while Megan expressed, "While you may have an official mentor, don't feel like they have to be the only person you go to when you are confused or discouraged." Megan further shared, "I found outlets around the building... teachers who become friends... I had numerous 'work Moms', more experienced teachers who I could use as a soundboard for my ideas or my frustrations." Basically, reaching out to teachers who have more experience than a first year teacher, and asking for help and support was repeated advice throughout the reflective letters written by the participants. Still other participants shared ways to build relationships with veteran teachers including: sitting in on classes of more experienced teachers; building relationships with their 'team of teachers' relative to their subject area; find teachers who have a personality close to

your own; ask questions; and the most frequently repeated mantra - “ask for help when you need it.

Utilization of strategies with English Language Learners. While analyzing the interview transcriptions, I found that although the participants expressed the use of numerous strategies they used in their lessons throughout their first year of teaching, ironically many of them did not recognize them as strategies gained or utilized. Strangely enough, Amber expressed that she used visuals, videos, peer buddies, and hands-on activities, but when specifically asked about strategies gained throughout her first year she replied, “I don’t feel like I gained a lot this year (of strategies). Like I said, I struggle with that.” Throughout the analysis of interview transcriptions, the use of specific strategies with ELLs was noted approximately 80 times, with several specific strategies being repeatedly mentioned by multiple participants thus, creating the five subthemes.

Group work/peer buddy/partner. This subtheme encompasses several of the strategies that were expressed as being used with ELL students in the classrooms of the participants throughout their first year of teaching. Some participants expressed they used strategic groupings that included students at differing levels of skill in the content area. Others used groups designated to help students feel ‘comfortable.’ Still others used peers or partners to help ELL students who could not access the content alone due to their low English language proficiency. Brian expressed his thoughts about using partners in his classroom:

They seem to do better if they’re paired with one of their friends or (someone who speaks the) same language. I try not to do that all the time, but I try and make sure they at least have one person, if they have a language-related question where they need help.

The majority of the participants also utilized some type of group or partner work with ELL students. Maureen explained that she had always been told random seating and group seating work on group projects, but she explained in her interview: “Groups did not work, there was too much going on in a group and too much opportunity to misbehave. Twos really work better.” Jeanne used groups and partners to help her ELL students better comprehend the content material and to feel as though they were part of the overall structure of the classroom. She explained:

You know, getting them to communicate. Trying to put them in groups with ... You hate to have them in a group with everybody, I mean, without ... I mean, you want to have them where they feel comfortable, but trying to do things such as the gallery walks, doing those, those are really helpful because they all have an experience. I mean, it's kind of fun to be out, and then really highlighting when they're talking about it, and making sure that I comment on particular things that I... specific things that they've done, that the EL kids have done, so they know that, yeah, this is right, because they don't feel very confident a lot.

Modifications to assignments/differentiation. Within the theme of strategies, the participants mentioned numerous methods of modification and differentiation. Some of the more specific types of modification specified by Kayla were: using both written and verbal instructions to scaffold for ELLs: rephrasing or clarifying when the text is too wordy: using checklists to give students a focus when working: and allowing time for students to ask clarifying questions before moving on to the next lesson or part of the lesson. Kayla explained, “I feel like I’m pretty good at the theory behind differentiated instruction, but maybe not on the

practical side of that. Coming into this (first year with ELL students) I knew that was going to be a big building block for me.”

Considering that any change a teacher makes from the original assignment or assessment can be labeled as differentiation or a modification, the list was long after analyzing all of the personal interviews. Each of the participants interviewed provided some mode of modifying or differentiating for ELL students. However, most of the participants did not utilize these strategies expressly because the students were limited in their English ability, and some of the participants did not even identify with the fact that they were providing alternate methods of instruction to these learners.

Visuals. This subtheme included a collection of strategies based on pictures, diagrams, charts, and videos. Participants described using “graphic organizers with drawings,” “videos including You Tube and Khan Academy,” “anchor charts,” and “physical representation of concept.” Kayla shared her efforts in Science, “So, yeah. Trying to sort of decrease the wordiness, try to add more visuals, especially with science content.” Both Hannah and Kaitlyn talked about “using videos to explain content and give ELLs a step by step explanation of what we are doing in class.” Tyler gave a very candid example of a lesson where he used visuals to try to clarify a difficult concept in his World History class:

Yeah, using visuals. We're in the Cold War unit right now. We're talking about brinkmanship, so coming to the brink of war. And a student had compared that to the game Chicken. So I pulled another student that was familiar with the game up to the front and I used that as a demonstration to show what brinkmanship is, to try and help the ELL students understand it as well as other students that it may be challenging to process

what brinkmanship is. So, trying to use physical and visual examples like that to try and help them understand.

Translations. After just a few of the participant interviews, *translation* was a recurring word in relation to teaching ELL students during the participants' initial year of instruction. I was actually shocked to discover just how heavily some of the participants relied on Google Translate to provide ELL students with content and information in their first languages. Despite their best intentions, using a translation application is not a reliable source to relay content information to students. Many of the participants were aware of this but used it anyway as they did not feel that had any other options. Kaitlyn shared with me her methods for teaching a student from Honduras who had arrived during her first year of teaching with no English ability: "Lots of Google translate, unfortunately. I know that isn't the most accurate, but that was my option at the point." Essentially each of the participants who mentioned the usage of Google Translate or some other translation application expressed they felt they had no other method to communicate the content to the ELL students in their classrooms; therefore, they continued the use of translation devices hoping to help their students access the classroom content.

Requests for further training. Through the interview process and the analyzing of the focus group transcripts and the reflective letters, the collective sentiment from all of the participants in the study was that they needed (further) training to be effective when teaching ELLs. Within the two focus group discussions 34 instances emerged where the participants mentioned the need or desire for further training and professional in regard to working with ELL students. Tyler shared his thoughts with the group about training he would have liked to receive prior to entering the classroom as a first-year teacher:

I would have liked to have had, especially with... one thing that we've talked about a lot with freshman academy team is obviously vocabulary instruction, what to do with that, it's like the most beneficial practice for English language learners, I would have liked to have had more specific training on that, preparation on that, and then also even like, granted, our district is doing a ton of this right now, but culturally responsive teaching, maybe including that there as well for maybe those teachers that aren't as familiar with that practice.

