

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF HIGH SCHOOL ACADEMIC SUBJECT
TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES DIFFERENTIATING FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE
LEARNERS

by

Valerie Jean Campbell

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the experiences of core academic subject high school teachers with differentiating instruction and assessment for English language learners (ELLs) in central Virginia. Two theories provided the theoretical framework for this study including the socio-cultural theory by Lev Vygotsky (1978) and the social cognitive theory by Albert Bandura (1989). These two theories explain learning as an interaction of social and cultural experiences between teacher and student and address the role of efficacy in teacher expertise. The central research question that guided this study was “How do select high school academic content teachers describe their experiences differentiating instruction and assessment for English language learners in central Virginia?” Data were collected from administration of the Teaching English Language Learners Scale (TELLS) (see Appendix B), face-to-face interviews, and archival data in the form of document analysis. Data were analyzed by the researcher using ATLAS.ti qualitative data analysis software. Four themes developed from the data, and include positive attitudes toward differentiation for ELLs, negative attitudes, and two themes related to the dependence of efficacy on supports available and strategies known. The themes that developed revealed that the participants experienced conflicting attitudes toward differentiating for ELLs and felt ill prepared. The results of this study may inform the body of knowledge regarding the education of ELLs to address closing the achievement gap for this population in reading and math, to improve teacher pre and in service programs, and to improve ELL programs.

Keywords: English language learners, differentiation, achievement gap, secondary school

Copyright Page

Dedication

I dedicate this manuscript to my parents, Charles and Mary Campbell, both of whom are now with our Lord in Heaven. Without the support of these two amazing individuals who lived during some of the most transformational times in our society and were members of what is known as the greatest generation, I would not have had the support, encouragement, and belief in myself to attempt this level of research and learning.

I would also like to dedicate this to my nephew, James Webb, a retired army ranger, who has overcome amazing trauma and adversity in life to become an amazing veteran, father, farmer, and lover of God and His creation. Finally, I dedicate this work to God and all of His children. It is the love that He instills in me that gives me the passion to advocate for children of all cultures and strive to improve educational opportunity for all. God gave me the strength to continue completing this project against some very trying situations. To Him be all the glory.

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Table of Contents

ABSTRACT.....	3
Dedication	5
Acknowledgments.....	6
Table of Contents	7
List of Tables	13
List of Figures	14
List of Abbreviations	15
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	16
Overview.....	16
Background.....	16
Historical Context	18
Legal Context.....	19
Social Context.....	21
Theoretical Context.....	24
Situation to Self.....	25
Problem Statement	29
Purpose Statement.....	30
Significance of the Study	30

Empirical Significance.....	31
Theoretical Significance	31
Practical Significance.....	32
Research Questions	32
Central Research Question.....	32
Research Sub-Question One	33
Research Sub-Question Two.....	33
Research Sub-Question Three.....	34
Definitions.....	34
Summary	36
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	38
Overview.....	38
Theoretical Framework.....	39
<u>Related Literature</u>	42
Teacher Sense of Self-efficacy	42
Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Teaching	45
Attitudes and Beliefs Toward Teaching ELLs.....	49
Attitude and Personal Experiences of Teachers.....	51
Effective Strategies for Teaching ELLs.....	52

Lack of Access and the Impacts of Lack of Achievement on Emotional	
Functioning	62
Summary	67
CHAPTER THREE: METHODS	70
Overview	70
Design	70
Research Questions	73
Setting	73
Participants.....	74
Procedures.....	77
The Researcher's Role	79
Data Collection	81
Teaching English Language Learners Scale (TELLS)	81
Interviews.....	83
Document Analysis	86
Data Analysis	87
Epoché.....	87
Interviews.....	88
Analysis of the TELLs	88
Document Analysis	89

	10
Triangulation of the Data	89
Trustworthiness	90
Credibility	90
Dependability and Confirmability	91
Transferability	91
Ethical Considerations	92
Summary	93
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS	95
Overview	95
Participants	95
Erik	96
Linda	96
Gayle	96
Tom	97
Shannon	97
Rick	97
Donna	97
Susan	97
Alan	98
Bridgette	98

<u>Discussions and Implications Related to the Theoretical Framework</u>	149
<u>Theoretical Discussion</u>	149
<u>Empirical Discussion</u>	151
<u>Discussion and Implications Related to Teaching Strategies</u>	153
<u>Implications</u>	159
<u>Delimitations</u>	161
<u>Limitations</u>	162
<u>Recommendations for Future Research</u>	163
<u>Summary</u>	164
REFERENCES	167
APPENDICES	186
APPENDIX A: IRB Approval Letter	186
APPENDIX B: Teaching English Language Learners Scale (TELLS)	187
APPENDIX C: Demographic Survey Questions	191
APPENDIX D: Approval Letter	193
APPENDIX E: Permission Request Email	194
APPENDIX F: Recruitment Email	197
APPENDIX G: Informed Consent Form	198
APPENDIX H: Figures and Tables	200

List of Tables

Table 1 Participant Demographics	76
Table 2 Providing First Language Support	205
Table 3 Providing Specific Linguistic Supports	206
Table 4 Communicating Expectations	206
Table 5 Obtaining Ongoing Training and Community Support	206
Table 6 Ability to Accurately Assess.....	207
Table 7 Participant ELL Student Membership	207

List of Figures

Figure 1	83
Figure 2 Equity Image	105
Figure 3	200
Figure 4 Equity Image	201
Figure 5 TELLS Criteria	201
Figure 6 Accommodations According to Student.....	207

List of Abbreviations

Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA)

English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)

English Language Development (ELD)

English Language Learner (ELL)

English Language Proficiency (ELP)

English as a Second Language (ESL)

Every Student Succeeds Act 2015 (ESSA)

Formerly Limited English Proficient (FLEP)

Limited English Proficient (LEP)

Long Term English Language Learner (LT-ELL)

No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) Teaching English Language Learner Scale (TELLS)

World Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the experiences of core academic subject high school teachers with differentiating instruction and assessment for English language learners (ELLs) in Central Virginia. This study is important as federal policy and federal law guide the delivery of services and instruction for ELLs; therefore, the use of appropriate teaching strategies is in no way optional. Consideration of this phenomenon must include the widening achievement gap for ELLs. This gap is a reflection of the equity issue in schools today. “It’s not the circumstances students bring to school that limit students’ growth, but rather their lack of opportunity at school” (Wolter, 2016, p. 31). If appropriate teaching methods are not employed, the opportunity to learn at school is severely limited for the growing population of students for whom English is not their native language. Understanding what teachers are experiencing as they plan differentiated instruction and assessment for ELLs may improve the quality of education that these students receive and promote the advancement of programs to support teachers in working with this diverse population of learners.

The purpose of Chapter One is to discuss the need to explore the phenomenon of this study based on the historical, legal, social, and theoretical context. In addition to the background information, Chapter One will also provide the reader with the situation to the researcher, problem statement, purpose statement, significance of the study, guiding research questions, definitions of terms used. Chapter one will end with a summary of the topics covered.

Background

Immigration is at the core of U.S. heritage; therefore, ELLs have been a part of the

educational canvas of the U.S. since the founding of the country. Throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, communities wrestled with the issues surrounding the education of children for whom English was not the native language used in the home. At the time of the American Revolution, many leaders, including Benjamin Franklin, began to feel that a common language should be established and taught in the schools as a means to preserve the new republic; thus, the era of the common secular school was born (Bybee, Henderson, & Hinojas, 2014; Cavanaugh, 1996; Collier, 2019; De Jong, 2016)

During the rise of immigration in the 1800s, parochial schools began to thrive as immigrant groups tended to stay together and create communities, which consequently isolated them from total immersion into the dominant culture. Political leaders sought to exert legal control over education by requiring attendance at state-run common schools where English was the language of instruction, causing dissension in language-diverse communities. Opposition to English-only education included the idea that the pluralistic nature of society should be reflected in the school. In fact, there was a definitive movement to make German the lingua franca of the U.S. due to a large number of German-speaking people in the country, and this debate lasted for some time. However, concerns over the lack of education among immigrants were leading to political corruption and crime, which caused laws to be enacted requiring mandatory school attendance in schools in which English was the language of instruction for children from the age of seven through 14 (Bybee, et.al.,2014; Cavanaugh, 1996; Collier, 2019; De Jong, 2016).

At the turn of the 20th century, a strong sense of xenophobia caused many to distrust those who did not speak English. The result of this sentiment was another push toward English-only education. As the industrial revolution was underway, public education became more standardized to meet the needs of the work force, and the practice of instructing in English only

in the public system became mandatory. Furthermore, the advent of World War I brought anti-German sentiments to the foreground and put to an end the debate on German language dominance in the country (Bybee, et.al.,2014; Cavanaugh, 1996; Collier, 2019; De Jong, 2016). This then began the phenomenon of educating students for whom English was not their home language in English-only schools. Federal policies were needed to address the issue; but equity would be a long time in the considerations of these policies.

Historical Context

At the end of World War I, in what was called the Americanization Movement, the policy toward the education of ELL students became one of immersion with minimal support in the acquisition of the English language (Cavanaugh, 1996; De Jong, 2016). Sadly, this policy remained in effect until the 1960s when civil rights legislation emerged, addressing the rights of non-English speaking students in public education. With the passing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title VI made it illegal to discriminate based on race, color, or national origin in federally funded institutions. That law then opened the door to evaluate the education of limited English proficient (LEP) students in the courts (La Morte, 2012).

In 1968, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) included Title VII (The Bilingual Education Act), which established that “bilingual education was appropriate for economically disadvantaged ELL students and provided funding for program implementation” (Texas Education Agency, 2010, p. 10-13). By 1994, Title VII programs were given “new provisions to emphasize professional development as well as provide for further research and assessment of programs; it also included immigrant children into the funding formula” (Texas Education Agency, 2010, p. 10-13). Ultimately, after many revisions of Title VII, the issue of bilingual education was left up to the legislature of the states, which vary widely. Some states

mandate bilingual education, and some do not. According to the code of Virginia § 22.1-212.1, under Obligations of School Boards, Virginia is primarily an English-only state which means that there is no provision for teaching bilingual courses other than in foreign language instruction (Code of Virginia). As a result, it is expected that classroom teachers will provide content instruction with language objectives embedded into their lesson plans to address the needs of ELLs in core academic subject classrooms (Freeman, 2013).

In 2001, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 was reauthorized under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). According to NCLB, funding was to be provided to states to improve LEP education to prepare students to succeed on state standardized assessments (Texas Education Agency, 2010). Title III also provides for the methods that states will use to identify, screen, and place LEP students within the school system. NCLB established the guidelines based on previous federal policy and case law that is more current. In 2015, NCLB was reauthorized as Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) with the Title III provisions intact (Skinner & Kuenzi, 2015). ESSA is the current policy governing the education of LEP students in public schools.

Legal Context

To address the importance of the phenomenon of differentiating instruction and assessment for ELLs, it is important for educators to be cognizant of the laws that apply. The federal policies outlined previously in this chapter have been challenged often in the courts, and the resulting rulings have helped to refine and define the law and policies concerning LEP programs and services in the public schools. Perhaps the most definitive case law regarding the education of LEP students was found in two major Supreme Court cases: *Lau v. Nichols* (1974) and *Castañeda v. Pickard* (1981). In *Lau v. Nichols* (1974), the placement of Chinese American

students into total immersion classrooms in the San Francisco Unified School District with no language support was found to be a violation of the student's civil rights in accordance with the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The district felt that they had treated the students equally under the law. However, the court found for the plaintiff, and the majority opinion held that providing equal facilities, textbooks, teachers, and curriculum was not equal treatment for students who do not understand English (*Lau v. Nichols*, 1974). This decision established the importance of differentiated instruction for language minority students.

The Lau decision further inspired the creation of the Lau Remedies by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights (Texas Education Agency, 2010, pp. 10-13). The Lau Remedies called for compliance standards for English language programs. Lau outlined the approaches, methods, and procedures for schools to follow in identifying, screening, and placement of LEP students. Lau also spawned the passing of the Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974 (EEOA), which states in section 1703(f): 'No state shall deny educational opportunities to an individual on account of his or her race, color, sex, or national origin by ... (f) the failure of an educational agency to take appropriate action to overcome language barriers that impede equal participation by its students in its instructional programs' is considered a violation of the law. (Texas Education Agency, 2010, pp. 10-13)

It is under these standards that public schools are currently held accountable in all states for the education of ELL students. Public school teachers, therefore, must know the law to ensure compliance and provide equity to non-English speaking children.

Another landmark case defined the basis for language instruction in the U.S. In the case of *Castañeda v. Pickard* (1981), the court established that it is illegal for schools to segregate

ELLs based on their language proficiency levels. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth District established the Castañeda test for LEP programs. The Castañeda test is a set of standards for schools to follow to remain in compliance with EEOA. These standards included the requirement that ELL programs must be implemented with instructional practices, resources, and personnel necessary to transfer theory to reality (Castaneda v. Pickard, 1981).

Lau v. Nichols (1974) and Castañeda v. Pickard (1981) established that schools must provide equal access to all areas of the curriculum coupled with instructional approaches that achieve both language and content objectives for ELLs. Castaneda (1981) also was the basis for inclusion of ELLs in the regular education classroom as opposed to the practice of keeping them self-contained until they acquire sufficient English language proficiency. A confounding factor for all educators on this issue was that current federal policies and the laws governing education focus mainly on standardized testing; therefore, teachers are often torn between the mandates for testing and the mandates for inclusion of ELLs. As a result, an ever-increasing achievement gap for ELLs continues to exist, which provides the social context for this study.

Social Context

The continuing growth of an achievement gap between White middle-class students and students of poverty and/or color reflects the need for improvement in the strategies utilized to educate this population of learners of which most ELLs are members (Byrd, 2020; Cowan; Pitre, 2014; Hanushek, Peterson, Talpey, & Woessmann, 2019; Soland & Soland, 2021). The gap between White and Hispanic students (ELL and non-ELL) and between Hispanic non-ELLs and Hispanic ELLs is widening yearly (Cadelle-Hemphill & Rahman, 2011; DelliCarpini, & Alonso, 2014; Hanushek et al., 2019; Gleeson, & Davison, 2016; Menken et al., 2012). The achievement gap that begins in primary grades and widens as the student progresses toward graduation is

enhanced when students enter the U.S. in late elementary or secondary education with no English proficiency (Hanushek et al., 2019; Moore, 2015). While there are many factors identified as contributing to the gap, vocabulary deficit is believed to be at the core (Millon-Fuaré, 2019; Lesaux, Kieffer, Faller, & Kelley, 2010); thus, students entering school with language deficiencies are unable to achieve to the level that students with higher vocabularies do (Millon-Fuaré, 2019; Lesaux et al., 2010; Moore, 2015). Participation in the achievement gap is compounded for the ELL student who is highly represented in lower socio-economic demographics (Hanushek et al., 2019; Moore, 2015). Therefore, instruction for these students must include language objectives that address vocabulary and language proficiency growth and be part of the core academic subject area curriculum.

Current research has focused on many areas of ELL instruction, including mostly program design and pre-service teacher training (Byrd, 2020; Dabach & Fones, 2016; Ghodbane & Achachi, 2019; Ingram & Nuttal, 2016). Research is available that explores teacher attitudes toward teaching ELLs and the educational experiences of long-term ELLs themselves (Byrd, 2020; Ghodbane & Achachi, 2019; Gleeson & Davison, 2016; Kim & Garcia, 2014, Murphy & Torff, 2019). The studies of teacher attitudes have yielded some disturbing information. Mainstream classroom teachers have indicated negative attitudes toward ELLs in the U.S. (Walker, Shafer, & Iiams, 2004, Murphy & Torff, 2019). These negative attitudes have included teachers expressing the desire to not have ELLs in their mainstream classrooms, and to have them self-contained all day with an ELL teacher in direct opposition to the law (Walker et al., 2004).

The effectiveness of the ELL teacher in promoting better outcomes has also been questioned. It has been suggested that the presence of an ELL teacher in the building encourages

core academic subject teachers to abdicate their legal and ethical responsibilities towards educating language minority students (Leavitt, & Hess, 2019; Walker et al., 2004). The concept of ableism and deficit thinking models towards students with linguistic deficiencies must also be addressed to improve education for all students (Leavitt, & Hess, 2019; Walker et al., 2004; Wolter, 2016). Therefore, this study sought to explore what occurs within the classroom for ELLs. The gap in the literature exists in qualitative studies of the experiences of secondary core academic subject teachers in differentiating instruction and assessment for ELLs in central Virginia, and it is hoped that this research will help narrow that gap.

What is known is that the best practices for second language learning are attributed to social contexts, in which language is the tool with which the learner translates abstract processes into conceptual forms (Ghodbane & Achachi, 2019; Lantolf, 2009; Leavitt, & Hess, 2019; Soland & Soland, 2021). Thus, differentiation strategies, as defined by Tomlinson and Strickland (2008) to include language objectives for second language acquisition, are considered to be the most effective methods for teaching core academic subjects to ELLs (Baecher, Artiglieri, Patterson, & Spatzer, 2012). With the increased diversity in the K-12 population, teachers need to be adept at differentiating instruction, particularly for ELLs (Parsons, Dodman, & Burrowbridge, 2013). Instructional planning that addresses “individual student needs, interests, and learning profiles is crucial in the act of differentiating instruction” (Parsons et al., 2013, p. 42). While differentiation is defined by Tomlinson and Strickland (2008) as a process of manipulating the content, process, and product of instruction, teachers must also acquire an ability to adapt instruction as it is happening for the ELL student (Parsons et al., 2013). This can be accomplished by employing culturally responsive differentiation strategies in order to narrow the gaps between the research and practice (Parsons et al., 2013). Culturally responsive teaching

is said to increase neuro plasticity in the brain and promote higher level thinking skills (Hammond & Jackson, 2015).

Despite the research supporting differentiated instruction as an effective method for addressing the needs of ELLs, the National Council of Teachers of English, National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, National Science Teachers Association, and National Middle School Association, in their national standards for teacher preparation, do not address differentiation (Baecher et al., 2012). Thus, what differentiated instruction looks like and how it is integrated is unclear (Baecher et al., 2012). As a result, many teachers are reluctant to provide it, as they are concerned that it requires drafting multiple lesson plans for each day and/or watering down the curriculum (Baecher et al., 2012).

Further compounding the use of differentiation is the idea that teachers tend to teach the way that they were taught and give little thought to more current methods of instruction (Gleeson & Davis, 2016). In a study of primary school teachers, it was found that the majority of teachers utilized a one-size-fits-all approach and did not address the students' readiness, interest, and learning profile (Melesse, 2016). The deterring factors in the study were ascribed to experience, knowledge, motivation, resources, time, class size, and range of diversity (Melesse, 2016). This is no less true for secondary teachers for whom content specialization is more important than developmental approaches; therefore, knowing what works and understanding teachers' practices is important to inform the body of knowledge on ELL instruction.

Theoretical Context

Currently, there is a lack of literature fully exploring high school core subject teachers' experiences in differentiating instruction and assessment for ELLs in central Virginia. It was important to explore these teachers' experiences in order to provide insight into program

improvement and support practices for the education of ELLs in this area to close the achievement gap for this population. Socio-cultural theory by Vygotsky (1978), along with social cognitive theory by Bandura (1989), provides the theoretical framework for this study.

Socio-cultural learning theory purports that the background and culture of the learner must be considered in order for the teacher to plan activities within the zone of proximal development to maximize learning (Vygotsky, 1978). Socio-cultural theory addresses the need for teachers to differentiate instruction to match the needs of the learner and is particularly relevant to the development of language learning. Vygotsky's (1978) concept of dialogic origin of competence supports the notion that second language learning requires differentiated approaches that address the acquisition of language within the core content framework (Lantolf, 2009). Vygotsky (1986) also supports the concept that language and learning are complementary processes that are necessary for each other to advance. In addition to socio-cultural theory, Albert Bandura's (1989) social cognitive theory, with its focus on teacher efficacy, provides support to the study of teacher experiences as they relate to experiences differentiating instruction and assessment for ELL students in core academic subject classrooms. The theoretical frameworks of the two theorists focus on how learning occurs through an individual's social interactions and cultural environments and is related to the sense of efficacy teachers bring to the task.

Situation to Self

Motivation for this study stemmed from my experiences as a K-8 classroom teacher and a K-12 ELL specialist. As a classroom teacher, I worked with ELLs in both elementary and middle school. At that time, I had little or no understanding of second language instructional practices, and our district was not well-equipped to support them as very few ELLs were

enrolled. I was interested in working with at-risk populations, and as a middle school language arts teacher, I looped, which is the process of teaching the same group of students over multiple grade levels, with the most struggling of readers for several years. Approximately 75% of the students in my class were on free and reduced lunch, and approximately 50% were long-term ELLs. At the time, I was unaware of the meaning or even the identification of long-term ELLs. What I did understand was that all of my students were struggling readers and writers due to language deficits. Interestingly, the concept of semi-lingualism became apparent to me as many of my students were not proficient in Spanish or English in their oral language development, let alone having literacy in either or both languages.

My experiences in the looping program brought an added interest to working with ELL students, and I obtained my master's degree and licensure in ESOL education. I then became one of two ELL teachers in a nine-school public school district in central Virginia. The job has evolved into my current role as ELL specialist, with an Education Specialist degree and district facilitator for the program that now constitutes six ELL teachers and one ELL tutor. My experiences in this capacity have exposed me to the difficulties English language learners encounter, particularly at the high school level, in acquiring English proficiency while learning state standardized learning objectives and passing end-of-course tests to earn a high school diploma.

Unfortunately, I have experienced negative attitudes from core academic subject teachers toward ELL students being placed in their classrooms and have witnessed student needs being ignored despite the district mandates and in-service training provided to teachers. The mandates state that core academic subject teachers must differentiate instruction and assessment for ELLs based on their English development plan (ELD), and according to the WIDA resource guides

adopted by the state of Virginia. I have found that teachers are not always eager to collaborate with ELL teachers on differentiation strategies and instead will exempt students from assignments and curve grades. This practice does not meet the needs of the learner, and when students are confronted with end-of-course (EOC) standardized tests, they are not prepared. This can be devastating to students at the moment and have long-term devastating effects on their self-concept and future opportunities. Many of my students look forward to turning eighteen in order to leave school, as they feel demoralized and eager to enter the workplace where their efforts are rewarded. Repeated failure on EOCs has been found to have negative impacts on motivation and serious long-term, negative emotional and psychological effects on ELLs (Kruger et al., 2016). I have seen this demonstrated regularly by my students.

In my experience, it appears that many teachers may not be sure how to instruct ELLs and are not aware of their roles and legal responsibilities despite professional development opportunities provided by the district. Teachers with good intentions often are frustrated by their inability to plan instruction that is necessary for ELLs. A few teachers often resent having to take the necessary time for planning instruction using differentiating strategies for a small percentage of students. Time for collaboration is also an issue and inhibits the ability of the classroom teacher to meet with the ELL teacher to receive support on planning instruction and assessment. For these reasons, I was eager to explore the experiences of high school core academic subject teachers in other districts in central Virginia to gain more insight into how they experienced this phenomenon. Since much research has focused on teachers' sense of efficacy in working with ELLs and indicated that the lower the sense of efficacy, the lower the ability of the teacher to differentiate for linguistic abilities, I am also curious as to how that aspect may affect participants experiences (McFarlane & Woolfson, 2013).

Post-positivism is the guiding paradigm for this research study as I sought to obtain information regarding the shared experiences of the participants in the phenomenon addressed using analytical phenomenology as described by Moustakas (1994). The ontological philosophical belief of a postpositive interpretive framework addresses the nature of reality as being beyond oneself (Creswell, 2013). In researching the experiences of the participants with the phenomenon, the reality as it is perceived through their eyes may inform the nature of the reality of the experience.

The ontological assumption relates to the existence of multiple realities (Creswell, 2013). This is addressed by the researcher in the reporting of themes that develop through the actual language of the participants as themes emerge (Creswell, 2013). To address this, I was meticulous in the recording, transcribing, and reporting of the interviews and their responses allowing for member check to ensure accurate results. The epistemological belief in post-positivism is that reality can never truly be known (Creswell, 2013). To address this, the researcher should minimize interaction with participants and determine validity through peer review (Creswell, 2013). For this reason, I conducted one interview and utilized an outside auditor to evaluate the analysis and interpretation of the data. The axiological belief addressing epoché, or bracketing, is in alignment with the phenomenological approach of Moustakas (1994). My own experiences with differentiating for ELLs and advocating for them as an ELL specialist required that I utilized Husserl's epoché as described by Moustakas (1994) in order to set aside my own biases and "experiences, as much as possible, in order to take a fresh perspective toward the phenomenon under examination" (Creswell, 2013, p. 80). The methodological belief of the paradigm is also in alignment with the scientific methodology using the deductive methods of data analysis, as explained by Moustakas (1994).

Problem Statement

Considered the fastest-growing population of public-school students in the U.S., ELLs reflect a diversity of linguistic needs in order to be academically successful (Kanno & Kangas, 2014; Menken et al., 2012; Navarez-La Torre, 2012). According to data, ELLs represent 4.4 million of the K-12 student population and are predicted to represent 25% by the year 2025 (Kanno & Kanga, 2014; Menken et al., 2012; Nevarez-LaTorre, 2012). In 2017, Ell students in 21 students had risen 6.0 percent or higher but less than 10.0 percent while 10 states reflected ELLs as 10 percent of their school age population (U.S. Department of Education, 2020). The problem is that as the number of ELL students continues to rise in public school systems, the achievement gap for this population continues to widen, particularly at the secondary level, and, consequently, high school dropout rates continue to increase (Cadelle-Hemphill & Rahman, 2011; DelliCarpini, & Alonso, 2014; Gleeson, & Davison, 2016; Menken et al., 2012; National Education Association, 2017).

To address this problem of rising enrollment rates, current research has focused on many areas of ELL instruction, particularly program effectiveness (Dabach & Fones, 2016; Ingram & Nuttal, 2016). There is also extensive research available on teacher attitudes, beliefs, and sense of self-efficacy and the educational experiences of long-term ELLs themselves (Gleeson & Davison, 2016; Kim & Garcia, 2014). However, there is a gap in the literature specifically addressing qualitative studies of the experiences of secondary core academic subject teachers in differentiating instruction and assessment for ELLs in the U.S. and, more specifically, in central Virginia.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the experiences of core academic subject high school teachers with differentiating instruction and assessment for English language learners (ELLs) in Central Virginia. Core academic subjects which contribute to a well-rounded education as defined by the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 were generally defined as English, math, science, fine arts, foreign language, CTE, Health & PE, ROTC, and social studies (ESSA, 2015). ELLs are defined as high school students for whom English is a second language and receive services in an ELL program per Title III guidelines (Skinner & Kuenzi, 2015). Differentiation is defined as the manner of content presentation, content process, and product as a response to independent student needs (Dixon et al., 2014).

The main theory that guided this research was socio-cultural theory as defined by Vygotsky (1978). Socio-cultural theory purports that the background and culture of the learner must be considered for the teacher to plan activities within the zone of proximal development in order for learning to take place (Vygotsky, 1978). A second theory that contributed to the theoretical framework was Albert Bandura's (1989) social cognitive theory which addresses the relationship between sense of efficacy and performance of certain behaviors.

Significance of the Study

This study may provide significant knowledge about the experiences of high school core academic subject teachers differentiating instruction and assessment for ELLs in central Virginia. This knowledge may be useful for improving the educational experiences of ELLs and narrowing the achievement gap. There are three areas that it is hoped this study will prove significant to educational research: empirically, theoretically, and practically.

Empirical Significance

The significance of this study provides an understanding of the phenomenon with emphasis on the manner in which participants differentiate instruction to meet the diverse linguistic needs of ELLs (Navarez-La Torre, 2012). While the concept of diversity in learning abilities is not new in the educational arena, the area of differentiation for language abilities is not as thoroughly researched (Dixon et al., 2014). Teachers must become adept at providing for the needs of such a diverse and rising population of learners if the achievement gap is ever to be addressed appropriately and if ELL students are allowed access to accelerated academic opportunities (Kanno & Kangas, 2014); therefore, it is hoped that this study will contribute to the knowledge available on the topic of interest. This study informs the body of research concerning teachers' sense of efficacy in working with ELLs and how that impacts their experiences differentiating instruction and assessment (Dixon et al., 2014). Through an understanding of the phenomenon, it is expected that ELL students, teachers, administrators, and school programs will benefit through an improvement in educational opportunities and a narrowing of the achievement gap for ELL students; thus, improving the lives of themselves, their families, and the community at large.

Theoretical Significance

This study provides support for the application of socio-cultural theory in research as it relates to the education of ELLs. As Vygotsky (1978) stressed the importance of language in developing thought processes through the interwoven use of language, this study provides stronger support for the application of this theoretical framework to the study of teaching ELLs. It is hoped that this study may increase the inclusion of strategies for teaching ELL students using socio-cultural approaches to allow this population to have more equitable access to the

curriculum. This study provides more insight into the application of the social cognitive theory and teacher efficacy (Bandura, 1989, 1977) as it pertains to the teaching of ELLs in order to inform teacher preparation programs and provide professional development aimed at increasing academic achievement and narrowing the achievement gap for this population of learners.

Practical Significance

This research study provides practical significance by informing the practices of administrators and teacher preparation programs in providing pre- and in-service teachers with the support needed to work effectively with ELL students at the secondary level (MacFarlane & Woolfson, 2013). Another potential contribution of this study is providing strategies for narrowing the achievement gap for ELLs and increasing high school completion rates (Murphy, 2014). The need to address time in the teacher day for collaboration may be supported by this study and provide administrators with an understanding of the importance of shared planning times for classroom and ELL teachers.

