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## First Year Teachers' Perceptions of Their Preparation for Teaching English Language Learners

Veronica Aguiñaga

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12-2017

# First Year Teachers' Perceptions of Their Preparation for Teaching English Language Learners

Veronica Aguiñaga  
*Concordia University - Portland*

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Concordia University–Portland

College of Education

Doctorate of Education Program

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First Year Teachers' Perceptions of Their Preparation for Teaching English Language Learners

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Concordia University–Portland

College of Education

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the College of Education  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor  
of Education in  
Higher Education

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Concordia University–Portland

2017

## **Abstract**

The number of English language learners (ELLs) in public schools is increasing rapidly throughout the United States. All teachers are expected to meet the individual needs of these culturally and linguistically diverse students in their classrooms. However, little training and guidance in preservice teacher education programs is being provided to prepare future teachers. This study investigated how first year teachers viewed their preparation of working with English language learners in their preservice teacher education program. From a transformative learning lens, it is recommended that preservice teacher education programs consider effective ways to provide a variety of field experiences and classroom experiences that will help prospective teachers understand how to teach ELLs. The research question was How do first year teachers perceive their preparation of working with English language learners? Drawing from qualitative data, the study described the experiences of six first year teachers and included their personal background, field experiences, and classroom experiences. The data revealed that teachers need more ELL one-on-one opportunities, professional development, and instructional support and resources in their preservice teacher education program.

*Keywords:* preservice teacher education programs, culturally and linguistically diverse students, English language learners, teacher perceptions

## **Dedication**

I give thanks to God who made this endeavor possible because you are my strength, light, and hope. Without you, I am nothing.

I dedicate this major accomplishment to several dear family members who have diligently encouraged me throughout these last three years. First, my husband Gustavo who has encouraged me in this entire rollercoaster of a journey. Without his unconditional love and support, I would not have been able to fulfill my educational dream. To my children, Gustavo and Casandra, thank you for your patience, encouragement, love, and understanding. You two are my life and joy. I only hope and pray that you understand that I never meant to take time away from you. To my dad and mom, Juan and Severina Meraz, who always have just the right words to make me feel like I can accomplish and conquer anything. To my siblings, thank you for your positive words of encouragement and constant support throughout this entire journey. Finally, to my best friends who are more like sisters, Ana Gutierrez and Adina Foust, who have never doubted me and know exactly how hard I worked for this because they heard about every struggle and moment of despair throughout this arduous journey. I love you all!

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **Introduction to the Problem**

To be able to teach in the 21st century, teachers need to be aware of the diverse needs and learning styles of their students. This includes understanding how and why students learn the way they do and recognizing the different factors that influence student learning. In addition to having a deep understanding of the subject matter (what teachers know about what they teach), it is particularly important for teachers to have pedagogical content knowledge (what teachers know about teaching) when addressing the needs of students including English language learners (ELLs) and culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students. Having a comprehensive knowledge of subject matters will allow teachers to communicate information and content effectively to their students. Concurrently, having extensive pedagogical content knowledge will allow the utilization of a variety of instructional strategies when teaching the subject matter. This will ensure that developmental levels, interests, and abilities of students are addressed, especially for the increasing number of ELL students.

The percentage of public school students in the United States who were ELLs was higher in the school year 2014–15 (an estimated 4.6 million students) than in 2004–05 (an estimated 4.3 million students) and 2013–14 (an estimated 4.5 million students). In 2014–15, the percentage of public school students who were ELLs ranged from (1%) in West Virginia to (22%) in California (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016, para. 1). These numbers indicate that the increase in ELLs is a phenomenon that is affecting schools across the United States.

Since the number of ELLs in public schools is still increasing, teachers must be prepared to provide a solid, educational foundation for all students with differences in academic abilities, socioeconomic status, cultural backgrounds, and English language proficiencies. Teachers

should find ways to build a culturally responsive classroom approach that incorporates multiple modes of learning and provides quality instruction to support the academic success for all students. Teachers need to know what to do to meet the individual needs of ELLs. This means that teachers should have sociolinguistic consciousness, an appreciation for linguistic diversity, and an understanding of students' language backgrounds (Pereira & Oliveira, 2015). Teachers should also advocate for ELLs to ensure that these students receive appropriate content and language support in the classroom.

Additionally, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was signed by President Barack Obama on December 10, 2015, to replace the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (United States Department of Education, 2017). The Every Student Succeeds Act reauthorizes the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 to ensure an equal learning opportunity for all students, including students with disabilities, economically disadvantaged students, and ELLs. Specifically, it requires states to hold districts and individual schools accountable for ensuring academic success for all students. Therefore, teachers should be prepared to teach ELLs by having an adequate understanding of second language acquisition and how to use a wide variety of instructional methods and strategies. Teachers should also know how to make necessary modifications and accommodations to meet the individual needs of all students.

Baecher, Artigliere, Patterson, and Spatzer (2012) stated that the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition affirmed the rapidly growing population of ELLs in U.S. schools and that, by 2025, nearly one out of every four public school students will be an ELL student. This increase requires an immediate change within the teaching profession including preservice teacher education programs and K-12 schools. To address this need, Baecher, Artigliere, Patterson, and Spatzer (2012) described that teachers can differentiate instruction to

support the academic achievement of their ELL students. However, Baecher, Artigliere, Patterson, and Spatzer (2012) also noted that many teachers do not know the meaning of differentiated instruction and how to integrate it into their classroom. For example, teachers do not provide ELLs full access to content matter and, at times, do not understand that ELLs should fully participate in all classroom activities with their peers (Baecher, Artigliere, Patterson, & Spatzer, 2012). Furthermore, teachers do not always provide adequate language support to enhance the development of the ELL's social and academic language.

In summary, much of the research literature suggested that the ELL student population is continuing to increase in public schools and that teachers should be prepared to teach these students (Daniel, 2014; Fitts & Gross, 2012; Lucas & Villegas, 2014). The process of learning how to teach students, including ELLs, should begin in preservice teacher education programs because this is the beginning phase of teacher preparation (Daniel, 2014; Fitts & Gross, 2012; Lucas & Villegas, 2014). Due to the gaps that appear in previous research, there is a need to examine and understand teachers' abilities to teach ELLs, particularly in understanding how a second language is learned and how to use pedagogical content knowledge to address diverse learning styles. Lacking is rich data on the lived experiences of first year teachers regarding their perceptions of their teacher education in areas like preparing to teach ELLs, learning how to differentiate instruction, and addressing the needs of diverse students. According to Roy-Campbell (2013), one of the reasons for inadequate instruction to ELLs is because teacher educators who prepare preservice teachers have not had this preparation themselves. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to understand how first year teachers interpret their experiences in learning how to teach ELLs.

## **Background and Conceptual Framework of the Study**

This phenomenological research study was conducted to provide professional educators with an understanding of lived experience and perceptions of first year teachers regarding ELL instruction in their preservice teacher education program. Moreover, this study examined how first year teachers use their knowledge to teach ELLs. It also may provide educators with the pedagogical content knowledge needed in preservice teacher education programs to address the needs of ELL students.

All classroom teachers should be equipped to teach ELL students, to understand the range of diversity among their students, and to use pedagogical content knowledge to address individual needs. However, Roy-Campbell (2013) indicated that educators teach based on how they were prepared in their preservice teacher education program and in turn teach their own students the same way. Therefore, if educators are not taught how to address the individual needs of students in their preservice teacher education program, then new teachers will not be prepared to meet the needs of any students, including ELLs. Fieman-Nemser (2001) expressed that preservice teacher education programs should provide preservice teachers the opportunities to a) analyze their personal beliefs and form new visions, b) develop subject matter knowledge for teaching, c) develop understandings of learners and learning, d) develop a beginning repertoire for reform-minded teaching and e) develop tools to study teaching to improve their practice.

Preservice teacher education program developers should seek qualified faculty and resources that support the learning needs of ELL students (Daniel, 2014; Fitts & Gross, 2012; Lucas & Villegas, 2014). Educators should also increase awareness about issues around educating ELLs through faculty research and publications of articles in general education

journals. Roy-Campbell (2013) suggested that information about working with ELL students should be incorporated into methods courses. Furthermore, there is a need for more formal preparation for educators to demonstrate how to meet the needs of ELLs to their preservice teachers (Roy-Campbell, 2013). Feiman-Nemser (2001) stated that the pedagogy of preservice teacher education programs resembles the pedagogy of higher education, which is full of lectures, discussions, and seat-based learning. Therefore, teacher educators do not practice what they preach and conduct classes that are too abstract to challenge beliefs or are too superficial to promote deeper thinking and understanding (Feiman-Nemser, 2001).

Baecher, Artigliere, Patterson, and Spatzer (2012) noted the importance of teachers knowing the ELL's native language proficiency because it influences the ELL's progress toward achieving English language proficiency. The ELL's native language proficiency should be considered for academic and social language support to effectively communicate with the student when delivering instruction and information. Baecher, Artigliere, Patterson, and Spatzer (2012) described 10 principles of differentiating instruction for ELLs:

1. Know the ELL's strengths and weaknesses including the levels of proficiency of their four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing).
2. Set common objectives for all students and differentiate the language objective for the ELL student.
3. Make differentiating instruction manageable through small variations of base activities for ELL students.
4. Make learning attainable for ELLs by simplifying linguistic demands to allow students to be actively involved in the learning process.
5. Identify a base activity for higher level students and tier downward for ELL students.

6. Work with the ELL student yourself rather than having higher-level student serve as the differentiation. (A higher-level student may work below his or her capability and a lower-level student may copy from the higher-level student without developing language skills).
7. Vary grouping to give ELLs the opportunity to interact with all peers.
8. Offer several activities for each lesson to allow students to select an activity that is at their level.
9. Recognize that cognitive development is connected to language proficiency which will prevent ELLs from expressing conceptual understandings in English. (Use Bloom's Taxonomy to differentiate questions and prompts.)
10. Allot the same number of minutes for a differentiated task to avoid classroom management issues.

Baecher, Artigliere, Patterson, and Spatzer (2012) concluded that rather than thinking of differentiation as individualized plans for every student, teachers should vary instruction through projects, tasks, and learning goals and provide support that develops content knowledge and language.