Professional development. Study participants expressed their desire for more professional development to work with English language learners. Unfortunately, even though all of the participants had taught ELLs during their first year of teaching, none of the participants were provided any professional development to work with ELLs during their first year of teaching. Cameron explained that although he worked with a large number of ELLs in his classroom and that his school had an extremely high number of ELL students, he was never offered any type of professional development for working with them. “But it was very; it's very rare that I've seen an opportunity (for professional development) come through about our English Language Learners.” Kaitlyn also expressed her concerns about a program her district purchased for helping teachers work with ELL students, but offered no professional development on how to utilize the resource:

Last year our school became an ELLevation school. Yes, so we were introduced to it. I would like to tell you we had a professional development training on it, but that's not really what it's been like. It's pretty much been like, “Here, this is a good resource. This is how you access it.” I think I would definitely like to use it more, and also have true professional development in that program.

Preservice teacher training. All but a few of the participants in the study expressed they did not receive any preservice teacher training in regard to ELLs in neither their undergraduate nor their graduate programs. Those who could recall having professors who mentioned ELLs explained that the professors discussed mostly cultural identity of minorities and closing the achievement gap, but none of their course work prepared them for working with culturally and linguistically diverse students in their classrooms. Those participants who became teachers through the process of lateral entry had no training at all in relation to working with ELL students. Hannah was open and honest about her feelings and frustrations regarding her own undergraduate training:

I didn't have anything. And to be honest... Unless I can't remember. The only course I remember from my college career was on African American students and closing the gap or understanding their language and where they come from and what they're dealing with. I specifically do not remember... No one told me that I could have 10 to 15 ELs in one class. You know what I mean? No one told me that that was possible. They made it sound like I would have one or two here or there; it was never... So then when I get to teaching and I have all these kids, I'm kind of like... I was under the impression it wasn't going to be like this. I just wish I had a class in general. Or at least a teacher who was honest with me and was like, "This is how it's going to be, this is what's going to happen, and this is how you handle it."

Research Question Responses

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenology was to describe the first year experiences of secondary teachers who have only been trained in specific content areas, but not in the area of English as a second language, yet regardless of their lack of training, were assigned

to provide instruction to English language learners in their everyday classrooms.

Central research question. The central research question was: *How do secondary education teachers untrained in ESL methods in the southeastern region of the United States describe their first-year experiences in content area classrooms with high numbers of ELLs in their classrooms?* The description of the participants' experiences varied from expressions of "extremely stressful" and "I left school every Monday of the fall semester ready to look for a new job", to "even when I felt most defeated, when a student says how much they appreciate you, it just makes everything worth it." Overall the participants described their first-year experiences with teaching ELLs as a combination of difficulties, rewards, and ultimately great experiences building relationships with students even when they could not communicate completely with them.

Subquestion 1

The first subquestion for this study was: *How do participants describe their expectations of their first year of teaching prior to the actual experience?* This question focused on the two of the three types of transitions described by Chickering and Schlossberg (2002) and sought to determine if any of the participants experienced either anticipated transitions or unanticipated transitions in their first year of teaching. The data from the first theme to emerge, relationship building, primarily answered this question. The participants' descriptions of their expectations for themselves as educators prior to their actual experiences in their first year revolved around anticipated ideas about building relationships with their students and helped to describe the phenomenon.

Although not every participant expressed their expectations for themselves in terms of building student relationships when the questions about first year expectations were asked,

building good teacher-student relationships was addressed at some point throughout the interview process by every participant. Tyler's expectations for himself were based on content knowledge, he explained:

Growing in content knowledge and really, really focusing on working on differentiating. Because that was a struggle for me last year when I was student teaching. As far as instructional skills that I felt that I had in order to be a successful teacher, I think I had finally gotten over the hump of being nervous about doing direct instruction. I would try to, again, push the students towards more personal inquiry like while I was student teaching. But I think that that was away for me to move away from direct instruction because one, it just made me nervous.

While several others shared their personal expectations of themselves in very personal ways, Amber, Jessica, Megan, Hannah, Cameron, and Kaitlyn all talked about being the teacher to whom the students could relate. Amber, who was a first-year lateral entry teacher, shared her vision, "Kind of creating a classroom culture where students felt comfortable and welcome and they would have ... We know like a safe space to be able focus on learning. And so I wanted to build those relationships." The common theme of relationship building between teacher and student was repetitive throughout interviews, focus groups, and reflective letters.

However, those teachers who began their first year with those expectations learned quickly that building good relationships with students is not as simple as they had expected it to be, making those teachers experience unanticipated transitions in their first year and forcing them to change their thinking and behaviors in dealing with students. Kaitlyn, also a lateral entry teacher explained, "I thought I would be the teacher that all the kids liked because I'm fun and I have a good sense of humor. But I came to realize quickly that kids do not think you're funny."

Subquestion 2

The second subquestion guiding this research study was: *What are the strategies participants described using to adapt their teaching methods for ELL students throughout their first year?*

This question, based on coping references, was primarily answered as participants discussed the many strategies they utilized with ELL students in their teaching practices, and the relationships they built with supporting teachers and educational peers. Therefore, both the themes of strategies and teacher-to-teacher relationship provide answers to this research question.

None of the participants included in this study felt as though they were trained adequately to instruct English language learners. Several of the participants were lateral entry teachers and actually had no educational training before entering a classroom. The frustrations due to the lack of training were evident across all of the data sources. Amazingly enough, each participant described strategies they used to help ELL students access content material in their classrooms. Hannah shared that she used, hand gestures, peer-buddies for language help, pictures and diagrams matched with words for recognition. Tyler discussed his use of visuals, physical representations of concepts, and methods of collecting feedback from students. Both Megan and Cameron explained that they utilized a strategy known as ‘chunking’ to break text down into more manageable portions for student comprehension. Each participant found these coping strategies to help him or her through their first year of instructing ELL students.