Research Questions

In order to address the problem, it is important to explore the experiences of secondary core academic subject teachers providing content knowledge and English language acquisition to ELL students. One central question and three sub-questions guided this research. Following is a detailed description of the research questions.

Central Research Question

How do select high school academic core teachers describe their experiences differentiating instruction and assessment for English language learners in Central Virginia? The goal of this question was to elicit the experiences of participants in the phenomenon. Research suggests that there is a disconnection between practice and pedagogy in the practices of

differentiating instruction for ELLs (Parsons et al., 2013). Given the diversity of needs presented by ELL students, teachers are faced with growing challenges in planning instruction to address linguistic levels and prior knowledge (Kanno & Kangas, 2014; Menken et al., 2012; Navarez-La Torre, 2012). To ensure that ELL students are being provided equal access to education, the experiences of teachers in providing differentiated instruction must be understood.

Research Sub-Question One

How do participants describe their attitudes and beliefs about differentiating instruction and assessment for English language learners? This question is important as the research indicates that teacher attitudes affect the academic achievement of ELLs due to teachers' lack of training, a poverty of cultural knowledge, and an absence of language learning knowledge (Pettit, 2011). These deficits may lead to discriminatory practices within the mainstream classroom toward ELLs (Pettit, 2011). It is important; therefore, to explore the attitudes of the participants towards the education of ELLs as part of their experiences. This information may provide an additional lens through which the data can be interpreted and is supported by the theoretical framework for this study.

Research Sub-Question Two

How do the participants describe their sense of self-efficacy for differentiating instruction and assessment for English language learners? The second sub-question guiding this study addressed the participant's sense of self-efficacy in differentiating instruction for ELLs. According to Klassen and Tze (2014), the establishment of an empirical link between measures of teaching effectiveness aids in understanding the psychological processes of effective teaching. Self-efficacy is a facet of teacher knowledge and preparation, and as such this "forms a highly personalized belief system that limits the teachers' understanding, judgment, and behavior"

(Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2017, p.79). Exploring the sense of self-efficacy held by the participants may provide information regarding effectiveness which may be linked to teacher experiences.

Research Sub-Question Three

How do the participants describe their experiences with providing socio-cultural learning opportunities for ELLs within the classroom? The third sub-question guiding this study addressed Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural theory that language and learning are interwoven, particularly for the ELL student and; therefore, opportunities for social learning situations are an integral part of the learning experience (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky (1986) also purports that thought and language, while they do not necessarily grow at equal measures, do intersect throughout the learning process and thus are interwoven and inextricable with one another.

Definitions

1. *Ableism* - a deficit approach to teaching students with disabilities, language deficits, or socio-economic challenges (Wolter, 2016).
2. *Attitude* - a favorable or unfavorable evaluative reaction toward something or someone, exhibited in one's beliefs, feelings, or intended behavior (Ajzen, 1991).
3. *Core Academic Subjects* - The state or the local education agency defines the term core academic subjects. The term may refer to English, reading or language arts, writing, science, technology, engineering, mathematics, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history, geography, computer science, music, and physical education, and any other subject (Camera, 2015).
4. *Culturally Responsive Teaching* - the ability of the teacher to be aware of the ways in which deep cultural knowledge affects learning (Hammond & Jackson, 2015).

5. *Differentiation* - “Differentiation is a philosophy, or a way of thinking about teaching and learning, rather than a single instructional strategy” (Tomlinson, 2000, as cited by Dixon, Yssel, McConnell & Hardin, 2014, p. 113). It is characterized by a response to learner needs either in the way content is presented (the content dimension of differentiation), the way content is learned (the process dimension), and the ways students respond to the content (the product dimension). All of these adaptations are designed to meet the individual characteristics of learners and to maximize their time in school (Dixon et al., 2014).
6. *English Language Learner* - Identified LEP students, per Title IX, Part A, Sec. 9101, who are receiving services in an English language learner program per Title III guidelines (Center for Public Education, 2007).
7. *Limited English Proficiency student (LEP)* - According to Title IX, Part A, Sec. 9101, the federal government defines an LEP as “a student who is aged 3 through 21; who is enrolled or preparing to enroll in an elementary school or secondary school; who was not born in the U.S. or whose native language is a language other than English; and who comes from an environment where a language other than English is dominant; or the LEP student may be a student who is a Native American or Alaska Native, or a native resident of outlying areas; and who comes from an environment where a language other than English has had a significant impact on the individual’s level of English language proficiency; Or a student who is migratory, whose native language is a language other than English, and who comes from an environment where a language other than English is dominant” (U.S. Department of Education, 2004, p.107).

8. *Self-efficacy* - Teacher self-efficacy is defined as “a judgment of his or her capabilities to bring about desired outcomes of student engagement and learning, even among those students who may be difficult or unmotivated” (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001, p. 783)
9. *SLIFE* - Students who have had limited or no education and literacy in their home language are referred to as L2 Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE) (Marshall & DeCapua, 2013).
10. *World Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA)* - Founded in 2002, the organization that would become WIDA began with three states involved in an EAG grant: Wisconsin (WI), Delaware (D), and Arkansas (A), hence the acronym WIDA. As other states joined, World-class Instructional Design and Assessment was created to fit the acronym. Recently WIDA decided to stop using the acronym definition. Now WIDA just means WIDA. The mission of WIDA is to “advance academic language development and academic achievement for children and youth who are culturally and linguistically diverse through high quality standards, assessments, research, and professional learning for educators” (WIDA). WIDA provides resources, training, and research to states that have joined the consortium.

Summary

Due to the rapidly increasing enrollment of ELL students in public education, there is a need to study the experiences of core academic subject teachers at the high school level in order to ensure this population is receiving equitable educational opportunity (Kanno & Kangas, 2014; Menken Kleyn, & Chae, 2012; Navarez-La Torre, 2012). According to current data, the nation will be comprised of a student population in which 25% of the students will be classified as

ELLs by the year 2025 (Kanno & Kanga, 2014; Menken et al., 2012; Nevarez-LaTorre, 2012). The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the experiences of core academic subject high school teachers with differentiating instruction and assessment for ELLs in central Virginia. The continued widening of the achievement gap for this group of students supports the purpose of this proposed study. The theoretical framework was based on the socio-cultural theory of Lev Vygotsky (1978) and the socio-cognitive learning theory of Albert Bandura (1989). This theoretical framework supports the need for teachers to differentiate instruction for diverse learner needs and particularly to address the linguistic needs of the learner to promote psychological development while addressing their own feelings of efficacy toward the task. Given the continuing widening of the achievement gap for ELLs, as compared to non-ELLs, it is imperative that the research should reflect the experiences of teachers as they work with ELLs in the core academic subject classroom. Chapter Two provides the theoretical framework for this study which is based on the work of Lev Vygotsky (1978) and Albert Bandura (1977, 1989). The chapter will also provide a review of the available literature that relates to this study and address the gap in the literature.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

The population of ELLs attending public schools is rapidly growing, and teachers are faced with differentiating instruction for a variety of linguistic and academic needs in order to provide equity in education for these students (Kanno & Kangas, 2014; Menken et al., 2012; Navarez-La Torre, 2012). The federal law is clear in establishing that ELL students must be provided equitable access to educational opportunities in mainstream classroom settings, using research-based and proven methodologies (Castañeda v. Pickard, 1981; Lau v. Nichols, 1974). Therefore, it is important to understand the experiences of secondary teachers providing instruction for ELLs in core academic classrooms to ensure that teaching practices are in alignment with current law and research (Parsons et al., 2013). It is hoped that a study of the shared experiences of these teachers will aid schools in improving best practices for the education of ELL students in order to close the achievement gap and provide them with more equitable academic opportunities.

The review of the literature in Chapter Two explores the theoretical framework for this study and is based on the socio-cultural theory of Lev Vygotsky (1978) and socio-cognitive theory of Albert Bandura (1989). Socio-cultural learning theory as defined by Vygotsky (1978) addresses the role of language in learning and was the primary theory guiding the research. Albert Bandura's (1989) socio-cognitive theory serves as a secondary framework with a focus on self-efficacy and addresses the role of teacher efficacy in working with ELL students as an integral part of their shared experiences. The connection between socio-cultural theory and instructional strategies will be discussed along with the role of efficacy in planning and implementing instructional strategies. The review of the related literature will address the

following key issues relevant to the phenomenon: (a) the increase in the population of ELLs in public schools, (b) the widening achievement gap for ELLs, (c) research on teacher sense of efficacy, (d) attitudes and beliefs toward teaching ELLs, (e) effective strategies for differentiating instruction for ELLs, (f) culturally and linguistically responsive teaching methods, (g) the impacts of failure on ELL's achievement and emotional functioning, and (h) the gap in the literature. The chapter closes with a summary of the review of the literature.

Theoretical Framework

The two theories used to explain this research are the socio-cultural theory by Vygotsky (1978) and the social cognitive theory by Bandura (1989). In both theories, learning is attributed to the social and cultural interaction between the teacher and the learner and, therefore, provides a foundation for exploring the experiences of select high school teachers in differentiating instruction and assessment for ELLs. Working with students who are acquiring a second language while learning content is rooted in socially constructed paradigms.

The socio-cultural theory stresses the importance placed on the role of language and culture in human learning and provides the overarching framework for this study (Vygotsky, 1978). At the core of the socio-cultural theory is the concept of mediation of the human mind (Lantolf, 2009). The mediation is described as the support and scaffolds provided by an adult or a more competent learner to the student (Lantolf, 2009). In the area of second language acquisition, this mediation can reform the mental system and affect one's self-concept (Lantolf, 2009). According to Vygotsky (1986), "The true direction of the development of thinking is not from the individual to the social, but from the social to the individual" (p. 35); therefore, children must be active participants in teaching and learning by being in a symbiotic relationship in which teachers both learn from the student and draw them into a deeper relationship with the cultural

world surrounding them (Vygotsky, 1978). Practice in language rich learning opportunities provides frameworks for cognition; thus, learning should take place through socially mediated learning activities (Turuk, 2008; Vygotsky, 1978). Since learning is based on social processes necessary for children to adopt the intellectual life of their mentors, they do not learn by being told what to know, but by a series of complex and dynamic relations involving developmental processes and learning activities (Vygotsky, 1978).

Differentiated learning activities are a necessary part of second language learning and are supported by socio-cultural theory. “Second language acquisition is a skill best learned in socially-mediated activities provided to meet the zone of proximal development of the learner” (Turuk, 2008, p. 258). As such, differentiated learning activities take into account the student’s zone of proximal development (ZPD), which is important to the framework of this study (Vygotsky, 1978). Simply put, it is more important to assess the ability of a child by what he can do with assistance rather than what he can do on his own (Vygotsky, 1978). This concept is at the core of language learning practices adopted throughout the U.S., and more importantly, in Virginia (WIDA, 2017). Once ZPD is established, children need the support of a more mature other in order to access their true potential (Vygotsky, 1978). In differentiation, by identifying the student’s ZPD, the teacher is able to plan and implement lessons that will lead to the next stage the learner is ready to progress to (Vygotsky, 1978).

Another facet of teaching is the teacher’s sense of self-efficacy in working with certain populations of learners. For this reason, Bandura (1989) incorporates self-efficacy as an integral part of learning, and behavior is a second and important theoretical framework for this research study. Similar to socio-cultural learning theory, social cognitive theory promotes cognition and social interaction as the fundamental basis for learning (Bandura, 1989). According to social

cognitive theory, people “contribute to their life path through their motivation, behavior, and development in a reciprocal network of interactions” (Bandura, 1989, p. 8). The social cognitive theory promotes that cognition and social interaction are the fundamental basis for learning. They are characterized by the basic capabilities of (a) symbolic capability, including cognitive schema and language acquisition, (b) vicarious capability, which opposes stimulus-response learning in that people are able to learn from one another, (c) observation, and abstract modeling, (d) forethought capability, (e) self-regulatory capability, (f) and self-reflective capability (including self-efficacy appraisal) (Bandura, 1989). It is the latter, self-efficacy which is the foremost determinant in human behavior, as it requires a sense of ability in order to determine whether a certain behavior is produced (Bandura, 1977).

For the teacher working with the ELL student, the sense of self-efficacy experienced by the teacher is a determinant of the initiation, the effort expended, and duration of a certain targeted behavior, that of differentiating lessons for the student and; therefore, an important framework for this study. According to Bandura (1977), the ability to persist in a behavior enhances feelings of self-efficacy in that behavior. Individuals will derive self-efficacy from an interaction of sources, including success, observation, persuasion, and their psychological states regarding the behavior (Bandura, 1977). There is a positive correlation between experiences and self-efficacy. The theory also addresses the cognitive processes involved in determining self-efficacy as resulting from enactive, vicarious, exhortative, and emotive sources (Bandura, 1977); therefore, this framework supports the investigation of the phenomenon of the experiences of core academic subject teachers working with ELL students.

The grounding of the research in these two theories may provide further insight into the application of socio-cultural theory and socio-cognitive theory in the experiences of the participants with the phenomenon. These theories may inform the practices of teacher education programs and ongoing staff development opportunities for educators working with ELLs, as well as improve the quality of education for language minority students; thus, improving their futures and narrowing the achievement gap.

Related Literature

ELLs are the fastest-growing population of public school students in the U.S. (Kanno & Kangas, 2014; Menken et al., 2012; Navarez-La Torre, 2012). At this point, ELLs represent 4.4 million of the K-12 student population with an expected growth rate to represent 25% of the population by the year 2025 (Kanno & Kangas, 2014; Menken et al., 2012; Navarez-La Torre, 2012). As this population grows, there continues to be data supporting a widening achievement gap for ELLs (Cadelle-Hemphill & Rahman, 2011; DelliCarpini & Alonso, 2014; Gleeson & Davison, 2016; Menken et al., 2012). As a result, ELLs are members of one group defined as vulnerable students with the widest achievement gap and a high school dropout rate of 58% (National Education Association, 2017). Nationally, 31% of ELLs score at the basic level in reading and math in the fourth and eighth grades, as compared to 72% of non-ELLs (Murphy, 2014). These scores are concerning and support the need to address what teachers of core academic subjects are experiencing while working with ELLs at the secondary level. It is important to understand what resources and strategies are in place in the high school setting to address this critical problem to narrow the gap and increase graduation rates.

Teacher Sense of Self-Efficacy

Given the fact that the majority of growth in U.S. school age population is attributed to immigrant children, teachers are finding that they are ill-prepared on the secondary level to meet the needs of linguistically diverse learners (Gleeson & Davis, 2014; Klassen & Tze, 2014; Santibañez & Gándara 2018; Tellez & Manthey, 2015). What makes secondary school challenging is the lack of time that high school teachers have to develop relationships with students in general due to the fragmented class schedules (Santibañez & Gándara 2018).

Much research on teachers' sense of efficacy in working with different populations of learners has been conducted (Dixon, Yssel, McConnell, & Hardin, 2014; Gleeson & Davis, 2014; Klassen & Tze, 2014; McFarlane & Woolfson, 2013; Tellez & Manthey, 2015). While the majority of the research has involved studies of inclusive settings for gifted and special education students (Dixon et al., 2014; McFarlane & Woolfson, 2013), there have been studies that included teacher efficacy for the instruction of ELLs (Gleeson & Davis, 2014; Klassen & Tze, 2014; Tellez & Manthey, 2015). All of the current research on teacher efficacy supports that teachers with a higher sense of efficacy exhibit behaviors associated with effective teaching toward a given population of learners (Dixon et al., 2014). Conversely, those with lower senses of efficacy are more reluctant to engage in differentiated instructional practices that are known to improve learning (Callaway, 2017; Klassen & Tze, 2014).

Early training on working with ELL students has been indicated as another determining factor in teacher efficacy (Tran, 2015). The research indicates that teachers with higher senses of efficacy received extensive training during their pre-service programs in methodologies for working with ELL students in the classroom as opposed to those who did not (Tran, 2015).

What remains unclear is whether it is the higher sense of efficacy that drives teachers to pursue

extensive training that increases the effectiveness or whether the training encourages higher senses of efficacy that increase performance (Tran, 2015).

While many factors affect ELL achievement, including the age when entering U.S. schools, level of proficiency, home language literacy, teacher training, and teacher efficacy, the lack of teacher efficacy for ELLs may be rooted in the lack of training teachers receive for language instruction and may be one of the strongest determinants as to the progress made by this population of learner (Fu & Wang, 2021). Only 29.5% of teachers of ELLs have language instruction training, which may be a high estimate due to the fact that teachers receiving training is not indicative of certification or endorsement in the area of language instruction (Johnson & Wells, 2017). Given that knowledge of first and second language acquisition and culturally responsive teaching methods is required of all classroom teachers of ELL students, the lack of these abilities is reflected in a disproportionate number of ELLs in special education classes and those dropping out of school (Cruze, Cota, & Lopez, 2019). Also of interest is a study by Regalla, Hutchinson, Nutta, and Ashtari, (2016) that determined that pre-service teachers often report high levels of self-efficacy for working with ELLs based on coursework until they are provided a simulation classroom experience. In this study, following the simulated experiences, the teacher candidates reported lower levels of self-efficacy, which indicated that training in and of itself is not as effective without real-world experience (Regalla et al., 2016).

The two themes of teacher self-efficacy for teaching ELLs and awareness of second language acquisition are interrelated (Tran, 2014). Teacher efficacy coupled with second language awareness dictates the instructional choices, student achievement, and ability to provide the proper language interventions when needed. It is this impact on instructional

decisions makes the study of efficacy of vital importance in a study of teacher's experiences working with ELL students in the high school academic classroom (Tran, 2014).

Interestingly, a teacher's perceived collective efficacy for English language development (ELD) instruction has been found to be higher than their individual efficacy and higher than measures of school-wide efficacy associated with perceived strength of programs and practices (Téllez & Manthey, 2015). These results may indicate that collective efficacy is a more important factor than individual teacher efficacy. There are challenges to these assumptions about efficacy, as there exists a belief that psychological characteristics are more of a determinant of teacher effectiveness than a sense of efficacy (Kirkpatrick & Johnson, 2014; Klassen & Tze, 2014; Robertson-Kraft & Duckworth, 2014).

Though the roles of psychological characteristics and teacher effectiveness have been studied extensively, there are criticisms of the results based on the self-reporting nature of the data collected (Klassen & Tze, 2014). Klassen and Tze (2014), in an effort to investigate the validity of the assumption, found a small, but significant, effect size between psychological characteristics and teaching effectiveness, but they found a much stronger effect size for the relationship between efficacy and teacher performance; thus, supporting the importance of the relationship between efficacy and effectiveness. Therefore, the role played by efficacy, both personal and collective is a core component of understanding the experiences of teacher experiences planning instruction and assessment for ELLs at the secondary level.

Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Teaching

An important element of working with diverse populations is the use of culturally and linguistically responsive teaching approaches (CLRT) (Averill, Anderson, & Drake, 2015; Hammond & Jackson, 2015; Lin, 2015; Reyes, 2014; Siwatu et al., 2017). Developed from

socio-cultural theory, these approaches have been found to improve teaching and learning for ELLs (Hammond & Jackson, 2015; Lin, 2015; Reyes, 2014; Siwatu et al., 2017). CLRT, in a whole-school approach, has been found to improve student perceptions of school climate, as well as student well-being, moral identity, and resilience (Read, Aldridge, Ala'i, Fraser, & Fozdar, 2015). Interestingly, a study by Calloway (2015) found that teachers with a higher sense of CLRT efficacy also had a higher sense of overall teacher efficacy; therefore, there are benefits to both the student and the teacher. Culturally responsive teaching is not multi-cultural education; instead, it is a frame of mind that aims to focus on equity while respecting diversity (Ebersole, Kanahale-Mossman, & Kawakami, 2016). It is important that classroom teachers are well versed in the difficulties inherent in learning a new language (Nieto, 2017). There is an expectation supported by federal laws that the transition from non-English speaker to proficient speaker should only take a year (Nieto, 2017). However, this is not the case and should be understood by all teachers of ELLs. In the culturally and linguistically responsive classroom, this is the knowledge that is apparent to the student and, therefore, provides them with the academic and socio-emotional support needed (Nieto, 2017).

Given the obstacles newcomer ELLs face in a public school in the U.S. in the form of statewide standardized exams and rigorous standards, it is important to understand that the narratives behind standards are essentially based on the dominant White culture (Ramirez & Jaffee, 2016). In this way, the newcomer is denied the use of his own rich lived experiences and multilingual literacies in the learning process (Averill et al., 2015; Ramirez & Jaffee, 2016; Ramirez & Jimenez-Silva, 2014). An essential component of CLRT for at-risk high school ELLs is a validating environment that explicitly recognizes students' cultural strengths, including their primary language, as important elements for literacy learning (Ebersole et al., 2016; Ramirez &

Jaffee, 2016; Ramirez & Jimenez-Silva, 2014). The environment of the validating classroom includes materials that are designed to incorporate the culture of the student through materials and interactions with other students and the teacher in order to enhance understanding and strengthen the language-learning environment for ELL students (Averill et al., 2015; Ramirez & Jimenez-Silva, 2014; Vescio, 2016).

The concept of CLRT is based on the premise of teachers advocating for ELLs with other academic subject teachers through collaboration, professional development, and implementation of instructional practices that are known to be successful in supporting literacy learning (Ramirez & Jimenez-Silva, 2014). In this manner, teachers can form an understanding of the strengths of the students in various disciplines and support each other in providing strategies to implement to enhance ELL understanding in other subjects (Averill et al., 2015; Ramirez & Jimenez-Silva, 2014; Vescio, 2016).

Teachers with higher senses of CLRT feel more confident to support all students in the learning process and improve student engagement (Hammond & Jackson, 2015; Taylor & Trumpower, 2014). These teachers not only feel confident in their own abilities, but they believe that culturally diverse students desire to learn and are entitled to equity in accessibility to learning (Hammond & Jackson, 2015; Taylor & Trumpower, 2014; Vescio, 2016). The CLRT classroom will provide information in an authentic, holistic, in-depth approach that incorporates multiple perspectives reflecting the global society that aims to engage all students (Taylor & Trumpower, 2014). In this way, the CLR teacher creates a community of learners founded on mutual respect and a willingness to take risks (Hammond & Jackson, 2015; Taylor & Trumpower, 2014; Vescio, 2016).

The equitable contexts identified by CLRT that support risk-taking for students focus on practices that promote relationships, relevance, and responsibility (Ebersole et al., 2016; Vescio, 2016). Vescio (2016) pointed out that equity is not the same as equality; equality seeks to provide all students with the same information, while equity provides an equal opportunity to access the same information, which is an important distinction in CLRT practices. The emphasis on equity supports the need for differentiation of instructional practices and materials for ELL students in order to allow for equitable access (Ebersole et al., 2016; Ramirez & Jaffee, 2016; Vescio, 2016).

Relationships are at the forefront of Maslow's hierarchy and are an important practice in CLRT; simply put, when a student feels safe, then learning can occur (Hammond & Jackson, 2015; Vescio, 2016). Suggested practices to help a student feel safe include knowing the student, the family, and the community (Vescio, 2016). As many cultures are collectivist in nature and consider all aspects of life communal, as opposed to the predominant U.S. culture of individuality this is an important factor to consider (Hammond & Jackson, 2015). Following the building of relationships, relevance can be provided by connecting the learning experiences to their actual lived experiences (Hammond & Jackson, 2015; Ramirez & Jimenez-Silva, 2014; Vescio, 2016). Relevance is aimed at targeting student assets, as opposed to their deficits (Ramirez & Jimenez-Silva, 2014; Vescio, 2016). In so doing, the barriers that culturally diverse students are constrained by are removed, and higher cognitive functioning is allowed (Hammond & Jackson, 2015; Ramirez & Jaffee, 2016; Ramirez & Jimenez-Silva, 2014; Vescio, 2016). Finally, the element of responsibility is required in CLRT; this is a commitment on the part of the teacher to provide the modifications and accommodations needed to allow for equitable opportunities for all students to learn (Ebersole et al., 2016; Vescio, 2016). One

aspect of this commitment is that of a willingness to receive and provide coaching and modeling opportunities with other teachers, as research has indicated that CLRT practices do not come naturally to all teachers (Averill, Anderson, & Drake, 2015). This practice has been shown to be effective when provided in informal and natural contexts as well as in structured staff development protocols (Averill et al., 2015).

Like differentiated teaching, CLRT is not a strategy but more a frame of mind that is most effective when it is adopted in a whole-school approach (Hammond & Jackson, 2015; Reyes, 2014). When teachers and administrators have strong foundations of professional knowledge, skills, and experiences as culturally and linguistically responsive educators, strong connections are made with students, families, and teachers, and student achievement increases (Hammond & Jackson, 2015; Lin, 2015; Read et al., 2015; Reyes, 2014). CLRT, also known more simply as culturally responsive teaching (CRT), has been found to increase student engagement and achievement as it affects the neuroplasticity of the brain by increasing synapse growth (Hammond & Jackson, 2015; Swanson, Bianchini, & Lee, 2013); therefore, it is important to explore the experiences of core academic subject teachers in the high school setting in reference to culturally and linguistically responsive teaching practices.

Attitudes and Beliefs Toward Teaching ELLs

Inextricably interwoven into efficacy beliefs is the role that attitude plays in human motivation and teacher knowledge (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2017; Gleeson & Davis, 2016; Pettit, 2011). According to Ajzen (1991), in the theory of planned behavior, behavior is linked to the production of behavior, and the research supports that there is a correlation between the two (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2017; Gleeson & Davis, 2016; Pettit, 2011; Siwatu, Putman, Starker-Glass & Lewis, 2017). It has also been shown that a teacher's personalized belief system influences

and limits the teacher's understanding, judgment, and behavior toward instruction which may lead to the development of discriminatory practices (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2017; Pettit, 2011). Furthermore, negative teacher attitudes have been found to have a negative effect on the academic achievement of ELLs (Kim & Garcia, 2014).

Negative attitudes toward staff development opportunities create an unwillingness to change practices, deficits in training, preparation, language acquisition knowledge, and cultural responsiveness (Gleeson & Davis, 2016; Pettit, 2011). These negative attitudes are also affected by the fact that teacher attitudes result from the fact that teachers, particularly on the secondary level, indicate that they develop their teaching styles, strategies, and models through personal experience as students, rather than from outside training (Gleeson & Davis, 2016; Pettit, 2011). Therefore, many teachers are reluctant to change practices despite professional development unless there is dissonance between their beliefs and practices (Gleeson & Davis, 2016). In contrast, according to Rubinstein-Avila and Lee (2014), despite the mostly positive feelings shared by secondary teachers of ELLs, they feel inadequate to differentiate for linguistic and academic needs. These teachers indicated that they did not feel they were able to effectively teach linguistically diverse students (Rubinstein-Avila & Lee, 2014). This study indicated that attitude might not be as important a factor as training in meeting the needs of ELL students, which is in contradiction to much of the available literature.

One study examined the role of positioning and agency in shaping the instructional practices of teachers of ELLs (Kayi-Aydar, 2014). Positioning is comprised of attitudes and beliefs about others and informs agency, the actions taken, or words spoken, to others (Kayi-Aydar, 2014). The findings indicated a definitive impact on the agency as derived by attitudes and beliefs that were reflected in the way teachers responded to and instructed ELL students

(Kayi-Adar, 2014); therefore, understanding attitudes and beliefs held by secondary core academic subject teachers is an important facet to be explored in order to improve instruction for ELLs.

Another study investigated the expectation of curriculum rigor for ELLs by high school teachers. The researchers in this particular study linked these expectations to teacher beliefs about the ability of and a lack of understanding as to how a language is learned (Murphy & Torff, 2019). There continues to be a belief held that ELLs should learn English prior to engaging in a more rigorous curriculum (Murphy & Torff, 2019).

Attitude and Personal Experiences of Teachers

Research supports that the attitude of the teacher toward the ELL student affects how well the student learns (Medina, Hathaway, & Pionieta, 2015; Zhang, 2017). Teachers who have had personal experiences in multicultural settings are proven to have more positive attitudes toward teaching diverse students (Medina et al., 2015; Zhang, 2017). Teacher preparation programs that incorporate study abroad programs or experiential immersion models are effective ways in which to incorporate lived experiences into the repertoire of the teacher (Medina et al., 2015; Zhang, 2017). According to the literature, teachers who have had experiences abroad prior to or during their teaching experience improve their cultural understanding, linguistic awareness, and have positive impacts on their affective and cognitive domains (Medina et al., 2015). Similarly, in a study of pre-service music teachers who were involved in a cultural immersion experience, the participants were found to develop more cultural and linguistic responsiveness (Zhang, 2017). The participants felt that their understanding, knowledge, and empathy for ELLs improved their ability to plan instruction that was more effective for this population of learners (Zhang, 2017).

In an effort to address these challenges, Bohon, McKelvey, Rhodes, and Robnolt (2017) invited volunteer teachers to participate in an immersion experience during a summer institute in which they were taught academic tasks in a foreign language by university faculty who designed lessons using ESL strategies. The results were strongly indicative that the teachers' knowledge and abilities for planning instruction for ELLs increased (Bohon et al., 2017). The research supports that multicultural personal experiences are vital to the formation of a teacher who is culturally and linguistically responsive and, therefore, is an aspect of teacher attitudes, beliefs, and sense of efficacy, and are valuable to the focus of the current study.