Beal and Rudolph (2015) indicated that schools need to revise their preservice teacher education programs to better prepare preservice teachers to meet different sociocultural, linguistic, and academic needs. Preservice teacher education programs are being challenged to improve preparation of their preservice teachers to meet the needs of all students while still answering the calls of increased accountability (Beal & Rudolph, 2015). According to Beal and Rudolph (2015),

As we continue to work in a socio-political environment in which teacher education and



higher education are being scrutinized and politicians are calling for reduced higher education costs and higher standards, we must grapple with how to improve our programs and prove our effectiveness to the public with fewer resources. (p. 52-53)

It is critical that teachers recognize how to effectively educate all students even with the increased number of ELLs in public schools (Hogan & Hathcote, 2013). Issues or impeding factors related to curriculum and instruction should be uncovered. These issues may include: limited access to content, an absence of culturally responsive teachers, or a lack of awareness of cultural backgrounds and biases (Hogan & Hathcote, 2013). A culturally responsive teacher education program can facilitate learning cultural competence and an appreciation for diversity. Additionally, preservice teachers can examine their perceptions while they are working with ELLs in their preservice teacher education program. Through self-reflection, preservice teachers can become aware of their own culture perspectives, biases, and assumptions that could affect their attitudes, actions, and behaviors in the classroom.

This phenomenological study was guided by the theoretical framework and research literature supporting the need to address the diverse learning styles of students to assist ELLs in acquiring the necessary skills to achieve academic success. Furthermore, this study framework guided the researcher in indicating the challenges that teachers face when teaching ELLs, particularly those relating to addressing the individual needs of students or differentiating instruction. There is significant research on the importance of differentiating instruction for ELLs, but very little research that focuses on how teachers are prepared in their preservice teacher education programs to teach the ELL students (Roy-Campbell, 2013).

## **Problem Statement**

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2016), many public schools were experiencing a large influx of ELLs. It was not known how first year teachers perceive their lived experience of their preparation for working with English language in their preservice teacher education program. Therefore, this phenomenological study was used to conduct the research to better understand the perceived lived experience of a preservice teacher education program in addressing ELL instruction that is different from the regular education experience that most teachers do not understand or experience. The researcher examined meanings through human experiences and empirical perspectives that helped understand the perceptions of first year teachers regarding their teacher education preparation.

## **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand how first year teachers interpret their lived experiences of their preparation for working with English language learners in their preservice teacher education program. Specifically, this study examined how first year teachers view the effectiveness of their preservice teacher education program relating to addressing the individual needs of ELL students. This study also provided professional educators with an awareness of common perceptions of first year teachers regarding their experiences in ELL instruction in their preservice teacher education program.

## **Research Question**

The general research question guiding this study was developed using the literature review to better understand how first year teachers interpret their experiences in their preservice teacher education program. The findings of this phenomenological study provided crucial

information for answering the central question. The following central question guided this research study:

RQ1: How do first year teachers perceive their preparation for working with English language learners?

### **Significance of the Study**

The significance of the study was that it examined how first year teachers interpret their experiences in learning how to teach ELLs. Most of the current research indicates that teachers do not understand or know how to address the diverse learning needs of students. Identifying how first year teachers experience and understand how to address the individual needs of students can positively contribute change in preservice teacher education programs. The results of this study may benefit educators by providing them with information to improve the structure and effectiveness of preservice teacher education programs. It also may benefit teachers who have ELL students in their classroom by allowing them to experience firsthand the outcomes of their teacher preparation. The significance of the theory is that Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory (1991) was presented to identify ways that preservice teacher education programs can be improved by addressing ELL instructional strategies and practices.

### **Definitions of Terms**

**Teacher efficacy.** Teachers' perceptions or beliefs about their own capacities as teachers (Jimenez-Silva, Olson & Hernandez, 2011).

**Differentiated instruction.** Using a wide variety of approaches or teaching styles to address the diverse needs of students with different learning styles and abilities (Islam & Park, 2015).

**English language learners.** Students with a first language other than English (Roy-Campbell, 2013). Other common terms found in literature include ESL (English as a Second Language), L2 (second language), LEP (limited English Proficient), CLD (culturally and linguistically diverse), and language minority students.

**Pedagogical content knowledge.** Teacher knowledge used to connect content to pedagogy or instructional strategies and methods (Kleickmann, Richter, Kunter, Elsner, Besser, Krauss, & Baumert, 2016).

**Phenomenological research.** Research that describes the common meaning of several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or phenomenon (Creswell, 2013).

**Preservice teacher.** A student teacher or a student in a preservice teacher education program who is learning how to become a teacher (Feiman-Nemser, 2001).

**Preservice teacher education program.** A formal program offered by an approved teacher education institution which prepares individuals to become teachers by examining beliefs critically in relation to good teaching, developing subject matter knowledge, developing an understanding of learners, and forming a repertoire of tools and resources (Feiman-Nemser, 2001).

## **Limitations**

It was evident that several limitations could impact this study. One of the greatest limitations to this study was that data was from a limited number of participants. The study included participants who graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education and completed a common preservice teacher education program. Due to the small number of participants, the researcher was cautious about making generalizations from this study.

Another limitation of this study was that only one university and its preservice teacher education program was involved. A study with multiple universities and different preservice teacher education programs using the similar sampling group would have lessened the concern about the effectiveness of generalizations. The researcher is aware of the limitations of the study and realizes the importance of making broad statements and generalizations.

## **Summary**

This introductory chapter presented an overview of the study via background and conceptual framework of the study, problem statement, purpose of the study, research question, significance of the study, definition of terms, and limitations. Chapter 2 contained the literature review, which included an introduction to the chapter, review of research literature and methodological literature, review of methodological issues, synthesis of research findings, critique of previous research, and summary of the chapter. Chapter 3 presented the methodology which included an introduction, research design, research questions, purpose and design of the research study, research population and sampling method, instrumentation, validity and reliability, data collection, data analysis procedures, limitations of the research design, ethical issues, and summary of the chapter. Chapter 4 provided the data analysis and results which presented the results of the study in a narrative format based on the data generated and analyzed through the application of the research design. Chapter 5 identified the discussion and conclusion which was comprised of a discussion of the study findings and a conclusion related to the research question and literature review. The concluding chapter also addressed recommendations for further research related to the study.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **Introduction to the Literature Review**

The purpose of this study was to understand how first year teachers interpret their experiences in learning how to teach English language learners (ELLs). This literature review began with transformative learning theory which is used as the theoretical framework for the study. Next, the literature review focused on methodological research. Finally, the literature review of the literature concluded with a synthesis of the research findings, a critique of the research, and the Chapter 2 summary.

The literature review chapter began by reviewing articles that focused on preservice teacher preparation and how preservice teacher education programs addressed ELL instruction. This review emphasized how preservice teachers must understand the process of learning a second language as well as cultural diversity in the public schools. Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory (1991) was presented to identify ways that preservice teacher education programs can be improved by addressing ELL instructional strategies and practices. Additionally, the research literature showed that attention was needed to reform preservice teacher education programs that promote and support experiences with ELL or culturally diverse students. Such reforms require preservice teacher education programs to explain and demonstrate how a second language is learned, help prospective teachers identify related socio-cultural factors, and model differentiated instructional strategies.

The different strategies regarding instruction of non-English speaking students were reviewed to become aware of the knowledge and concepts preservice teachers are given in their preservice teacher education programs. In-depth searches for information about preservice teachers and their experiences with ELL instruction were conducted using educational databases

like EBSCO host, ERIC, and ProQuest. These searches used the key words like *preservice teacher education programs, English language learners, second language learners, culturally diverse students, English language learning strategies, teacher preparation, English as a second language, second language acquisition, instructional strategies, and differentiated instruction*. Since only six research studies within the last five years addressed preservice teachers and their experiences with ELL instruction, data related to the topic of instruction of ELLs in regular classrooms were also identified and reviewed. This search found a larger amount of information concerning strategies used to address the needs of ELL students. Of the few research studies found, none explained how preservice teachers were instructed on how to implement the strategies.

The research revealed a gap in the literature about preservice teachers and novice teachers feeling inadequate when they tried to implement the different types of instructional strategies. Much research has been done on the types of strategies that can be used with ELLs, but studies do not reveal how preservice teachers are prepared to execute the recommended strategies (Daniel, 2014; Fitts & Gross, 2012; Lucas & Villegas, 2014). Another area of disparity is the difference between what the faculty teaches in the preservice teacher education programs and what cooperating teachers and administrators expect to be taught. There is minimal research about the importance of collaborative efforts among preservice teachers, cooperating teachers, and university supervisors in instruction and cultural awareness (Daniel, 2014; Fitts & Gross, 2012; Lucas & Villegas, 2014). At the beginning of the literature review, the researcher's expectation was that the research would show that limited resources and information about strategies were available for preservice teachers. Faculty in preservice teacher education

programs do seek to provide ELL instructional strategies, but there is a lack of guidance and support from experienced mentors in helping preservice teachers implement these strategies.

Completing preservice teacher education programs can ensure that preservice teachers learn how to meet the challenging needs of ELLs. This benefits not only the preservice teachers but also their future ELL students. Completing preservice teacher education programs should increase teacher knowledge in learning a second language, understanding cultural diversity, and acknowledging personal biases and assumptions. Information in the literature showed that preservice teachers should have a multitude of opportunities and interactions with ELL students to help them understand how to address the individual needs of ELL students. By participating in improved ELL instruction in preservice teacher education programs, preservice teachers and ELLs can both experience success in the classroom.

### **Conceptual Framework**

**Transformative Learning Theory.** The conceptual framework for this phenomenological study was supported by Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory (1991). To understand how preservice teachers used their past experiences to formulate current ideas and practices, analysis of the preservice teachers' personal history and *weltanschauung*, or world view, was crucial. It was important that this analysis included cultural perspectives, backgrounds, and social interactions. It is through these prior learning experiences that perspectives, personal paradigms, presuppositions, and assumptions are created. This formative type of learning begins during childhood through socialization and schooling experiences from parents, friends, and mentors. By deciphering these perspectives, preservice teachers can better understand the purpose and development of new ideas and perspectives for a worldview of effective learning and teaching approaches. Preservice teacher education programs must help



preservice teachers acknowledge their assumptions to help develop new and meaningful perspectives when teaching ELL students.