Supportive coping strategies from teachers and peer educators were expressed most effectively in the reflective letters written by the participants. Megan shared her strategies for coping with her first-year frustrations:

To combat some of these frustrations, I found outlets around the building. In large part, it is the other teachers, who become friends that will hopefully see you through your first

year. I often found my PLT members, other department members, or even other younger teachers, could reenergize me and help me get through even the toughest of days. Find your teacher friends and keep them close.

Several of the other suggestions for first year teacher support shared in the reflective letters included: shadowing a veteran teacher; don't be afraid to ask questions; celebrate the small victories; and most importantly, ask for help. Maureen summed it up by stating:

Laugh, Laugh, Laugh, especially when you have your greatest challenges. It will get you through. I also learned that you are not necessarily given the students or classes you were expecting or have the experience for, and there isn't always the support needed. But you survive and learn!

Subquestion 3

The third subquestion for this study was: *How do participants describe their planning strategies and processes for their second year of teaching ELL students based on their first-year experiences?* This question sought to describe the “moving out” phase of the transition of the participants' first year of teaching. Reflections on the experiences of the participants' first year were gathered through all three data sources – interviews, focus group discussions, and reflective letters.

Participants had varied responses in relation to the strategies they would like to employ for their second year of instruction. In the individual interviews, many of the participants were not able to give a specific response when questioned about strategies they would like to attempt or focus on with their ELLs for the following year. Amber, Brian, and Kayla also had no response when asked about strategies for the next school year. The strategies used by the participants with their ELL students throughout their first year were not specifically taught to

them in any of their methods courses, and without training or some kind of professional development, many of the participants struggled to give any ideas about strategies they might employ in the upcoming academic year. When directly asked in the interview about the methods she would like to implement the next year, Hannah replied:

If I knew, I would tell you. That's part of the professional development, the training.

Someone's got to tell me so tell me and I'm going to do it. All the things I implemented are not from just my brain, I didn't wake up one day and think of it, it was things that were taught to me. You have to teach me how to teach them (referring to ELL students).

All but two of the participants (when questioned in the interview) expressed they needed some type of professional development in order to determine what strategies they would like to try with ELLs moving forward into the next school year. Cameron was already planning on attending a professional development over the summer to help him prepare strategies for his ELL students in the upcoming school year. He described the training he would attend:

So the biggest strategy that I'm going to do. So, I'm going to a curriculum called Big History. Big History kind of looks at world history from a thematic approach. And one of the things that I'm doing as I'm planning is how do I chunk material? And they do a wonderful job at translating materials.

Jessica mentioned she would like to integrate more culturally relevant materials regarding her ELL students' cultures, and Kaitlyn and Tyler wanted to have more training in the use of the ELLevation platform and SIOP strategies respectfully.

Although many of the participants were not able to voice exact strategies they would like to incorporate into their lessons during their next year in the classroom, their reflective letters expressed the importance of professional development and training for first year teachers and

encouraged the reader to pursue any and all avenues to learn and grow throughout their first year of teaching. Jeanne advised her first year teacher reader to “schedule EVERY professional development opportunity that comes your way,” explaining that although you may not think the information beneficial at the time, at some point you may need it. Megan expressed to the novice teacher reader of her reflective piece that professional development kept her motivated and engaged throughout her first year as an educator:

Another strategy that kept me motivated and engaged even throughout all the hard times and frustrations was that I made sure I was continuing to be a learner as well as a teacher. Over the course of my first-year teaching, I attended multiple professional developments, mostly in my field (Social Studies) but also some concerning Restorative Justice Circles, Literacy, etc. I found the reason I enjoy teaching is for the sharing of knowledge, and that the more professional development I went to, the sharper and better off I was. In fact, there are so many teacher PD or travel opportunities where you can get paid to learn. They actually reserve spots for beginning teachers! Keep your own passion for learning going by seeking out opportunities across the country or globe.

All participants, regardless of whether or not they could directly state strategies they would like to attempt to use for the next academic year or workshops they would like to attend, expressed the need for and the importance of continued learning and growth. As participants transitioned from their first year as educators into their second year, the knowledge they gained was observable in their thoughts and shared recommendations passed on to new first year teachers entering the education field in their reflective letters.

Summary

First year secondary teachers untrained in methods for working with ELLs described their

experiences throughout their first year of teaching with substantive numbers of students who have limited English proficiency in their classrooms. This transcendental phenomenological study investigated the participants' perspectives on the phenomenon. The participant group was comprised of a total of 11 teachers, six completing their first year and five completing their second year, from varying secondary content areas. Three of the participants were males and eight of the participants were females.

This research study used three forms of data collection including, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and reflective letters. Each interview was audio recorded and transcribed. Focus group discussions were video and audio recorded and transcribed. Participants scribed a reflective letter to share thoughts and recommendations with a hypothetical first year teacher based on their own experiences throughout their first year of teaching. The transcriptions of the individual interviews and focus groups, and the reflective letters were read numerous times and coded both manually and after uploading all documents into NVivo 12. The codes were then examined, similarities were combined, and finally the codes were clustered into themes.

Chapter Four presented the results of this study by answering the research questions with the three main themes that emerged from the data analysis. The three themes that emerged included (a) relationship building, (b) utilization of strategies with ELLs, and (c) request for further training. Within each of the main themes, several subthemes developed. Participants' experiences throughout their first year of teaching in regard to teaching practices were generally described as difficult, frustrating, and with feelings of utter unpreparedness. However, each participant shared common positive experiences in regard to relationships with their students, and how those relationships affected their desire to continue teaching.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the lived experiences of first year secondary teachers who, although not trained in methods for working with English language learners (ELLs), were placed in classrooms where they had substantive numbers of students with limited English proficiency. A total of 47 potential participants completed the demographic questionnaire to participate in the study; however, only 11 met the criteria to participate. The participants in the study were from various backgrounds and possessed different characteristics concerning age, ethnicity, content and grade levels taught, and school districts where they were employed. Of the 11 participants, 11 completed individual interviews, 5 participated in focus group interviews, and 6 completed reflective letters. All of the data was analyzed using phenomenological reduction (Moustakas, 1994). This chapter includes a summary of the findings as related to the three identified themes, literature relevant to the study, and Schlossberg's (1981) transition theory, which guided this study. Implications of the research are then described, followed by a discussion of the delimitations and limitations of the study, and closing with recommendations for future research.