Effective Strategies for Teaching ELLs

At the core of a study on teacher experiences with the education of ELL students is an understanding of what are considered to be effective teaching strategies for this population. It was found that strategies that are rooted in socio-cultural and socio-cognitive learning theories are the most effective (Siwatu et al., 2017). These strategies include providing social contexts for learning, differentiation of process and product, experiential learning experiences, whole-school vocabulary approaches to language instruction, creating language objectives in connection with content objectives, activating transnational funds of knowledge, and scaffolding of instruction (Bohon et al., 2017; Calderón, 2016; Calderón & Minaya-Rowe, 2011; Dabach & Fones, 2016; Dixon et al., 2014; Lantolf, 2009; Tomlinson & Strickland, 2008; WIDA, 2017).

Social context. The best practices for second language learning include social contexts in which language is used to translate abstract processes into conceptual forms (Chandrasegaran, 2013; Kim, 2015; Lantolf, 2009; Lozano, 2014). For the English language learner, second language learning is not only about learning the rules of the language, but it is “a struggle of concrete socially constituted and always situated beings” participating “in the symbolically

mediated lifeworld of another culture” (Lantolf, 2009, p. 15). English language learners who work collaboratively are able not only to acquire oral language skills but also improve their writing (Kim, 2015; Murphey, Falout, Tetsuya, & Yoshifumi, 2014). When working with secondary ELL students on the research process, for example, Kim (2015) cited many supports that are effective. The first consideration should include an assessment of their technological abilities and understanding of search engines (Kim, 2015). It is also important that ELLs are allowed to use their native language to research information and be allowed to work with a language peer to discuss the information in order to synthesize what they have read before working on expressing their learning in English (Kim, 2015). In other words, it is not just about the structure of language, but it is also about the cultural significance of the language and learning that the ELL must master as well (Chandrasegaran, 2013, Lozano, 2014). For this reason, it is important to understand to what extent teachers of core academic subjects are cognizant of the socio-cultural nuances of language and learning. Learning, therefore, for the ELL, is about becoming a member of the culture as well as understanding the language (Fan-Wei, 2017; Hammond & Jackson, 2015; Siwatu, 2017). Activities for learning should include social contexts for including the ELL in both of these activities (Lantolf, 2009; Lozano, 2014).

Differentiation of instruction. Perhaps the most effective teaching strategy for the education of ELLs is that of differentiation (Tomlinson & Strickland, 2008). Differentiation is a process of manipulating the content, process, and product of instruction (Tomlinson & Strickland, 2008). Differentiation for ELLs is based on language proficiency; therefore, it may not require using all aspects of the process (Baecher et al., 2012). It is important in allowing ELL students access to the curriculum as required by federal and state law and that the content should remain constant, while the process and product are differentiated to account for linguistic

proficiency (WIDA, 2017). In this way, the rigor of the content is not compromised, and the cognitive function remains intact (WIDA, 2017). Another consideration is the positive effect of differentiation for ELL students with limited or interrupted formal education (Marshall & DeCapua, 2013). In a study of students with first-grade educations who were older children and young adolescents, differentiation was found to significantly increase reading comprehension (Niño Santisteban, 2014). Furthermore, research seeking correlations between age, home language, gender, and socio-economic status in the acquisition of English language, indications found that the most impactful issue related to the exiting of ELL services is one's age when first entering the U.S. school system therefore supporting the need for differentiation (Harshorne, Tenenbaum, & Pinker, 2018).

The extent to which students receive differentiation may be a cause of the lack of achievement seen in the statistics for ELL students and the widening of the achievement gap (Baecher et al., 2012; WIDA, 2017). In a study of pre-service teacher lesson plans, it was found that differentiation strategies for ELLs were addressed as learning disabilities, were lacking in scaffolding strategies, and did not address language learning or activation of schemata (Brown & Endo, 2017). While differentiation is considered a strategy, it is also a way of thinking about teaching and learning and is likely linked to the sense of efficacy of teachers; teachers with higher senses of efficacy are known to differentiate more for students (Dixon et al., 2014; Tomlinson, 2000, 2008); therefore, it is important to understand what experiences teachers of ELL students have with implementing differentiated learning activities in their secondary academic subject classrooms.

Metacognition. ELL students have been found to increase their reading comprehension skills and vocabulary knowledge when metacognition skills are explicitly taught by the teacher

(Gatcho & Hajan, 2019). The use of metacognitive strategies for language learning “can lead to more profound learning and improved performance, especially among learners who are struggling” (Anderson cited in Hernberg, 2020, p. 110). There is a correlation between successful language learners and well-developed metacognitive knowledge and strategies (Hernberg, 2020); therefore, explicit teaching of metacognitive strategies may improve the language development of ELL students.

Whole-school approaches. More schools are adopting a whole-school approach to ELL instruction in which content area teachers and ELL specialists share the planning and instructional load (Calderon, 2016; Haworth, McGee, & MacIntyre, 2015; Short, Fidelman, & Louguit, 2012). In the whole-school approach, both classroom teachers working with ELL and other specialists participate in ongoing professional development to create collaborative, differentiated learning opportunities throughout the year (Calderon, 2016). In a study by Frey, Fischer, and Nelson (2013), the whole-school approach to increase cross-content and cross-grade level rigor for studying the academic language by increasing the oral language interaction between and amongst students has been shown to be highly effective. In a district-wide commitment, the students were immersed in academic language throughout the school day in a manner that went beyond memorizing terms (Frey et al., 2013). Whole-school approaches come in many forms, such as Calderon’s Expediting Comprehension for English Language Learners (EXC ELL), Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocols (SIOP), and other sheltered instruction approaches (Calderon, 2016; Haworth et al., 2015; Short et al., 2012). In these approaches, all teachers prepare to teach academic language, reading comprehension and writing in their content areas to embed instructional support to English learners (Calderon, 2016; Haworth et al., 2015; Short et al., 2012).

Whole-school approaches not only include the participation of teachers and ELL specialists but also require the participation of administration as well (Haworth et al., 2015; Short et al., 2012). SIOP and other sheltered instruction programs have shown that the academic performance of ELL students improves as a result of administrator's decisions to provide staff development opportunities, differentiation of the curricula, and build awareness in curricula planning for ELLs (Calderon, 2016; Trevino-Calderon, & Zamora, 2014). This is achieved by informing school leaders' decisions about meaningful professional development, customizing curricula, building awareness among course developers in teacher preparation institutions about the needs of second language learners, developing current and meaningful program offerings, and promising delivery practices for teachers (Calderon, 2016; Trevino-Calderon et al., 2014). Though whole-school approaches have been shown to increase ELL achievement, there is evidence that there is no one-size-fits-all approach (Haworth et al., 2015). Whole-school approaches require an assessment of the needs particular to that school setting (Calderon, 2016; Haworth et al., 2015; Trevino-Calderon et al., 2014). Still, they are found to be highly effective overall in increasing student achievement for ELLs (Harrisonburg City Public Schools, 2014; Haworth et al., 2015; Short et al., 2012).

Collaboration between ELL specialists and classroom teachers. Collaboration is perhaps the best element of the SIOP approach and is a very successful strategy for the improvement of ELL student achievement in many other models. Research supports the effectiveness of collaborative environments regarding the improvement of academic achievement for ELLs (Bottia, Moller, Mickelson, Stearns, & Valentino, 2016; Wilcox, Lawson, & Angelis, 2015). What is of importance in this model is that the collaborators must be strong in their understanding of the content to be taught or the model will be ineffective

(Nieto, 2017). Collaboration between ELL specialists and classroom teachers can take on many forms. The time needed for successful collaboration has to be supported, however, by institutional practices that support the use of the strategy (Brown & Endo, 2017). Proper collaboration models allow for co-planning, team building, peer observations, and brainstorming activities (Brown & Endo, 2017). Research supports the effectiveness of collaborative environments on the improvement of academic achievement for ELLs (Wilcox et al., 2015). It is important to this research to determine to what extent core content teachers are provided with adequate supports to collaborate with ELL specialists.

Language and content objective alignment. Simply understanding social English is not enough (Franquiz & Salinas, 2013). In order for ELL students to be successful academically, they must be explicitly taught the academic language of the subject along with the concepts and skills (Franquiz & Salinas, 2013; Jung & Brown, 2016). Teachers must be able to identify the impact of language on learning and create clear, observable, and measurable objectives embedded into content objectives during lesson planning (Freeman, 2013; Jung & Brown, 2016; Hernandez, Thomas, & Schuemann, 2012; WIDA, 2017). An interesting approach utilizing student language objectives was studied in which a school-wide approach was incorporated to revise content materials for ELLs in order to allow them access to content at their linguistic level (Hernandez et al., 2012). Working using backward design methods for instructional planning, the staff first produced modified assessments and then planned engaging activities to match the academic skills and processes required while embedding language objectives with content objectives (Hernandez et al., 2012).

The Commonwealth of Virginia adopted the WIDA resources and language assessment program as the methodology of instruction for ELLs throughout the state. As a result, teachers

are expected to include language objectives in lesson plans for ELLs (Freeman, 2013). In order to support this expectation, the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) provides educators with free training on WIDA methodology, which utilizes research-based approaches to differentiate instruction for language proficiency (Freeman, 2013; WIDA, 2017). In these trainings, educators of ELLs are taught to use language proficiency levels in the areas of reading, writing, listening, and speaking to provide the appropriate modifications, as well as supports to materials and teaching strategies to promote the development of proficiency in English and the acquisition of content knowledge simultaneously.

It is important to note that these strategies are reliant upon the use of social interaction within the classroom to promote language development and are not effective in isolation (Calderon, 2016; WIDA, 2017). WIDA trains educators using a systematic planning approach by providing examples for every grade and content strand in a well-formatted resource guide (WIDA, 2017). Since acquiring academic literacy is at the core of academic success (Franquiz & Salinas 2013, WIDA 2017), the extent to which this is being implemented in high schools in Central Virginia is an important focus on the phenomenon of this study.

Working memory strategies. An additional critical component of L2 acquisition is working memory (Hummel & French, 2016; Verhagen & Leseman, 2016). According to current schools of thought, working memory contains a critical sub-component called *phonological memory*, which is responsible for processing speech-based material (Hummel & French, 2016; Verhagen & Leseman, 2016). Differences in individual phonological memory capacity are a determinant factor in both L1 and L2 acquisition (Hummel & French, 2016; Verhagen & Leseman, 2016). Strategies for improving the language proficiency for ELLs include strategies for increasing working memory such as computerized games, memory match

activities, and other activities which target improving the phonological memory capacity of ELL students (Hummel & French, 2016; Verhagen & Leseman, 2016).

Bilingual education programs. One strategy that is effective for ELL instruction is that of bilingual language programs. In bilingual education, the student is instructed in content in both Spanish and English and develops competency in both languages simultaneously (Arellano, Liu, Stoker, Slama, 2018; Chin, 2015; Kheder, 2019). The use of bilingual education programs allows the student to continue to develop their home language and literacy skills and allows ELL students to learn new content while acquiring English and not fall behind due to limited English proficiency (Chin, 2015; Wahyuni, 2019). A benefit of this approach is that it also develops home language literacy which is closely linked with the ability to acquire a second language (Arellano et al., 2018; Chin, 2015; Macswan, Thompson, Rolstad, McAlister, & Lobo, 2017; Wahyuni, 2019).

There are many advantages to bilingual education such as increased cognitive functioning (as measured by higher IQ scores), cultural competency, increased listening skills, and academic success, as well as expanded communication skills (Chin, 2015; Kheder, 2019; Wahyuni, 2019). Bilingual children develop brain functions in the areas of divergent thinking, analyzing language, metalinguistic awareness, and nonverbal communication skills (Kheder, 2019; Macswan et al., 2017; Wahyuni, 2019). Further advantages of bilingual education can be found in an increase in relational skills on the part of the bilingual student with immediate and extended family and the community (Arellano et al., 2018; Kheder, 2019). Bilingual individuals are also more adroit at creating relationships with members of other ethnic and nationality groups (Kheder, 2019; Wahyuni, 2019).

There are some negative effects believed to be a result of bilingual education programs. One concern is that by limiting the time spent on English acquisition, it may take longer for the student to develop the second language proficiency (Chin, 2015). Program implementation may be limited due to the of availability of teachers who are bilingual and certified to teach content and a lack of materials in all languages needed (Chin, 2015). The theoretical foundation on which bilingual education is founded includes the idea that content and language are interrelated (Wahyuni, 2019). Academic knowledge cannot be developed without language to process and evaluate the knowledge; therefore, learning a second language can be motivating and rewarding or frustrating and difficult (Wahyuni, 2019). A further concern regarding the use of bilingual programs is in their segregate nature. By separating ELLs from the mainstream classroom, a separate but equal mentality is promoted, which is in direct violation of civil rights and the Lau Laws (Chin, 2015). There is also the concern that ELLs will suffer confusion in learning the second language due to what is termed limited capacity theories, which purport that the brain is limited in its capacity for language learning (Kheder, 2019). However, this has been found to have no real foundation in research (Kheder, 2019).

Despite the obvious benefits of bilingual education programs, it is not widely used in Virginia. What is vital for the success of this type of program is for teachers to have a strong understanding of the subject matter taught and be fluent in the home language of the students (Chin, 2015; Pando & Aguirre-Munoz, 2020). This would require that the teacher be not only bilingual but also endorsed in the subject taught. For Virginia, bilingual education is not mandated (Code of Virginia § 22.1-212.1); therefore, many districts find they do not have the resources to implement a program and rely on English-only immersion with targeted ELL support. Ultimately, while bilingual education programs are effective, particularly for students

with limited formal education, the most effective strategies continue to be differentiated assignments, experiential learning, and inquiry design as opposed to many other approaches, including bilingual programs (Nieto, 2017; Pando & Aguirre-Munoz, 2020). Despite the benefits of learning in their home language, students who receive bilingual materials and access to teachers who speak their home language do not benefit in acquiring English and learning without the instructional supports that are proven effective for all learners (Nieto, 2017).

Other successful strategies for ELLs. Success for ELL students has been found when teachers access the transnational funds of knowledge (TFK) brought to the classroom by the ELL student (Dabach & Fones, 2016). The foundation of TFK is that the student's past experiences are related to future learning which aligns with Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory (1978). This approach is highly effective when working with students with limited or interrupted formal education ELL students, as they need to connect new learning to known constructs (Marshall & DeCapua, 2013). Teachers using TFK have found increased achievement not only for ELLs, but for all students in the classroom (Dabach & Fones, 2016).

Another successful strategy has been in the use of arts integration to raise achievement for ELL students (Ingraham & Nuttall, 2016). Such programs have been shown to increase collaboration among students and staff, as well as raise confidence levels and school pride among ELL students (Ingraham & Nuttall, 2016). These programs align with socio-cultural theory as they address areas of strength and increase collaboration, both fundamental aspects of socio-cultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978).

Gaming has been used effectively to improve ELLs understanding of the language and content (Hashim et al., 2019). Games such as Socrative, PowerPoint Challenge Game, and Kahoot have been shown to raise student's retention of vocabulary and content knowledge

significantly when used with appropriate supports for ELLs (Hashim et al., 2019). It is important to note that the significance of supports is necessary to ensure participation on the part of the ELL.

Finally, the use of scaffolding as a facet of differentiation is an essential part of ELL support. Through equitable grading of written assignments based on linguistic proficiency, ELL student writing has been shown to improve dramatically as one is assessed at one's appropriate linguistic ability level (Siegel et al., 2014). Providing students with realia, visual supports, graphic organizers, and simplified texts are also ways in which content learning can be scaffolded to support language acquisition (WIDA, 2017). These are also in alignment with socio-cultural learning and the zone of proximal development. The learner must be supported and mediated from one stage of proficiency to the next by the support of the teacher who understands what the student can do and when he or she is ready to move on to another level (Vygotsky, 1978). The extent to which these strategies are utilized in the secondary content classroom is important to the present study.

Lack of Access and the Impacts of Lack of Achievement on Emotional Functioning

Emotional functioning plays an integral part in language learning (Pishghadam, Zabetipour, & Aminzadeh, 2016). According to major theories of emotion, the relationship between emotion and cognition is a dynamic system that includes the influences of society and culture (Oxford, 2015). The role of emotions is described as being so vital that it determines the ability of a student to participate in certain activities that will increase language learning (Pishghadam et al., 2016). The role of emotions in second language acquisition has not been widely accepted for the importance it plays for the learner, but the negative effects are illustrated in the lack of success that students encounter in their efforts to achieve academically and

linguistically (MacIntyre & Vincze, 2017). Freud defined anxiety as “an unpleasant affective state or condition, similar to dread or nervousness, with physiological and behavioral manifestations” (as cited in Sener, 2015, p. 875). It is this state of anxiety that produces negative effects on the ability of the ELL student to fully attend to activities that will increase his or her mastery of the English language and academic content (Pishghadam et al., 2016).

The importance of studying the phenomenon of teacher experiences working with ELLs at the secondary level can be found in the widening of the achievement gap for this population as well as in the research regarding the negative impacts of lack of achievement on the emotional functioning of ELLs (Kanno & Kangas, 2014; Kruger, Li, Kimble, Ruah, Stoianov, & Krishnan, 2016). ELLs face institutional barriers that, though they may be unintentional, are still debilitating (Kanno & Kangas, 2014). ELLs who do not receive appropriate differentiated learning and assessment opportunities may experience serious, long-term, negative, emotional, motivational, and psychological effects (Kruger et al., 2016).

What permeates the lack of access for ELLs and affects their growing achievement gap as compared to other populations of learners continues to be the level of academic language required at the secondary level and the attitudes of teachers toward the appropriate amount of rigor for ELL students (Murphy & Torff, 2019; Santibañez & Gándara 2018). For ELL students entering the U.S. at the secondary level, teachers are limited in the time they have to build relationships with students in general, and most believe that a less rigorous curriculum is more appropriate for this student population (Murphy & Torff, 2019; Santibañez & Gándara 2018).

As a result, it has been found that it is difficult for English language learners to gain admittance into advanced placement and honors classes on the secondary level; therefore, many ELL students simply believe that these courses are not an option for them and they do not

attempt to enroll (Kanno & Kangas, 2014). Other institutional barriers are developed according to the course sequences established in high schools for the education of ELLs (Hammond, 2015; Kanno & Kangas, 2014). Through the use of sheltered instruction programs, ELLs are tracked through ELL courses and/or remedial general education courses and denied the opportunity to enroll in courses outside of the track that they entered (Kanno & Kangas, 2014). Even when they are academically successful, there is a belief that they are not equipped with the necessary skills to participate in higher-level academic courses and, therefore, are not granted access (Kanno & Kangas, 2014; Kruger et al., 2016).

Repeated failure on high-stakes testing has negative impacts on the effort, self-perceptions, and emotional functioning of ELLs as well (Kruger et al., 2016). Deep depression and extreme anger have been noted in many ELLs that continue after exiting the secondary school setting (Kruger et al., 2016). These negative impacts continue into their adult years for many of these students and affect their ability to set goals, and impact their sense of self-regard (Kanno & Kangas, 2014; Kruger et al., 2016). Furthermore, many of these students share a sense of pointlessness in attempting to improve their lives post-secondary education (Kruger et al., 2016).

Transnational students often have feelings of shame and loss shared by other cultural groups (Siefert & D'Amico, 2015). One case study of an African American female teacher who was born in the segregated south indicated that cultural divides are important in recognizing the negative impacts of education on ELL students (Siefert & D'Amico, 2015). In this study, the teacher noted the extent that the displaced feelings of immigrant children are similar to those of the African American students and teachers. "I can be home and be 'ghetto Ellie' and come to school and be professional teacher," (Siefert & D'amico, 2015, p. 740) much in the way that

culturally diverse children must learn to adapt to the dominant school culture. Transnational children are uprooted from their home countries and leave behind the familiarities of their cultural, language, and social norms, and are placed into an alien environment in which they do not have the understandings of the dominant culture (Winstead & Wang, 2017). These children are then expected to learn academic content and the new language rapidly in order to assimilate into the culture (Siefert & D'Amico, 2015; Winstead & Wang, 2017). In most schools in the U.S., the first language support is removed, and they are left to struggle to make meaning of their experiences on their own (Siefert & D'Amico, 2015; Winstead & Wang, 2017). Similar to the experiences of many African Americans, transnational immigrant students suffer feelings of shame and loss as they experience negative impacts from their educational experience (Siefert & D'Amico, 2015; Winstead & Wang, 2017). It is important to investigate the extent to which participants in the current study understand these feelings of loss and shame and are able to support students as they learn the language and social norms of the dominant culture while retaining pride in their own home language and culture.

While ELLs are resilient in many ways, they often do not recognize the obstacles they are up against until it is too late (Kim & Garcia, 2014). In one qualitative study of long-term ELL students in Texas (those in the program for seven or more years), it was found that despite repeated academic failure and struggles to learn English, these students viewed school positively (Kim & Garcia, 2014). While this may, on the surface, appear to be a positive outcome, it, in fact, may be signaling institutionalized racism in which they are being conditioned to accept failure as their lot (Hammond & Jackson, 2015). Students should not come to school expecting to fail, nor should they leave secondary school without the proper skills and knowledge needed to be successful in life. For this reason, it is of great importance to study what is happening in

the core academic subject classroom on the secondary level from the viewpoint of the teacher and give voice to the barriers that affect the lack of achievement for this population of learners.

While much research has been conducted on the phenomenon of teaching and learning for ELLs, there is a gap in the literature involving the experiences of high school academic subject teachers in central Virginia who work with ELL students. Much is known about teachers' sense of efficacy, but there has been little extrapolation of that research into what is actually happening to affect that efficacy for the teacher working with ELL students. The role of attitude in efficacy and intention is addressed but not specified for the teacher of the ELL at the high school level. It is important to understand what teachers are experiencing and feeling in order to offer improved educational opportunities for this population, to address the problem of a rising drop-out rate, and narrow the widening achievement gap.

Culturally and linguistically responsive teaching practices are well researched as to their positive impact on the education of students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds; however, there is little research on the extent that these practices are being promoted in high schools in central Virginia. Similarly, the attitudes, beliefs, and personal experiences of teachers of ELLs at the secondary level need to be explored in order to allow these educators a voice in the discussion of how to best teach students with a variety of linguistic needs. Through analyzing these experiences, this study may add to the knowledge base the strategies and practices that are most beneficial and what may be harmful to the ELL in today's secondary classroom, an area that is lacking as well in the literature. The hope is to narrow the gap in the literature with more personalized experiences of teachers who are actively working with high school ELLs.

What is known is that effective strategies, or best practices, are available and well researched for working with diverse populations. However, many teachers lack a sense of efficacy in utilizing these strategies for a variety of reasons. Despite the efforts of the state to provide training in the resources and strategies provided through membership in the WIDA consortium, there is no detailed research into how these are being implemented into the high school curriculum and planning of the core academic subject teacher. It is also unclear to what extent classroom teachers are aware of these approaches and are encouraged to adopt them.

Perhaps the most important aspect of teaching ELLs on the secondary level is that of the lack of opportunity and the widening achievement gap experienced by this population. The literature is clear that there are serious and long-term negative impacts on ELL students because of repeated academic failure. Ultimately, this is a serious sociological issue for the state as they are leaving school without the education needed to be active participants in society.

The law is clear that ELL students are to be provided with research-based instructional practices that will allow them equity in education while acquiring the English language. However, the literature does not explore the reasons are that teachers are having difficulty meeting the needs of these learners and to what extent they recognize their legal obligations. Allowing secondary academic subject teachers a voice in describing what they experience in this setting may provide insight into the ways that the educational system can improve the experiences of ELL students at the secondary level.

Summary

In summary, the literature addresses what is known about the phenomenon of teaching English learners. The theoretical framework guiding this study is Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural theory and Bandura's (1989) socio-cognitive learning theory that emphasizes the social

aspects of learning and self-efficacy as a vital element to the instruction of ELLs. The population of ELL students is continuing to rise, and these students require specific learning opportunities to target core academic subject learning and linguistic growth in accordance with federal and state law.

A growing achievement gap and a higher drop-out rate for ELL learners is of concern to educators and is important to the focus of this study. The rate this gap is growing based on the growth in the population of English learners in the U.S. system is of grave concern and needs to be investigated for solutions. Current research has explored teacher sense of efficacy in working with ELLs, and their attitudes and beliefs, which are linked to teacher expertise and has found it lacking teacher attitudes and beliefs have been studied as to their effect on instruction, and a discussion of successful strategies for teaching ELLs informs the reader about practices currently supported in the research. Culturally and linguistically responsive teaching approaches have been researched and found to be effective in increasing achievement for diverse populations of learners and should be considered when studying the experiences of teachers working with ELLs (Dixon, Yssel, McConnell, & Hardin, 2014; Gleeson & Davis, 2014; Klassen & Tze, 2014; McFarlane & Woolfson, 2013; Tellez & Manthey, 2015).

Sadly, research also indicates that the effects of repeated academic failure have been found to be highly detrimental for ELLs continuing long after they leave high school. What is missing from the research is a voice from high school teachers describing what they are experiencing in planning and implementing differentiated lessons and assessments for ELLs. This study may provide more insight into the phenomenon to help prepare teachers to increase the achievement for ELLs, strengthen ELL programs, and support the application of socio-cultural and socio-cognitive theories in teacher education programs.

Chapter Three will provide the reader with an explanation of, and the foundation for, the use of phenomenological research methodology in this study. The chapter will provide an in-depth explanation of all facets of the research process. One thing that is clear in the research is that the most effective strategies continue to be differentiated assignments, experiential learning, and inquiry design, as opposed to many other approaches, including bilingual programs. However, teachers feel unprepared to use these methods with ELLs for reasons that include lack of training, time, beliefs about teaching linguistically diverse students, and an understanding of language development.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the experiences of core academic subject high school teachers with differentiating instruction and assessment for ELLs in central Virginia. Chapter Three will provide the reader with the research design and the research questions. The chapter will also explain the setting, participants, and procedures followed in conducting the research. The role of the researcher will be discussed along with a detailed description of the data collection methods using face-to-face, audio-taped, long interviews, the Teaching English Language Learners Scale (TELLS), and document analysis. Chapter Three provides the reader with an understanding of the types of data that were collected, the strategies utilized for data collection, and the analysis procedures in order to ensure replication of the study. Finally, the chapter provides information on the methods used to ensure trustworthiness, credibility, dependability, confirmability, transferability, and ethical considerations in the proposed research study.

Design

To study the experiences of core academic subject high school teachers with differentiating instruction and assessment for English learners, this research was conducted using qualitative research methods. The general research design was phenomenological, and the specific design was transcendental phenomenology. In studying post-positivist paradigms, qualitative research is the most effective approach as post-positivist researchers believe, like positivists, that there is a singular reality; however, they differ in that the post-positivists seek to elicit the participants' view of reality; thus, making the qualitative approach more appropriate

than a quantitative design for this study (Creswell, 2013; Teherani, Martimianakis, Stenfors-Hayes, Wadhwa, & Varpio, 2015).

Qualitative research is defined as a process based on assumptions that are evaluated through a theoretical lens (Creswell, 2013). The focus of qualitative research is to inquire into the meaning individuals attribute to a problem or issue in their natural settings (Creswell, 2013; Teherani et al., 2015). The researcher serves as a key instrument in the qualitative process, which, in addition to participant meanings and natural settings, includes the following characteristics: inductive analysis of multiple data sources, emergent design, and the production of a holistic textual account (Creswell, 2013; Teherani et al., 2015).

Phenomenology is an appropriate qualitative design for this study as the researcher seeks to derive knowledge and “grasp the structural essences of experience” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 35) of the participants with the phenomenon using a deductive, scientific methodology. The use of the post-positivist interpretive framework to inform the philosophical assumptions of ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodology is also appropriate for the research design chosen (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994).

Beginning as a philosophical movement, phenomenology has evolved to include approaches to qualitative research methodology (Kafle, 2011; Moustakas, 1994). As a set of philosophical doctrines, phenomenology shares the ontological assumption, what the world is like, and the epistemological assumption, how it is known, coupled with strategies for “the descriptive management of the mental entities relating to such a world” (Kafle, 2011, p. 182) in order to capture experiential essences as knowledge in order to reconstruct reality.

As a research design, the purpose of phenomenology is for the researcher to study the nature and meanings of phenomena by focusing on the way things appear through “experience or

in our consciousness” to “provide a rich textured description of lived experience” (Kafle, 2011, p. 181). It is more simply defined as a qualitative method that focuses on human experiences and the way in which meaning is derived from those experiences (Creswell, 2013).

Common characteristics of the different approaches to phenomenology are description, reduction or bracketing, essences, and intentionality (Kafle, 2011; Moustakas, 1994).

Description is the aim of phenomenology. This is done using the process of reduction that includes bracketing of the phenomena in order for the reality to be revealed as the essence of the individual’s experience (Kafle 2011; Moustakas, 1994). Intentionality refers to the total meaning of the experience as it is analyzed by the researcher (Kafle, 2011; Moustakas, 1994).

Phenomenology is the most important method for exploring phenomena of pedagogical significance and; therefore, is appropriate for this study (Kafle, 2011). Through the research, this researcher intends to explore the individual experiences of the participants in teaching ELL students in mainstream content classrooms; thus, phenomenology is the most appropriate research design.

Phenomenology is divided into three classifications, including transcendental, hermeneutic, and existential (Creswell, 2013). Transcendental phenomenology, based on the philosophical movement initiated by Husserl (1859-1938) and later interpreted by Moustakas (1994), is the original form of the design and the one chosen by this researcher (Kafle, 2011). Transcendental phenomenology is based on the premise that personal prejudices can be suspended through epoché, or bracketing, in order to provide a state of pure consciousness during the reduction process (Creswell, 2013; Kafle, 2011; Moustakas, 1994). It is the concept of epoché that sets transcendental phenomenology apart from hermeneutic and existential approaches and makes this the appropriate design for this study. The researcher in this study has

significant experience with the phenomenon of teaching ELLs at the high school level and needs to set aside her own experiences in order to allow the experiences of the participants to reveal the essential knowledge of the shared experience which is the purpose of transcendental phenomenology.