Transformative learning is the process by which adult learners use prior learning experiences to transform individual meanings into new perspectives or outlooks. Mezirow (1991) expressed that the goal of adult education is to help adults realize their potential for becoming more socially responsible and autonomous learners. Moreover, Mezirow (1991) described transformative learning as learning that “results in new and transformed meaning schemes or, when reflection focuses on premises, transformed meaning perspectives” (p. 6). Through past and current experiences, individuals form new expectations and give new meaning to previous and current experiences. Through transformative learning, preservice teachers can reflect on their own life experiences and obtain a deeper understanding of their personal, cultural, spiritual, and religious beliefs. Reflective learning can provide a unique way of defining their worldview to understand how ELL students acquire the English language. Mezirow (2000) defined transformative learning as,

the process by which we transform our taken-for granted frames of reference (meaning perspectives, habits of mind, mind-sets) to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective so that they may generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide action. (p. 7)

**Meaning perspectives.** Mezirow (1991) also expressed that meaning perspectives or habits of expectations act as perceptual and conceptual codes that form, limit, and may distort how we think, believe, and feel. Additionally, Mezirow (1991) noted that meaning perspectives can affect how we learn, what we learn, when we learn, and why we learn. Mezirow (1991) described these meaning perspectives as structures that are largely operational and unarticulated

presuppositions that often distort views of reality. Presuppositions in preservice teacher education programs can produce false and inadequate meaning perspectives in teaching and lead to inappropriate forms of instructing ELLs. This is why it is so important to consider the role of meaning perspectives and use them to eliminate inappropriate assumptions. In addition to helping interpret meaning, meaning perspectives help the individual construct meaning schemes within individual beliefs, values, and feelings. These meaning schemes are habits of what we expect will happen, what is noticed, and what individuals choose not to notice, even in learning and teaching. To understand how and why preservice teachers learn, meaning perspectives were investigated to discover how meaning is constructed. Through reflective learning, preservice teachers evaluated and reevaluated their meaning perspectives, presuppositions, and assumptions to transform purposeful and efficacious knowledge. Consequently, Mezirow's (1991) transformative learning process offers new and transformed meaning schemes and perspectives to preservice teachers.

Mezirow (1991) added that assumptions are “products of unreflective personal or cultural assimilation” (p. 81). Such distorted assumptions can impede the awareness of seeing other perspectives and inhibit the integration, differentiation, and purpose of new experiences in preservice teacher education programs. Even though assumptions can be true, they need to be validated with facts and evidence, not by misconceptions and beliefs. Assumptions, regardless of whether they are true or false, are dependent upon the dominance of a culture or society. This also holds true in preservice teacher education programs. For example, if ELL instruction is not valued in a particular preservice teacher education program, then ELL instruction may be overlooked and not considered as a crucial component of the program. Mezirow (1991) described it best when he said that meaning perspectives provide us with criteria for evaluating

right from wrong. We learn in order to add or change the structure of our expectations or meaning perspectives and schemes (Mezirow, 1991). Mezirow (1991) added that learning to change these structures of meaning is fundamentally transformative. Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory (1991) can give us an awareness of our conceptions of the world and give us a clearer meaning of our assumptions formed by families, cultures, and society. This will lead to the understanding of how preservice teachers can use their past experiences and evaluate new information to reform their views.

**Transformative learning.** Mezirow (1991) explained that James Loder asserted that there is a "grammar of the knowing event that informs learning conflict between what is known and what must be understood" (p. 163). This is called transformative logic and consists of five steps: a) conflict, b) scanning, c) imagination, d) release and open, and e) interpretation.

Through the transformative learning process, conflict is caused by what Mezirow (1991) called a "disorienting dilemma." After a conflict occurs, scanning begins and answers are discovered and information is gathered and analyzed. Then, understanding and transformation of the "disorienting dilemma" occur and a new perspective results. Next, energy within the conflict is released and the individual is conscientious to the contextual situation and results in problem-solving strategies. Finally, connections are made and validation of the interpretation is sought.

Transformative learning allows learners to think autonomously. Autonomous learners can reflect on their learning, evaluate their experiences, and form new insights or paradigms. In transformative learning, autonomy allows for greater understanding of the assumptions that support one's and other's concepts, beliefs, and feelings and those of others (Mezirow, 2000). Further, autonomous learners can view an experience through multiple perspectives and understand that concepts and feelings depend upon those perspectives. Autonomous thinking

also allows learners to think for themselves and gives learners a sense of meaning, which is free from the presumed perspectives. For instance, an instructor who wants to motivate and foster autonomous thinkers can provide opportunities for preservice teachers to select from a wide variety of activities that promote discussion, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills, such as journal writing, think-pair-share, and other cooperative learning activities. Mezirow (2000) affirmed that

Achieving greater autonomy in thinking is a product of transformative learning – acquiring more of the understandings, skills, and dispositions required to become more aware of context of interpretations and beliefs, critically reflective of assumptions, able to participate freely and fully in rational discourse to find common meaning and validate beliefs, and effective in acting on the result of this reflective learning process. (p. 29)

Transformative learning involves two types of intentional learning, which originated from philosopher and sociologist, Jürgen Habermas: instrumental and communicative. Both domains of learning have their own purpose and logical way of validating statements, experiences, and revealing new paradigms of understanding. Adult learners, like preservice teachers, require the use of these two domains. In instrumental learning, the adult learner seeks to control and manipulate the environment and places emphasis on improving prediction and performance (Mezirow, 2003). Hypotheses are then tested and consequences are analyzed. The focus in instrumental learning involves determining cause-effect relationships, problem-solving of tasks, and the acquisition of an improved and task-oriented performance. Therefore, instrumental learning usually occurs when learning how to do something. Instrumental learning is dependent upon communicative learning and involves the making of predictions about physical or social experiences.

Communicative learning requires the adult learner to consciously use his or her own values, feelings, and meanings instead of acting upon others' actions and thoughts. This type of learning occurs when a person fully comprehends what someone is telling them. In communicative learning, adult learners acknowledge presuppositions and assumptions from the person who is communicating with them. Mezirow (1991) explained that reasoning happens by using metaphors rather than hypotheses in communicative learning. The logic involved in communicative learning is called metaphorical-abductive logic, which helps individuals understand the unknown. Metaphorical-abductive logic enables individuals to make comparisons of previous experiences and analyze the meanings and authenticity of words, actions, truth, and feelings. In summary, communicative learning requires critical reflection, assessment of assumptions, understanding of values, morals, feelings, and the different types of concepts (social, political, philosophical, psychological, and educational).

In preservice teacher education programs, transformative learning can be used to change preservice teachers' "old" experiences into "new" meaning schemes. Preservice teachers may encounter many situations in which presuppositions can happen. These presuppositions may come from family upbringings, faculty collaboration, or peer interactions. Preservice teachers can become transformative learners who are self-reflective and use the integration of concepts being learned in their preservice teacher education programs to address the needs of ELL students. Reflective learning involves the examination of assumptions and premises of instrumental and communicative learning. To instill an appreciation for learning a second language and cultural diversity, preservice teacher education programs can support this type of transformational learning. Ways to incorporate a transformational education in colleges and

universities include: in-class discussions, research assignments, differentiation instruction lessons, field experiences, professional development, and cultural projects and events.

Mezirow (2003) explained two distinctive adult learning capabilities in transformative learning in which adults can fully engage in critical-dialectical discourse. Mezirow (2003) defined critical-dialectical discourse as having an open mind, listening empathetically, avoiding premature judgment, and seeking a common ground. First, Mezirow (2003) identified Robert Kegan's (2000) ability to become critically self-reflective. Through self-reflection, preservice teachers can enhance their awareness of their strengths, weaknesses, values, and goals as an educator. Self-reflection can also allow preservice teachers to explore what may or may not work with their students' diverse abilities. Second, Mezirow (2003) noted King and Kitchener's (1994) adult learning capability of reflective judgment or the ability to engage in critical-dialectical discourse which involves assessing assumptions and expectations that support individual beliefs, values, and feelings. Reflective judgment in teacher education courses would allow preservice teachers to become active inquirers and open to constructive criticism. Moreover, self-reflection and critical thinking would enable preservice teachers to be actively and meaningfully involved in understanding the different methods and logic behind instructional practices, strategies, and methods.

Furthermore, Mezirow (1997) indicated that adult educators can facilitate transformative learning by becoming aware and critical of their own and others' assumptions. Professional educators can provide preservice teachers with practice in recognizing their assumptions, exploring different perspectives, and redefining misconceptions and stereotypes. Providing multiple opportunities for preservice teachers to have discourse about their learning can also validate what and how one understands and identifies beliefs. Mezirow (1997) summarized,

Effective discourse depends on how well the educator can create a situation in which those participating have full information; are free from coercion; have equal opportunity to assume the various roles of discourse (to advance beliefs, challenge, defend, explain, assess evidence, and judge arguments); become critically reflective of assumptions; are empathetic and open to other perspectives; are willing to listen and to search for common ground or a synthesis of different points of views; and can make a tentative best judgment to guide action (p. 10).

**Preservice teacher education programs.** Preservice teacher education programs should include the importance of addressing the needs of all students including the increased number of ELL students in public schools throughout the United States. Téllez and Manthey (2013) affirmed that improving education for the approximately 3.5 million ELLs in U.S. schools today should be a national educational priority. Specifically, preservice teacher education programs should provide instruction to their preservice teachers that supports the learning of a second language. Preservice teacher education programs can foster the development of understanding of how to address the individual needs of ELLs through a variety of field experiences. The ultimate goal for preservice teacher education programs should be to equip preservice teachers with learning tools and strategies that engage and increase comprehension for diverse learners. Tang, Lee, and Chun (2012) indicated that preservice teacher education programs need to increase the importance of addressing the individual needs of ELLs by helping them recognize the need for change, equipping them with proper metacognitive strategies, and providing them with opportunities for successful classroom and field experiences.

The recent increase in immigration accounts for demographic changes in U.S. public schools (Samson & Collins, 2012). Samson and Collins (2012) indicated that an estimated 25%

or one in four children are from immigrant families. To address these demographic changes, university administrators and teacher educators should consider reviewing their curriculum and instruction to better prepare preservice teachers. Preservice teacher education programs should include opportunities for preservice teachers to work with ELLs since they will likely have these students in their future classrooms. Samson and Collins (2012) noted that there has been little attention to essential standards, knowledge, and skills that general education teachers should possess to provide effective instruction to ELLs. The fact that teachers are and will encounter diverse learners in their classrooms requires that every teacher has sufficient knowledge and understanding of a wide range of skills to address the unique needs of all students, including ELLs (Samson & Collins, 2012).