Summary of Findings

The goal of this transcendental phenomenology was to gain an understanding of a phenomenon experienced by a specific group of educators. Using several methods of data collection, I was able to gather participants' descriptions of their lived experiences. The research questions were utilized to gain results, which I presented in the form of themes and as a comparison in alignment with Schlossberg's (1981) transition theory.

First-year secondary teachers involved in this study came from varying backgrounds and

demographics, worked at different grade and content levels, and were trained at universities in several different states. Due to the variation in participants' backgrounds and experiences, a qualitative design using the transcendental phenomenological methodology was best suited to this study (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). Participants were initially recruited using purposeful sampling through two school districts in North Carolina; however, snowball sampling was later implemented in order to obtain a sufficient number of participants for the study. There were a total of 11 participants, all having just completed their first or second year in the field of education. All participants were secondary teachers, teaching in various content areas at either the middle or high school level. Participants were employed at five different schools in three districts in North Carolina at the time of the interviews. Triangulation was utilized by collecting three different sources of data from the participants (Creswell, 2013). Data collection methods included semi-structured interviews, online focus group discussions, and reflective correspondence letters.

Data analysis was performed using Moustakas's (1994) modified version of Van Kaam's approach to transcendental phenomenology. The researcher first used *epoche* to bracket out personal experiences and perceptions in relation to working with ELLs and teachers of ELLs. Each interview was audio recorded and transcribed. Focus groups were both audio and video recorded, and the audio was transcribed. Participants completed reflective letters as correspondence to a new first year teacher. The researcher conducted data analysis by repeatedly reading and rereading the transcripts of the interviews and focus groups, and the reflective letters. Each transcript and reflective letter were first manually coded, and later uploaded into NVivo 12 to further analyze and organize the codes into clustered horizons (Moustakas, 1994), and finally labeled into themes and subthemes. Three main themes emerged after analyzing the

data. The three themes were (a) relationship building, (b) utilization of strategies with ELLs, and (c) request for further training.

I relied upon the themes that emerged from the data during analysis to answer the central research question and the three guiding questions, which were presented at the onset of this study. The responses by participants to the semi-structured interviews, focus group discussion questions, and the self-reflective writing piece were directly correlated to their lived experiences as first-year teachers who were placed in challenging situations. Participants expressed their thoughts about themselves prior to beginning their first year as educators, most of them hoping to be effective in relating to their students. First-year teachers then proceeded to explain the strategies they employed while transitioning through their initial year. Finally, the participants described their thoughts in relation to the experiences they lived, what supports they would have liked to have had, and how to create and find supports when none are provided. These themes provided insight into what participants experienced, and how they moved into, through, and out of their first year as educators working with ELL students but lacking the support and training to do so.

Relationship Building

The first guiding question used in this study asked participants to describe their expectations for themselves during their first year of teaching prior to actually experiencing it. This question was best answered by the theme of relationship building, and more specifically the subtheme of teacher-to-student relationships. The majority of participants when asked about their personal expectations for themselves as educators in their first year of teaching expressed that they would build relationships with students by being good role models, being an empathetic figure, and creating a comfortable classroom where students would want to be and want to learn.

Others expressed that they imagined themselves as being a friend to the students, being liked by the students because they were funny, and being someone the students could talk to.

Utilization of Strategies

The second guiding question asked the participants to share strategies that they used throughout their first year of teaching specific to adapting their methodology for ELLs. The theme of utilization of strategies for ELLs primarily answered this question. Numerous strategies were described by participants as being used throughout their first year of instruction. Several of the strategies were specifically utilized with students with limited English proficiencies and became subthemes in relation to the overall strategies used. Most of the participants related they used translation to clarify content and concepts for their ELL students. The utilization of peer buddies, partners, and groups was also repeated by many of the participants. The use of peers was explained by several of the participants as placing students with someone who speaks their language and could help them with understanding what was happening in class.

Request for Further Training

The third guiding question asked the participants to describe planning strategies and processes pertaining to ELLs for their second year of teaching, based on their first-year experiences. The theme that mostly answered this question was request for further training, specifically the need for professional development, which was one of the subthemes under further training. Participants expressed the need for further training in the form of professional development as they were already in the classroom as teachers and beyond the point where preservice classes would benefit them. Only two of the 11 participants actually responded with specific strategies they would employ, but one of the two expressed that he would be attending a

professional development that summer to learn more about the strategies.

Discussion

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the lived experiences of first year secondary teachers who, although not trained in methods for working with ELLs, were placed in classrooms where they had substantive numbers of students with limited English proficiency. The study's findings highlight the expectations, experiences, and reflections of the participants throughout their first year, as they transition from first to second year teachers. Schlossberg's (1981) transition theory served as the theoretical framework for this study. The findings from this study help to extend the literature concerning teachers entering the classroom for the first time with limited or no preparation for working with ELL students and add to the body of research on transition theory and its application in regard to first year teachers.

Theoretical

Schlossberg's (1981) transition theory is comprised of three types of transitions: anticipated, unanticipated, and non-events. Transition theory centers around four major factors that influence a person's ability to cope with transition. Schlossberg (1981, 2011) explained that situation, self-factors, support, and strategies determine how a person handles the transitions in their life. Educators go through a challenging transition throughout their first year of teaching. Moir (2016) explained that first-year teachers go through several stages in their initial year of teaching that mirror Schlossberg's transition theory including anticipation of the situation (expectations), survival (strategies and supports), and reflection (self).