Research Questions

This study seeks to explore the lived experiences of participants in teaching ELLs in the academic content high school classroom. The following research questions will guide this study:

RQ1: How do select high school academic content teachers describe their experiences differentiating instruction and assessment for ELLs in central Virginia?

SQ1: How do participants describe their attitudes and beliefs about differentiating instruction and assessment for ELLs?

SQ2: How do the participants describe their sense of self-efficacy for differentiating instruction and assessment for ELLs?

SQ3: How do the participants describe their experiences with providing socio-cultural learning opportunities for ELL's within the classroom?

Setting

This study took place at a high school located in central Virginia. The high school (grades 9-12) is in a rural and emerging suburban county with two small towns. Enrollment in the school is approximately 1550 students. The rationale for selecting this school is that it has a diverse population of ELLs.

Blueberry High School (BHS) is a 9-12 comprehensive high school located in Beautiful District in central Virginia. The district has two small towns, and the demographics of the area range from small farms to grand estates as well as suburban enclaves. The only high school in

the district, the demographics of BHS are as follows: total enrollment: 1,550, 51% male, 49% female, 18.0% Black, 5% Hispanic, 69.0% White, 6% two or more races, 3% other race, 10.4% LEP, 32% economically disadvantaged, 21% students with disabilities, and 14.4% gifted (Beautiful Public School District, 2017). The administration at the district level is structured with one superintendent and one assistant superintendent, an elementary and a secondary director of instruction, a district-wide literacy specialist, and a STEM specialist. At the site level, the school administration is comprised of one principal and three assistant principals. The school operates on a department-level leadership organization where the department heads and administration meet regularly to make instructional decisions. Teachers share in the decision-making through their department representation.

Participants

The purposeful criterion-based sample was drawn from one high school in central Virginia described in the setting section of this proposal. Purposeful sampling is the most common sampling method in qualitative research and allows the researcher to locate participants with rich experiences with the phenomenon to be studied (Creswell, 2015). For this study, the participants had to have at least one year of experience teaching ELL students in academic subject classrooms on the high school level; therefore, the criterion was established. The use of criterion sampling was appropriate to ensure that the participants met certain criteria in their experiences (Creswell, 2015). Criterion sampling was conducted by contacting the principal to obtain permission to email a request to participate to all teachers in the school and asking them to complete a survey of their demographics, including years of teaching experience and experience levels working with ELLs (see Appendix E). Purposeful criterion-based sampling is appropriate for phenomenological qualitative research as participants are chosen for their relevance to the

“research question, analytical framework, and explanation or account being generated” (Schwandt, 2015, p. 277) by the research.

Participant selection took place until maximum variation, and data saturation was achieved with between five to 25 participants (Creswell, 2013). Maximum variation in qualitative research sampling is the inclusion of participants to provide for heterogeneity in the sample (Creswell, 2013). Since the purpose of the research study was to represent the population, including maximum variation, it was important to ensure the diversity of the sample (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). Data saturation is defined simply as the state when the research has achieved “no new data, no new themes, no new coding, and ability to replicate the study” (Fusch & Ness, 2015, p. 1409). In phenomenological research, data saturation and maximum variation are accomplished using the epoché and probing interview questions (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

Drawing from the pool of high school core academic subject teachers with at least one full year of experience teaching ELLs, the expected sample size was between 10 and 12 participants; ten participants were finally obtained. This is an adequate number as the recommended sampling size for phenomenological qualitative research is between 10 and 15 participants (Creswell, 2013). Yet, ensuring that the participants had rich experiences to share was actually more important in qualitative research for data saturation than the number of participants (Fusch & Ness, 2015). For purposes of this study, the selection of teachers who have experience with the phenomenon using purposeful criterion-based sampling and the creation of probing research questions allowed for data saturation to be attained.

Demographics for participants are as follows: four males and six females with a predominant ethnicity of White/Caucasian, with one participant also of Native American descent, participated in the study. All participants were native to the U.S. The average years of

teaching in the classroom was nine years, with five having eight to 16 years of experience, four had 16-25, and one with four to eight years. All participants but two currently had ELLs in their classes. The participants all held bachelor's degrees, with six also having a master's degree; five also held additional endorsements in various areas.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Age	Gender	Race/Ethnicity	Education	Years of Experience	Years Working with ELLs	Currently Working with ELLs
56 and over	Male	White	Bachelors, Master	16-25	2	Yes
36-45	Female	White	Bachelors, Master	8-16	5	Yes
46-55	Female	White	Bachelors	16-25	7	Yes
26-35	Male	White	Bachelors, Master	8-16	4	No
46-55	Female	White	Bachelors, Master	16-25	16	No
46-55	Male	White	Bachelors, Professional Diploma in Curriculum Development	4-8	4	Yes
46-55	Female	White	Master	16-25	10	Yes
46-55	Female	White	Bachelors	8-16	16	Yes
56 and over	Male	White/Native American	Master	8-16	13	Yes
46-55	Female	White	Bachelors	8-16	12	Yes

Procedures

This section provides the reader information regarding the procedures to conduct this transcendental phenomenological study of high school teachers' experiences in differentiating instruction and assessment for ELLs. This section discusses approvals needed, the participant selection processes, the role of the researcher, data collection methods, and analysis procedures.

The first steps in the procedure for conducting this research was to defend this proposal and then to obtain Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from Liberty University (see Appendix A). Once IRB approval was obtained, the site was contacted to obtain the appropriate approval from the superintendents and administrators to proceed. After confirming district approval, the site was contacted to elicit participants for the study. Purposeful criterion-based sampling was utilized to obtain participants who had experience teaching ELLs in a core academic subject class at the high school level for at least one year. This was achieved through requesting permission to send an email invitation to all teachers at the school, which included a demographic and experience level survey. Criterion-based sampling is essential to phenomenology as it is necessary to have participants who have experienced the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

Obtaining participants was the next step in the research process. According to Moustakas (1994), it is essential that the participants have experienced the phenomenon, are interested in understanding its nature, are willing to participate in lengthy, audio-taped interviews (one or two). It is also important that the participants are agreeable to having the data published in a dissertation; therefore, each participant was contacted via email informing them of the nature of the research and inviting them to participate (Moustakas, 1994).

Those who responded and were interested in contributing participated in a 10 to 20-

minute pre-interview to ensure the participant understood the nature of the research and was willing to participate in all phases of the research and to introduce them to the researcher to begin building rapport (Moustakas, 1994). Written informed consent was obtained shortly thereafter via personal delivery by the researcher. For demographic purposes, a survey of educational background and demographic information was administered via a Google form (see Appendix C).

The third step in the research process involved preparing for data collection by developing the interview questions for the one-on-one interviews. The questions were designed to build rapport, put the participants at ease, and explore the experiences of the participants with the phenomenon. Pilot interviews were conducted with a small sample outside of the research setting to further ensure the clarity of questions and wording prior to actual data collection. The questions were then revised and refined as needed. Prior to the actual data collection and following the development of the interview questions, experts in the field were contacted to review the questions for clarity and purpose and to ensure that there were sufficient questions to elicit the experiences of the participants and to address the research questions.

Data collection then proceeded in the manner that follows. Prior to participating in interviews, the Teaching English Language Learners Scale (TELLS) survey of teaching efficacy was administered via a Google form. The responses to the TELLs were then analyzed before the interviewing process began. Afterward, the interviews took place as semi-structured face-to-face interviews that were audiotaped using a digital voice recorder for both interviews and the focus group. The interviews took place in an environment of the participant's choosing, either on campus or off, and in a private, comfortable environment where the participant felt safe to speak freely. Document analysis was conducted in conjunction with interview data collection. The

final data were collected from an audiotaped focus group discussion using a digital voice recorder and at a time and location that was agreed on by the participants at each site, either on or off-campus, in an environment where the participants felt comfortable to freely express themselves.

Data analysis was continual throughout the data collection process. As interviews and focus groups are completed, either the researcher or a professional transcriptionist transcribed them. Ongoing analysis using memoing and open coding was conducted in order to allow the experiences of the interviews to remain fresh for the researcher. Themes were developed using ATLAS.ti qualitative data analysis software. Once all data were transcribed, investigated, and coded, final data analysis and member checking were conducted, and the results were reported. An outside auditor was utilized to review the results to establish trustworthiness in the analysis of the researcher (Creswell, 2013).

The Researcher's Role

The role of the researcher in a qualitative study is that of a human research instrument through whom the data are analyzed. In this capacity, it was important that there was no prior relationship with the sites or participants and that the researcher remained an impartial observer (Creswell, 2013). For this research study, these criteria were met. In an effort to avoid ethical violations, the researcher had no affiliation with the setting of the schools as they were in districts in which I have never taught. I also had no affiliation with the participants for the same reason.

In my current role as an ELL specialist in a district in central Virginia, I am intimately aware of the struggles facing core academic teachers at the high school level in differentiating instruction and assessment for ELLs. My experience as an advocate for ELL students who

struggle with content learning due to language deficits drives my interest in this phenomenon. As the national data indicates a rise in the enrollment coupled with a widening of the achievement gap for this population of learner (Kanno & Kanga, 2014; Menken et al., 2012; Nevarez-LaTorre, 2012), I am invested in improving instruction for ELLs and adding to the body of knowledge on ELL instruction in the area of central Virginia.

I have long been interested in the study of methodologies that are effective to close the achievement gap and improve opportunities for minority students. To that end, I have devoted the past 15 years of my career to studying the effects of poverty on children and its impact on student achievement. Emerging from that interest came an understanding of the vocabulary deficits that inhibit academic achievement for lower socio-economic populations, of whom many ELLs are members, which then led to an interest in becoming an ELL specialist.

Previously, I taught primary and elementary school, middle school language arts and social studies, and have worked as the language arts department chair and the curriculum lead teacher for middle school language arts. All of this experience has invested me with a deep passion for struggling learners and a desire to improve instruction for all students to close the achievement gap. It is my belief that when effective instructional strategies are implemented, all students will achieve at higher levels.

Based on my experience, I bring natural biases and assumptions to the research study. As I coded and analyzed the data, it was important for me to consider Husserl's epoché as described by Moustakas (1994). Epoché is the setting aside of my preconceived biases based on my own experiences (Moustakas, 1994). According to Moustakas (1994), the epoché does not deny the entirety of my experiences but focuses on the natural attitude or preconceived external facets of my own understanding about the phenomenon. Creswell (2013) describes bracketing as the

method of addressing the epoché in qualitative research. Bracketing allows the researcher to confront personal biases and assumptions and address them head on through journaling to minimize their impact on the analysis of the data presented (Creswell, 2013). Bracketing will; therefore, allow me to recognize my own prejudices in order to set them aside in the research process.

Data Collection

For purposes of triangulation, three methods of data collection were employed in this study and include interviews, administration of the Teaching English Language Learners Scale (TELLS), and document analysis. Data collection consisted primarily of one semi-structured, face-to-face, audio-taped long interview conducted at a time and place convenient to each participant. Follow-up interviews were not required for purposes of clarification. The participants were asked to complete the TELLs to determine their sense of efficacy in working with ELLs. Document analysis was conducted and consisted of an examination of teacher planning documents, redacted student language proficiency level data, and blank copies of modified materials or assessments used in class.

Teaching English Language Learners Scale (TELLS)

Participants will complete the TELLs by completing a Google form to determine their sense of efficacy in working with ELLs. TELLs is described as “a scale that measures teachers’ individual beliefs in their capability to perform effective tasks in order to successfully teach English language learners in their mainstream classroom” (Carney, 2012, p. 16). The TELLs was developed based on previous scales used to measure teacher efficacy, beginning with the Teacher Efficacy Scale (TES) of Gibson and Dembo (1984) (as cited in Carney, 2012).

Criticism of the TES led to the development of other scales of efficacy in specific

teaching environments such as the Classroom and School Context Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale (CSC-TSES) by Friedman & Kass (2002). The CSC-TSES focuses on the school and classroom contexts to include variables such as school climate, principal behavior, sense of community among staff, and school decision-making procedures, as these are considered determinants of teacher efficacy (Carney, 2012).

The validity and reliability for the TELLs were established in a study aimed to address factor stability, convergent and discriminant validity, and temporal reliability (Carney, 2012). Validity and reliability scores for the TELLs are reported as Cronbach's alpha for the full scale at .94 (Carney, 2012). The TELLs was used for descriptive and triangulation purposes to add information to the third research question regarding teachers' sense of efficacy in teaching ELLs. The TELLs has also been used in a subsequent study by Garver, Eslami, and Tong (2018) and yielded an overall internal consistency for the sample of .827.

1. Monitor ELL students' understanding of directions.
2. Use ongoing assessment for ELL students.
3. Perform assessments at a level for ELL students' language proficiency and current functioning.
4. Teach classroom expectations to ELL students.
5. Model classroom tasks for ELL students.
6. Highlight key points for ELL students in some way (outlines, lists, etc).
7. Provide authentic (accurate) visual aids for ELL students.
8. Use mechanical aids, real objects, music, art, games, and hands-on experience to reinforce ELL students' learning.
9. Redirect ELL students who are persistently off task.
10. Plan evaluations that accommodate individual differences among my ELL students.
11. Use repetition for ELL students.
12. Learn new strategies to use with my ELL students.
13. Identify ELL students' individual English proficiency.
14. Post common expectations in the classroom in English for ELL students.
15. Use members of the community as resources for working with ELL students and their families.
16. Locate materials in ELL students' native languages.
17. Encourage homework support activities staffed by bilingual teachers, volunteers, etc for ELL students.
18. Learn certain words and phrases in ELL students' native languages
19. Praise ELL students for their accomplishments using a phrase in their native language.
20. Encourage ELL students to use their native language.
21. Greet ELL students with a phrase in their native language.
22. Pair ELL students with bilingual students who can speak the same language.
23. Provide native language instructional support for ELL students.

Figure 1

Interviews

Each long interview was conducted as a semi-structured, face-to-face, audiotaped interview of approximately 40 to 60 minutes in length. As transcendental phenomenological qualitative inquiry seeks to explore the experiences of the individual, the interview was the primary data collection method used in this study as established by Moustakas (1994). In qualitative research, the interview is prepared and conducted with a logical working model in mind to elicit the information and answer the research questions posed (Schwandt, 2015). As this research study seeks to explore the experiences of participants with a certain phenomenon,

the interview is an appropriate method for data collection (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994).

Following the transcription of the interview, the participants were provided with copies in order to ascertain the certainty of the transcript.

The semi-structured, audiotaped, face-to-face interviews were scheduled and conducted at a time and place convenient to each participant in order to address the research questions.

Standardized Open-Ended Interview Questions

1. Describe why you went into education.
2. Describe the methods of instruction you received as a student growing up.
3. Describe your philosophy of teaching.
 - a. In what ways have those experiences impacted your instructional practices?
4. Describe your primary method for instruction in your content classroom. (Examples if needed: guided learning, lecture note-taking, independent research, collaboration, learning centers).
5. Describe the instructional practices you use in working with your ELL students.
6. Describe any informative experiences you have had working with ELLs.
7. Describe your level of confidence in planning instruction and assessment for ELLs.
8. Describe your attitudes or beliefs about differentiating instruction for ELLs.
9. Describe your overall experiences providing opportunities for students to work in groups or with partners.
10. Going forward, what further training for working with ELLs you would like to receive?
11. Describe anything else about your experiences working with ELLs that you haven't already shared, and you would like to.

Question one was designed as an icebreaker and intended to create rapport with the participants prior to the actual data collection as recommended by Creswell (2013). This question allowed the subject to focus on the experience of teaching in order to allow memories to be activated which was important in order to allow the participant to share their experiences (Moustakas, 1994). Questions two through six were designed to address the central research question regarding the participant's experiences with planning and differentiating for ELL students. Research suggests that there is often a disconnection between research and practice (Parsons et al., 2013). These questions sought to elicit information regarding the strength of that assertion. It has also been found that teachers tend to teach the way they were taught despite advanced training in more effective methodologies; therefore, the focus of these questions was used to determine to what extent this is true for participants (Gleeson & Davis, 2016). These questions also addressed the challenges teachers are facing with the growth of the population of diverse learners with varying levels of linguistic ability and prior knowledge (Kanno & Kangas, 2014; Menken et al., 2012; Navarez-La Torre, 2012).

Questions six through eight were designed to address the first sub-question regarding teacher attitudes toward teaching ELLs and the second sub-question regarding teacher sense of efficacy. Teacher attitudes have been linked to achievement for ELLs; therefore, the responses to these questions were important to the exploration of their lived experiences (Gilakjani & Sabouri 2017; Pettit, 2011). Furthermore, research supports the premise that higher senses of efficacy are closely associated with behaviors of effective teaching while lower senses of self-efficacy are associated with a reluctance to engage in differentiated instructional practices (Dixon et al., 2014; Klassen & Tze, 2014).

Questions nine and ten were designed to elicit information that may not have emerged naturally in the interview, such as those regarding the use of socio-cultural learning opportunities according to sub-question three of this proposed study. According to Vygotsky's (1978) concept of the dialogic origin of competence, second language learning requires not only differentiation but an understanding that the process of language and learning are complementary and necessary in order for students to acquire proficiency in either (Lantolf, 2009; Vygotsky, 1986). The final question was used to ensure that any additional information the participants wished to include was not limited by the questions asked.

Document Analysis

To determine the degree to which differentiation was taking place in the classroom, document analysis was conducted. The purpose of including document analysis in the study was to explore artifacts created for student instruction and assessment along with student language proficiency documentation and ELL plans. By examining this data, it was hoped that the researcher was able to triangulate the data from the experiences of the participants from an intellectual and emotional point of view and a practical view in order to determine what the reality was for the teachers. Document analysis consisted of examining teacher lesson plans (both daily and unit plans) in order to record the planning process of differentiation within the lesson plans for ELLs. Redacted copies of student English language development plans were analyzed to determine what modifications and accommodations for differentiation were provided for in the plan. WIDA Access for ELLs yearly language proficiency score reports with any identifying information removed were analyzed to determine the language proficiency levels of students in the participants' classes who are ELL. Additional document analysis was conducted on unused copies of modified materials or assessments created for use in class to ascertain the

manner in which instruction and assessment were differentiated by the participant and aligned with the needs of the learners.

Data Analysis

Four steps were followed in this transcendental phenomenological study to analyze the experiences of the participants. Since the goal of transcendental phenomenology is that of allowing the voices of the participants to be heard in relation to the experience of the phenomenon, the first step is epoché, in which the researcher journals and explains his or her own experiences with and feelings related to the phenomenon in order to identify and isolate any biases or prejudices that might inhibit the research process (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). This step was vital to avoid bringing bias and judgment into the data collection and analysis of the study. The second step in the data analysis was transcendental phenomenological reduction to describe the essences of the perceptions and feelings of the participants (Moustakas, 1994). Next, the researcher applied imaginative variation to develop themes from the reduction process (Moustakas, 1994). Finally, the textural composite, or themes, were developed, and the structural composite, or setting, of the experience, was developed from the data and written in textual form (Creswell, 2013; Kafle, 2011; Moustakas, 1994).

Epoché

The researcher kept a field journal throughout the data collection process. The journal was a reflection of the impressions the researcher had before, during, and after data collection about either the setting or the participants. In this way, the researcher addressed any biases or preconceived beliefs and feelings she had regarding the setting or participants to avoid allowing them to affect the analysis of the data. Bracketing, in this way, was an essential component of transcendental phenomenology and is what set it apart from other methods of phenomenology

such as hermeneutics and existentialism (Kafle, 2011). Through this process the researcher acknowledged her feelings about the phenomenon and allowed for clear intentionality (Moustakas, 1994).

Interviews

Interviews from individual face-to-face interviews were transcribed by the researcher or a professional transcriptionist. Transcribed data were analyzed using ATLAS.ti. The transcendental phenomenological reduction took place as the transcriptions were read and reread using memoing to provide an overall essence of the data and apply horizontalizing.

Horizontalizing is a reiterative process that involves regarding each statement as relevant and having equal value to the topic and questions and viewing the statements through a variety of lenses in order to provide clear descriptions of the experience (Moustakas, 1994).

From the horizontalized statements, open coding was established; open coding was used to place statements into meaningful units that reflected textural contexts. The next step was to apply imaginative variation to develop themes by clustering the codes from the reduction process. The goal in this process was to unify noema, what is experienced, and noesis, the way in which it is experienced. Finally, the themes and context were developed from the data. From these themes, this unification of noema and noesis, the meanings and essences of the phenomenon were constructed into textural descriptions (Moustakas, 1994).

Analysis of the TELLS

The TELLS was scored, and data were analyzed. Data were triangulated with the interview and focus group data, as well as document analysis, in order to provide for trustworthiness in the study. Measures of efficacy were compared to the established themes and specific statements from the data. The TELLS results were analyzed for descriptive purposes to

describe and explain the findings of the data analysis.

Document Analysis

Collected documents were coded using open coding, and organized into themes, and then triangulated with the TELLS and interview data. During document analysis, codes and themes were compared as they emerged in the data. Document analysis informed the data by providing examples of what participants were actually doing in relation to student data and the English language development plan as part of their experience. To aid the analysis, a visual representation was constructed aligning the ELD plan, WIDA score report, and differentiated artifacts as determined from the document analysis to evaluate the match between the documents. This information was analyzed by the researcher and reported in both visual and narrative form. The purpose of this data was used to triangulate the results of the interviews and other data sources with actual artifacts from the experience.

Triangulation of the Data

There are four types of triangulation of data (Denzin, 1978). This study utilized the type denoted as data triangulation to provide for stronger validity of the conclusions. According to Creswell and Miller (2000), data triangulation is an appropriate validity procedure in qualitative research to compare the development of themes in a study. This type of triangulation cross-checks data to search for commonalities (O'Donoghue & Punch, 2003). The data from interviews, the TELLS, and document analysis were the sources used for triangulation.

Triangulation, as described by Cohen and Manion (1986) is defined as an attempt to explain the complexity of human experiences from more than one standpoint.

Altricher, Feldman, Posch, and Somekh, (2005) agreed by saying it provides detail and balance to a situation. An advantage of using triangulation in qualitative research is that of creating new

ways to analyze the phenomenon and provide more clarity (Thurmond, 2001). Should inconsistencies in the data arise, they should be seen not as a necessary impediment to the understanding but as a way in which to understand the experience on a deeper level (Patton, 2002).

Trustworthiness

The value of qualitative research is established in terms of trustworthiness, which is equivalent to internal and external validity in quantitative research (Schwandt, 2015). To establish trustworthiness, the researcher must address four criteria: credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. Providing rich, thick descriptions allows the reader to understand the experiences as they were portrayed to the researcher. The establishment of these criteria provides a level of assurance to the reader that the quality of the research reaches accepted limits (Schwandt, 2015).

Credibility

Credibility addresses the issue of appropriate interpretation of the respondent's experiences as analyzed by the researcher (Schwandt, 2015). The use of previously utilized transcendental phenomenological research methods, as established by Moustakas (1994), provided credibility to the research. By establishing trust with the organization through preliminary meetings prior to data collection, the credibility of this study was further enhanced. Member checking provided further credibility to this study by allowing the participants to verify the results of the interview. This study used triangulation of the data using interviews, focus group discussions, the TELLS, and document analysis to determine the extent to which the researcher has reconstructed and narrated the experiences through the use of corroborating evidence (Creswell, 2013).

Dependability and Confirmability

Dependability in qualitative research is a reflection of the researcher's responsibility for ensuring that the entire research process is "logical, traceable, and documented" (Schwandt, 2015, p. 309). Dependability is a function of credibility, and many of the aforementioned procedures contributed to the dependability of this study (Shenton, 2004). Furthermore, the use of overlapping methods of data collection in the form of interviews and focus groups contributed to the dependability of qualitative research (Shenton, 2004).

Confirmability addressed the extent to which the results of the research were influenced by the personal biases and experiences of the researcher (Shenton, 2007). The most important aspect of confirmability was established through the use of bracketing to address epoché in the form of journaling of the researcher's thoughts and feelings as they pertain to the research experience (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). Through the use of triangulation and an external audit, this researcher established confirmability of the results. Triangulation provided the necessary corroborating evidence found in multiple sources, methods, and theories to support the assertions of the researcher (Creswell, 2013). The use of an outside auditor provided interrater reliability to the study, as the auditor had no experience with the research other than reviewing the process and product to assess accuracy (Creswell, 2013).

Transferability

Transferability in qualitative research refers to the ability of the reader to establish similarities between the research and other research it may be transferable to (Schwandt, 2015). This study may be transferable to sites with similar demographic contexts. Through providing detailed descriptions of the site and participants in the study, the transferability of the research may be applied to other contexts. The use of triangulation of the data in the form of interviews,

the TELLS survey results, focus group discussions, and document analysis contributed to the transferability of the data (Creswell, 2013). Transferability was determined by the degree of thick description included in the analysis of the data concerning the phenomenon (Shenton, 2004); therefore, this researcher provided adequate thick descriptions of the phenomenon in order to increase transferability. Finally, the use of purposeful criterion-based sampling and the explanation of the criteria, along with the full methodology for the study, aided in the ability of future researchers to transfer this study to other contexts.

Ethical Considerations

In conducting research using human subjects, there are ethical considerations that are important to ensure the safety of the participants. The most important considerations in qualitative research are the issues of anonymity, confidentiality, and informed consent (Sanjari, Bahramnezhad, Fomani, Shoghi & Cheraghi, 2014). Anonymity in this study was ensured through the use of pseudonyms to protect the identity of the subjects and the setting (Creswell, 2013). Any identifying information was redacted from documents in order to ensure anonymity as well. Confidentiality was addressed in this study as the data were stored on a password-protected computer and/or in a locked filing cabinet throughout the study. Participants had a full understanding of the purpose of the study prior to and during the research process as determined by the provision of informed consent and the disclosure of any researcher affiliations to the phenomenon. The use of member checks ensured that the potential disclosure of harmful data was negated. Participants were provided with published copies of the final report.

Other ethical considerations addressed were minimizing the disruptions to participant's lives, the establishment of rapport, and potential power issues (Creswell, 2013). Disruptions to the participants' lives were minimized by using planning times or after school times for

interviews at the participant's discretion and exhibiting respect for the school schedule and outside commitments on the participants' lives. The establishment of rapport was established prior to and throughout the research process through preliminary meetings or phone conversations. The research also diligently adhered to research and site protocols and respected confidentiality inherent in the research process. To address potential power issues the research was conducted in three districts unaffiliated with the researcher and with participants who have no prior relationship with the researcher.

Summary

This chapter provided the reader with the research design and proposed research questions for this transcendental phenomenological study. The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of core academic subject high school teachers with differentiating instruction and assessment for ELLs in central Virginia. In addition to the research design and research questions, the reader has been provided with an explanation of the setting, participants, and procedures to conduct the research. The role of the researcher was addressed along with a detailed description of the types of data collected, strategies utilized for data collection, and how the data were analyzed. Finally, the chapter closes with information on the methods used to ensure trustworthiness, credibility, dependability, confirmability, transferability, and ethical considerations in the research study.

In closing, the methodology chosen for this study, transcendental phenomenology, was appropriate for the purposes of studying the experiences of core academic subject high school teachers with differentiating instruction and assessment for ELLs in central Virginia. This design was appropriate as the research was seeking to understand the experiences of the participants and required the bracketing of the researcher in the research process to ensure true

intentionality was achieved. The methodology for conducting the transcendental phenomenological research was established clearly for purposes of replication to similar contexts and demographics. The establishment of trustworthiness and ethical considerations were clearly established as well. Chapter Four provides the findings of this research study. The chapter presents an in-depth discussion of the participants, explains the results, and summarizes the data analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

Chapter Four provides the reader with the results of the data analysis. This study sought to explore the lived experiences of participants in teaching ELLs in the academic content high school classroom. The following research questions guided this study: RQ1: How do select high school academic content teachers describe their experiences differentiating instruction and assessment for English language learners in central Virginia?; SQ1: How do participants describe their attitudes and beliefs about differentiating instruction and assessment for ELLs?; SQ2: How do the participants describe their sense of self-efficacy for differentiating instruction and assessment for ELLs?; and SQ3: How do participants describe their experiences with providing socio-cultural learning opportunities for ELLs within the classroom? This chapter describes their experiences after analysis of the TELLS survey, using coding processes to analyze their interviews, evaluate documents, and triangulate the data, which revealed the experiences of navigating the world of teaching ELLs at the high school level.

Participants

There were 10 participants included in the study. Each participant (a) was a licensed teacher of high school content, (b) was over the age of 18, and (c) had a minimum of one year of experience teaching ELL students. The criterion for participants was established to ensure the phenomenon would be addressed.

Recruitment for the study was done via initial email to all teachers in the site accompanied with an interest survey form to address the criterion and demographic information to ensure saturation was met (see Appendix F). Teachers who responded with an interest in participating were provided with a copy of the informed consent form (see Appendix G). Once

informed consent was received, participants were provided with a link to the TELLs (see Appendix C). Each participant was provided a pseudonym to be used for ethical considerations. Upon receipt of the results of the TELLs, participants were sent an invitation to schedule an interview. During the interview, requests were made for documentation in the form of lesson plans and other documents the participant felt were pertinent to the experience. Other documentation was obtained through the use of the student management program elevation used by the district to manage ELL student services.

Descriptions of Participants

Following are individual descriptions of each of the ten participants for the study. Pseudonyms were used to protect their identity.

Erik. Erik was a Caucasian male aged 56. He was a full-time teacher of Career and Technical Education and Science. He has a master's degree and is endorsed and/or certified in Computer Science, Technology Education, Physics, and Leadership. He had been teaching between 16-25 years with two years of experience working with ELL students, and at the time of the study, he had ELLs in his classes.