There is foundational knowledge about ELLs that preservice teacher education programs should provide preservice teachers. For instance, preservice teachers should be taught the importance of oral language development, academic language, and cultural sensitivity (Samson & Collins, 2012). These areas of knowledge should be integrated into the preparation, certification, evaluation, and development of all teachers (Samson & Collins, 2012). Appropriate training in meeting the ELL students' language and learning needs will facilitate academic success. Without specific training in addressing the needs of ELLs, preservice teachers will not be able to teach these students adequately. Currently, federal and state demands for public schools are high, and funding is limited. Therefore, teachers need to be extra conscientious in spending to improve student performance for ELLs.

Furthermore, preservice teacher education programs should provide the general knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to teach ELLs (De Oliveira & Burke, 2015). This includes giving preservice teachers knowledge of learners and their social contexts, knowledge



of subject matter and curriculum goals, and knowledge of teaching (De Oliveira & Burke, 2015). Knowledge of learners and their social contexts involves knowledge about learning, human development, and language. Having content and teaching knowledge (pedagogical content knowledge) will help preservice teachers understand the reasoning behind educational goals and purposes for particular content and subject matter. Lastly, knowledge of teaching will enable preservice teachers to understand the importance of subject matter by using a variety of teaching styles for diverse learners that incorporate multiple assessments methods and classroom management techniques. Inevitably, these three components can provide all preservice teachers with a common foundation of knowledge and understanding of the different linguistic, academic, and cultural needs of students.

Several learning checkpoints, like coursework, state examinations, and student internships, are encountered throughout preservice teacher education programs to ensure preservice teachers are being prepared effectively to work with diverse students. However, these checkpoints are rarely correlated among one another and frequently do not address the needs of ELLs (Samson & Collins, 2012). Samson and Collins (2012) also stated that there is no guarantee that teacher educators and the coursework provide preservice teachers with the linguistic, academic, and cultural knowledge needed to work with ELLs. In addition, state examinations do not necessarily assess preservice teachers' knowledge and skills in working with ELLs. Consequently, preservice teachers can pass state examinations without fully demonstrating that they can teach linguistically diverse students.

### **Review of Research Literature and Methodological Literature**

Islam and Park (2015) indicated that teachers face a multitude of challenges when trying to meet the needs of ELLs since an undergraduate degree does not provide an in-depth study on

learning a second language, which includes academic, linguistic, and socio-cultural competence. Islam and Park (2015) reported that preservice teacher education programs lack instructional delivery learning on resources and services for second language acquisition. Moreover, preservice teacher education programs should include instructional support that targets various aspects of learning like cultural sensitivity, academic and language proficiency, stages of acculturation, modifications, and instructional strategies. It becomes imperative that preservice teacher education programs include and demonstrate essential strategies and educational tools that are needed for effective classroom instruction for ELLs. Preservice teacher education programs should provide demonstrations on how to apply a wide variety of different instructional techniques and methods.

According to Lucas and Villegas (2013), a preservice teacher education program is the first encounter in teacher development that can provide preservice teachers understanding on how to accommodate instruction and assignments for ELLs. Lucas and Villegas (2013) also expressed that learning how to teach ELLs should continue throughout the teachers' careers. Increased inclusion in classrooms has raised awareness of the need for all teachers to understand how to teach ELLs (Lucas & Villegas, 2013). A preservice teacher education program that addresses the needs of all students is vital to validate the importance of teaching all students. Lucas and Villegas (2013) described that teacher educators must decide how to organize preservice and in-service activities that will help develop a coherent teacher learning continuum.

Like Lucas and Villegas, Daniel (2014) also stressed the need for more research in defining how and when preservice teachers learn to educate ELLs in preservice teacher education programs. Daniel (2014) explained that further analysis is needed urgently in determining how elementary teachers work with ELLs in their preservice programs. University

professors should provide opportunities for preservice teachers to employ knowledge, methods, and strategies learned. This includes reflecting and evaluating their own cultural backgrounds, biases, and knowledge of how a second language is acquired. Preservice teachers must also observe and tutor ELLs to fully understand how learning occurs for these students. Daniel (2014) expressed that few studies have documented how preservice teachers learn to be culturally responsive in preservice teacher education programs.

Fitts and Gross (2012) revealed that developing culturally and linguistically competent teachers requires exposure to linguistic diversity through internships and service learning. Fitts and Gross (2012) also communicated that these learning opportunities should consist of broadening the preservice teachers' socio-cultural understandings and guiding them in addressing the needs of diverse learners. They recommended exposing preservice teachers to second language acquisition, knowledge of language learning and linguistics, socio-political aspects of language, and direct interaction with families of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Finally, Fitts and Gross (2012) concluded that preservice teachers need multiple, prolonged opportunities in working with diverse learners.

Daniel (2012) also conveyed the significance of the role and responsibilities of cooperating teachers with their preservice teachers. Daniel (2012) described that when preservice teachers enter their cooperating teacher's classroom, they discover the cooperating teacher's values, ideals, and perspectives. Preservice teachers tend to view their cooperating teacher's ideas and feelings about the different aspects of teaching as the ideal way to think and teach. For this reason, it is crucial for cooperating teachers to demonstrate the importance of working with culturally diverse students. Daniel (2014) also asserted that teacher educators

should not only express the purpose, rules, and goals of the teaching environment, but also what is significant and important, what needs to be improved, and what needs to be addressed.

### **Review of Methodological Issues**

Qualitative researchers seek to understand the construction of meaning or how people make sense of their world using their experiences. For instance, Islam and Park (2015) affirmed that teacher preparation did not adequately support the learning of ELLs. These findings were gathered from preservice teachers' reflection papers, group discussions, and assessments. Islam and Park (2015) identified a variety of strategies that should be implemented by all teachers of ELL students. These strategies included a) building background, b) making connections, c) using one-to-one tutoring, d) making predictions, and e) using body language, facial expressions, and intonations. Islam and Park (2015) identified a mismatch between current teachers and students in understanding cultures and the purpose for high quality instruction for ELL students; however, Islam and Park (2015) did not address the mismatch that may exist between preservice teachers and cooperating teachers. Islam and Park (2015) conveyed the significance of providing differentiated instructional strategies that considered students learning a second language and their culture. They emphasized that differentiated instruction can help students acquire both the English language and academic content language. Lastly, Islam and Park (2015) described that preservice teacher education programs must offer opportunities for preservice teachers to identify and deliver instruction to ELLs, including the practice of differentiating instruction.

Nevertheless, it is important to understand the different perspectives about the effectiveness of preservice teacher education programs relative to teacher preparation in teaching ELLs using multiple strategies. Like Islam and Park (2015), Daniel (2014) indicated that public schools are failing to support ELLs in many ways. Some teachers of ELL students do not allow

students to use their native language, and some feel that they are not capable of teaching ELLs. In describing what is known about the preparation of preservice teachers, Daniel (2014) expressed that culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy in preservice teacher education programs can enhance students' experiences in public schools. For example, courses can be designed to help preservice teachers learn to teach ELLs. Finally, preservice teacher education programs can provide information that allows preservice teachers to obtain knowledge, dispositions, and skills necessary throughout their experiences in preservice teacher education programs.

Daniel (2014) noted that there is very little research conducted to document how preservice teachers learn to teach ELLs. In some research studies, preservice teachers expressed that teachers should expect less from ELLs upon entering as well as exiting the programs. In one study mentioned by Daniel (2014), it was determined that preservice teachers' responses to questions were highest at the conclusion of a multicultural course. Other case studies emphasized the importance of open communication between course instructors and cooperating teachers and schools. Open communication on policies and beliefs about education can ensure all parties understand the significance of preservice teachers learning to reach and teach ELLs or culturally and linguistically diverse students. Therefore, Daniel (2014) sought to find out how preservice teachers learn to educate this student population in elementary schools during their student teaching.

In conclusion, Daniel (2014) indicated that preservice teachers learn best through social interactions during field experiences. Daniel (2014) purported that a) preservice teacher education programs fail to discuss ELL instruction and strategies, b) cooperating teachers do not support preservice teachers in addressing the needs of the ELL students, c) university supervisors

and cooperating teachers do not collaborate their thoughts and ideas about the goal for student teaching, d) cooperating teachers do not appropriately model interest in teaching ELLs or culturally responsive students, and e) interactions with students allow preservice teachers to strengthen and gain culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy. Finally, Daniel (2014) identified ways to support preservice teachers in learning to educate culturally diverse students through interviews, observations, artifacts, and teacher education documents.

Lucas and Villegas (2013) alleged that preservice teachers have their first teaching encounter with ELLs during their student teaching. According to Lucas and Villegas (2013), Feisman–Nemser’s framework of central tasks of teacher development supports the importance of the context of the teacher and student learning as reflected in her emphasis on learning about diverse learners, pedagogy, and learning from classroom practices and field experiences. They affirmed that teacher educators must advocate for ELL instruction in preservice teacher education programs and consider particular tasks, such as pedagogical skills and linguistic orientations, which will ensure that preservice teachers understand and address the needs of ELLs. Lucas and Villegas (2013) also indicated that preservice teachers should develop a sociolinguistic consciousness, a value for linguistic diversity, and a need for ELL advocacy. This awareness should include the examination and reflection of personal beliefs and values about language and cultural diversity.

Lucas and Villegas (2013) also discussed how preservice teachers must understand that ELLs need a variety of instructional strategies for acquiring the English language as well as academic content language. They mentioned the importance of preservice teachers knowing how second language acquisition occurs. Another important factor in developing exemplary teachers of ELL students is promoting and attending professional development workshops and

conferences. Lucas and Villegas (2013) expressed that there is little research done that examined how to increase an awareness for ELL instruction in the public schools.