Situation. Situation relates to when and how the transition takes place, and the degree of control the person experiencing it feels as it is happening. Self-factors deal with demographic characteristics and viewpoints of the person experiencing the transition. As participants

transitioned into their roles as first-year teachers, they began to realize many of their preconceived ideas and expectations about themselves were not completely accurate. As the teachers expressed their expectations of themselves as a teacher, many of them related that those ideas changed quickly once they actually stepped into the classroom to teach. Jeanne expressed this idea clearly when she shared:

I thought that I was going to find the Holy Grail, that I was the one, because of my age, my experience. But it's way different. I mean, I thought, okay, well, I'm a mom. I've been through lots of adversity. I've been ... Not only was that a benefit or a good part, it also was a detriment, because I thought that of course I can do this. It's hard.

As participants began to realize their situation was not what they had expected it to be, they began to look for coping strategies. Some participants explained they just had no idea the student population would look like this. While others said they expected the diverse population, but still did not fully comprehend the extent of the situation until they were in the classroom and facing it.

Support and strategies. Support and strategies are related to the support network one has, and the coping strategies are what they use to modify the situation in order to successfully finish the transition. ALL participants shared the experience that support for working with ELL students was limited in their schools and districts. Several participants explained that although the population of ELL students was present in fairly strong numbers, the focus on moving those students forward was not emphasized. Megan shared this about her district's professional development:

We ... one of our ESL teachers is very adamant, wants to do professional development. I think she talked to our principal until we had one session that was ELL specific. But I'm

talking one session on an early release day so it may have been an hour, hour and fifteen minutes. But that is always ... they like teachers having voice on what our PD is on. And that is a box that I pretty much always check (ELL professional development) because I know that's something I need to work on. The offerings for that are by far the slimmest. We're all about the scope portfolios and all about improving literacy, but that is not something that (ELL professional development) is pushed, or prioritized, or valued almost at my current school.

All participants expressed the need for more support and professional development focused on working with ELL students. Several participants voiced the need for specific strategies for working with ELLs. Overall, the participants felt that they found or created strategies, some they described as successful and others not so much, to use with ELL students in order to survive their first year.

Self. Through the use of reflective letters, the participants expressed that although their first year was full of challenges and some incorrect expectations, joining the teaching profession was a rewarding and fulfilling career to have. They detailed how to celebrate even your 'failures' and mistakes, and how to grow and learn from those. Hannah shared her philosophy of how to embrace your mistakes:

Lastly, be proud of your mistakes. Mine include lack of relationship with students, not supporting EL's enough, rushing through curriculum too fast, etc. I wasn't a great first year teacher, but that's also because I reflected on my mistakes. We teach our students to be proud of their mistakes because that's how they learn. We should be modeling that for them. Lead by example. Mistakes are meant to happen so that you can reach new heights in your career. Laugh at them, let them happen, and take the time to fix them.

Teaching is half instruction and half self-reflection. If you don't take the time to reflect on how you are reaching your kids, then you aren't reaching them at all.

Several participants suggested finding yourself a support system of friends and family early in your first year to help you survive. All participants described the first year as a learning experience, and definitely not an easy one. Participants expressed the ups and downs of the first year and shared that one should not be focused on the downs but concentrated on the ups in order to move forward and succeed as an educator.

The first stage of the transition theory as described by Chickering and Schlossberg (2002), *moving in*, can be identified as the educator participants' expectations of themselves prior to beginning their first year. According to Chickering and Schlossberg's definition, the participant moves into an anticipated event (new job) with expectation about how this transition will occur. Through responses to interview questions related to their expectations of themselves at the moving in stage of this transition, participants expressed how they anticipated their first-year experiences to progress.

Following the moving in phase, Chickering and Schlossberg (2002) described the second phase of *moving through* as the time after the anticipated event happens until the end of the transition phase. The participants' journey through the first year was considered moving through and all of the strategies that were employed during that time. Moir (2016) described this as several phases the new teachers experience including, survival phase, disillusionment phase, and rejuvenation phase. For this particular study, the survival phase was the focus of moving through, including all of the strategies first-year teacher participants utilized to make it through their initial year of teaching. Although no professional development was attended by any of the participants, collectively they addressed numerous strategies used in their classrooms to help

them move through their first year instructing ELL students.

The final stage of Schlossberg's theory is *moving out*, which encompasses the time at the end of the transition. Participants were asked to create a reflective piece of writing to share advice with newly graduated prospective educators entering their first year of teaching. Moir (2016) described this time of reflection as "a particularly invigorating time for first-year teachers." The sentiment of the reflective writing pieces constructed by the participants expressed positive feelings about teaching, students, and staff member, regardless of the struggle of their first year, which they articulated through their interviews and focus group discussions. Although the majority of the participants voiced great need and concern about not being prepared to work with ELL students effectively, only one of the participants was not going to return to teaching the following year, leaving the remaining 10 on their way to moving through into the new school year.

Empirical

Previous research studies on teacher preparation, student achievement, and professional development for practicing teachers who work with ELLs have been conducted (Berg, Petró, & Greybeck, 2012; de Jong, Harper, & Coady, 2013; Goldhaber, Liddle, & Theobald, 2014; Henry et al., 2013; Peter, Markham, & Frey, 2012; Salerno, & Kibler, 2013). However, no research exists on first-year secondary teachers with no training to work with ELLs. This study allowed me to gain insight as to what training and courses, in relation to teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students, were provided to participants in their education programs prior to entering the classroom.

Major growth trends in this student population have accentuated the necessity for preparing all teachers to instruct culturally and linguistically diverse students (Lucas & Grinberg,

2008; Lucas & Villegas, 2011). The continued growth of the number of ELL students entering classrooms of content-trained teachers, and the lack of research on this topic indicated a gap and the need for more studies focused on teacher training and preparation for first-year content teachers. This study allowed me, through participant explanations, to examine the curriculum for training education majors currently being utilized in several universities in North Carolina and Virginia. None of the participants' programs included mandatory training in regard to working with linguistically diverse populations.