Linda. Linda was a Caucasian female between the ages of 36-45 years of age. At the time of the study, she was a full-time English and Reading teacher. She has a bachelor's and master's degree in the area of social sciences and education. She also has experience in teaching at the secondary and post-secondary level for the past eight to 16 years. Linda had five years of experience and was working with ELLs in the classroom at the time of the study.

Gayle. Gayle was another female teacher in the 46-55 age range. She indicated her race as White/Caucasian. She held a bachelor's degree in secondary English instruction and had taught a variety of English courses ranging from grades nine to 12. Gayle had been teaching

between 16-25 years. She had seven years' experience and was working with ELLs in the classroom at the time of the study.

Tom. Tom was a male Caucasian between the ages of 26-35. He held a bachelor's and master's degree in secondary science education. He taught science and had been teaching between eight to 16 years and had worked with ELLs for four of those years. He did not have ELLs in his class at the time of the study. However, he had experience in the past of more than one year; thus, he met the criterion for a participant in this study.

Shannon. Shannon was a female teacher between the ages of 46-55. She listed her race as White/Caucasian. A special educator, Shannon held both a bachelor's and master's degree in English and special education and had taught a variety of subjects on the secondary level, including experience teaching at the elementary level. She had been teaching for between 16-25 years with experience working with ELLs for all of those years at the time of the study.

Rick. Rick was a Caucasian male between the ages of 46-55. He held a bachelor's degree and had various other certifications and credentials in the field of education and music. He was teaching an elective content course with between four to eight years of experience at the time of the study. He had current experience working with ELLs in his classroom as well as four years in the past.

Donna. Donna was a female Caucasian between the ages of 46-55. She held a master's degree in secondary education along with several other endorsements. She was currently teaching science at the high school. She had between 16-25 years of experience teaching overall, with ELL experience of ten of those years. She had ELLs in her classes at the time of the study.

Susan. Susan was a female Caucasian between the ages of 46-55. She held a bachelor's degree in math and business. She was a math instructor with between eight and 16 years of

experience. She had worked with ELLs every year she taught and had ELLs in her class at the time of the study.

Alan. Alan was a Caucasian, Native American male in the 56 and over age bracket. He held a Master of Science in Instructional Technology with many additional credentials and certifications. Alan was an elective content teacher at the high school. He had been teaching between eight and 16 years at the time of the study and had experience all of those years and at the time of the study working with ELLs in his classes.

Bridgette. Bridgette was a female Caucasian Italian American between 36-45 years of age. She held a bachelor's degree and was teaching advanced math at the high school. She had between 16-25 years of experience teaching that included working with ELLs each year and during the study.

Results

Sense of Efficacy in Teaching ELL Students TELLS Survey

Participants were asked to complete the TELLS to provide an understanding of their sense of efficacy in working with ELLs. This survey was used to inform the central research question: How do select high school academic content teachers describe their experiences differentiating instruction and assessment for English language learners in central Virginia? This survey also addressed sub-question two: How do the participants describe their sense of self-efficacy for differentiating instruction and assessment for ELLs?

The TELLS is a 23-question, 10-point Likert scaled survey ranging from Certain Cannot Do At ALL to Certain Can Do (see Appendix H). This data was used to triangulate with the interview and document analysis to provide for trustworthiness in the study. Measures of efficacy were compared to the established themes and specific statements from the data. The

TELLs results were also analyzed for descriptive purposes to describe and explain the findings of the data analysis. The results of the TELLs are represented in Tables one through five (see Appendix H).

For purposes of data analysis, the questions were given simpler titles and then grouped according to specific areas of efficacy when working with ELL students. The results are listed in both numerical and textual representations. Textual representations are as follows: Certain Cannot Do At ALL = 0; Low Certainty = 1-3; Moderately Certain Can Do = 4-7; High Certainty = 8-9, Certain Can Do = 10. Participants' numerical and textual scores were represented in Figures three and four and Tables one through five (see Appendix H).

Using numeric values and textual descriptions for those values, the mean data revealed that the overall sense of efficacy of the group was moderate for efficacy as a whole. However, the area of providing specific linguistic supports was high in efficacy for the group. Interestingly, certain individuals had lower overall senses of efficacy in working with ELLs. The participant with the lowest sense of efficacy was Gayle with a mean score of three, which indicated a low certainty in overall ability to differentiate and assess ELL students. The most challenging area for all participants was in the area of providing first-language support to students.

Document Analysis

Document analysis took the form of collecting documents regarding ELL students in the form of levels of language proficiency and required accommodations and modifications needed according to their English Language Development Plan (ELD). This information was obtained through the use of the student management platform for the district. This data was intended to be used as the foundation to analyze teacher lesson plans if provided and/or examples of

differentiated materials and student work. However, none of the participants were able to provide differentiated lesson plans or examples of student work. Additionally, three participants shared documents that they felt spoke to the phenomenon and their feelings in the form of a book, a poem, and an image which were then analyzed along with the other documental data. The results of the document analysis follow.

Student Scores and Accommodations

Of the ten participants, eight had ELL students in their classes at the time. I was able to obtain redacted reports from the district that provided the students' English language proficiency (ELP) scores along with their ELD plan. The ELP is based on a yearly test administered state-wide according to federal mandates that require all ELL students to be assessed yearly for their ELP (Freeman, 2007). The test used by the state of Virginia is the ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 and is generally administered online. Possible score results range from 1.0 (beginning) to 4.4 (exiting). Students are able to score up to 6.0 on the test but in Virginia are considered to be exiting, on a par with a native English speaker's proficiency, at the 4.4 level. Students who score below 4.4 continue to be referred to as limited English proficiency (LEP), while students who score higher than 4.4 are considered to be formerly LEP or FLEP and are monitored for four years (Freeman, 2007). FLEP students generally do not require accommodations and/or modifications. The redacted ELD plans for the LEP students were also provided and analyzed, along with the score reports. According to the document data, Alan, Rick, Erik, Linda, Shannon, and Tom all had LEP and FLEP students in their classes at the time of the interviewing process. All of the LEP students required some form of accommodation or modifications in order to be successful according to their ELD plan. The table of students, their English proficiency scores, need for

accommodations, and the participant who taught them are listed in figure five: Group Mean (see Appendix H).

According to the document data, Alan, Rick, Erik, Linda, Shannon, and Tom all had LEP and FLEP students in their classes at the time of the interviewing process. All of the LEP students required some form of accommodation or modifications in order to be successful according to their ELD plan. Figure five (see Appendix H) explains the modifications and accommodations for the LEP students. The chart also explains the performance definitions as defined by WIDA for each ELP level under the column WIDA Can DO Descriptor by level. The chart further allowed the reader to interpret the linguistic ability of the student in using English. The analysis of student ELP scores and ELD documents paired with the participant allowed the reader to see the extent to which differentiation was required by each participant.

Lesson Plans, Shared Materials from Teachers, Student Work

One aspect of data collection that this research relied on was that of document data in the form of teacher-created lesson plans which provided for linguistic differentiation for ELL students, differentiated materials including class assignments, homework assignments, and assessments, and examples of ELL student work. Interestingly, none of the participants provided any current lesson plans, differentiated assignments or tests, and no ELL student work to the researcher. While this might seem as if the data were insufficient, this researcher believes that it is quite the opposite. The lack of examples speaks to the fact that while teachers were able to voice many strategies in effect to support ELLs in direct instruction per se, there was no evidence of those; therefore, these data were analyzed as such.

Other Documents Provided

Alan. Three of the participants provided documents to the researcher that they felt were pertinent to the study. Alan provided a book he read during his coursework titled *The Norton Anthology of Latino Literature* (Ulibarri, 2011). Rick shared a poem *The Bridge Builder* by Will Alan Dromgoole (1931), and Donna shared a meme she felt embodied her feelings on equity and access for all students.

Alan shared that he was particularly moved by a story he read during his master's coursework that he felt was a foundation of the understanding of other cultures for him. "I took a course-- as far as cultural-- one of the cultural courses I took for international studies, and it was Latin American literature. And this book was thick. Huge thick. But what I learned-- what was so amazing, was how many revolutionaries there were and the revolutionary thought. Like the democratic thought, and things like that. I told you about the cigar? The grandmother that smokes the cigar?"

The cigar that had once been a symbol of authority had now become an instrument of love. I am convinced that in the solitude and in the silence, with the smell and the taste of the tobacco, there in the smoke, my grandmother established some kind of mystical communication with my grandfather [...] It was enough to see the soft and transfigured face of the grandmother when she returned to us from the strange communion, to see the affection and gentleness with which she treated us kids. (Ulibarri, 2011)

And in the end, it was the fact that not just did the smell of the cigar remind her of her husband, who was the head of the family and the head of the business and all that stuff, but it was signifying that she was taking over and she was becoming the one that was-- to her children and everybody else, that she was the one-- *My Grandmother Smoked Cigars* was the name of the story.

Rick. In speaking about why he first went into education, Rick shared that a former teacher had shared a very moving poem with him that was his inspiration. The poem follows:

The Bridge Builder

By Will Allen Dromgoole

An old man going a lone highway,
Came, at the evening cold and gray,
To a chasm vast and deep and wide.
Through which was flowing a sullen tide
The old man crossed in the twilight dim,
The sullen stream had no fear for him;
But he turned when safe on the other side
And built a bridge to span the tide.

“Old man,” said a fellow pilgrim near,
“You are wasting your strength with building here;
Your journey will end with the ending day,
You never again will pass this way;
You’ve crossed the chasm, deep and wide,
Why build this bridge at evening tide?”

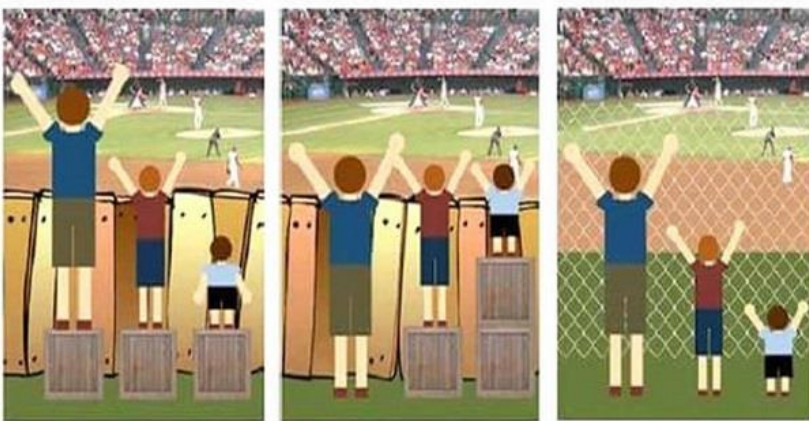
The builder lifted his old gray head;
“Good friend, in the path I have come,” he said,
“There followed after me to-day

A youth whose feet must pass this way.
 This chasm that has been as naught to me
 To that fair-haired youth may a pitfall be;
 He, too, must cross in the twilight dim;
 Good friend, I am building this bridge for him!" (Dromgoole, 1931).

"It talks about an old man in the twilight time of his life. He's moving along, and he crosses this chasm deep and wide, and he stops, and he turns around and builds a bridge. And somebody comes up after him and says, "Hey, look, you're done with this. You've crossed. Why would you waste your time? You need to keep moving forward." And in the poem, it starts talking about, and the old man looked at him and said something like, "This chasm deep and wide was not a pitfall-- was not a problem for me but there comes after someone that this may be a pitfall for them and I build a bridge for him." I am a bridge-builder. Now you know. The bridge builder. And that's why I got into education."

Donna. While Donna was discussing her feelings about differentiation, she shared an image she felt explained her feelings better than words. "I don't think language should be a barrier to learning at all. Actually, I could show you a picture of this. Because I was just talking about this with some kids the other day. Because dual enrollment, we get into a lot of off-topic things during remediation. Because it's too much remediation time for the dual enrollment kids. It's like they're the cream of the crop kids, they don't have to make a point to do. But at the same time, I don't want to do new material during remediation. So, we get into philosophical discussions and stuff."

“But one of them was asking me about differentiation for special ed kids. And she was like, “Well, how is that fair? They're getting more help than they-- that's not fair to the other kids.” And I was like, “You've got to define fairness.” - But I showed her this picture to kind of explain it. And it was like-- and I'm not saying that foreign language is a handicap. It can be a barrier. Works the same way. I showed her this picture (see Figure 2).



(Valbrun, 2017)

Figure 2 Equity Image

Summary of Document Analysis

The document analysis yielded important information regarding the needs of the ELL learners in the participants' classrooms. The majority of students were identified as LEP with lower levels of language proficiency and, thus, required supports to be put in place to allow them to have equitable access to the curriculum. However, the participants did not provide lesson plans or copies of redacted student work to support their assertions as to what practices they utilized in the classroom. This lack does not indicate that there was any misrepresentation on the parts of the participants and should not be taken as such. It does beg the question as to the extent that instruction is designed for the needs of individual students as opposed to whole group approaches. This will be discussed further in Chapter Five.

Interviews

After participants completed the TELLs, formal interviews were arranged via a Google form in which the participants indicated the dates, times, and locations that would best accommodate their schedules. Each participant was asked 11 interview questions to allow the participant to describe the phenomenon. The semi-structured, audiotaped, face-to-face interviews lasted for between 30 to 45 minutes and were audiotaped and transcribed by a professional transcriptionist verbatim. Participants were emailed the transcripts to allow for member checking to ensure the validity of the transcript. Participants were encouraged to correct or modify the transcript as needed. None of the participants changed or modified the transcript.

Data from the interviews were analyzed using phenomenological reduction according to Moustakas (1994) to allow for themes to emerge to allow the phenomenon to be described. Triangulating the results from the TELLs, document analysis, and analysis of the interviews allowed for the essence of the phenomenon to emerge. The use of various forms of data allowed for the experience of the participants in planning and differentiating instruction for ELL students to be clarified and a full understanding of the phenomenon to emerge.

Theme Development

Using the participants actual descriptions of their beliefs, experiences, and sense of efficacy in working with ELLs, the results are reported in detail according to the themes that developed. Data were collected through a survey of teacher efficacy in working with ELL students called the TELLs, a face-to-face interview, examination of artifacts shared by the participants, and triangulation of the methods utilized. The data were collected and then analyzed using ATLAS.ti to aid the researcher in the identification of codes and search for themes (see Appendix H). Triangulation of the data was utilized to provide validation to the

findings. The results of the analysis are presented here according to the themes that emerged describing their shared and individual experiences with teaching ELL students in the high school content classroom and further by their responses to the research questions in the following section.

Coding was accomplished by assigning labels to clusters of responses that formed once key terms were identified. Codes were then combined to allow themes to emerge. Moustakas' (1994) method of analysis reduction was followed by using epoché, coding, horizontalization, textural descriptions, structural descriptions, clustering into themes, and text-structural synthesis. During epoché, the researcher set aside pre-judgments, biases, and preconceived ideas, which was vital as the researcher was a member of the faculty at the site and had preconceived biases and judgments regarding the participants and the overall experience from the point of ELLs at the site (Moustakas, 1994). Coding was done by uploading the transcripts of the interviews and descriptions of archival data into ATLAS.ti and using the coding feature to highlight and recognize recurring themes in the data. Horizontalization, the next step, required listing significant statements from the data and assigning each equal worth (Creswell, 2013). This was followed by the textural-structural description, which included direct quotes from the participants, which led to clustering of themes and provided for the ultimate description of the essence of the phenomenon of working with ELL students in the high school content classroom (Creswell, 2013). The participants were asked to verify the synthesis to allow for member checking of the data to ensure validity (Creswell, 2013).

The shared experience that emerged from the analysis was that teaching ELLs is a complex emotional experience for the participants. The experience is rooted in both positive and negative attitudes toward teaching ELLs as well as a large range of efficacy from low to high not

only as a group but within each individual. The experience was also rooted in the level of confidence in working with ELLs in general in regard to strategies and communication ability. From the analysis, four themes emerged, including positive attitudes, negative attitudes, efficacy is dependent on supports available, and efficacy is dependent on teacher training.

Theme One: Positive Attitudes Toward Differentiation

A majority of the participants expressed positive attitudes and beliefs about differentiating lessons and assessments for ELLs. The positive aspects are themes of differentiation as a practice already in use, positive personal experience, and respect for other cultures, respect for the challenges faced by ELLs, and an overall belief in the ability of all children to learn. These feelings were reflected in their TELLs responses but not through document examination.

Many participants indicated that they were comfortable with differentiating lessons and assessments for all students and, therefore, felt positive about doing so for ELLs. Linda explained her feelings by stating, “I think it's definitely necessary, and I don't think of it as a burden or, I mean, it's no different than differentiating for any other students. As the teacher, it's my job to try to meet each student where they are and bring them forward. So, I mean, that's just part of the job [laughter]. That's teaching, I mean.” This is supported by Linda's moderate results on the TELLs.

Shannon, too, shared that she felt differentiation was an integral part of her teaching methodology when she said, “I used a lot of the modifications and accommodations that we do with special ed, I use with ELL a lot of times. And with my instruction, I do the same. Because, again, with that, I use a lot of pictures. I use a lot of graphs.” Susan explained her belief that if she can differentiate for one need, why not all? “They're all kids. They're all here. They all

have to be taught. Differentiating the instruction, I've done it for students who have medical issues, so why wouldn't I do it for language issues?" Shannon exhibited a high level of certainty on the TELLs.

Rick expanded on Susan's belief by citing the vast array of differences that he works with daily. "That is what we do. I have kids in here. ELL is just one small group. I have IEPs, autism spectrum. Very low cognitive functioning learners all the way up to some of the best and brightest in the school." Rick seemed very accepting of all students and eager to be supportive to them as he explained his view of the teacher as a bridge-builder. Reciting the words from the poem

The Bridge Builder by Will Allen Dromgoole: "This chasm deep and wide was not a pitfall-- was not a problem for me but there comes after someone that this may be a pitfall for them, and I build a bridge for him." The analysis of the poem as documental data supports Rick's overall sense of commitment to helping students, as do his TELLs scores which were consistently high.

Several participants shared experiences living in other countries and developing a deep respect for them. They cite these experiences as formative experiences for working with ELLs and linguistic differentiation. Alan shared his experiences of learning to communicate in foreign languages and the challenges he faced,

Being over in Italy and dealing with the French and the Belgians. Most of them speak English, but some don't, but you've just got to-- Just try to communicate. You know what I mean? It's a human nature to me. It's a human nature thing, where you're-- communication. Hand and arm signals.

Rick also shared a positive experience observing instruction in the Philippines and the relaxed and natural attitude toward differentiation that informed his own attitudes, “a bunch of these ... grandmothers that would just take all the kids, it was the coconut grove, and they would sit over here. And they'd read. And they'd go over here and have a little whiteboard. They'd do math like the colonial times and have their little chalk thing. They would do little science projects, and eventually, they had a school.”

While Rick shared a positive personal attitude, he was frustrated by the lack of empathy he sees in the U.S. school system for children of other cultures. “Making the transition from what they had before to, Here, come here and sit down here for 15 minutes. Stand up. Go over here and sit down here for 15 minutes. And it's so structured, so regimented,” He was clear on that teachers need to take cultural background into account when working with children from other countries. “Yeah, it speaks to that whole culture piece. What we have to take into account when children come to us from other nationalities, countries, languages, that they have a different way of learning.

Bridgette had experience with ELLs in her own family and feels supportive of the challenges of ELL students. “My father came over to the United States when he was 17, he didn't speak a lick of English at all, and got a job at a factory and-- a chocolate factory, and he had no idea what he was doing, and thankfully, somebody took the time to help him learn the language, and his job and his responsibilities and stuff like that, and he's very intelligent.”

Another participant who shared intimate knowledge of experience with other cultures was Erik. Erik grew up and attended school in various countries and shared his experiences as helping to form his own attitudes toward students from other nationalities. “I was raised a minority. Everywhere I went, I was a minority until I came back to the United States.” Erik also

had experience with being a minority language. “There were a lot of Japanese kids, a lot of Chinese, Filipino, Korean. I mean, that was the school that everybody who wasn't Japanese sent their kids to and including some Japanese people who wanted their kids raised in an English-speaking school. But outside of the classroom, you never heard English; nobody spoke English,” These experiences were the basis for Erik to open his home to non-English speaking children. “I had three foster kids, and none of them, even though they were all from the same country, none of them could talk to each other. None of them spoke the same language.” These experiences, according to Erik, form the foundation of his understanding for the experience of the ELL student in U.S. schools.

In addition to experiences with other cultures, some of the participants expressed deep respect for the resiliency of the ELL student. They indicated an understanding that the issues facing these students are deeply rooted in the immigration experience and other outside factors. Shannon put it succinctly when she said, “This isn’t just a language issue.” She explained further, “Yeah, so, like I said, I just had no concept of what kids were dealing with and I think a lot of teachers don't. They just have no concept”

Shannon was not alone in this point of view. Bridgette voiced concerns over the outside pressures that she feels ELL students face. “I think we need a lot of support, school-wide, talent-wide, a lot of support because there's a lot going on outside of school that they're having to deal with.” Bridgette also shared an understanding that school is not always a priority for some students and, therefore, differentiation is a must. She said, “there's so many factors going on that my classroom ends up low on their priority list because they've got other things going on in their minds that they need to take care of, so yeah, definitely need to differentiate instruction.”

Both Shannon and Bridgette share a respect for the resiliency of the ELL student and their families. Shannon stated, “I absolutely love working with the population, especially because a lot of them, once they see some success, then it's just like they-- you want more and more and more, and watching the growth is so amazing. And also, the families. All my families have been-- I mean, regardless of-- they've just been fabulous. I mean, just so, so thankful, but just, whatever we can do, let us know. So yeah, I'm just so excited with them and absolutely adore them.”

Bridgette stated, “I'm impressed by their perseverance and their-- I don't know. It's a big deal to come to another country and have to learn the language and the culture.”

Those who shared a positive attitude toward differentiation for ELL students seems to share the same respect for other cultures in general and the resiliency of the immigrant. Bridgette put it this way, “Oh my gosh, yeah. We need to provide every opportunity because it's not like they aren't intelligent, they're in a completely different country.” Linda summed it up by saying, “I think given the right environment and the right resources that any child is able to make progress and learn.” Rick expressed it as “this is what we do.” While Susan was clear when she said, “They're all here. They're all kids.”

Theme Two: Negative Attitudes and Beliefs toward Differentiation for ELLS

While there were many positive feelings about differentiation for ELLs, there were negative ones as well. The negative aspects of differentiating instruction and assessment for ELLs were expressed as limited English proficiency as a deficit and a lack of pre-requisite skills and overall ability of ELLs, lack of time to plan, and lack of staff to support in the classroom, too much work to differentiate, and an overall belief that learning is the responsibility of the student, and finally a sense of intimidation and insecurity in working with ELLs.

For some of the participants, LEP status was seen as a deficit. Tom expressed it as a lack of efficacy on the part of the teacher as well, “Am I doing a kid a favor, if I say have this version of the lab, it's written in Spanish, and this version of the lab it's written in English? Part of me is like, the only reason I wouldn't do that is because I don't speak Spanish. And I would not trust myself to be able to do that appropriately.” Linda was frustrated by the length of time it takes ELLs to process and complete assignments. She said, “the rest of the class finished those books two weeks ago, and they're still reading theirs which is great. I want them to keep reading it, but now where they would be at the point where they can discuss it with somebody else, the rest of the class has kind of moved on.” She shared concern about future planning by saying, “But then again, I'm not sure what we'll do with them when the rest of the class is reading *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *Romeo and Juliet*.” Linda is also uncertain about the ability to overall incorporate ELLs into the classroom, “in my experience, the ELLs that I've had aren't anywhere near the level of the other students that I'm teaching. So, in order to try to incorporate them together doesn't seem as feasible.”

Gayle also found lack of English proficiency and skills a negative factor, “but trying to teach him the grammar and stuff was difficult because he didn't know the language at all.” Erik also shared frustration with the lack of English proficiency and academic ability saying, “But I don't have the means to differentiate language like some places can” and “They didn't know the most simple algebra, and I'm like, Wait a minute. You're a junior, and you're a senior, and you can't solve for X. That's seventh-grade algebra, seventh-grade math.” Along the same lines, Susan indicated that there is a gap in math ability for ELLs. She said, “I don't see a lot of the ELLs with the math that I'm teaching.” Finally, there was this thought expressed by Gayle that reflected an underlying belief in the limited future of the ELL when she stated, “I'm sure this

child probably did not learn to speak complete English, but I'm sure he learned some while he was at school. But his job was going to be going back and working with mom and dad at the Chinese restaurant.”

Some participants felt that differentiating for ELLs is difficult as it takes a lot of time to do. Gayle summed it up “You’ve got to do a lot of digging, and that's something that a lot of teachers just don't have time for.” Susan reinforced this feeling by saying in regards to differentiating for students with limited English proficiency, “I'm very unsure because that's been totally out of my realm of experience. Because I've not had that. So, I've been very fortunate.” Gayle voiced concern about the ability of teachers to actually do the work required without more support when she said, “and I saw that there was a whole lot of needs that we weren't going to be able to meet. Not without a whole heck of a lot of help.” She summed it up by saying, “we try to do everything we can, but in a classroom, there's just not enough hands.” Linda added that time is a large constraint to differentiating for ELLs when she said, “if I had all the time I needed, I could do it.”

Another negative aspect of differentiating for ELLs was centered around the amount of work it takes to do so. According to Linda, “we're already expected to differentiate for all the kids in the classroom as it is, because they are at such varying levels, to add in one more thing just sometimes feels like it's just never going to happen [laughter]. And I think part of it too is it's not like I can just differentiate a lesson for ELLs and have that because every ELL is different. They're all at different levels, they're even coming from different places, even if they speak the same language, so what works for one won't necessarily work for another.” Gayle reflected a similar feeling in her response “and whether we like it or not that's a part of our lives

and we've got to." She also went on to say that "But at the same time for us to be able to serve our community, we're not doing a really good job of it."

One final negative theme that emerged from the interviews was that of the responsibility of the student to be prepared to learn and to actively engage in it. Erik expressed his views on this as "I am a facilitator in that situation where here is the information. It is your responsibility to read, to interpret, to absorb, to listen, to play with the videos and do the simulations. That is your responsibility, to do that." Gayle concurred saying, "if I make a big project then you need to be responsible for it."

Erik expressed an overall frustration with differentiation and student sense of responsibility:

Yeah. And I've actually had students just tell me, I don't learn that way. You have to do this for me. And I said, have you ever tried to do it this way? I don't learn that way. You have to do it-- because they're unwilling to even figure out that path beginning. He just said, I'm going to take the test later on. And I was just like, Oh. Are you now? Okay. Hey. If that's what you want to do, it's fine. Then when he gets back with a 40, he's going to say, why did I get a 40? And I'd say, Because it's 10 points every day after the-- and it's right in my syllabus. What? You didn't read the syllabus? You didn't understand the consequences? I'm sorry. It's not my fault.

Interestingly, a sense of intimidation emerged from the interviews. Participants shared that the inability to communicate with students who do not speak English or their parents were intimidating and contributed to a low sense of efficacy and insecurity. Bridgette stated, "I think I wish I would have called home more, but I was too intimidated by the language line." She expanded on her insecurity by saying, "I probably don't do a good enough job with regard to the

kids that don't have their native languages in English because I don't-- unless I would have to specifically look up a word that is an English word in their language to help bridge the gap” Susan also found that, “The confidence factor of, it would take a little while to say, Okay, yes, this is actually-- I am doing the right thing, and it is working.” Further examples of insecurity as a factor in low self-efficacy were shared by Tom, Alan, Rick, Donna, Linda, Gayle, and Erik in their reliance on the ELL teacher and bilingual students to support their instruction discussed earlier in this section. They all shared thoughts on the subject. Toms remarked, “Honestly, my level of confidence is low.” Gayle said, “Well, I rely on [the ELL teacher] a lot.” Susan stated, “The confidence factor of it would take a little while.”

Theme Three: Efficacy is Dependent on Support and Student

The sense of efficacy was dependent on several factors, including the availability of bilingual students, support of the ELL teacher, the language proficiency level of the student, and translation resources. The themes that emerged were centered on confidence in having strategies versus not having strategies, a sense of intimidation when dealing with a foreign language, and insecurity in being able to provide support to the student.

The sense of efficacy of participants was highest when the participants felt they had a reliable bilingual student in the class to support the lower proficiency ELL student. These sentiments were consistently supported by the results of the TELLs and the lack of documentation provided for analysis. Erik described feeling more confident in this situation when he said, “See with Xavier and the Spanish kid, it was a class of 30, so it was very difficult for that one-on-one time, but with Juan and Steven, I could help them out and make sure. But what with those two, what would happen was Juan would help Steven out a lot and they buddied up. (ibid) I had more of a rapport with them, one-on-one rapport with them because it was a

smaller class.” This was echoed by Rick, “Well, we do try to pair them up with a partner, like Mr. Ramos. That just makes life so much easier.” Shannon also shared a higher sense of efficacy when having a bilingual student available to support a lower level LEP, “if one student understands what I'm trying to say, then I'll sometimes have them explain in Spanish.” Alan shared that this is a practice he uses regularly. In describing one of his strategies as “sitting them close to somebody that can interpret some things,” Alan expressed a high level of sense of efficacy in supporting ELLs. He also expressed frustration when students overuse the student interpreter, “they all wanted to go through Jose. I said, Stop doing that. You're wearing him out, and that's not the way we're going to do it. You learn a little Spanish, and he learns a little English, and that's how we're going to do it. We'll do it together.” The use of the bilingual student appeared to correlate with the level of insecurity and intimidation the participant felt when dealing with ELL students.