Fitts and Gross (2012) conducted a qualitative case study design that examined growth of preservice teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and knowledge about ELLs. Fitts and Gross (2012) used Bennett's (1993) framework of intercultural sensitivity over the course of a semester. Findings gathered from documents, artifacts, group interviews, and surveys suggested that preservice teachers had limited interaction with ELL students. Fitts and Gross (2012) identified the purpose for understanding the beliefs about ELLs, perceptions of English language competence, and learning about culture. In other words, "Understanding students' cultural and social capital, must include interactions and experiences with diverse populations outside of the schoolyard – where students' daily actions and social networks are lived, established, and valued" (Fitts & Gross, 2012, p. 91).

### **Synthesis of Research Findings**

The literature revealed that the number of ELLs will continue to grow in the United States. It is also stated that preservice teachers, as well as classroom teachers, must be prepared to teach these types of learners. Therefore, it is crucial that all current and future educators embrace the urgency for improving our preservice teacher education programs and public schools in fulfilling the needs of diverse student populations.

The authors also indicated that there are many factors that can positively influence ELL learners. These factors or components were discovered through surveys. They included culturally and linguistically responsive preservice programs, field experiences with ELLs, second language acquisition instruction, ongoing professional development, collective efficacy, and linguistic and cultural awareness. Moreover, it was stressed that classroom teachers must be

equipped with appropriate instructional tools, such as visuals, hands-on activities, and oral and written instructions. Providing a wide range of instructional teaching strategies to enhance the learning of diverse students was also recommended. Examples of effective instructional strategies are a) building background, b) one-to-one instruction, c) small group instruction, d) language experience approach, e) interactive writing, and f) total physical response among other forms of differentiated instruction. Islam and Park (2015) stated that teachers may know what strategies to use with ELL students, yet they struggle to implement them in the classroom.

Another vital concern shown in the literature is that the studies reported that preservice teachers and teachers have misconceptions and prejudices about ELLs. Teachers do not seem to evaluate and reflect upon their perceptions of ELLs in their classrooms nor do they acknowledge that they are responsible for teaching these students. The authors also expressed that preservice teachers and current teachers do not have a complete understanding of what the students can and cannot do and are unaware of how a new language is acquired. For instance, some teachers inhibit the students by discouraging students from using their native language. In other cases, teachers are not aware of the significance of collaborating with one another to create learning opportunities that maximize student learning.

### **Critique of Previous Research**

Although many literature authors addressed the commitment and obligation teachers should have to diverse student groups, there are several differences that should be considered. First, it is important to note the reason for doing each study, the research information being sought, and the sample groups used. Tèllez and Manthey (2012) focused on the teachers' perceptions of effective school-wide programs and strategies for ELLs. They did not consider perceptions of the students toward their teachers. Tèllez and Manthey (2012) based their



findings on Bandura's concept of self-efficacy, which is a cognitive process in which individuals mold their beliefs about persistence, possible failure responses, and performance strategies on a particular task (1993). Therefore, the authors considered teacher efficacy and beliefs as an influences on their pedagogical and performance skills in the classroom. Data were obtained from 578 California teachers from studies that explored teachers' perceptions through collective efficacy and the school environment.

The purpose for Islam and Park's (2015) study was to use a graduate reading methods course to determine how preservice teachers prepare and reflect on differentiated instruction in literacy comprehension. Islam and Park (2015) discussed, in depth, the role of differentiated instruction with ELLs and provided several examples. Through a variety of differentiated instruction strategies, Islam and Park (2015) promoted several student assessments for checking academic achievement. Reflective paper grades, Canvas group discussions, and assignments were all part of the data collection. However, the findings suggested that little research has been done to determine how teachers implement literacy instruction for ELL students. In any case, teachers struggled to implement instructional approaches for ELL students throughout public school settings.

Similarly, Lucas and Villegas (2016) presented ideas for preservice teachers and described preservice teacher education programs as the first encounter in teacher development for teaching ELLs. Lucas and Villegas (2016) used the Feisman-Nemser's (2001) framework of central tasks for learning as the basis for identifying strategies to teach ELL students. With the Feisman-Nemser's framework, the content delivered is rich, and concepts and activities are student-centered. Also, Lucas and Villegas (2014) stated that preservice teacher education

programs should be the first phase of teacher development where culturally and linguistically responsive and pedagogical assignments should be designed to address the needs of ELLs.

Daniel (2014) revealed that school systems are failing to meet the needs of ELLs. Through the use of interviews (with preservice teachers and teachers), observations, documents, and artifacts, Daniel (2014) revealed that ELLs are often told to stop speaking their native language and to do repetition and grammar drills. Low expectations are communicated to ELLs and little is known about the efforts between the cooperating teachers and the preservice teachers. The participants in Daniel's (2014) study consisted of a cohort of preservice teachers and eight teacher educators.

Finally, Fitts and Gross (2012) suggested that preservice teachers can learn through field experiences with culturally diverse populations. Using surveys and interviews, Fitts and Gross (2012) determined that, for preservice teachers to learn about ELLs, they must be exposed to positive dispositions, pedagogical skills, and socio-cultural understandings. Fitts and Gross (2012) used open-ended questions and compared the responses to questions asked at the mid-point of the study to exit surveys. Findings showed there were limited experiences with ELLs, which resulted in a gap in developing skill sets to reach the targeted population (Daniel, 2014; Fitts & Gross, 2012; Lucas & Villegas, 2014).

## **Chapter 2 Summary**

Although preservice teacher education programs may include some instructional strategies and teaching methods to use with ELL students, the reality is that some preservice teachers and first classroom teachers do not know exactly how to implement them. More research is needed to discover how preservice teachers perceive their preparation and readiness to teach diverse learners. Preservice teacher education programs must be created for culturally

and linguistically diverse students and to help prepare future teachers to teach all students, including ELLs. Ultimately, preservice teacher education programs must create instruction, course activities, and field experience opportunities that focus on the learning of ELLs.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to understand how first year teachers interpret their experiences in learning how to teach English language learners (ELLs). Moustakas (1994) proposed that research should focus on the holism or essences of an experience. This qualitative research study examined meanings through human experiences and empirical perspectives that helped the researcher understand the perceptions of first year teachers regarding their ELL instruction in their preservice teacher education program. The primary data were identified through in-depth interviews with six first year teachers who identified the factors that may affect preservice teacher learning and their professional development. This chapter presented the following topics: research methodology, research question, purpose and design of the research study, research population and sampling method, instrumentation, data collection, data analysis procedures, limitations of the research design, ethical issues, and summary of the study.

This research study examined how first year teachers view the effectiveness of their preservice teacher education program relating to addressing the individual needs of ELL students. Creswell (2012) indicated that qualitative research requires researchers to obtain a deep understanding of the problem(s) while quantitative research is used to find trends or explanations for the problems using statistical analysis of the data. Creswell indicated that, in quantitative research, the research problem section is used to direct the types of questions or hypotheses proposed in the study. In qualitative research, Creswell (2012) noted that the research problem discussion is typically used to establish the importance of the central idea. Consequently, the best format for this research study was a qualitative approach since the phenomenon explored the perspective of first year teachers to gain an understanding of the

issues. Moreover, this research study also identified *what* the participants experienced and *how* they experienced the phenomenon.

## **Research Design**

Creswell (2013) described five approaches in qualitative research: narrative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study. Although these approaches may have similar philosophical assumptions and interpretive frameworks, each approach is different in its purpose, research question, unit of analysis, data collection, and data analysis strategies. Narrative research studies explore the life of one or two individuals through multiple data gathering methods and seek to retell the stories of the participants to convey a message or point. Similarly, phenomenological studies may also use multiple forms of data gathering, but interviews are the main information gathering method. However, the focus for phenomenological studies is to describe a particular phenomenon as expressed by a group of individuals. Grounded theory studies also use a variety of data collection methods, but data is collected from a large group of individuals to develop a theory or explanation of a particular process or action. Case studies usually use a variety of data gathering methods to develop an in-depth description and analysis of one or more cases. Finally, ethnographic studies use primarily observations and interviews but may also use other sources to describe and interpret shared patterns of culture of a group.

Husserl wrote that the science of phenomena is called phenomenology and is the ‘science of science’ because it investigates what other sciences take for granted or ignore, “the very essence of their own objects” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 46). Husserl’s focus on pure phenomenology and essence formulated his use of transcendental phenomenology, which is “the scientific study of the appearance of things, of phenomena just as we see them and as they appear to us in

consciousness” (p. 49). For this reason, the researcher decided to utilize a transcendental phenomenological research model as described by Moustakas (1994). Moustakas’ (1994) phenomenological model consists of four methodological steps: a) preparing to collect data, b) collecting data, c) organizing, analyzing, and synthesizing data, and d) developing a summary, implications, and outcomes.

### **Research Question**

Creswell (2012) defined qualitative research as “an inquiry approach useful for exploring and understanding a central phenomenon” (p. 626). In qualitative research, the researcher asks the participants broad, general questions to collect detailed descriptions in the form of words or images. The researcher then analyzes the information to develop specific themes about the phenomenon. Using the data, the researcher interprets meaning and draws upon personal reflections and past research. Hence, this study warranted the use of the qualitative research approach to capture the rich descriptions of how the first year teachers constructed meaning of their preservice teacher education preparation experience.

The general research question guiding this study were developed using the literature review to better understand how first year teachers interpret their experiences in their preservice teacher education program. The findings of this phenomenological study provided crucial information for answering this central question:

RQ1: How do first year teachers perceive their preparation of working with English language learners?

### **Purpose and Design of the Research Study**

The purpose of this study was to understand how first year teachers interpret their experiences in learning how to teach ELLs. The research design for the study did not present

aspects of a narrative study as the study goal was to examine and understand a small group of first year teachers' perceptions and understandings of their experiences so that common features can be studied. It was not a grounded study because its purpose was not to generate a new model or theory nor was it a case study because it was not bounded by time or place. It was asking a "how" research question. Therefore, the research design that best suited this study was a phenomenological one.

According to Moustakas (1994), transcendental phenomenology was first introduced as early as 1765 in philosophy and in Immanuel Kant's writings. Georg Hegel was the first philosopher to technically define the term phenomenology. Hegel described phenomenology as "knowledge as it appears to consciousness, the science of describing what one perceives, senses, and knows in one's immediate awareness and experience" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 26). However, Edmund Husserl further developed the concept of phenomenology. He believed that knowledge was based on inner evidence, intuition, and essence and developed the concept of epoché or bracketing. In phenomenological studies, researchers bracket their personal experiences to allow a fresh perspective toward the phenomenon being examined and to eliminate presuppositions. Moustakas (1994) wrote that the word phenomenon comes from the Greek word *phaenesthai*, which means to flare up, show itself, or appear. In addition, Moustakas (1994) defined phenomena as "the building blocks of human science and the basis for all knowledge" (p. 26). Using Moustakas' (1994) transcendental phenomenological research model, this phenomenological study allowed the researcher to discover commonalities and reveal the essence or meaning behind individual experiences.