Although an abundance of research exists about professional development for working with ELL students, most come from the perspective of teachers in service or veteran teachers (Berg et al, 2012; de Jong et al., 2013; Peter, Markham, & Frey, 2012). In my research I found no mention of documented research on professional development with emphasis on teaching ELLs for first-year teachers. This study allowed me to gain a perspective from the viewpoint of first-year teachers in regard to their perceived needs for professional development in their first year of teaching to develop skills for working with English language learners. The overwhelming expressions from the participants was the great need for professional development for working with ELL students.

Prior research has documented that many teacher preparation programs offer course work in cultural diversity or working with diverse populations, but these courses do not teach education candidates how to work effectively with ELL students (Gandara, Maxwell-Jolly, & Driscoll, 2005). The participants in this study expressed the lack of preparation they felt when faced with having to teach ELLs without proper training to do so. Many of the participants explained that the only courses they could recall taking that might have even 'mentioned' ELLs were focused on culture and how to use culturally diverse materials for instruction. This

testimony from participants confirmed that, in their experiences at least, teacher education programs are not preparing teachers for working with linguistically diverse populations.

Empirically, this study was consistent with many of the findings from previous research conducted on the connection between ELLs, first-year teachers, and teacher education programs. The participants' responses corroborated with numerous findings in prior research studies based on veteran teachers who teach ELLs. This study adds to the current literature by including information from first-year secondary teachers on the topic, which has previously not been studied. This study commences to fill that gap in the literature.

Implications

The findings in this transcendental phenomenological study have implications for preservice teachers, professors of teaching pedagogy, universities and schools of higher education, and educational faculties in general. During this study, I examined the viewpoints of first-year secondary educators working in classrooms with substantive numbers of ELL students, without any methodological or professional development training to do so. Eleven participants shared their transition throughout their first year of teaching through individual interviews, focus group discussions, and reflective letters. Following data collection, I analyzed the data using codes that revealed themes describing the experiences of the participants. Through analyzing the data, I discovered the findings of this study were consistent with other parallel studies, but that this study added to the literature a group that had not previously been addressed. The following sections discuss the theoretical, empirical, and practical implications derived from the research.

Theoretical Implications

To this researcher's knowledge, first-year teachers' transitions have not been studied using Schlossberg's (1981) transition theory. This theory defines a transition as any event, or

non-event that results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles. A person's perception of whether or not he or she defines the event or non-event as a transition plays a key role in the context and impact of the transition.

An anticipated transition is one that is expected to happen, such as a move, graduation, or starting a new job. In this study, participants experienced an anticipated transition when they were hired for their first teaching job. Upon 'moving into' their new positions, participants expressed various feelings in respect to this anticipated transition from extreme worry to ecstatic to be starting in their new positions. Responses about how they felt when they were initially hired depended on how participants viewed this transition.

The next part of the transition, 'moving through,' focused on strategies the participants learned or experimented with to cope with the challenges they faced. Participants shared strategies they had tried in their classrooms to help ELLs, as well as coping strategies such as 'finding a school Mom', or a 'mentor to show you the ropes.' The final stage of transition was the 'moving out' stage. During this stage, participants were asked to reflect upon their entire first year (entire transition) and record advice for the next generation of new educators.

The findings of this study are consistent with Schlossberg's (1981) description of the stages one goes through in the transition theory. Participants began the transition from the beginning of their first year, moving in with expectations of themselves based on their individual perceptions and situations. They then moved through the transition developing strategies to cope with challenges they faced throughout their first year of teaching. Finally, they were able to move out of this transition and reflect on their practices, revealing what worked for them and what did not, as well as what they perceived as needs for going forward.

This study added to the literature based on Schlossberg's (1981) transition theory.

Primarily because there have been no studies conducted with first-year teacher transition, and secondly because it involved a select group of individuals tasked with transitioning through challenges they were not expecting to encounter.

Empirical Implications

Previous studies indicated the need for more effective teacher training programs in regard to working with ELL students (Lucas et al., 2008; Molle, 2013). The participants in this study corroborated this information explaining that, “teacher education programs do not focus on ELL instruction methods.” Lacking in the research is the reasoning behind the insufficiency of preparation courses. According to Ballantyne, Sanderman, and Levy (2008) only four states had specific coursework or certification requirements for all teachers who work with ELL students. Participants expressed “they would have like to have had some kind of training in their programs to work with ELL students.”

Empirically this study filled a gap in the literature currently available by presenting viewpoints of an underrepresented population, first-year secondary teachers who are untrained in ELL methodology, but currently teaching ELL students. Previous research has focused on teachers who work with ELLs beyond their first year of teaching, professional development for working with ELL students (not prior to a teacher’s first year), methods English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers use for working with ELL students, and numerous other related topics. To this researcher’s knowledge, there have been no studies conducted with first-year secondary teachers working with ELLs, but untrained to do so.

The implications of this study are that teachers need to have training and experience working with ELL students prior to entering the classroom as a first-year teacher. Universities should require education majors to have at least a strategies class for working with this

population. A collection of courses dealing with linguistics, language development, cultural diversity, and strategies would be ideal. Due to the lack of training, several participants that were lateral entry teachers expressed a desire that professional development to work with ELLs should be encouraged at the very least and mandated if possible during the first few weeks of school in areas where there is a high population of ELLs.

Practical Implications

In this study, I examined the lived experiences of the first-year secondary teacher participants through individual interviews, focus group discussions, and reflective writing pieces, to gain an understanding of their perceptions about their first year teaching experiences with ELLs, strategies they implemented, frustrations and challenges they faced, and their viewpoints when reflecting on their first year of teaching. By analyzing the transcriptions of the interviews and focus groups, as well as the reflective writing pieces, I was able to develop themes that emerged during the data analysis. From these themes I was able to establish some practical implications that could be used for the purpose of training teachers to work with ELLs.

The teacher participants interviewed in this study unanimously expressed the need for course work in their teacher preparation programs for working with ELL students. Some participants described their programs as so full that they could not take a course for ESL strategies, which was an additional course beyond the required classes they needed for graduation. Other participants explained the only mention of ELL students came through courses based on culturally diverse learners, but there was little or no mention of linguistically diverse learners.