Another area that affected the sense of efficacy of the teachers was that of the support of the ELL teacher. Most felt that their efficacy was higher when they collaborated with the ELL teacher and had translation support. Again, these results were supported during triangulation of the data. Shannon shared,

I like coming down to work when I've had-- I mean, I don't have anybody right now. But when I've had students coming down working with (the ELL teacher) as far as looking at tests and what's appropriate, what's not appropriate. And I think some of our students with novels, we did a lot of modifications. And with tests, modified to make sure that they're understanding the general concepts. So, I feel pretty good about it.

Erik further emphasized the point by saying, “it would be very difficult. It would be very, very much an uphill battle. I know that the resources are out there, but I would have to hunt for them and get people like the ELL teacher to help me out.

Gayle also felt that her sense of efficacy was higher with support, “Well, I rely on the ELL teacher a lot. Because in the end, she’s the expert.” Linda also agreed with this by saying, “this year, being in the library and being closer to the ELL teacher, being able to talk more about where they're coming from and what they're going through is really I think enlightening.” In speaking about communication, Bridgette said,

If the ELL teacher were translating for me, I'd be fine. But it's just somebody else on the line talking. I know that they're just saying what I'm saying. I get that. But just the whole idea that somebody else is listening. I don't know. That intimidated me. As with bilingual students, the availability and support of the ELL teacher also ties into the themes of insecurity and intimidation that emerged from the data.

For many of the participants, efficacy was linked to the proficiency level of the student. Teachers seemed to feel that if the student had sufficient English skills to understand and follow directions, the teacher was better able to teach them and differentiate instruction. A comparison of the student's English proficiency levels, the TELLS results, and lack of differentiation documentation would support these feelings. Donna was clear on this point; when asked about her sense of efficacy, she said, “I think it depends on what level they're at.” She expanded by saying, “I think I would struggle more with ones that have more of an English problem, especially since I do a lot of stories.” Gayle concurred with this, “Here's the thing it depends on what level they are. I mean really. I mean, if there is a limited English. If they have a real issue, a real deficit then I am a fish out of water. I mean, I'm just absolutely feel lost.” Erik also

agreed, “If I had a level two or level three ELL student in physics, I would be very, very hard-pressed to be able to give them the same level of instruction as I would an English speaker.”

The third factor affecting sense of efficacy for teachers was found in the amount of reliance they placed on the ability to translate materials into the home language of the student. This fed heavily into their securities as educators to support their students. Again, this was strongly supported by the TELLS results and other aspects of triangulation in the analysis of the data. In discussing his frustration and sense of failure in supporting ELLs, Erik said, “there's a limited amount of instruction that I use that has been translated into Spanish” citing the inability to translate as a reason for his low sense of efficacy. Tom also shared his reliance on translation and lack of experience with languages other than Spanish as a factor in his low sense of efficacy; “I did the Quizlet things. I did Spanish versions. And I've actually never had to deal with any student who wasn't ELL with Spanish.” In speaking of her low sense of efficacy, Bridgette said, “... I guess I would need a way to translate the activities.” She went on to wonder, “I don't think his textbook comes in his native language,” speaking of a Russian-speaking student.

Interestingly, the theme of intimidation emerged from the interviews. This was not expected and provided a very intimate look at the experiences of the participants. Participants shared that the inability to communicate with students who do not speak English, or their parents, was intimidating and contributed to a low sense of efficacy and insecurity. Bridgette admitted this clearly by stating, “I think I wish I would have called home more, but I was too intimidated by the language line.” She expanded on her insecurity by saying, “I probably don't do a good enough job with regard to the kids that don't have their native languages in English because I don't-- unless I would have to specifically look up a word that is an English word in their language to help bridge the gap—” Susan also found that, “the confidence factor of it

would take a little while to say, Okay, yes, this is actually-- I am doing the right thing and it is working.” Further examples of insecurity as a factor in low self-efficacy were shared by Tom, Alan, Rick, Donna, Linda, Gayle, and Erik in their reliance on the ELL teacher and bilingual students to support their instruction discussed earlier in this section. Tom remarked that “Honestly, my level of confidence is low.” Gayle said, “Well, I rely on the ELL teacher a lot.” While Susan stated that, “The confidence factor of it would take a little while.”

Theme Four: Efficacy is Dependent on Strategies and Knowledge

The predominant theme regarding strategies and knowledge centered around culturally and linguistically responsive teaching strategies, with an emphasis on the cultural impact on the brain as defined by Hammond and Jackson (2015). Interestingly, the participants were all involved in a school-wide discussion on this book. When triangulating the TELLS results with the document analysis and actual words of the participants, a different story emerged. A secondary theme emerged centered around best practices for instructional strategies including, differentiation for linguistic needs, experiential learning experiences, and guided teaching-learning practices. Some participants were comfortable using more traditional teaching strategies such as lecture, notetaking, and assigned bookwork exclusively. This theme was reinforced during triangulation of the TELLS results and the document analysis. While the questions were focused on ELL-specific strategies, the majority of the results appeared to reflect the teacher’s whole class instructional methods.

Those participants who felt they had strategies in place no matter what the strategy, felt a higher sense of efficacy than those who did not. After sharing a variety of strategies he uses in his instructional techniques for all students, Alan said, “I’m confident. I think we’re making a difference. I’m comfortable.” Rick also shared Alan’s confidence by saying, “I do pretty well. I

have to change. I have to change the accommodations of the strategy depending on who I have in my class.” Shannon, too, had a high level of confidence and explained her strategies as “with my instruction, I do the same. Because, again, with that, I use a lot of pictures. I use a lot of graphs. I use a lot.” Both Rick and Alan scored high on the TELLs in the sense of efficacy, yet neither was able to provide documents to support their strategies for differentiation for ELLs. These experiences are supported by the participants' results on specific items in the TELLs, but there was no documentation provided to support these statements.

In contrast, another segment of the participants shared a lack of strategies for differentiating instruction and assessment for ELLs as the reason they have a sense of low efficacy. Erik shared regarding his sense of efficacy as, “Poor because of resources, the availability of resources for different things.” Erik felt so strongly about his lack of strategies saying,

Let's say that here it is, the first day of August, and we're all back to school, and I get my roster, and the ELL teacher comes and tells me that I have two ELL students in my class. I'd be going like, Oh boy. Here we go.

He went on to say this about his sense of ability to differentiate for ELLs: “And I've failed at it. I mean, I really did because I don't know what else to do because I don't have the resources available, the appropriate resources available, to help out that student.” This low sense of efficacy was supported in the lack of documentation that Erik was able to provide when compared to the low level of proficiency in the ELLs in his classes. In contrast, Erik reported moderate senses of efficacy on the TELLs. Rick, though usually on the high end of confidence in his ability to differentiate for ELL students according to previous comments and the TELLs

reporting, admitted that “To be honest with you, ELL-specific, sure. I'll admit I'm behind the power curve because my co-teacher has been doing the ELL work.”

Answers to the Research Questions

The research question is the basis of the entire phenomenon exploring the lived experiences of classroom high school teachers working with ELLs. These experiences were analyzed from a point of understanding the background of the participants in their own educational experiences as students, their journey in becoming a teacher, and their philosophy of education. These aspects were important as research supports the impact of prior experiences affecting one's perceptions and experiences with a specific phenomenon (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2017; Gleeson & Davis, 2016; Pettit, 2011). The main research question for this study was “How do select high school academic content teachers describe their experiences differentiating instruction and assessment for English language learners in central Virginia?” The answer to this question is best approached through a discussion of the sub-questions. The sub-questions are as follows: How do participants describe their attitudes and beliefs about differentiating instruction and assessment for ELLs? How do the participants describe their sense of self-efficacy for differentiating instruction and assessment for ELLs? How do the participants describe their experiences with providing socio-cultural learning opportunities for ELL's within the classroom?

Sub-Question One

Sub-question one was: How do participants describe their attitudes and beliefs about differentiating instruction and assessment for ELLs? This question addressed the underlying attitudes and beliefs held by participants that might affect the phenomenon for each participant. Attitudes and beliefs are an underlying element of efficacy Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2017; Gleeson & Davis, 2016; Pettit, 2011) and are considered a predictor of future behavior (Ajzen, 1991).

Thus, this question was important to an analysis of the experiences of the participants. The themes that developed regarding attitudes and beliefs are basically defined as positive and negative. Positive themes were expressed as feelings that differentiation is already a part of practice, positive personal experience with other cultures, the resiliency of the students, outside issues faced by the students, the intelligence of students, and a belief that all children can learn. Negative themes were focused on the lack of ability and language on the part of the student, belief that learning is the responsibility of the student, not the teacher, time constraints, staffing constraints, and to do the right thing requires a great deal of work above and beyond what is normally required. Most participants fell on either positive or negative; however, some participants were contradictory about their attitudes and beliefs. Throughout the theme development and triangulation process, there was a relationship between attitudes, efficacy, and practice.

Many participants indicated that they were comfortable with differentiating lessons and assessments for all students and, therefore, felt positive about doing so for ELLs. As Linda said, “I think it's definitely necessary, and I don't think of it as a burden or, I mean, it's no different than differentiating for any other students.” Shannon also shared, “I used a lot of the modifications and accommodations that we do with special ed, I use with ELL a lot of times.” Susan, too, felt that “They're all kids. They're all here. They all have to be taught.” Perhaps Rick said it most succinctly when he remarked, “That is what we do.”

In further support of positive attitudes and beliefs, several participants shared experiences living in other countries and developing a deep respect for them. Alan's experiences in learning to communicate in foreign languages were an example he presented to illustrate his understanding of the difficulties faced by ELL students.

Being over in Italy and dealing with the French and the Belgians. Most of them speak English, but some don't, but you've just got to-- Just try to communicate. You know what I mean? It's a human nature to me. It's a human nature thing, where you're-- communication. Hand and arm signals.

Rick's experiences with educational systems in other countries through his own children were another example of how these experiences contributed to his positive attitude toward working with students from other cultures. He also shared a positive experience observing instruction in the Philippines and the relaxed and natural attitude toward differentiation that informed his own attitudes. "It speaks to that whole culture piece. What we have to take into account when children come to us from other nationalities, countries, languages, that they have a different way of learning."

Erik's understanding was rooted deeply in his own personal experiences as a minority culture as a child. He said, "Everywhere I went, I was a minority until I came back to the United States." Having experiences with second language learning one's own family was also a contributor to positive attitudes toward ELLs. Bridgette explained, "My father came over to the United States when he was 17, he didn't speak a lick of English at all, and got a job at a factory and-- a chocolate factory, and he had no idea what he was doing, and thankfully, somebody took the time to help him learn the language."

A respect for the resiliency of the ELL student is another example of positive attitudes of teachers and how they affect teaching and learning for ELLs. Some participants indicated an understanding that the issues facing these students are deeply rooted in the life experiences of the students. Shannon identified it as, "This isn't just a language issue." Bridgette, too, said, "I

think we need a lot of support, school-wide, talent wide, a lot of support because there's a lot going on outside of school that they're having to deal with.”

A belief that all children can learn was supportive of positive attitudes toward teaching ELLs. Bridgette’s remarks, “We need to provide every opportunity because it's not like they aren't intelligent, they're in a completely different country,” were supported by Linda, who said, “I think given the right environment and the right resources that any child is able to make progress and learn.” Susan may have said it best when she stated, “They’re all here. They’re all kids.”

Conversely, there were negative expressions of attitude toward the teaching of ELLs. Limited English proficiency as a deficit and a lack of pre-requisite skills and overall ability of ELLs, lack of time to plan and lack of staff to support in the classroom, too much work to differentiate, and an overall belief that learning is the responsibility of the student were the primary contributors to those attitudes. For example, Tom wondered, “Am I doing a kid a favor if I say have this version of the lab, it's written in Spanish and this version of lab it's written in English?” is one example. Linda’s expressed frustration by saying, “the rest of the class finished those books two weeks ago, and they're still reading theirs ...” and “I'm not sure what we'll do with them when the rest of the class is reading *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *Romeo and Juliet*” are two more. Linda basically admits defeat, “in my experience, the ELLs that I've had aren't anywhere near the level of the other students that I'm teaching. So, in order to try to incorporate them together doesn't seem as feasible.” Gayle expressed a negative attitude in saying, “trying to teach him the grammar and stuff was difficult because he didn't know the language at all,” and Erik said, “But I don't have the means to differentiate language like some places can” and “They didn't know the most simple algebra.” Gayle exhibited negativity in the future of ELLs by

saying, “his job was going to be going back and working with mom and dad at the Chinese restaurant.”

Lack of planning time and support was another negative attitude promotor for working with ELL students. As Gayle said, “You’ve got to do a lot of digging, and that's something that a lot of teachers just don't have time for.” This was reinforced by Susan, who spoke about having to differentiate for ELLs, “Because I've not had that. So, I've been very fortunate.” Gayle also added, “I saw that there was a whole lot of needs that we weren't going to be able to meet. Not without a whole heck of a lot of help,” continuing, “we try to do everything we can, but in a classroom, there's just not enough hands.” Linda added, “if I had all the time I needed, I could do it.”

Another negative aspect of differentiating for ELLs was expressed as too much work. From Linda, we hear, “We're already expected to differentiate for all the kids in the classroom as it is, because they are at such varying levels, to add in one more thing just sometimes feels like it's just never going to happen. And I think part of it, too, is it's not like I can just differentiate a lesson for ELLs and have that because every ELL is different. They're all at different levels, they're even coming from different places, even if they speak the same language, so what works for one won't necessarily work for another.” This was supported by Gayle when she said, “Whether we like it or not, that's a part of our lives, and we've got to.” She also went on to say that “We're not doing a really good job of it.”

One final negative theme that emerged from the interviews regarding attitude was that of learning is the responsibility of the student solely. According to Erik,

I am a facilitator in that situation where here is the information. It is your responsibility to read, to interpret, to absorb, to listen, to play with the videos and do the simulations.

That is your responsibility to do that.

Gayle concurred saying, “if I make a big project then you need to be responsible for it.”

Erik went on to say, “I’ve actually had students just tell me, “I don’t learn that way. You have to do this for me.” And I said, “Have you ever tried to do it this way?” “I don’t learn that way. You have to do it--” because they’re unwilling to even figure out that path beginning.”

Despite evoking some negative attitudes, the themes that emerged in response to sub-question one were predominantly positive. While limited English proficiency was seen as a deficit that caused many difficulties on the part of the teacher, the participants held mostly positive attitudes about the experience. They were strong in their overall belief that all children can learn, teachers need to teach the kids that are present, and ELLs were no different than any other child with a specific learning need.

Sub-Question Two

Sub-question three was: How do the participants describe their sense of self-efficacy for differentiating instruction and assessment for ELLs? This sub-question addressed the individual participants' sense of efficacy in working with ELLs. This question was important to address one of the theoretical frameworks of this study sense of efficacy as framed by Bandura (1977). This question was answered primarily through an analysis of the interview data and TELLS survey results. Certain factors influenced the sense of efficacy for each individual. These factors led to the themes that developed. The factors affecting the sense of efficacy included availability of bilingual students in the classroom, support of the ELL teacher, the language proficiency level of the student, and translation resources. The themes that emerged were

centered on the dependence of efficacy on supports available and strategies known.

Having a reliable bilingual student in the class to assist the lower proficiency student increased senses of efficacy. Erik described feeling more confident with such support when he stated, “It was a class of 30, so it was very difficult for that one-on-one time. But what with those two, what would happen was Juan would help Steven out a lot. And they buddied up. (ibid) I had more of a rapport with them, one-on-one rapport with them because it was a smaller class.” This was also a factor for Rick, “We do try to pair them up with a partner... That just makes life so much easier.” Shannon concurred, “if one student understands what I’m trying to say, then I’ll sometimes have them explain in Spanish.” Alan also felt that “sitting them close to somebody that can interpret some things,” was beneficial.

Another factor that affected the sense of efficacy of the teachers involved was that of the support of the ELL teacher. Most felt that their efficacy was higher when they collaborated with the ELL teacher. According to Shannon, “I like coming down to work with the ELL teacher So, I feel pretty good about it.” Erik shared the same sentiment, “It would be very difficult. It would be very, very much an uphill battle. I know that the resources are out there, but I would have to hunt for them and get people like the ELL teacher to help me out.” Gayle, too, credited collaboration with the ELL teacher for increasing her sense of efficacy, “Well, I rely on the ELL teacher a lot. Because in the end, she’s the expert.” Linda also agreed with this, “this year being in the library and being closer to the ELL teacher, being able to talk more about where they’re coming from and what they’re going through is really I think enlightening.”

Efficacy levels for many of the participants were linked to the proficiency level of the student. Students with higher English proficiency levels increased the confidence of the classroom teacher. Donna shared, “I think it depends on what level they’re at.” She expanded by

saying, “I think I would struggle more with ones that have more of an English problem, especially since I do a lot of stories.” Gayle agreed, “Here's the thing it depends on what level they are. I mean really. I mean, if there is a limited English. If they have a real issue, a real deficit then I am a fish out of water. I mean, I'm just absolutely feel lost.” Erik too said, “If I had a level two or level three ELL student in physics, I would be very, very hard-pressed to be able to give them the same level of instruction as I would an English speaker.”

The final factor affecting the sense of efficacy for teachers was the level of reliance they placed on translation materials into the home language of the student. For Erik, “there's a limited amount of instruction that I use that has been translated into Spanish” and this was a cause of his low sense of efficacy. Tom, too, was reliant on translation to increase his confidence; “I did the Quizlet things. I did Spanish versions. And I've actually never had to deal with any student who wasn't ELL with Spanish.” Bridgette said, “... I guess I would need a way to translate the activities.” She went on to wonder, “I don't think his textbook comes in his native language,” speaking of a Russian-speaking student. These participants all felt that the most important accommodation for ELLs was the providing of translated documents and teaching in their native languages. They also expressed a feeling of intimidation and insecurity in interacting with second language learners.

The factors addressed above directly led to the development of the themes. The theme most prevalent in answering this research sub-question was that of confidence in knowing what strategies are appropriate for ELL instruction and differentiation. An individual might claim a high sense of efficacy associated with one factor then also allude to an underlying low sense of ability to support these students.

Participants who felt they knew the correct strategies felt a higher sense of efficacy than those who did not. For example, explaining the program he uses, Alan said, “I’m confident. I think we’re making a difference. I’m comfortable.” Rick, too, in speaking of his strategies, shared, “I do pretty well. I have to change-- I have to change the accommodations of the strategy depending on who I have in my class.” Shannon explained her strategies as “with my instruction, I do the same. Because, again, with that, I use a lot of pictures. I use a lot of graphs. I use a lot.”

In contrast, other participants were concerned by a lack of strategies for differentiating instruction and shared lower senses of efficacy. Erik shared in regard to his sense of efficacy, “Poor because of resources, the availability of resources for different things.” Erik felt so strongly about his lack of strategies saying, “let’s say that here it is, the first day of August, and we’re all back to school, and I get my roster, and the ELL teacher comes and tells me that I have two ELL students in my class. I’d be going like, ‘Oh boy. Here we go.’” He further said, “And I’ve failed at it. I mean, I really did, because I don’t know what else to do because I don’t have the resources available, the appropriate resources available to help out that student.” Rick admitted that “To be honest with you, ELL-specific, sure. I’ll admit I’m behind the power curve because my co-teacher has been doing the ELL work.”

The answers to sub-question two regarding efficacy indicated that there is a strong dependence on many factors that affect a teacher’s sense of efficacy. Teachers feel intimidated and insecure in dealing with lower-level English proficiency students due to a lack of communication skills and knowledge of appropriate strategies. They are also dependent on the support of the ELL teacher and translation capabilities in order to differentiate for ELLs.

Sub-Question Three

The third sub-question was: How do the participants describe their experiences with providing socio-cultural learning opportunities for ELLs within the classroom? This sub-question was on the basis of the actual actions of participants in differentiating instruction and assessment for ELLs. The question specifically was asked in the form of questions regarding opportunities for socio-cultural learning opportunities as advocated by Vygotsky (1978), a second underlying theoretical framework for this study and instructional strategies used. From this discussion, the theme of efficacy as a result of knowledge of strategies helps to answer this question. Culturally and linguistically responsive teaching strategies with an emphasis on the cultural impact on the brain, as defined by Hammond and Jackson (2015) was a common response by the participants. This was most likely a result of the fact that all of them were involved in a school-wide discussion on this book. Participants shared their knowledge of strategies, including differentiation for linguistic needs, experiential learning experiences, and guided teaching-learning practices. Some participants were comfortable using more traditional teaching strategies such as lecture, notetaking, and assigned bookwork exclusively, and these are expressed in the text that follows.

The primary responses in the interviews addressing sub-question three was that of culturally responsive teaching practices. As stated earlier, due to the required district-wide reading of “Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain” by Hammond and Jackson (2015), the participants were familiar with the research that supports socio-cultural learning opportunities and related them in the light of their effectiveness for all students as well as ELLs.

Several of the participants shared experiences in cultures, not their own and how this made them feel and as examples of their understanding of the need to recognize culture in teaching and interacting with students. Linda, speaking about being in France, said, “The way

that people responded to me could automatically tell that I was American even before I opened my mouth, which just fascinates me.” This gave her empathy for immigrants “So this is what it feels like to be the minority. To maybe be the only person in the subway, or in a room, or as far as you can see, that looks like you do, that speaks like you do, that thinks like you do.” She could empathize with the loneliness and singularity that she felt immigrants experience and wanted to ensure they do not experience that in her classes. As has been shared, Erick spent much of his formative years living abroad. This experience informed his approach to culturally responsive approaches saying, “out of self-preservation, to incorporate myself into the culture, not be the outsider, to work extra hard to be accepted into whatever that culture was, ... at the same time, to understand both.” Erik also shared, “You don't want to meet somebody and immediately put them off. You don't want a child to walk into your room and you try to say something that's inviting and wind up alienating them because you said the wrong thing,” he shared.

Alan credited his experiences in other countries as giving him more of an understanding of the need for socio-cultural empathy when working with students,

I learned so much from that. And then how does it feel to be, say, Puerto Rican and live in New York? I never got to look at it from that perspective. What was it like growing up right when Castro was taking power, and your dad was not part of that? Was on the opposite side, and you watch people get gunned down in the streets?

Rick went on to say, “What we have to take into account when children come to us from other nationalities, countries, languages, that they have a different way of learning.” Linda also addressed the effects of cultural adaptation and learning,

Try to put yourself in their shoes and think about how difficult it must be to be in a completely foreign place with a foreign language and foreign customs, and foreign food.

Just everything is different. How hard that would be.

Bridgette felt that “I need to build that relationship to have, and know, something about the culture in order to build that relationship.”

A few participants had developed an understanding of the theories on the effects of culture on the brain and spoke to that. Tom said, “We have our own technique up there that I think stimulates the brain and gets everybody moving, and it accommodates everybody, too. From IEP students to ELL students to-- we make it all work.” Brigette spoke on brain research and said, “I did a little bit of study. Of course, it's still relatively new how the brain learns and stuff. And when you're under stress, your working memory, and everything, it's not working at full potential. So, I try to alleviate that piece.” Erik spoke to the need to support ELLs by saying,

I just need to make sure that everything I do and say I can do and say at a level that is not too far above where they are. If they're here, it needs to be just a little bit above so that it kind of stretches but not way up here to where they're just like, throw their hands up, I have no idea. I quit.

One important aspect of socio-cultural learning theory is the element of social interaction in the learning process. For most participants social interaction as part of the instructional process was valued. Examples of the use of socio-cultural practices can be found in Bridgette's statement,

They do get to work with partners and check each other. We go outside for a lot of scavenger hunts that are review activities, and I feel like that's helpful because they can

kind of move around and discuss things within groups that maybe a classroom doesn't work out as well.

She further stated,

I have enough whiteboards for each of my classes to all be up at the board at the same time. So, they do a lot of board work where they can coach each other and I just kind of sit in the middle of the room and call out problems, that kind of stuff. We play Kahoot (a game) for competition.

Tom too shared the use of socio-cultural strategies,

Then we'll do some lab or activity to reinforce that. Or sometimes maybe we'll do the lab activity and then the explanation afterwards. I'll say that's sort of one, two thing is the main thing I'm doing every day. Or either covering a new thing, which is more me, and then student question sort of stuff. I try to give them much of open-ended questions, and then we reinforce and back it up with the activity, like the hands-on thing. So, I'll say that's primary way, for sure.

Rick's total approach to learning is in a teamwork setting,

We try to pair people up together in teams depending on what their strengths are. If a person has natural leadership ability, we make them leader of the team. If we have those kids that are good at organizing and planning things.

Gayle also was a practitioner saying, "So, my class is usually a little noisier than everybody else's only because I want them to work together. I want them to. That's why I have tables instead of desks because I want them to ask each other." Susan had this to say on the subject,

Education as a whole, is going more that way, but also the kids, they're learning better that way. As a whole group, they're learning. It gives them a little bit of a chance to demonstrate what they know and that feel safe kind of thing about it.

She also respected that individual choice aids many students, "Okay, you work better with this person? Okay. As long as you're working there." She went on to say,

My students work together every day. So, they go to the board in pairs. They work on their little projects; they can work together. We quiz sometimes together, testing totally individual but the working together, the collaboration, most of the time in my classes, they do have assigned seating. But I allow them to choose their own partners if they're going to the board.

For Donna, there were some negative feelings regarding the use of social contexts.

Preferring more structured approaches, she gave this example,

We'll do, I think, pair-share, think about it, pair up with one person, make a bigger group, and then, share with the whole class. What I usually do is, I use the sticks of destiny (popsicle sticks with student names on them to determine who speaks next).

Speaking of ELLs specifically, Donna said, "Yeah. If I have an ELL kid, I always liked to team them with a kid who did well but wasn't super vocal so that they wouldn't get overpowered. So, they wouldn't get shouted down kind of."

Alan also used the social learning approach saying,

Lab day, you'll usually do some type of team building activity, but we also reinforce the things like, for instance, one group got to build rope bridges and [inaudible]. We use the class time to do that but it also teaches-- they like learning those skills.

He continued, “We do that all the time. That's the way we operate up there, for the most part. Virtually every class. They are broken down into (teams).” Shannon as well was an advocate for social learning in that she said, “I'm very big on group work.”

On the other hand, Linda was not comfortable with social learning contexts and said,

My experience has been that the students, somehow, seem to get more off track when they work together. Even given a very clear goal and a specified amount of time and the necessary resources, when they congregate, they seem to want to talk about other things. I know, all the research and the professional development that I've been to says, they need to talk about what they're learning, it helps them process it and remember it, and I believe all that. But I haven't quite figured out how to put them in groups so that they can kind of manage themselves to do what's needed to make that happen. I mean, I have small classes and I still have a hard time. Although, I do have a semi-special population. But that's been my experience.

When asked about specific instructional strategies to determine the extent that best practices for supporting ELLs are present in the participant's lessons, the replies varied. Differentiation in some form, hands-on learning, guided practice, and the use of the first language was the most common. Other methods less appropriate for ELLs were shared as well, including lecture, note-taking, book work, Socratic method, story-telling, and independent seatwork.

Differentiation was a predominant strategy discussed by the participants. Shannon shared her methods, “Vocabulary that is more accessible, depending on the level that they're on graphic organizers, modified assignments as far as reading assignments. Like when we have novels, doing ones that are more accessible . . . so much scaffolding.” She went on to say,

First, pictures to help explain vocabulary. One of our former students, he didn't have a history with something he'd never studied. So, he didn't have the context for anything like that. But I can remember doing timelines to show him wars. And that once he understood when the wars were, then able to put things in between or stuff like that. So, I try to do a lot of visual pieces to help. Shannon was willing to try whatever works.

Bridgette, in speaking of differentiation, offered only that she “used really cool activities on Desmos that are really interactive for that class and fun.” Linda explained her thoughts on differentiation as,

Try to build baby steps and then put those pieces together at the end for a final product. So, for the essay they're writing now, we started with one paragraph. No, let me back up. We started with pre-writing and so they did a chart to help them answer the prompt and then we talked about the prompt and what it meant and how you create a thesis from that and then after that, we did one paragraph and after that we did the second paragraph and after that we did the third paragraph and today they were revising and editing. So, baby steps. Kind of small chunks of time to work on it.

She also uses one-on-one conferencing. So more specific guidance on what they've done and what they need help with.

Gayle considered scaffolding a form of differentiation. “I like the scaffolding; I think that that helps a lot when kids are helping each other.” Tom mentioned that he differentiated for vocabulary learning. “One of my specific things is, we have a lot of specialized vocabulary. Let's do that. Unfortunately, a ton of it, it's Latin-based. And so, I have all my prefixes and suffixes (posted on the wall).” Another strategy that was discussed by the participants was the use of guided practice. For Linda, she said, “I don't lecture a lot. I try to do 10 or 15-minute

mini-lessons giving them small chunks of information at a time. Going over examples and then trying to have them do it more on their own.” Erik’s interpretation was,

So, let's just take a topic. All right. In a class, topic A, how to push button No. All right. So, I do some lecture. I try to minimize the amount of lecture that I do because I know that they don't want to sit here and just listen to me talk. So, I'll explain the purpose of the No button, how the No button works and how to operate the No button. Then I'm like, ‘Okay. So, here are some things that I want you to do with the No button. I want you to-- everybody pick it up, smell it, taste it, touch it, feel it, push the button, listen to it, and figure out-- you try to figure out how it works. So, I've given you just enough maybe to kind of guide your curiosity. And then I give it to them and let them tear it apart. And even in physics, not physically tear it apart, but mentally tear apart the concepts and then put them back together in a way that they can understand them. So, my lectures are very-- not real in-depth. They just touch across the top of the topics. Just so that really kind of introduce some of the vocabulary and what have you. And I always try to relate it to something that they will understand.