Moustakas (1994) purported that the purpose of phenomenological research studies is to understand and describe the essence of a shared concept or phenomenon. Creswell (2013) also

noted that phenomenological research allows the researcher to explore the individuals' common meaning of the experience. Similarly, Van Manen (1997) expressed, "It differs from almost every other science in that it attempts to gain insightful descriptions of the way we experience the world pre-reflectively, without taxonomizing, classifying, or abstracting it" (p. 9). Hence, this research design provided an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the common perceptions of what was learned by first year teachers throughout their preservice teacher education preparation program.

This phenomenological research study was conducted to provide professional educators with an understanding of common perceptions of first year teachers regarding their experiences in ELL instruction in their preservice teacher education program. Creswell (2013) expressed that, in a qualitative study, there is a need to obtain a complex and detailed understanding of the issue. He also explained that qualitative research studies are used to empower individuals to understand and share their experiences. Furthermore, Creswell (2013) described that qualitative researchers "collect data in natural settings with a sensitivity to the people under study, and they analyze their data inductively and deductively to establish patterns or themes" (p. 65). For this reason, a phenomenological research study was used to conduct the investigation on the perceived effectiveness of a preservice teacher education program in addressing ELL instruction. The review of the literature about perceptions of preparedness and practices of first year teachers identified this situation as a challenge in today's public school classrooms. The challenges that first year teachers face with ELL students are phenomena that are in need of understanding. That understanding should include the cultural, linguistic, and academic backgrounds of culturally and linguistically diverse students. Factors that may or may not create challenges for first year teachers who teach ELLs were identified and shared with professional educators.



Oklahoma schools have had more than 43,500 ELLs since the school year 2012-2013, which was marked by a nine percent increase from the 2002-2003 school year (Migration Policy Institute, 2015). According to the Oklahoma State Department of Education (2016), Oklahoma schools served 50, 117 ELLs, which made up (7%) of Oklahoma's total student population in the 2015-2016 school year. Therefore, first year teachers must be equipped with pedagogical knowledge, resources, and tools that can benefit the learning of their ELL students. Preservice teacher education programs must be efficient in delivering instructional methods and professional expertise on how to educate ELL students. This phenomenological study investigated how first year teachers feel about their preparedness for teaching ELLs after completing their preservice teacher education program.

Based on the literature review, there is a lack of data on how first year teachers interpret their experiences regarding their preparation for teaching ELLs in their preservice teacher education program. Exploring this issue may provide useful information to policymakers, university administrators, and teacher educators to improve preservice teacher education programs in delivering ELL instruction to preservice teachers. This research study may positively impact teachers and preservice teacher education programs as well as ELL students, which may increase teacher and student retention.

Polat and Mahalingappa (2013) expressed the importance of all teachers, especially core subject area teachers, accepting the responsibility of the needs of the growing ELL population in public schools. Polat and Mahalingappa (2013) also mentioned exploring teachers' beliefs about second language acquisition and academic achievement in mainstream classrooms. Additionally, the authors explored the possibilities of preservice teacher education programs implementing

assignments, activities, and field experiences that expose preservice teachers to a wide variety of linguistic, ethnic, cultural, and racial backgrounds.

Verdi, Riggs, and Riggs (2012) stated that preservice teacher education programs must change to meet the challenges in today's classrooms. This includes differentiating instruction for all types of learners. Verdi, Riggs, and Riggs (2012) also acknowledged that evaluations of preservice teachers and preservice teacher education programs must be reliable, valid, and useful. Evaluations, which are reliable, valid, and useful should result in an increase in faculty and program improvement as well as greater preservice teacher success in teaching ELLs. By investigating first year teachers' perceptions on their preparedness to teach ELLs, staff in preservice teacher education programs can enhance the ability to provide clear and effective instruction that addresses the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students.

Verdi, Riggs, and Riggs (2012) further explained that understanding the meaning of differentiating instruction is a challenge for preservice teachers. Teacher educators must examine how they describe the purpose of differentiating instruction as well as how they demonstrate it to their preservice teachers. Hence, preservice teachers should also be given the opportunity to apply a variety of differentiated instructional strategies in their field experiences, classroom activities, and assignments. These include but are not limited to helping preservice teachers use a culturally relevant teaching point of view to explore the meaning behind activating prior knowledge, scaffolding, making predictions, and using body language, facial expressions, gestures, and intonations. Islam and Park (2015) also indicated that teacher educators must provide preservice teachers the opportunity to reflect on their preparation of differentiated instruction. Thus, preservice teachers must know how to provide adequate support for ELL students through a variety of instructional strategies. Likewise, preservice teachers must have a

deep understanding of how a second language is learned, including the difference of social and academic language, when entering their first year of teaching in classroom.

### **Research Population and Sampling Method**

To address the central question, this study sampled first year teachers who have experiences in teaching ELLs. Creswell (2012) stated that a population is a group of individuals who share characteristics. The total population of participants for this study was 16 first year teachers who graduated from XYZ University in the fall of 2016. The sample was six elementary teachers, purposefully selected to assist in answering the central question regarding their perceptions on their preservice teacher education program. The teachers who were selected to participate shared the same characteristics and experienced the phenomena studied. The selected participants have graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education from the same university and completed the same preservice teacher education program.

A nonprobability sampling method, as described by Creswell (2012), allows the researcher to select individuals who vary little in their personal characteristics. “In nonprobability sampling, the researcher selects individuals because they are available, convenient, and represent some characteristic the investigator seeks to study” (p. 145). The population of interest was first year teachers from public schools in western Oklahoma. One of the approaches to nonprobability sampling is *convenience sampling*. In convenience sampling, according to Creswell (2012), the researcher selects participants to further understand the central phenomenon because they are willing and available for the study. The sample consisted of six first year teachers who graduated in the fall of 2016 and who are currently teaching in an elementary public school in Oklahoma.

## **Instrumentation**

The instrument for this phenomenological study was a semi-structured interview guide. The interview questions were based of the central research question. In a qualitative research study, the researcher identifies types of data that will measure the phenomena in the research questions. Creswell (2012) and Patton (1999, 2000) conveyed that instruments are developed through these steps: identifying the purpose of the instrument, reviewing the literature, writing the questions, and testing the questions. Creswell (2013) and Patton (1999, 2000) also noted that data collection in phenomenological studies mainly consists of multiple interviews with the participants. After reviewing the literature and purpose for conducting this research study, the data used in this qualitative research were developed using in-depth, one-to-one interviews.

Using Creswell's (2013) proposed steps for interviewing, data were collected for this study using the following nine steps:

1. Decided on general and open-ended questions which focused on understanding the central phenomenon in the study.
2. Identified interviewees who can best answer questions being investigated through purposeful sampling.
3. Determined the type of interview that was most useful: telephone, focus groups, or one-to-one interviews.
4. Used adequate recording procedures when conducting interviews, including type of mic.
5. Designed and used an interview protocol or guide with approximately five to seven open-ended questions, which is four to five pages in length.
6. Refined interview questions and procedures through pilot testing.
7. Determined the setting for conducting interviews.

8. Obtained written consent (Appendix B) from the interviewee and explained the purpose of the study as well time needed to conduct the interview and plans for using the results.
9. Used good interview procedures for questioning and recording information.

### **Validity and Reliability**

Creswell (2013) and Patton (1999, 2000) explained validation and reliability in qualitative research. “Validation in qualitative research is to suggest that researchers employ accepted strategies to document the “accuracy” of their studies” (Creswell, 2013, p. 250).

Validity is the degree a researcher assesses a specific concept in a study. Researchers must acknowledge threats to validity, whether external or internal. Creswell (2012) stressed that external validity refers to the validity of the cause-and-effect relationship being generalized to other people or situations. Internal validity refers to the validity of inferences regarding cause-and-effect relationships between variables. Reliability refers to the degree to which the scores from an instrument are consistent and accurate. Creswell (2012) posited that “reliability can be enhanced if the researcher obtains detailed field notes by employing good-quality tape for recording and by transcribing the tape” (p. 253).

When conducting this phenomenological study, it was crucial to consider threats to validity and reliability. To avoid threats to validity, the researcher submitted the interview questions to two experts in the field of education to ensure that the questions were not ambiguous or unclear. The participants were given clarification when needed to avoid misinterpretations as well as plenty of time to respond to the questions. Procedures for the interviews were consistent to avoid participant fatigue and anxiety. As mentioned above, the purpose of this study was to understand how first year teachers interpret their experiences in learning how to teach ELLs.

## **Data Collection**

According to Creswell (2013) and Patton (1999, 2000), data collection procedures require obtaining permissions from the participants and institutional review boards, applying a good quality sampling strategy, deciding on a means of recording information on paper and digitally, storing information, and considering any ethical issues that could arise. Prior to recruiting the participants, permission was obtained from the host university to conduct the research. A letter (Appendix A), which was signed and returned, was received from the host university granting consent. Next, the recruitment letters (Appendix B) were mailed to the potential participants. Once the recruitment letters had been returned and the participants had been identified, the researcher telephoned the participants to inform them about the study and their selection.

The researcher offered to have a face-to-face meeting to clarify any information or questions about the study. The introductory meeting between the researcher and the participants served to reduce any stress or anxiety among the participants, which occurred approximately three weeks before the initial interviews. Creswell (2013) discussed the importance of finding individuals who have experienced the same phenomenon. This did not present a problem since all the teachers in the sample were enrolled in the same preservice teacher education program. So, regardless of who was selected, all participants completed the same preservice teacher education program.