The participants who entered the education field as lateral entry teachers were explicit in saying they needed professional development early on in their first year of teaching, or at least

someone to guide them on strategies for ELL students. Since the majority of lateral entry teachers enter the classroom without any formal teacher education training, the participants who identified as lateral entry teachers were adamant about this. Several participants related in their reflective letters that new teachers should take advantage of any and all professional development, and several participants named professional development specific to working with ELLs as a must for new teachers.

Delimitations and Limitations

The researcher implemented several delimitations to guide the research. The study included only first- and second-year teachers at the secondary level who had not been previously trained in methods to work with ELL students. This delimitation helped the researcher ensure that all participants had experienced the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994).

During the participant selection process, several participants were excluded. A few people agreed to participate, and some were even interviewed, but were eliminated because they did not fit the demographic criteria outlined in the study. Even though the demographic survey stated first- and second-year teachers only, one potential participant revealed in the interview that she was a third-year teacher disallowing her to be a participant based on phenomenon including only first- and second-year teachers. Other potential participants were eliminated after the researcher specifically asked about the number of years they had been teaching prior to scheduling any interviews.

Due to the study's qualitative nature it has limitations (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2015). To conduct this study, I chose to use a transcendental phenomenological methodology. By design, qualitative studies generally use smaller sample sizes than quantitative studies. For this reason a smaller sample size was used in this study and data saturation was

achieved after 11 interviews. The participants were not ethnically diverse, and most of them were educated in North Carolina universities. Though the ages of the participants varied, all but three of them were female. Each participant completed the individual interviews, but only a portion of them participated in one of the two focus group discussions and wrote a reflective letter creating a weakness in the triangulation of the data.

Researcher bias was also a possible limitation to this study due to its qualitative nature. In qualitative studies the researcher serves as both the data collector and the analyzer of the data. To reduce researcher bias I limited my remarks during interviews and focus group discussions and wrote journal entries to collect my thoughts before and after collecting and analyzing data. As the human instrument in this study, I made every attempt to remain impartial while researching.

Recommendations for Future Research

There are several recommendations for further research considering the delimitations and limitations of this study. One of the major limitations of this study was the fact that the majority of the participant pool was educated in universities in North Carolina. Additional research conducted in states that have higher numbers of immigrant students with limited English proficiency, which may have teacher training programs that concentrate more on methods to teach ELLs, might provide more varied responses to the research questions addressed in this study. Expanding the region for the choosing of the participant pool to include other states' universities could add to the findings.

Future studies could explore the perceptions of novice teachers in years one through five. The inclusion of teachers beyond their initial year of teaching could include those who have participated in professional development or other support strategies for working with ELLs. This

expansion might help to determine if teachers feel more prepared with more experience in the classroom, and the potential effect of professional development for working with ELL students.

Further phenomenological studies should examine the perceptions of university professors in regard to training teacher candidates in methodology for working with ELL students. Research by Roy-Campbell (2013) explained that many preservice teachers are currently being trained by professors who do not possess knowledge of, nor have they obtained preparation themselves, for teaching ELLs. A study such as this may give insight into why first-year teachers are entering classrooms feeling so unprepared to work with the linguistically diverse populations in their schools.

Finally, interviews with school leaders and other key players were not included in this study. This study could be replicated to include a larger population of the school staff including administration, guidance counselors, etc. This type of study could provide a wider viewpoint in regard to preparation for working with the ELL population.

Summary

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenology was to describe the lived experiences of first-year secondary teachers who have only been trained in specific content areas, not English as a second language, but regardless of their lack of training, were assigned to provide instruction to English language learners. Participants for the study were selected based on demographic criteria gathered by the researcher in the form of a questionnaire. This group of participants that included first- and second-year teachers has been underrepresented in the existing literature related to the topic of the study. Considering the perceptions of this demographic is important because their viewpoints about teacher preparation can impact future teacher preparation courses.

Through analysis of the data, three themes and several subthemes emerged that answered the central research question. The three themes identified were (a) relationship building, (b) utilization of strategies with ELLs, and (c) request for further training. The participants overall had similar experiences in regard to the phenomenon studied. All participants expressed the desire to build good relationships with their students as well as with their peer teachers and staff. Most of the participants openly admitted the need for further training or professional development for working with ELL students.

Findings indicate that the participants put a great importance on building relationships. Participants gave insight into how they perceived themselves as relationship builders with students and expressed how their viewpoints changed as they began to transition through the year. Relationships with peer teachers was emphasized by participants in their reflective letters as ‘extremely important,’ and new teachers were encouraged to find friends and even family amongst their teacher peers.

This study’s findings offered several theoretical, empirical, and practical implications. This study added to the existing literature on first-year secondary-level educators who work with English language learners. This study also added to the current literature regarding Schlossberg’s transition theory, especially the utilization of first-year teachers. Practical implications offered information that could help universities and professors better prepare preservice teachers for linguistically diverse learners in their classrooms.

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APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL**LIBERTY UNIVERSITY**
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

December 11, 2018

Bonnie J. Carmen

IRB Approval 3487.121118: A Phenomenological Study of the Experiences of Secondary Teachers Trained in Content Only Areas Throughout Their First Year Instructing English Language Learners.

Dear Bonnie J. Carmen,

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty University IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year from the date provided above with your protocol number. If data collection proceeds past one year or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases were attached to your approval email.

Your study falls under the expedited review category (45 CFR 46.110), which is applicable to specific, minimal risk studies and minor changes to approved studies for the following reason(s):

6. Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes.
7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies. (NOTE: Some research in this category may be exempt from the HHS regulations for the protection of human subjects. [45 CFR 46.101\(b\)\(2\)](#) and (b)(3). This listing refers only to research that is not exempt.)