For Susan, guided practice was described as,

I give them a graph and, Okay, so what do you know? What do you think? What can you tell? What do you guess based on what we've done or what you've learned in the past, answer these questions? So, I don't really want to say its lecture and notes. More, maybe guided learning.

Another strategy that the participants discussed was that of hands on learning opportunities. Donna said,

I'm kind of a touchy person also, maybe not huggy. But when we're talking about muscles, and a kid is like, 'Well, I don't remember that muscle as an article of term.' And I'll say, 'Is it okay if I touch you?' And if they say, 'Yes,' and I'll be like-- and I'll grab them and I'm like, 'Okay. Feel that muscle? It's the one right underneath it.' I'll say, 'Put your hand right here on my knee. Do you feel that? That's that tendon moving in there.' And with the body, it's so easy to do that.

As mentioned previously, Tom used labs, and Rick and Alan prefer active team building activities. Use of the first language as a strategy to help ELLs elicited the following responses. Bridgette admitted that she relies on her first language in the form of translation applications. She stated, "And so the instruction for him, we're using a lot of-- we're using a lot of Google Translate, to be honest." She also shared, "I don't think his textbook comes in his native language." Linda also shared, "Because they seem to have good reading ability in Spanish. I've noticed that they're moving through books, and they're doing that kind of stuff. So, if they can read it in their own language and then discuss it in English, then, I think that will be beneficial." For Donna,

He was nervous about it, and the first things we were talking about was anatomical position and where the hands are and that kind of and I said how the hand is 'manus' which is like 'manus' in Spanish. And he kind of had his head down and I remember his head come up and he was like, 'What'?

The majority of responses shared revealed that many of the instructional strategies were more closely linked to lecture and note-taking and independent learning approaches. Susan said, "So it's kind of boring sometimes, but I do a lot of examples, and I provide them with kind of

fill-in notes, and then we go back through and spiral a lot of material, a lot of review.” Donna shared,

I do it very traditionally on the board. I write on the board. I don't do PowerPoints. So, it's like we do the notes. Gayle explained, So for instance, there's a certain amount of note-taking they have to do only because it's learning about a new culture or I mean, something that's alien to them and it's very history-driven, so we pair history and English together so that being the case, there are a lot of times they'll-- I do have them do some work out of the book where they actually go in and start analyzing dates and figuring out things like questions I think that our book handles it really well where it starts saying we've got this timeline, okay. Based on the timeline, if this date hadn't happened, what would have been the result? And so, they have to actively think about it. So that they do straight from the book because I think it does just as well as I could.

Erik discussed using the Socratic method,

So, that picks their interest or gets them to the questions that maybe, at one time, they didn't realize they had. And then once they're interested, it's easy to feed them because they just open their brain up and absorb.

Donna agreed with Erik,

I do a lot of storytelling, and the kids love it. They love it. I guess one of the reasons why I like anatomy, I have had a lot of injuries. But we almost always will start with a quiz and work independently.

In summary, the themes that emerged from the interviews regarding sub-question three revolved the actual actions of participants in differentiating instruction and assessment for ELLs. The predominant discussion centered around culturally and linguistically responsive teaching

strategies with an emphasis on the cultural impact on the brain. The use of socio-cultural learning opportunities as advocated by Vygotsky (1978), followed by best practices for instructional strategies including differentiation for linguistic needs, experiential learning experiences, and guided teaching-learning practices were also shared. For many participants, using more traditional teaching strategies such as lecture, notetaking, and assigned bookwork solely were still prevalent practices.

Summary of Answers to the Research Questions

In summary, select high school academic content teachers described their experiences differentiating instruction and assessment for English language learners in central Virginia in very complicated terms. The experience is a complicated emotional, practical, cultural, and personal experience. Teachers describe feelings related to positive attitudes and beliefs about the abilities of all children to learn coupled with negative feelings of inadequacies in limited English proficient students. Teachers also share feelings of insecurity and intimidation when working with students who they cannot understand or who cannot understand them. The participants also feel a range of levels of efficacy to teach ELLs effectively dependent on the presence of certain factors and supports. These ranges of efficacy vary within the individual and seem to depend on the context in which they are discussed.

When it comes to the participants' description of using socio-cultural learning opportunities, most were in favor; however, of those, they were more attuned to the provision of these opportunities as a whole class approach and not one that is differentiated to the specific needs and allowances necessary for lower level ELLs to participate. There was little shared in the way of specific ELL practices that are recommended according to the most current literature

on the subject. Many participants shared that their most used methods of instruction remain the lecture note-taking methodology that is most difficult for ELL students.

Summary

In summary, Chapter Four presented a textual description of the participants' demographics. The chapter also revealed the results of the TELLs to determine the sense of efficacy of the participants in teaching and differentiating for ELL students. The TELLs analysis was followed by a presentation of the documents submitted and the analysis of that data. The chapter closed with the analysis of the formal interview data and themes developed.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

ELLs are considered the fastest-growing population of public school students in the U.S. This population of learners requires differentiated strategies and modifications to be academically successful (Kanno & Kangas, 2014; Menken et al., 2012; Navarez-La Torre, 2012). Currently, ELLs represent 4.4 million of the K-12 student population and are predicted to represent 25% by the year 2025 (Kanno & Kanga, 2014; Menken et al., 2012; Nevarez-LaTorre, 2012). As the number of ELL students rises in public school systems, the achievement gap for this population continues to be widening and high school dropout rates are increasing (Cadelle-Hemphill & Rahman, 2011; DelliCarpini, & Alonso, 2014; Gleeson, & Davison, 2016; Menken et al., 2012; National Education Association, 2017, U.S. Department of Education, 2020).

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the experiences of core academic subject high school teachers with differentiating instruction and assessment for ELLs in central Virginia. Core academic subjects which contribute to a well-rounded education as defined by the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 were generally defined as English, math, science, fine arts, foreign language, CTE, Health & PE, ROTC, and social studies (ESSA (2015)).

The purpose of this study was to describe the experiences of core academic subject high school teachers with differentiating instruction and assessment for ELLs in central Virginia.

There was one research question and three sub-questions:

RQ1: How do select high school academic content teachers describe their experiences differentiating instruction and assessment for ELLs in central Virginia?

SQ1: How do participants describe their attitudes and beliefs about differentiating instruction and assessment for ELLs?

SQ2: How do the participants describe their sense of efficacy for differentiating instruction and assessment for ELLs?

SQ3: How do the participants describe their experiences with providing socio-cultural learning opportunities for ELLs within the classroom?

The main theory that guided this research was that of socio-cultural theory as defined by Vygotsky (1978). Socio-cultural theory purports that the background and culture of the learner must be considered in order for the teacher to plan activities within the zone of proximal development in order for learning to take place (Vygotsky, 1978). A second theory that contributed to the theoretical framework was Albert Bandura's (1989) social cognitive theory which addressed the relationship between sense of efficacy and performance of certain behaviors. This chapter presents a summary of the findings, including triangulation of the data, a discussion of the data, implications of the results, delimitations, and limitations, and recommendations for future research.

Summary of Findings

A summary of the findings begins with a summation of the demographics of the participants. Participants ranged in age from 26 to over 56, with females representing 60% of the group. The participant pool was lacking in racial diversity as all identified as White/Caucasian, and ethnic diversity was limited to one participant identifying as White/Native American and one White/Italian American. Teaching experience ranged from four to 25 years in the classroom, and all were currently teaching or had taught ELL students. Sixty percent of the participants held a master's degree. The focus of the study was to determine how these individuals provided

answers to the central research question of How do select high school academic content teachers describe their experiences differentiating instruction and assessment for ELLs in central Virginia? A summary of the sub-questions is necessary before addressing this central and focusing question.

Sub-question one was designed to address the attitudes and beliefs held by participants in planning and differentiating instruction for ELLs. Sub-question one was: How do participants describe their attitudes and beliefs about differentiating instruction and assessment for ELLs? There were two themes that emerged from the formal interview data that of positive attitudes and negative attitudes. Positive attitudes were expressed toward differentiation as an instructional practice for all students. Participants, for the most part, felt this was a necessary part of planning. Positive attitudes and beliefs were also expressed toward the interaction with other cultures and respecting the fact that all children can, and should, be given the opportunity to learn. Negative attitudes were revealed towards the student's lack of proficiency in English, the time constraints for planning, lack of support staff available, and the amount of extra work required to plan and differentiate for English proficiency.

Sub-question two sought to identify the teacher's sense of efficacy in instructing, planning and differentiating for ELLs. How do the participants describe their sense of self-efficacy for differentiating instruction and assessment for ELLs? The results of the TELLs indicated an overall moderate sense of efficacy among the participants prior to the interviews. The TELLs data were grouped according to the description of the teacher's ability to provide the following: language support, specific supports, behavior/expectations, training/community support, and assessment. An average of all categories revealed a moderate sense of efficacy with

the exception of specific supports, which was high. Only one participant indicated a consistently low sense of efficacy in all the categories.

From the formal interview analysis, themes emerged regarding the participant's lack of confidence in having the strategies to differentiate for language proficiency insecurity regarding the language barrier. Feelings of insecurity and frustration at having to plan and differentiate for linguistic needs were also dominant. Overall, there was a sense of doubt among all participants that they were able to meet the needs of ELL students properly. Many of the participants expressed feelings of intimidation when dealing with students who were fluent in other languages.

For the third sub-question the study asked: How do the participants describe their experiences with providing socio-cultural learning opportunities for ELLs within the classroom? This question was analyzed using the results from the formal interviews and document data analysis in the form of redacted ELL student plans, teacher lesson plans, examples of differentiated assignments and assessments, and redacted samples of student work. The document analysis beginning with the ELL student plans revealed that the students in the participants' classrooms were 85% male, with 72% identified as LEP and the rest FLEP. Sixty percent of the LEP students were considered to be at the entering or beginning levels of English acquisition according to the WIDA test results. All of the ELD plans for these students revealed that the student required modifications and accommodations to instruction, assignments, and assessments. There were no findings presented for the teacher lesson plans, examples of differentiated assignments, examples of student work, nor assessments as these documents were not made available. Other documents that were presented by participants were a poem and a graphic, each of which explained the feelings of two separate participants toward scaffolding as a

necessary practice for humanitarian reasons. Another participant shared a story that he identified with his respect for other cultures.

Interview data for this question was centered on practices of using socio-cultural learning practices and culturally responsive teaching practices. The faculty at the site were involved in reading the book “Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain,” by Hammond and; therefore, participants were aware of the terminology and theories regarding the use of these approaches. Interestingly, while participants expressed a belief in socio-cultural learning practices, the examples that emerged from the interviews contradicted a true understanding and comfort level with instituting these practices. For the most part, responses reflected a practice of using best practice activities in the form of ‘think pair share’ and other popular activities to increase interaction among students; however, little was expressed that specifically addressed these strategies and practices as they relate to the English language learner.

The central research question asked: How do select high school academic content teachers describe their experiences differentiating instruction and assessment for ELLs in central Virginia? The answer to this question is a summation of the sub-question responses and other data gleaned in the TELLS analysis, document analysis, and analysis of formal interviews. The answer is best presented as a triangulation of the data, which also serves to address the trustworthiness of the study results.

Triangulation of the Data

In a triangulation of the three forms of data collected, the TELLS, document, and interview analysis, conflicting results emerged. While the TELLS data presented an overall moderate sense of efficacy among the participants, document analysis and interview responses were, at times, contradictory to those responses. In addressing efficacy, in particular,

participants for whom scores were moderate to high on the TELLS share feelings of insecurity and doubt at their ability during the interviews. Furthermore, the lack of document data provided as compared to the ELL plans obtained for students in the participants' classes also caused an apparent contradiction to emerge. This was true as well for the ability of teachers to provide CRTS and socio-cultural learning opportunities. While their belief in these practices was strong, the evidence of the use of these practices was, at times, contradictory: therefore, a summary of the findings for the overall research question is that the experience of teaching ELL students for high school core content teachers is a confusing one at best.

Discussion

In order to discuss the findings of this study in relation to the empirical and theoretical literature reviewed, it is important to first address epoché. As the researcher, I had to address my own role in the site location and prior relationships with the participants. As the ELL specialist for the site studied, I had intimate knowledge of the level of differentiation and modification provided by many teachers in the building. Having such knowledge provided me with preconceived beliefs about the participants prior to the study. Therefore, it was vital that I bracketed and set aside my personal beliefs and biases in order to analyze the data as it presented itself objectively. This was done through journaling and evaluating my feelings prior to and after each interview. I worked very hard to assess my feelings and allow myself to acknowledge and contain any positive or negative feelings I might have harbored in order to allow myself to listen to the participants during the interviews truly. It is my belief that I was able to do this as I found myself with renewed understandings and respect for the participants despite any previous interactions and biases I may have held.

Discussions and Implications Related to the Theoretical Framework

The two theories that guided this study were the socio-cultural theory by Vygotsky (1978) and the social cognitive theory by Bandura (1989). These theories were appropriate as they both attributed learning to social and cultural interactions between and among teachers and students with the added factor of sense of efficacy for teachers as an integral factor. The education of the ELL is rooted in socially constructed paradigms.

Theoretical Discussion

From the data, there appears to be a strong belief among the participants in the importance of Culturally Responsive teaching practices as defined by Hammond & Jackson (2015). The teachers at the site were engaged in a faculty-wide book study of Hammond's book "Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain." Therefore, it was interesting to see the enthusiasm with which most participants embraced the concepts and ideas in the book. However, there did seem to be a disconnect between this enthusiasm and practice. Much emphasis was placed by the participants on respect and understanding for culture as opposed to the actual social interaction and instructional needs of linguistically diverse students. Many participants shared a sense of fear of being unable to communicate with students for whom English is not their first language. They were also unsure of how to make content accessible for non-English speaking students and feared they were not able to meet the needs of ELLs. At the core of the socio-cultural theory is the concept of mediation of the human mind through the support and scaffolds provided by an adult or a more competent learner to the student (Lantolf, 2009). In the area of second language acquisition, this mediation can reform the mental system and affect one's self-concept (Lantolf, 2009). While the participants understood this theoretically, they shared insecurity in being able to actually provide this to ELLs.

According to Vygotsky (1986), “The true direction of the development of thinking is not from the individual to the social, but from the social to the individual” (p. 35). Children must be active participants in teaching and learning by being in a symbiotic relationship in which teachers both learn from the student and draw them into a deeper relationship with the cultural world surrounding them (Vygotsky, 1978). Again, the results indicated that teachers were not confident in their ability to provide language-rich learning opportunities through socially mediated learning activities which is the basis of the theoretical framework (Turuk, 2008; Vygotsky, 1978). According to Vygotsky (1978), children do not learn by being told what to know, but by a series of complex and dynamic relations involving developmental processes and learning activities. Again, there was no strong evidence of this as a practice in the study. Most teachers were still reliant on the lecture note-taking format in their instructional practices.

In differentiation, according to Vygotsky’s identification of the student’s zone of proximal development, the teacher must be able to plan and implement lessons that will lead to the next stage the learner is ready to progress to (Vygotsky, 1978). The data, in this case, did not present strong evidence that the participants were able to provide differentiated lessons and activities for linguistically diverse students. In agreement with Vygotsky, Albert Bandura’s social cognitive theory promotes cognition and social interaction as the fundamental basis for learning (Bandura, 1989). According to social cognitive theory, people “contribute to their life path through their motivation, behavior, and development in a reciprocal network of interactions” (Bandura, 1989, p. 8). The social cognitive theory promotes that cognition and social interaction are the fundamental basis for learning. Characterized by the basic capabilities of (a) symbolic capability including cognitive schema and language acquisition, (b) vicarious capability, which opposes stimulus-response learning in that people are able to learn from one

another, (c) observation and abstract modeling, (d) forethought capability, (e) self-regulatory capability, (f) and self-reflective capability (including self-efficacy appraisal), self-efficacy is the foremost determinant in human behavior, as it requires a sense of ability in order to determine whether a certain behavior is produced (Bandura, 1977). The data from the TELLs and interviews showed interesting conflicts in the sense of efficacy for the participants.

The data analysis from the TELLs revealed that in a self-reporting survey, the participants, as a whole, expressed mostly moderate levels of efficacy in the areas surveyed for the instruction of ELLs. However, the interviews revealed more insecurity, self-doubt, and a sense of assuming that things just happened for students without much in the way of changes to instruction and practices on the part of the teacher. In fact, the participants did not provide examples of differentiated lesson plans, tests, or student work.

In analyzing the application of socio-cultural theory and socio-cognitive theory in the experiences of the participants with the phenomenon, it is clear that while there is a strong belief among the participants in the theoretical application of these concepts, the practice is still not the norm. There continues to be a need for staff development opportunities for educators working with ELLs to improve the quality of education for language minority students; thus, improving their futures and narrowing the achievement gap.

Empirical Discussion

An undeniable element in human behavior is that of the role of attitude (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2017; Gleeson & Davis, 2016; Pettit, 2011). In his theory of planned behavior, Ajzen (1991) supports the notion that there is a correlation between attitude and action (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2017; Gleeson & Davis, 2016; Pettit, 2011; Kayi-Aydar, 2014; Siwatu, Putman, Starker-Glass & Lewis, 2017). Unintentionally, a teacher's personal belief system may lead to

the development of discriminatory practices (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2017; Pettit, 2011). Teachers who have had personal experiences in multicultural settings have demonstrated more positive attitudes toward teaching diverse students (Medina et al., 2015; Zhang, 2017). The research was able to elicit data regarding the attitudes of the participants toward the teaching of ELLs. What developed were the themes of positive attitudes and negative attitudes. These were influenced by many factors and, therefore, were, in this researcher's opinion, a function, not only of the personal beliefs of the individuals but in the institutional requirements in which they operate.

Positive attitudes toward differentiation for ELLs included differentiation is already a part of practice, positive personal experience with other cultures, respect for the resiliency of the students and outside issues faced by the students, intelligence of students, and a belief that all children can learn. Negative attitudes centered around a lack of ability and language on the part of the student believes that learning is the responsibility of the student, not the teacher, time constraints, staffing constraints, and to do the right thing requires a great deal of work above and beyond what is normally required. Most participants fell on either positive or negative; however, some participants were contradictory about their attitudes and beliefs.

The participants all readily shared their experiences with certain ELL students which were, for the most part, positive. They also shared their own experiences living and/or interacting with other cultures, which again were mostly positive with a few exceptions when they encountered being the minority language or race in a situation. These experiences however, lead to more empathy and positive attitudes towards ELLs in their classrooms.

What is interesting is that the attitudes and beliefs of the participants seemed, at times, to contradict the sense of efficacy that teachers expressed in the TELLs survey and the enthusiasm displayed toward culturally responsive teaching practices. This would seem to indicate that the

site, while moving in the right direction toward equitable opportunities for ELLs, still needs to allow for more teacher training and support in the process.

Discussion and Implications Related to Teaching Strategies

Perhaps the most important element of a study of teacher experiences with differentiating for ELLs is an understanding of what teaching strategies are employed. The most effective being those with a foundation in socio-cultural and socio-cognitive learning theories (Siwatu et al., 2017). Those included in this include providing social contexts for learning, differentiation of process and product, experiential learning experiences, whole-school vocabulary approaches to language instruction, collaboration with ELL specialist, creating language objectives in connection with content objectives, activating transnational funds of knowledge, the scaffolding of instruction, and working memory activities (Bohon et al., 2017; Calderón, 2016; Calderón & Minaya-Rowe, 2011; Dabach & Fones, 2016; Dixon et al., 2014; Hummel & French, 2016; Lantolf, 2009; Tomlinson & Strickland, 2008; Verhagen & Leseman, 2016; WIDA, 2017).

Social Contexts. Social contexts are strategies in which language is used to translate abstract processes into conceptual forms (Chandrasegaran, 2013; Kim, 2015; Lantolf, 2009; Lozano, 2014). For the ELL, second language learning is not only about learning the language, but it is “a struggle of concrete socially constituted and always situated beings” participating “in the symbolically mediated lifeworld of another culture” (Lantolf, 2009, p. 15). Collaboration with others allows ELLs to acquire oral language skills and improve their writing (Kim, 2015; Murphey, Falout, Tetsuya, & Yoshifumi, 2014). It has also been determined that ELLs use their native language to research information and work with a language peer to discuss the information in order to synthesize what they have read before working on expressing their learning in English (Kim, 2015)

The data from the study indicated that participants were well versed in the need to provide social interactions for learning; there was not per se a social context established in most classrooms. A few participants embraced the use of daily partner and group work for practice, particularly in math and science. However, teachers of other subjects were less likely to use this consistent strategy due to the inability of students to stay focused and achieve the learning targets. Another concern of participants was not being able to understand two foreign language speaking students' conversations to determine if they were on task or not.

Differentiation. Differentiation is a process of manipulating the content, process, and product of instruction (Tomlinson & Strickland, 2008). However, differentiation for ELLs may not require using all aspects of the process (Baecher et al., 2012). It is important not to water down the curriculum, as many participants feared. According to federal and state law, the content should remain constant, while the process and product are differentiated to account for linguistic proficiency and allow the cognitive function to remain intact (WIDA, 2017). Differentiation is essential for ELL students with limited or interrupted formal education (Marshall & DeCapua, 2013). The need for differentiation of process and product was verbalized by all participants. The majority felt this was an important part of practice yet were unsure exactly how to do so for linguistic needs. The idea that secondary instruction is closely rooted in language proficiency was clearly a confounding factor for the participants. They simply were not sure how to make their content available without the use of English. The exception being again with math and science teachers who felt the nature of their disciplines required physical activity and modeling to teach skills. Participants in the social sciences, electives, and English courses were less confident in their abilities to do this.

What must be noted is that the extent to which students receive differentiation has been linked as a cause of the lack of achievement seen in the statistics for ELL students and the widening of the achievement gap (Baecher et al., 2012; WIDA, 2017). One reason this study sought to analyze teacher lesson plans was that it had been found that differentiation strategies for ELLs are often addressed as learning disabilities, are lacking in scaffolding strategies, and do not address language learning or activation of schemata (Brown & Endo, 2017). This was a vital piece of the research that was not provided to the researcher and is important to understand what experiences teachers of ELL students have with implementing differentiated learning activities in their secondary academic subject classrooms. Without it, we can only make assumptions based on student performance.

Experiential Learning. Another strategy, experiential learning experiences, was strongly utilized by science and some elective courses. These participants felt most confident when students were actively engaged in laboratory experiences and project building to meet the needs of linguistically diverse students. The caveat being that they mostly relied on a bilingual student to basically explain the processes to the ELL student. Those without a bilingual student to support felt less confident but still felt the hands-on, experiential activity was beneficial for ELLS.

Transnational Funds of Knowledge. Transnational funds of knowledge scaffolding of instruction were elements of the data that emerged from the study. Transnational funds of knowledge are brought to the classroom by the ELL student and represent the student's past experiences which are related to future learning (Dabach & Fones, 2016). Transnational funds of knowledge align with socio-cultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978) and is highly effective when working with students with limited or interrupted formal education ELL students, who need to

connect new learning to known constructs and again is aligned with Vygotsky's ZPD (Marshall & DeCapua, 2013; Vygotsky, 1978). The participants felt that allowing the student to connect to prior knowledge and experiences was a necessary strategy to allow for learning. Again, the constraint with using this approach for ELLs was the language barrier between teacher and student and, therefore, was difficult for the teacher to activate.

Use of Scaffolding. Scaffolding is identified in federal and state law as the use of supports to enhance the students' ability to provide evidence of understanding (Freeman, 2017; WIDA, 2017). The content should remain constant while the process and product are differentiated to account for linguistic proficiency, maintaining the rigor and cognitive function required (WIDA, 2017). Scaffolding can be achieved through equitable grading practices in which linguistic ability is taken into consideration in the grading process (Siegel et al., 2014) as well as providing students with realia, visual supports, graphic organizers, and simplified texts (WIDA, 2017). Scaffolding is in alignment with socio-cultural learning and the zone of proximal development as espoused by Vygotsky (1978). The extent to which these strategies are utilized in the secondary content classroom was an integral part of this study.

Scaffolding was spoken of by most participants as necessary strategies for working with ELLs. The concept of scaffolding, though appeared to be confused with differentiation and not always with supports. However, several of the participants mentioned using supports in the form of images, graphics, videos in the home language, charts, graphs, and graphic organizers to support understanding for ELLs. These supports were most often supplied to the entire class, but a few expressed adding additional supports specifically for their ELLs.

Whole-school approaches. A whole-school approach to ELL instruction is one in which content area teachers and ELL specialists share the planning and instructional load

(Calderon, 2016; Haworth, McGee, & MacIntyre, 2015; Short, Fidelman, & Louguit, 2012).

Classroom teachers collaborate with ELLs and other specialists in ongoing professional development to create collaborative, differentiated learning opportunities throughout the year (Calderon, 2016). This approach has been shown to be highly effective by increasing the oral language interaction between and amongst students (Frey, Fischer, & Nelson, 2013).

Calderon's Expediting Comprehension for English Language Learners (EXCELL), Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocols (SIOP), and other sheltered instruction approaches have shown great success (Calderon, 2016; Haworth et al., 2015; Short et al., 2012). This district has not embraced a whole school approach, and the participants were not aware of these strategies.

Collaboration between ELL specialists and classroom teachers. The effectiveness of collaborative environments regarding the improvement of academic achievement for ELLs is well supported in the existing literature (Bottia, Moller, Mickelson, Stearns, & Valentino, 2016; Wilcox, Lawson, & Angelis, 2015). However, the time needed for successful collaboration is determined by institutional practices that support the use of the strategy (Brown & Endo, 2017). Proper collaboration models allow for co-planning, team building, peer observations, and brainstorming activities (Brown, & Endo, 2017). Collaboration was an area that the participants were all in agreement. They unanimously spoke of the need to work more closely with the ELL specialist and expressed feelings of support and confidence when that was the situation. They also expressed frustration at the lack of time provided for this to take place. Participants felt that they really did not have any time during the school day to specifically work with the ELL specialist without it affecting some other aspect of their job. They mentioned that planning times are encumbered with professional learning communities, department meetings, duty

stations, remediating students, grading, and planning for instruction, not to mention contacting parents and other curricular demands.

Language and content objective alignment. In order for ELL students to be successful, they must be explicitly taught the academic language of the subject along with the concepts and skills; it is not merely a matter of having mastered social and instructional English (Franquiz & Salinas, 2013; Jung & Brown, 2016). Teachers should create clear, observable, and measurable objectives embedded into content objectives during lesson planning (Freeman, 2013; Jung & Brown, 2016; Hernandez, Thomas, & Schuemann, 2012; WIDA, 2017). To that end, the Commonwealth of Virginia adopted the WIDA resources and language assessment program as the methodology of instruction for ELLs throughout the state. The expectation is that teachers will include language objectives in lesson plans for ELLs (Freeman, 2013).

Without the evidence of lesson plans from the participants, it was impossible to assess the extent to which this was occurring. However, in the interview data, it was clear that this was not a practice for the participants. They did not use the terms nor respond to prompts regarding the use of language objectives in the interviews. Their focus was completely content-based and relied on the translation of materials and the support of bilingual students in the class to aid in understanding for ELLs and not in English language acquisition.

Working memory strategies. An additional critical component of L2 acquisition is that of working memory (Hummel & French, 2016; Verhagen & Leseman, 2016). Strategies for improving the language proficiency for ELLs include strategies for increasing working memory such as computerized games, memory match activities, and other activities which target improving the phonological memory capacity of ELL students (Hummel & French, 2016; Verhagen & Leseman, 2016). Many of the participants spoke of games they used with their

students; however, they were mostly competitive classroom games aimed to improve student engagement. The use of memory match activities and computerized memory games were not mentioned by any of the participants. This researcher believes they are practiced more on the elementary level than in secondary, where this skill is believed to have been developed already.

Implications

The implications of this study point to several positive elements. The participants all exhibited a desire to be positive in working with ELL students. They also expressed understanding of underlying theories that promote best-practice instruction for ELLs. Furthermore, there was unanimous respect for the difficulties faced by limited English proficient students. This section will discuss the theoretical, empirical, and practical implications of the study.

Theoretical Implications

The theoretical framework for this study addressed socio-cultural theory by Vygotsky (1978) and social cognitive theory by Bandura (1989). Both of these theories address the importance of learning, and especially language learning, in a social context that respects the culture of each individual. The data for this study indicated that participants all held positive beliefs about the importance of socio-cultural and social cognitive learning methods for all children. The book study the school was engaged in on culturally responsive teaching and its effects on the brain was definitely inspiring for those who participated in this study. Teachers referred back to the book throughout the interviews. The references to the book study lend evidence that school-wide staff development opportunities, when offered, may change school culture and offer teachers new insight into the education of language minority students.

Empirical Implications

Empirically, the participants did not have strong levels of confidence beyond their philosophical acceptance of the theoretical beliefs in the book they were studying. The participants all felt as though they were doing the best they could in the way of meeting the needs of the ELLs in their classes. No real methodology or teaching strategies were evident that spoke specifically to the needs of linguistic deficits. Modifications and accommodations were often referred to as the same ones used for students with learning disabilities. This would indicate that the district would benefit from more intensive and practical training to build on the book study and the philosophies embraced by the staff. The participants were clear in their desire for more understanding on how to implement supports for ELLs and admitted that they were not confident in their ability to provide them. A more systematic approach to staff development in the strategies for supporting ELLs would be highly beneficial. Universities and large-scale policymakers should take into consideration the need for training for pre-service teachers in a more intensive approach. The majority of the participants did not feel they had received adequate training, either pre or in-service. Participants were well versed in providing social contexts for learning, the scaffolding of instruction, and experiential learning experiences but required training on how to adapt those practices for limited English proficiency students. The district may benefit from exploring and implementing whole-school vocabulary approaches in the form of Calderon's EXCell program or SIOP practices. Finally, the participants all reflected a need to obtain more training on ways in which to differentiate process and product and create language objectives connected to content objectives. Further training in activating transnational funds of knowledge and working memory activities is also recommended by the previous research conducted and may benefit these participants.