In this phenomenological study, the process of collecting data consisted of two 30–45 minute interviews per participant. The two interviews were scheduled a week apart. The first interview focused on obtaining contextual information about the participant's life experience, and the second interview allowed the participant to reflect upon the meaning of their experiences. Moustakas (1994) denoted that the first step in data collection is to engage in the

epoché process to create the appropriate atmosphere to conduct the interviews. Epoché is a Greek word meaning “to refrain from judgement, to abstain from or stay away from the everyday, ordinary way of perceiving things” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 33). Epoché enables pursuit of a new perspective by setting aside everyday understandings, judgements, and presuppositions. Phenomena are revisited and viewed in a more open environment to gather the essence of the lived experiences. To eliminate presuppositions, epoché was employed in this study. According to Creswell (2013), “Phenomenology’s approach is to suspend all judgments about what is real – the “natural attitude” – until they are founded on a more certain basis (p. 77).

The purpose of interviewing was to acquire the views of the participants, to learn about their experience, and to understand their individual perceptions. This allowed new ideas and thoughts to be discussed during the interview process. The interview questions were clear and unambiguous. A formal, semi-structured interview method was used with open-ended questions. Open-ended questions allowed the participants to voice their experiences without being constrained by the researcher’s perspectives or past research findings and helped the researcher discover overlapping themes. The same questions were asked of all interviewees. Once the interviews were completed, the audio-taped results were transcribed for analysis. During the interviews, the researcher used epoché to focus on the research problem and set aside any personal biases and perspectives by listening attentively to the participants and abstaining from judgment as they explained their lived experiences. For phenomenological studies, Moustakas (1994) suggested that the researcher should ask broad and general questions. The research question for this study was a) How do first year teachers perceive their preparation of working with English language learners? This question provided focus on gathering data that provided textual and structural descriptions of the experiences, resulting in an understanding of the

common perceptions and experiences of the participants. The interview schedule (Appendix D) was designed to allow the participants to select, describe, and enable their sharing of learning encounters.

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

Analyzing data in a qualitative study entails the preparing and organizing of the data, categorizing the data into themes through coding, and representing data into tables or discussions (Creswell, 2013). The interviews were transcribed, read, and reread. Once the interviews were transcribed and reread, the coding process began manually. “The process of coding involves aggregating the text or visual data into small categories of information, seeking evidence for the code from different databases being used in the study, and then assigning a label to the code” (p. 184). The researcher sought to find out more about the topic and revisited the transcripts throughout the analysis. As new insights and ideas developed, new codes were created to capture the phenomena.

As explained by Creswell (2012), “thematic analysis moves away from reporting the “facts” to making an interpretation of people and activities” (p. 473). Thematic analysis allowed the researcher to identify, analyze, and report patterns or themes within the data. Throughout the data analysis process, the researcher used thematic analysis to link data from codes to categories and informative text segments. Brackets were placed around text segments and code words or phrases which accurately described the meaning of the segments. The text segments were also noted if they were obtained during the first or second interview to identify broader themes and redundancy.

Next, the researcher labeled codes to identify themes and events. Labeling enabled the themes to be placed into similar categories. After labeling, theme identification and



alignment occurred to categorize the information, reduce redundant categories, and help understand the phenomenon of how first year teachers describe the ELL instructional practices they learned in their preservice teacher education program. The themes also helped understand the factors that affect first year teachers in teaching ELLs as well as the connections to the types of instructional strategies, activities, and assignments used in the preservice teacher education program and in their personal classroom. Lastly, the data helped the researcher understand the culture of the preservice teacher education program and its influence on the professional experience of first year teachers.

### **Limitations and Delimitations of the Research Design**

Creswell (2013) described limitations as potential weaknesses or problems with the study. As with any study, the study itself also had its limitations. Since the sample size was small, universal generalizations could not be made. As in most studies, the researcher may have had biases and beliefs that could have affected the study. However, the researcher used bracketing to set aside biases, beliefs, and assumptions about the phenomenon. While conducting this phenomenological research, the researcher also addressed any presuppositions and viewed them as an opportunity to gain understanding of the participants' perspectives to improve the preservice teacher education programs by addressing ELL instructional strategies and practices.

As a bilingual educator, the researcher's views have drastically changed from when the researcher was a student in the preservice teacher education program. Consequently, the researcher's perspectives and beliefs could have impacted how the data were interpreted; however, the researcher knows the importance of addressing the individual needs for all students in the classroom, especially ELLs. Since the researcher also speaks two languages, the

researcher acknowledges the significance of gaining insight about first year teachers and their experiences with ELLs and sharing the information with other professional educators.

The study also had delimitations or boundaries set by the researcher. The study was delimited to only one preservice teacher education program in Oklahoma. Studying only a small number of participants who completed the same preservice teacher education program limited the scope of the investigation. Thus, the results might not be helpful in making generalizations about first year teachers in other public schools.

### **Ethical Issues**

According to Creswell (2012), ethical research is research that is honest and shared with participants and that has not been previously published, plagiarized, or influenced by personal interest. Ethical research gives credit to authors and their contribution to the study. Therefore, appropriate steps were taken to protect the identity of the participants. The participants were informed that participation in this study was strictly voluntary and that they could choose to withdraw at any time without any impact. The researcher also discussed the consent form with the participants and treated all participants with respect. To protect the identity of the participant, pseudonyms were used. The participants were not identified in any part of the study. Confidentiality was maintained throughout the entire study to protect the privacy of the university and the participants. All data collected during this study is stored in a locked fire proof safe at the researcher's office for three years and then it will be destroyed.

The researcher is a university instructor who teaches education classes and serves as a university supervisor for preservice teachers. The researcher also served as an advisor to preservice teachers who are seeking an elementary education major. The researcher was

considered her positions at the university may present bias and ethical issues that could possibly effect the participant's responses.

## **Summary**

This phenomenological study examined how first year teachers viewed the effectiveness of their preservice teacher education program relating to addressing the individual needs of ELL students. The number of ELLs in public schools is drastically increasing all over the United States. As stated in the National Center for Education Statistics (2016), seventeen states, including Oklahoma, had high percentages of ELLs, ranging between (6 %) and (9 %) in the academic year of 2013 – 2014. Inevitably, this research study produced insights into the factors that influenced first year teachers teaching ELLs and provided university administrators and teacher educators ways to improve preservice teacher education programs. Interviews were the main and only data collecting instrument for this study. The participants included six first year teachers. Moustakas' (1994) methodological steps was used to organize, analyze, and synthesize the data to address internal and external validity. After collecting and analyzing the data, a written report was composed to present the answers to the research questions. The report was presented in Chapter 5.

## **Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results**

### **Introduction**

This phenomenological research study involved collaboration with first year elementary teachers to examine how they interpret their experience in learning how to teach ELLs. The purpose of this chapter was to describe the findings from this phenomenological research study addressing this research question: How do first year teachers perceive their preparation of working with English language learners? While there is much research that reveals what types of instructional strategies teachers can use to teach ELLs, more was needed to be known about how first year teachers experience learning to teach ELLs and understanding how to address the individual needs of ELL students in preservice teacher education programs. Consequently, the researcher examined how first year teachers view the effectiveness of their preservice teacher education program relating to addressing the individual needs of ELL students. The researcher discovered factors that can improve the structure and effectiveness of preservice teacher education programs regarding ELL instruction.

In this chapter, the researcher presents a description of the sample, research methodology and analysis, summary of the findings, presentation of the data and results of the study, and summary. The data presented addressed the research questions with a thorough summary of the findings. These results presented valuable information across the entire spectrum of this study. The findings from this study will be shared with professional educators as well as university administrators to understand how first year teachers interpret their experiences in learning how to teach ELLs. Furthermore, the results of this research will be used as a tool for improving and transforming teacher education programs to increase the effectiveness of teaching preservice teachers to teach ELLs. A qualitative research design

utilizing a homogenous sample consisting of six first year teachers who graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education from XYZ University and completed the same preservice teacher education program was used for this study.

Data presented in this study were derived from one-to-one interviews. The goal of conducting the interviews was to understand how first year teachers interpret their experiences in learning how to teach ELLs at XYZ University. The researcher analyzed the data thematically throughout the data collection process to clarify meaning. The data helped the researcher understand the culture of the preservice teacher education program and its influence on the professional ability of first year teachers. The themes and categories were significant to the following central research question:

RQ1: How do first year teachers perceive their preparations for working with English language learners?

Table 1

*Participants' Demographics*

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Teaching duration</b>	<b>Grade Level</b>
Participant 1	female	half year	3rd grade
Participant 2	female	half year	3rd grade
Participant 3	female	less than a month	1st grade
Participant 4	female	half year	1st grade
Participant 5	female	half year	6th grade
Participant 6	female	half a year	1st grade

The first portion of the results described the participants' background, including their professional information. Then, the participant's demographics, emerging themes from the

interview are reported throughout the chapter. The participants' real names have been replaced by pseudonyms to protect individual identities.

### **Description of the Sample**

The potential sample of the population of participants for this study included 16 first year elementary teachers who graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in Elementary Education from XYZ University in the fall of 2016. Eight teachers responded to the request but only six of them were interviewed based on the selection criteria described in Chapter 3. Six first year teachers were selected to answer the central research question regarding their perceptions regarding ELL instruction their preservice about teacher education program. All six teachers were selected because they share common characteristics such as completed the same preservice teacher education program, graduated in fall 2016, and currently teaching in a public school in Oklahoma.

A nonprobability sampling technique was used for this study. According to Creswell (2012), in nonprobability sampling the researcher selects the participants because they are available and convenient. In addition, Creswell (2012) noted that these participants also carry some characteristic the investigator is seeking to study. One of the sampling approaches to nonprobability sampling is convenience sampling. According to Creswell (2012), in convenience sampling, the researcher intentionally selects the participants because they are willing and available for the study.

The participants were informed that the purpose of the study was to understand how first year teachers interpret their experiences in learning how to teach ELLs. All participants were also reminded that the information provided in this study would be confidential and that their names would be protected by a pseudonym. For this reason, the following descriptive summaries are provided for each of the five participants using pseudonyms.

Participant 1 is 22 years old and has a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education. She is a first grade teacher and started her teaching career in January 2017. Participant 1 teaches all subjects in her highly populated Spanish speaking public school. She expressed a strong passion for teaching ELLs, which was evident during the interviews. Participant 1 explained that she is happy to be at A Elementary because she wants to help all of her students achieve their educational goals. She has a great understanding of who an ELL is and how she can best accommodate their needs.