Please retain this letter for your records. Also, if you are conducting research as part of the requirements for a master's thesis or doctoral dissertation, this approval letter should be included as an appendix to your completed thesis or dissertation.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project. Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP

Administrative Chair of Institutional Research

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APPENDIX B: RECRUITMENT LETTER

Dear Fellow Educator:

My name is Bonnie Carmen, a doctoral candidate at Liberty University's School of Education. I would like to invite you to consider participating in a research study which attempts to describe the experiences of first-year secondary educators trained strictly in content areas but tasked with teaching English language learners (ELLs) in their everyday practice. More research is needed to explore the experiences of educators working with ELLS without prior training in their methodology courses. You have an opportunity to contribute information that can inform future secondary novice teachers. In order to participate in this research study, you must meet the following criteria:

1. Be a practicing second-year educator
2. Teach full-time at the secondary level
3. Have not had methodology classes for working with ELLs in your educational program before your first year of teaching

If you agree to participate in this study, I would ask you to do the following:

1. Respond to a confidential questionnaire that should take no more than 10 minutes.
2. Participate in a one-on-one interview that should last between 45 minutes to one hour. This interview will be audio recorded. Your identity will be confidential in this study.
3. You will be invited to participate in a focus group interview with other teachers in this study. If you choose to participate, the interview should last about one hour. The interview will be audio recorded. All responses will be confidential.
4. You will be asked to write a reflective letter about your first-year teaching experiences. All written responses will be kept confidential.

I have attached an informed consent document that provides more information about the study so that you can make an informed decision about your participation.

Thank you for taking the time to consider participating in this study. If you choose to participate in this study, please respond by email to bram6@liberty.edu or you may call me at XXX-XXX-XXXX. I will schedule a time to personally meet with you to collect the signed informed consent document to participate in the study. If you choose to participate in this study, I will send you a link to a Google form so that you can complete the questionnaire. At that time, I will also have you schedule an appointment to conduct the one-on-one interview.

Sincerely,

Bonnie Carmen
Doctoral student at Liberty University

APPENDIX C: CONSENT FORM

A Phenomenological Study of The Experiences of Secondary Teachers Trained in Content Only Areas Throughout Their First Year Instructing English Language Learners

Bonnie J Carmen
Liberty University
School of Education

You are invited to be in a research study on the experiences of first year teachers who have not been trained to work with English language learners, but had these students placed in their classes regardless of the lack of training to work with this specialized population of students. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a secondary content teacher who has had less than two years experience as an educator, and did not have specific training in your methodology courses for working with English language learners, but was expected to educate them throughout your first year of practice. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Bonnie Carmen, a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Background Information: The purpose of this study is to describe the first year experiences of secondary teachers who have only been trained in specific content areas not English as a second language, but regardless of their lack of training, were assigned to provide instruction to English language learners. Teachers will be asked to describe their expectations prior to their first year, explain their experiences with teaching English learners and strategies used, and finally share knowledge based on experiences with novice teachers yet to begin their first year of instruction. Research has demonstrated that there is a lack of novice classroom/content teachers trained to work with English language learners (ELLs), however as the number of ELLs rises, more and more content teachers are expected to educate these diverse students without ever having been trained to do so. The data gathered will give a clearer picture of what novice teachers feel they need in regards to teaching ELLs in content classrooms, and potentially provide universities with input as to what courses may be added to educational methodology to improve novice teachers' tools for working with ELLs.

Procedures: If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

1. Complete a face-to-face interview composed of open-ended questions, which will be audio recorded for later transcription. The interview is 19 semi-structured questions and should take approximately one hour to complete.
2. Participate in a focus group with other participants. The focus group will be facilitated by the researcher and consist of 10 semi-structured, open-ended questions. The focus group session will preferably be face-to-face (or if distance poses a problem by Internet video) and all sessions will be audio recorded for later transcription. The focus group should take approximately one hour depending on attendance and participation.
3. Reflective letter written by participants to upcoming first-year teachers based on their own first year experiences working with ELLs. Participants will be able to reflect on the

practices and experiences of their first year in regards to working with ELLs although they lacked the training to do so. Dedication of time to this letter writing will be dependent on the thoroughness of the participant.

Risks: The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

Benefits:

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society include:

For educational facilities and higher education in general, this study may guide structure for the creation of undergraduate courses aimed at mainstream teachers. For preservice teachers, it may assist them in choosing courses that will provide necessary skills for working with ELLs before being placed in their personal classrooms. Finally, it may also provide information to universities regarding the importance of preparing mainstream secondary teacher candidates for working with ELLs and additional coursework to be added to basic pedagogy for all classroom teachers.

Compensation: Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participants will be assigned a pseudonym. Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- A certified transcription company will be used to transcribe audio files.
- Data will be stored on a password locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher and a certified transcription company will have access to these recordings.
- I cannot assure participants that other members of the focus group will not share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.

Conflicts of Interest Disclosure: N/A

Voluntary Nature of the Study: Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

How to Withdraw from the Study:

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

Contacts and Questions: The researcher conducting this study is Bonnie Carmen. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at btran6@liberty.edu. You may also contact the researcher's faculty chair, Dr. Grania Holman at ggholman@liberty.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information for your records.

Statement of Consent: I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Investigator

Date

APPENDIX D: REFLECTIVE LETTER PROMPT

Reflective Letter Prompt

Reflecting back on your first year of instruction, what kinds of things would you tell novice teachers that they can do to make their first year a successful one? Write a letter to a first year teacher sharing pointers and advice that you feel you would like to have had access to at the beginning of your first year of teaching.

You may use some of the following ideas to build the content of your letter on:

- What are some things you accomplished in your first year that you are proud of?
- What is something that you found particularly frustrating in your first year?
- What are some strategies you learned that helped you in your first year?
- What was the most useful professional development experience you had in your first year?
- What is something you would change about your first year if you could?
- What is one way that you grew professionally in your first year?
- Who amongst your colleagues was the most helpful to you?
- What has caused you the most stress in your first year?
- What was the most valuable thing you learned in your first year?
- What was the biggest mistake you made in your first year? How can you avoid making the same mistake in the future?
- In what ways did you change the lives of your students during your first year?
- If there were anything you could have changed about your first year, what would it have been?