Practical Implications

Practical implications of this study can be found in the need for the school to provide time for teachers of ELLs to have regularly scheduled time to meet with the ELL specialist built into their schedule in place of other requirements. This lack of time was the single most complaint of all participants and is; therefore, a consideration that building and district administration need to consider when planning services for ELLs.

The participants also expressed frustration at the language barrier between them and their Spanish-speaking students. All of the participants expressed a desire to learn Spanish to aid them in communicating with students and families. Spanish language instruction for teachers is an area that the district should consider addressing. If teachers feel they can at least minimally communicate, then a sense of efficacy will rise, and attitudes will be more positive. Most negative attitudes and efficacy centered around the language barrier and reliance on others to communicate with students in their place.

Finally, teachers need more training in effective strategies for teaching ELLs. The teachers did not provide evidence of understanding some of the core practices that research has deemed effective in providing instruction for ELLs. The ability to differentiate was limited to methods that were more appropriate for students with specific disabilities as opposed to linguistic limitations.

Delimitations

In order to determine the essence of the phenomenon and ensure the participants had experience in the situation studied, certain delimitations were made by the researcher. The first decision was that of research design. Since the research sought to elicit the feelings and experiences of the participants, qualitative phenomenology was chosen as the methodology and transcendental phenomenology as the specific design. Qualitative research is the most effective

approach to study post-positivist paradigms as post-positivist researchers believe that there is a singular reality; making the qualitative approach more appropriate than a quantitative design for this study as the focus of qualitative research is to inquire into the meaning individuals attribute to a problem or issue in their natural settings (Creswell, 2013; Teherani, Martimianakis, Stenfors-Hayes, Wadhwa, & Varpio, 2015).

The decision to employ a phenomenological design was an appropriate decision as the researcher sought to derive knowledge and “grasp the structural essences of experience” from the participants (Moustakas, 1994, p. 35). Of the three classifications of phenomenology, transcendental, hermeneutic, and existential (Creswell, 2013), transcendental phenomenology is the original form of the design and the one chosen by this researcher as it allows for the suspension of personal prejudices through epoché, or bracketing, on the part of the researcher (Kafle, 2011). The researcher in this study had significant experience with the phenomenon of teaching ELLs at the high school level and in the site location and, therefore, needed to set aside her own experiences in order to allow the experiences of the participants to be revealed.

Further delimitations were employed in the participant selection process to ensure that participants had experience with the phenomenon. Participants were required to be at least 18 years of age, hold a valid teaching license, and had to have a minimum of one-year of teaching experience with ELLs. In this way, the data would reveal a wealth of experiences and allow the essence of the shared reality to emerge.

Limitations

As with all research, certain limitations exist. In this study, the primary limitations can be found in the size of the sample studied, which was ten participants. While appropriate for a phenomenological study, it is still a small size. The fact that the researcher was an employee of

the district and in a position of knowledge of the district's policies for the education of ELLs was another limiting factor. Originally, it was hoped that the study would encompass three sites. However, this was not a viable option due to scheduling difficulties between and among districts, time constraints on completion of the research, and those of the researcher; therefore, the study was eventually limited in scope and focused on one district and one school site.

The location of the site could be considered as a limitation due to the fact that in central Virginia, the demographics for surrounding counties change drastically. The district is bordered by and/or in easy commute to Northern Virginia, with large populations of ELLs in Richmond and Charlottesville. All of these areas are extremely diverse in their demographics and are not reflective of the district studied. Perhaps the biggest limitation in the study was the inability of the researcher to procure documents in the form of lesson plans reflecting the best practices for the instruction of ELLs.

Recommendations for Future Research

In consideration of the study findings, limitations, and the delimitations placed on the study, several recommendations are made for future research. The study would benefit from a wider scope in the form of comparing districts in central Virginia and encompassing and/or encompassing more than one high school. The size of the participant group could also be increased in this way. It may also be beneficial for the researcher to not be in any way affiliated with the districts and/or schools being studied to avoid the inherent risk of personal bias in the analysis of the data. A study of more diverse districts with a variety of different languages other than Spanish represented might also yield further insight into this phenomenon.

The study might also yield more in the way of evidence if it were analyzed more fully from document analysis of materials supplied by participants in order to determine the extent to

which the concept of differentiation for ELLs has moved beyond the theoretical agreement and actually become practice. An in-depth study of those documents that reflect differentiated practices and student achievement may yield more in the way of practical knowledge.

While qualitative methods are the best for examining the experiences of teachers, quantitative methods may be effective in examining practices and determining the extent to which teachers are actively engaged in providing linguistic and socio-cultural learning supports into their daily instructional practices for language deficient students. Action research projects focused on the effectiveness of best practices for ELL instruction mentioned in this study may also be beneficial to the body of knowledge on this subject.

Summary

With a basis on Vygotsky's theory of socio-cultural learning and Bandura's social cognitive theory, this research sought to explore the experiences of high school core academic teachers in differentiating lessons, assignments, and assessments for ELLs. Through an analysis of the data provided by the TELLS, semi-structured audio-taped interviews, and document analysis, several findings were revealed. Participants initially revealed in the TELLS survey a moderate sense of efficacy in working with ELLs. This, however, was revealed to be more or less stable through triangulation of the data.

Overall, the data revealed that teachers were eager to support and relate to ELLs in their classes. They respected the cultures and appreciated the diversity of this population of learners. However, there also emerged themes of anxiety and insecurity in relation to the ability to effectively communicate with the students as well as instruct and assess them effectively. Most participants reflected a desire to learn to speak Spanish in order to communicate with students

and were reliant on the skills of bilingual students and ELL specialists to teach and assess the content taught.

In relation to the theoretical framework of the study, again, most participants were advocates of using socially interactive strategies in their instructional methods. They felt that these were beneficial to all students. A few participants were not as comfortable with the use of these strategies as they felt they could easily become distracting for students and, therefore, were not as committed to using them regularly. There was a strong emphasis on understanding the relationship between culture, learning, and the brain development of students. What seemed likely in the data was how these strategies were directly adapted in order to allow students with limited English to participate fully in the learning environment.

Teacher attitudes and beliefs regarding the instruction for ELLs were positive as they related to the students themselves. Negative attitudes emerged in relation to the challenges that teaching students with limited English and/or formal education from other cultures propose. These negative attitudes were not overt and were aimed at the amount of time, training, and support that was available for the increased amount of work needed to plan and implement appropriately differentiated lessons.

Effective strategies for the instruction of ELLs were present in the data, particularly those with a foundation in socio-cultural and socio-cognitive learning theories (Siwatu et al., 2017). As already discussed in this chapter, participants were mostly in favor of providing social contexts for learning, scaffolding of instruction, and experiential learning experiences, yet did not relate how those were adapted for limited English proficiency. There were no whole-school vocabulary approaches to language instruction presented by the participants and no evidence of the practice in the school itself. The areas that were less discussed and were lacking in data were

that of differentiation of process and product, time for collaboration with ELL specialist, creating language objectives in connection with content objectives, activating transnational funds of knowledge, and working memory activities.

In conducting this research, I realized the extent to which classroom teachers empathize with and desire to teach ELLs effectively. The passion expressed by the participants was moving and allowed me to understand that, for the participants in this study, the experience of working with ELLs was both rewarding and heartbreaking. Participants in this study want to teach, and, for most participants, a lack of understanding a foreign language seemed to create a barrier to their ability to reach these learners effectively. Institutional limitations beyond their control were also frustrating factors in their sense of efficacy. The knowledge that I have gained from conducting this research will be shared with the administration in the hopes that further training and education for high school teachers in the area of best practices for instruction of ELLs can be implemented and an understanding of the need to provide adequate time to collaborate with specialists and plan for the needs of ELLs be provided to teachers.

I have enjoyed this study immensely, and it has reinforced my perspective on the experiences of the high school teacher working with ELLs. These teachers are truly dedicated to what they do. They are committed to reaching each and every student they teach. They are, however, insecure and frustrated by their own limitations and the limitations that are set by the institution. It is my hope that this research will provide support to the body of knowledge to encourage policymakers and administration to understand the level of further support that teachers require in order to support the rising population of ELLs in the public school system and close the achievement gap.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

IRB Approval

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

December 14, 2018

Valerie Campbell

IRB Approval 3529.121418: A Phenomenological Study of High School Academic Subject Teachers' Experiences Differentiating for English Language Learners

Dear Valerie Campbell,

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.

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

Sincerely,



The Graduate School

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APPENDIX C

Demographic Survey Questions

Age

Age 25 and under ☐

26-35 ☐

36-45 ☐

46-55 ☐

56 and over ☐

Gender

Male ☐ Female ☐ Other ☐

Ethnicities and Race

Please check all that apply

Pacific Islander _____

African American _____

White/Caucasian _____

Black _____

Asian _____

Hispanic _____

Latino/a _____

Native American _____

Multiracial _____

Other _____

Nationality _____

Professional Background

What subject/subjects do you teach this year?

What other subjects have you taught?

Educational Background

Degree

Bachelors

Master

Major/Focus

Educational Specialist
Doctoral

Additional certifications or endorsements held:

Total years of teaching experience: _____

Total years of experience working with English language learners (ELL)s: _____

Currently working with ELLs in the classroom: ____yes ____ no

APPENDIX D

Approval Letter

January 16, 2019



Researcher
Doctoral Candidate
Liberty University

Dear Valerie:

After careful review of your research proposal entitled A Phenomenological Study of High School Academic Subject Teachers' Experiences Differentiating for English Language Learners, we have decided to grant you permission to conduct your study at Some High School.

Check the following boxes, as applicable:

- ☐ Data will be provided to the researcher stripped of any identifying information.
- ☐ I/We are requesting a copy of the results upon study completion and/or publication.

Sincerely,

Superintendent/Site director

APPENDIX E

Permission Request Letter

District Permission Request

[Date]



Dear Dr. Superintendent:

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree in Curriculum and Instruction. The title of my research project is “A Phenomenological Study of High School Academic Subject Teachers’ Experiences Differentiating for English Language Learners.” The purpose of my research is to describe the experiences of academic subject high school teachers in differentiating instruction and assessment for English language learners (ELLs) in Central Virginia in order to address the problem of the widening achievement gap and rising high school dropout rate for ELLs.

I am writing to request your permission to conduct my research at address in VA. If required, I will also request the approval of the school principal.

Participants were recruited based on being a teacher of academic content at the high school level and having at least one year of experience working with ELLs. Teachers were asked to participate in a survey that will ask a few questions to determine teacher sense of efficacy in working with ELLs. They will also be asked to participate in one face to face interview in which they will be asked questions regarding their experiences in working with ELLs and to participate in one focus group discussion. Both the interview and focus group discussions will last approximately 40 to 60 minutes and will be audiotaped. The interviews will be transcribed by the researcher or a professional transcription service and will be analyzed using ATLAS.ti software according to the methodology of Carl Moustakas. The interview will be held at a time and place of the participant’s choosing and the focus group will be held after a consensus of the participants has been reached as to the time and place. Participants will also be asked to allow me to review and make copies of lesson plans, modified materials and/or assessments, and provide redacted WIDA score reports and ELL plans for each student.

Participants will be presented with informed consent information prior to participating. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

For education research, school and district permission will need to be on approved letterhead with the appropriate signature(s): Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, please send your scanned letter of approval by email to researcher@liberty.edu.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of this matter. If you have further questions I can be reached by email or phone at the number provided below.

Sincerely,

Doctoral Candidate
Liberty University

Permission Request Email

Dear Director of Instruction:

I am writing to request permission to conduct a research study as partial completion of a doctoral degree in affiliation with Liberty University, Lynchburg, Virginia. The research study is titled: A Phenomenological Study of Secondary Academic Subject Teachers' Experiences Differentiating for English Language Learners. This is a qualitative study and the data collection procedures will be as follows:

Participants be will required to complete the following tasks:

1. Complete preliminary survey on educational background, experience, and demographics via google form. 2-5 min.
2. Complete the Teaching English Language Learners Scale (TELLS) via google forms. 5-10 min.
3. Participate in one face to face audio-taped interview. 40-60 min.
4. Provide access to redacted documentation in the form of lesson plans, instructional materials, ELL levels of students.

To protect anonymity of the participants, schools, and district, pseudonyms will be used for all. Any potential identifying information on documents for document analysis will be redacted. All data will be stored on a password protected computer and in a locked filing cabinet. Member checking of the data will be used to ensure participant validation.

I have already received approval through the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Liberty University and my dissertation chair, to proceed with this study. I am eager to conduct this study and am in hopes that the results will provide valuable insight into the needs of the classroom teacher to effectively meet the needs of the English language learner.

I thank you in advance for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,
Valerie Campbell
Researcher

Attachments:

Interview Questions
TELLS Survey

APPENDIX F

Recruitment Email

September 3, 2019

Dear [Recipient]:

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. The purpose of my research is to describe the experiences of academic subject high school teachers in differentiating instruction and assessment for English language learners (ELLs), and I am writing to invite you to participate in my study.

If you are 18 years of age or older, are a high school academic subject teacher, have at least one year of experience working with ELLs, and are willing to participate, you will be asked to participate in a one-on-one, face-to-face interview (40 minutes), participate in a survey on your sense of efficacy for working with English language learners (10 minutes), and provide documents such as lesson plans, unit plans, ELL planning materials, student materials and/or levels of English language proficiency that have been stripped of all identifiers of students you have worked with (30 minutes). Your name and other identifying information will be requested as part of your participation, but this information will remain confidential. The interviews and focus groups will be transcribed by me or a professional transcription service. You will have an opportunity to review the transcripts of the interviews and focus group discussion as well.

To participate, please respond to the survey link included in this email and complete a short survey on your teaching experience, educational background, and demographic information. Please feel free to respond to this email should you have any further questions or require more information.

Once your survey response is received, a letter of informed consent will be shared with you via email. Please print off, sign, scan, and email the letter to researcher@liberty.edu or if you prefer you can mail it to (gave personal address). If you have another preferred method of receiving or sending the consent form, please don't hesitate to contact me.

To participate please go to this link:

Link

Sincerely,

Doctoral Candidate
School of Education
Liberty University
researcher@liberty.edu

APPENDIX G

Informed Consent Form

The Liberty University Institutional
Review Board has approved
this document for use from
12/14/2018 to 12/13/2019
Protocol # 3529.121418

CONSENT FORM

A Phenomenological Study of High School Academic Subject Teachers' Experiences
Differentiating for English Language Learners
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School of Education

You are invited to be in a research study on the experiences of high school academic subjects teachers' experiences differentiating for English Language Learners (ELLs). You were selected as a possible participant because you are a high school teacher of core content, and you have working with ELLs for at least one year. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Valerie Campbell, 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 experiences of academic content subject high school teachers in differentiating instruction and assessment for English language learners (ELLs) in Central Virginia in order to address the problem of the widening achievement gap and rising high school dropout rate for ELLs.

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

1. Complete preliminary survey on educational background, experience, and demographics via google form. 10 min.
2. Complete the Teaching English Language Learners Scale (TELLS). 25 min.
3. Participate in one face-to-face, audio-taped interview. 40-60 min.
4. Participate in site-based, audio-taped focus group discussion. 40-60 min.
5. Provide access to redacted documentation in the form of lesson plans, instructional materials, ELL levels of students. 15 min.
6. Participate in a 30-min review of the transcripts of the interview and focus group discussion.

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 an understanding of the needs of English language learners in the public school setting in order to provide appropriate instructional approaches to address the achievement gap. Further benefits may include improvements to teacher education programs to

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provide pre-service teachers more preparedness for working with ELLs in the public school setting.

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. To protect your privacy, participants will be assigned a pseudonym. I will conduct the interviews in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation. 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 will have access to these recordings. However, I cannot assure participants that other members of the focus group will not share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.

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 or 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 Valerie Campbell. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact her [REDACTED] du. You may also contact the researcher's faculty [REDACTED] u.

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

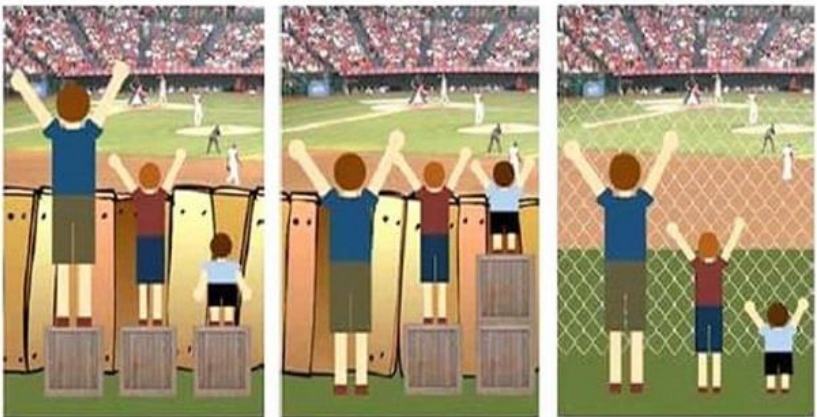
APPENDIX H

Figures and Tables

Figure 3

1. Monitor ELL students' understanding of directions.
2. Use ongoing assessment for ELL students.
3. Perform assessments at a level for ELL students' language proficiency and current functioning.
4. Teach classroom expectations to ELL students.
5. Model classroom tasks for ELL students.
6. Highlight key points for ELL students in some way (outlines, lists, etc).
7. Provide authentic (accurate) visual aids for ELL students.
8. Use mechanical aids, real objects, music, art, games, and hands-on experience to reinforce ELL students' learning.
9. Redirect ELL students who are persistently off task.
10. Plan evaluations that accommodate individual differences among my ELL students.
11. Use repetition for ELL students.
12. Learn new strategies to use with my ELL students.
13. Identify ELL students' individual English proficiency.
14. Post common expectations in the classroom in English for ELL students.
15. Use members of the community as resources for working with ELL students and their families.
16. Locate materials in ELL students' native languages.
17. Encourage homework support activities staffed by bilingual teachers, volunteers, etc for ELL students.
18. Learn certain words and phrases in ELL students' native languages
19. Praise ELL students for their accomplishments using a phrase in their native language.
20. Encourage ELL students to use their native language.
21. Greet ELL students with a phrase in their native language.
22. Pair ELL students with bilingual students who can speak the same language.
23. Provide native language instructional support for ELL students.

Figure 4 Equity Image



(Valbrun, 2017)

Figure 5 TELS Criteria

	Certain Cannot Do At All - 0	1	2	3	4	Moderately Certain Can Do - 5	6	7	8	9	Certain Can Do - 10
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Figure 4: Group Mean

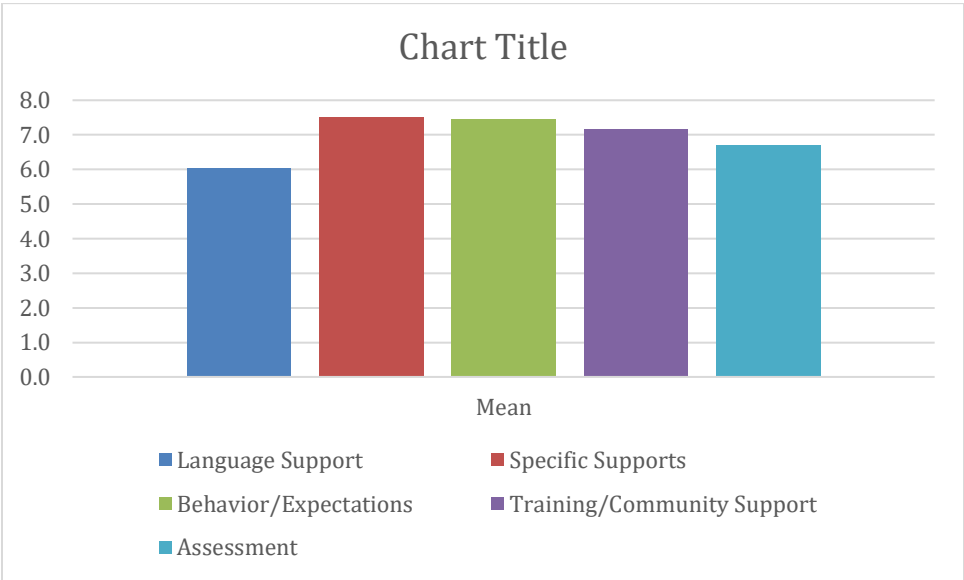


Figure 5 Individual Participant Data in the Five Areas of Efficacy.

Area of Instruction/Assessment	Sense of Efficacy
Language Support	Moderate
Specific Supports	High
Behavior/Expectations	Moderate
Training/Community Support	Moderate
Assessment	Moderate

Figure 6 Accommodations According to Student

Student	Participant	Modifications	Testing Accommodations	WIDA Can Do Descriptor by level	Other ID
Guillermo	Alan, Rick	1.6 English/native language dictionary or electronic translator Teach student to use dictionary in class and on tests Highlighted texts/study guides, graphic organizers/guided outlines Provide copies of notes Teach specific note-taking skills Provide bilingual content area glossary Use manipulatives and realia Use adapted or modified textbooks Paired oral and written instructions Use individual or small-group instruction Scheduled extended time for projects and assignments Read aloud tests Simplified tests (shortened, provide word bank, change format) No penalty for spelling/grammar Reduced/modified homework Classroom buddy Rosetta Stone	audio test bilingual dictionary	1 - Entering	Knows and uses minimal social language and minimal academic language with visual support
Marcus	Erik	3.4 highlight texts teach specific note taking	audio test	3 - Developing	Knows and uses social English and some specific academic language with visual support

Slick	Erik, Linda	2	English/native language dictionary or electronic translator Teach student to use dictionary in class and on tests Highlighted texts/study guides, graphic organizers/guided outlines Provide copies of notes Teach specific note-taking skills Provide bilingual content area glossary Use manipulatives and realia Use adapted or modified textbooks Paired oral and written instructions Use individual or small-group instruction Scheduled extended time for projects and assignments Read aloud tests Simplified tests (shortened, provide word bank, change format) No penalty for spelling/grammar Reduced/modified homework Classroom buddy Rosetta Stone	audio test bilingual	1 - Entering	Knows and uses minimal social language and minimal academic language with visual support	
Sissy	Gayle	3.4	1. Highlighted texts/study guides, graphic organizers/guided outlines 2. Teach specific note-taking skills 3. Paired oral and written instructions	audio test	4 - Expanding	Knows and uses social English and some technical academic language	SPED
Boyo	Gayle	3.3	1. Read aloud tests 2. Simplified tests (shortened, provide word bank, change format)	audio test	3 - Developing	Knows and uses social English and some specific academic language with visual support	
Tommy	Linda	1.9	English/native language dictionary or electronic translator Teach student to use dictionary in class and on tests Highlighted texts/study guides, graphic organizers/guided outlines Provide copies of notes Teach specific note-taking skills Provide bilingual content area glossary Use manipulatives and realia Use adapted or modified textbooks Paired oral and written instructions Use individual or small-group instruction Scheduled extended time for projects and assignments Read aloud tests Simplified tests (shortened, provide word bank, change format) No penalty for spelling/grammar Reduced/modified homework Classroom buddy Rosetta Stone	audio test bilingual dictionary	1 - Entering	Knows and uses minimal social language and minimal academic language with visual support	

Matteo	Linda	1.7	English/native language dictionary or electronic translator Teach student to use dictionary in class and on tests Highlighted texts/study guides, graphic organizers/guided outlines Provide copies of notes Teach specific note-taking skills Provide bilingual content area glossary Use manipulatives and realia Use adapted or modified textbooks Paired oral and written instructions Use individual or small-group instruction Scheduled extended time for projects and assignments Read aloud tests Simplified tests (shortened, provide word bank, change format) No penalty for spelling/grammar Reduced/modified homework Classroom buddy Rosetta Stone	audio test bilingual dictionary	1 - Entering	Knows and uses minimal social language and minimal academic language with visual support	
Peter	Linda Shannon	3.5	1. Paired oral and written instructions 2. Read aloud test	Audio Test	3 - Developing	Knows and uses social English and some specific academic language with visual support	SPED
Carmen	Shannon	3.6	highlight texts teach specific note taking	audio test	3 - Developing	Knows and uses social English and some specific academic language with visual support	SPED
Jorge	Tom	4.3	1. Highlighted texts/study guides, graphic organizers/guided outlines 2. Teach specific note-taking skills 3. Read aloud tests	none	4 - Expanding	Knows and uses social English and some technical academic language	

Table 2*Participant Demographics*

Age	Gender	Race/Ethnicity	Education	Years of Experience	Years Working with ELLs	Currently Working with ELLs
56 and over	Male	White	Bachelors, Master	16-25	2	Yes
36-45	Female	White	Bachelors, Master	8-16	5	Yes
46-55	Female	White	Bachelors	16-25	7	Yes
26-35	Male	White	Bachelors, Master	8-16	4	No
46-55	Female	White	Bachelors, Master	16-25	16	No
46-55	Male	White	Bachelors, Professional Diploma in Curriculum Development	4-8	4	Yes
46-55	Female	White	Master	16-25	10	Yes
46-55	Female	White	Bachelors	8-16	16	Yes
56 and over	Male	White/Native American	Master	8-16	13	Yes
46-55	Female	White	Bachelors	8-16	12	Yes

Table 3*Providing First Language Support*

Participant Name	Provide native language support	Speak in student's language	Use of L1	Greet in student's language	Pair with bilingual partner	Provide L1 support	Mean	Textural Description
Erick	7	4	2	2	3	4	4	Moderate
Gayle	1	3	3	3	3	0	2	Low
Tom	6	8	8	8	10	6	8	High
Shannon	9	8	10	7	10	0	7	Certain

Bridgette	5	9	9	9	3	0	6	High
Linda	3	9	9	9	3	0	6	High
Susan	4	7	7	0	8	4	5	Moderate
Rick	10	10	6	8	10	1	8	High
Alan	8	6	8			7	7	High
Donna	3	9	8	8	8	0	6	High

Table 4

Providing Specific Linguistic Supports

Participant Name	Differentiate Assessment	Model Tasks	Highlight Key Points	Provide visual aids	Use of Realia	Use of Repetition	Identify proficiency levels	Post expectations	Provide Homework Support	Mean	Textural Description
Erick	2	9	7	9	9	5	2	7	9	7	Moderate
Gayle	5	2	3	0	3	3	3	72	1	2	Low
Tom	6	9	10	9	8	8	7	10	7	8	High
Shannon	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	9	10	Certain
Bridgette	8	10	10	9	8	8	5	9	9	9	High
Linda	7	7	7	7	8	8	4	10	9	7	Moderate
Susan	4	7	7	7	8	8	6	10	8	7	Moderate
Rick	5	10	5	10	10	10	10	9	10	9	High
Alan	10	10	10	10	9	9	9	2	9	8	High
Donna	8	9	9	7	9	9	5	10	5	8	High

Table 5

Communicating Expectations

Participant Name	Teach Expectation	Redirect off task behavior	Mean	Textural Description
Erick	5	6	6	Moderate
Gayle	2	3	3	Low
Tom	9	8	9	High
Shannon	10	10	10	Certain
Bridgette	10	6	8	High
Linda	9	8	9	Moderate
Susan	7	8	8	Moderate
Rick	8	7	8	High
Alan	10	10	10	High
Donna	7	6	7	High

Table 6

Obtaining Ongoing Training and Community Support

Participant Name	Ongoing Staff Development	Community Resources	Mean	Textural Description
Erick	9	1	5	Moderate
Gayle	3	1	2	Low
Tom	10	1	2	Low
Shannon	10	9	10	Certain
Bridgette	9	8	9	High
Linda	8	3	6	Moderate

Susan	10	5	8	High
Rick	10	10	10	Certain
Alan	9	8	9	High
Donna	9	7	8	High

Table 7

Ability to Accurately Assess

Participant Name	Monitor Understanding	Ongoing Assessment	Evaluate	Mean	Textural Description
Erick	7	3	3	4	Moderate
Gayle	5	5	1	4	Low
Tom	9	7	8	8	High
Shannon	10	20	10	10	Certain
Bridgette	7	7	6	7	High
Linda	7	7	7	7	Moderate
Susan	6	7	7	7	Moderate
Rick	3	5	8	5	Moderate
Alan	8	6	8	7	High
Donna	9	8	7	8	High

Table 8

Participant ELL Student Membership

Student	M/F	Participant	ELP Levels Comp/WIDA Score	Accommodations	ELD Plan
Guillermo	M	Alan, Rick	1.6	yes	Yes
Juan	M	Alan, Rick	FLEP	No	No
Xin	M	Bridgette	FLEP	No	No
Marcus	M	Erik	3.0	yes	Yes
Jose	M	Erik	FLEP	No	No
Marco	M	Erik, Linda	2.0	yes	Yes
Jack	M	Gayle	FLEP	no	No
Michelle	F	Gayle	3.4	yes	Yes
Frederico	M	Gayle	3.3	yes	yes
Tommy	M	Linda	1.9	yes	yes
Matteo	M	Linda	1.7	yes	yes
Peter	M	Shannon	3.5	yes	yes
Carmen	F	Shannon	3.6	yes	yes
Jorge	M	Tom	4.3	yes	yes
None		Donna			
None		Susan			