Participant 2 is 23 years old and has a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education. She started her teaching career in January 2017. Participant 2 teaches 3rd grade math and science. She described her school as predominantly White. She has a caring personality and expressed a desire to have more ELL students in her classes. During the interviews, she stressed the importance of needing more services and resources for her ELL students. Participant 2 stated that she enjoyed helping her ELL students, but she felt she was limited in resources.

Participant 3 is 23 years old and has a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education. She started her teaching career in August 2017. Participant 3 teaches all subjects to first grade students in a small rural school. She described her school as predominantly White. She is excited about her teaching position and would like to increase her ability in teaching ELL students. Participant 3 mentioned that she wants to help her ELL students succeed and that she will do whatever it takes to help them reach their maximum potential.

Participant 4 is 23 years old and has a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education. She is currently working on her Master's Degree in Education. Participant 4 started her teaching career in January 2017. She is a first grade teacher and teaches all subjects. She is passionate about teaching and excited to be a part of B Elementary, which is a very diverse school with many Spanish speaking students. Participant 4 is a dedicated teacher who longs to be an

exceptional teacher to all of her students no matter their cultural background. She is a team player and has set high expectations for the upcoming year.

Participant 5 is 23 years old and has a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education. She began her teaching career in January 2017. Participant 5 is very enthusiastic about her role as a 6th grade Science and Geography teacher. She stated that her school is currently undergoing changes to the ELL program due to new testing standards and has offered training to all teachers to address how to refer ELL students to the pullout program if needed. She expressed that the school is encouraging teachers to collaborate and make the transition smoother for the teachers and students. Participant 5 is ready to be a team player.

Participant 6 is 33 years old and has a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education. She started her teaching career in January 2017. She teaches all subjects and is a first grade teacher in a small rural school. Participant 6 is excited to be a part of C Elementary and is passionate about helping students succeed and become productive citizens. In her interviews, she expressed a special feeling to help her ELL students succeed in the classroom and beyond. She realizes the importance of the role of the teacher in making a lesson plan clear and specific. Participant 6 also explained several ways in which a teacher can ensure the learning of all students, especially ELL students.

### **Research Methodology and Analysis**

Interviews provide useful information when it is not possible to directly observe participants and allow participants to describe detailed information (Creswell, 2012). As indicated by Creswell (2012), the most popular type of interview approach in educational research is the one-on-one interview. This procedure was used in this research study for data collection and data analysis. Creswell (2012) stated that one-on-one interviews are ideal for interviewing participants who are not hesitant to speak, are articulate, and can share ideas freely.



Through semi-structured interviews, the participants were given the opportunity to share how they perceive their preparation to teach ELLs in their preservice teacher education program. The process of collecting data consisted of two one-hour interviews per participant. The two interviews were scheduled a week apart. The first interview focused on obtaining contextual information about the participant's life experience, and the second interview allowed the participant to reflect upon their meaning of their experiences. The resultant data enabled the researcher to interpret and understand the participants' views on the effectiveness of their preservice teacher education program relating to relative to the individual needs of ELL students. Prior to the data collection process, approval was sought and obtained from Concordia University Institution Review Board and XYZ University to conduct the study. (Appendix E and Appendix F).

The researcher then emailed recruitment letters to potential participants. Once the participants had been identified, the researcher met with the teachers who responded to the request and clarified any information or questions about the study. The researcher also discussed the consent form with the participants. After the teachers formally agreed to volunteer, the researcher arranged a time schedule for the interviews. The interviews were conducted at the researcher's office or at the interviewee's home and were audio-taped. Each interview lasted 30–45 minutes.

The researcher reviewed key elements such as confidentiality and the right to withdraw at any time with the participants. The researcher also reminded the teachers that the interviews would be audio-taped. The researcher then collected the signed informed consent forms before any data was collected.

The recording of the data was done by audio recording using two digital recorders, with one serving as a backup to ensure complete recording of interviews. The researcher also took

notes while conducting the interviews. Once all interviews were completed, the researcher began verbatim transcriptions of the responses. The interviews were transcribed, read, and reread. Finally, the entire transcriptions and field notes were thoroughly read to gain a comprehensive impression of all the responses. Creswell's (2012) six steps in analyzing and interpreting qualitative data were applied to analyze the interview data: preparing and organizing the data, engaging in an initial analysis of the data through coding, using codes to develop themes, representing the findings through narratives and visuals, making meaning and interpretation of the results, and conducting strategies to validate accuracy of the findings.

The researcher revisited the transcripts throughout the analysis. Thematic analysis allowed the researcher to identify, analyze, and report patterns or themes within the data. In a qualitative research study, the researcher needs to analyze data to form answers to the research questions (Creswell, 2013). Creswell (2013) noted that this process involves examining the data in detail to describe what was learned and developing themes or categories from the data. Throughout the data analysis process, the researcher used thematic analysis to link data from codes to categories and informative text segments. Brackets were placed around text segments and code words or phrases to accurately describe the meaning of segments. The bracketed segments were placed on a chart under the research question or sub-question. If a segment pertained to both questions, then it was placed under both questions. Text segments were also noted if they were obtained during the first or second interview to identify broader themes and redundancy.

Next the researcher labeled the codes to identify the themes. Labeling enabled the themes to be placed into similar categories. After labeling, theme identification and alignment occurred to categorize the information, reduce redundant categories, and help understand phenomenon of how first year teachers describe the ELL instructional practices in their preservice teacher

education program. The themes also helped in understanding the factors that affect first year teachers in teaching ELLs as well as the connections to the types of instructional strategies, activities, and assignments used in the preservice teacher education program and in their personal classroom.

### **Descriptive Summary of the Findings**

In this section, a descriptive summary is provided for each of the major themes and the categories, which were developed from the participants’ responses. The relationships between the themes are also summarized. From the analysis of the data, three major themes emerged: a) Pedagogical knowledge (connecting subject matter to instructional strategies and methods to facilitate student knowledge) b) Teacher efficacy (teachers’ perceptions or beliefs to positively influence student learning) and c) Challenges (lack of resources, knowledge of curriculum, and student learning). Table 2 shows the themes and related categories. These themes and categories were significant in answering the central research question.

Table 2

#### *Major Themes and Categories*

<i>Themes</i>	<i>Categories</i>
Pedagogical Content Knowledge	Coursework Field Experiences Professional Development
Teacher Efficacy	Preparation
Challenges	Instructional Support and Resources

The table contains the five categories that were developed as a result of reviewing the participants’ concerns. Pedagogical Content Knowledge was the theme that generated the most categories.

Teacher Efficacy and Challenges generated the least with only one category.

## **Pedagogical Content Knowledge**

Pedagogical content knowledge or teacher knowledge is a crucial component in effective teaching and student learning (Kleickmann et al. 2016). Kleickmann et al. (2016) expressed the importance of why teachers should understand pedagogical content knowledge and how it connects content (subject matter) to pedagogy (instructional strategies and methods). Understanding pedagogical knowledge can help teachers comprehend what learning opportunities will help all students, especially ELL students, acquire knowledge and skills taught in the classroom. Kleickmann et al. (2016) contended that teachers should be able to choose a variety of instructional strategies that facilitate student learning and address specific learning concepts for all students. In preservice teacher education programs, teacher educators should ensure preservice teachers understand how to use their knowledge of content, ELL instruction, and teaching strategies to meet the needs of diverse student learners (Jimenez-Silva, Olson, & Hernandez, 2012). The participants expressed that teachers should a) know how to present the curriculum for their students, b) be aware of students' prior background knowledge and any problems students may have when learning, and c) use a variety of instructional strategies or methods for classroom instruction. Preservice teacher education programs greatly impact teacher quality and in turn student achievement. As a result of the interview data, three categories were created within the pedagogical knowledge theme: (a) professional development, (b) field experiences, and (c) coursework.

## **Teacher Efficacy**

By providing preservice teachers with foundational knowledge through the use of meaningful and engaging pedagogical practices, teacher efficacy regarding ELL instruction will increase (Jimenez-Silva et al., 2012). Teacher efficacy or teachers' beliefs about their ability to teach affects student success. As noted by Jimenez-Silva et al. (2012), research suggests that a

significant factor in improving ELL instruction is preservice teachers' confidence in their ability to teach ELLs in the classroom. Factors that may affect teacher efficacy regarding ELL instruction include experiences in preservice teacher education programs, personal backgrounds, and sociocultural experiences (Polat & Mahalingappa, 2013). It is important to understand these factors to understand how negative experiences or constraints can be overcome. By taking the time to understand these factors, teacher educators can provide learning opportunities for preservice teachers on how to create and facilitate learning for all students. Tang, Lee, and Chun (2012) mentioned that Bandura (1997) believed that self-efficacy was the most powerful agent needed to "execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments." In addition, Jimenez-Silva et al. (2012), concurred that Bandura (1977) defined self-efficacy as a cognitive process in which individuals construct beliefs about their ability to achieve a specific level of performance. Therefore, what preservice teachers believe, what they expect to see in their classrooms, and what they will actually encounter in their teaching experience may not be the same as their beliefs or expectations. Nevertheless, teacher efficacy regarding ELL instruction requires further attention in preservice teacher education programs. During the analysis of the teacher efficacy theme, one category was identified as predominant: preparation.

### **Challenges**

A third theme in this study was challenges. The category that arose from this theme was: instructional support and resources. In order for students to master content objectives, teachers must be equipped with adequate instructional support and resources. With appropriate support and resources, teachers can best meet the diverse learning styles and needs of their students. The participants in this study expressed the importance of instructional support for teacher effectiveness. Through the different kinds of instructional support from administrators, colleagues, and other professional educators, teachers can have the appropriate resources and

support needed to teach state standards and ensure student achievement. The availability of quality resources and support impacts how teachers prepare their students to connect to prior learning and build upon their knowledge. Almy (2012) stated that teachers need to be equipped with clear expectations and high quality materials so they can understand exactly where their students are and how to move them forward to their goals and objectives. Additionally, teachers need to understand the types of adaptations they can do for their students, especially ELLs. Therefore, preservice teacher education programs should also provide many opportunities for preservice teachers to garner experience in making adaptations, like accommodations (supports and services provided on how students learn the material) or modifications (changing what a student is taught as in an objective or assignment) by using a variety of teaching strategies. Effective teaching strategies can improve delivery of instruction, student engagement, and student achievement.

### **Presentation of the Data and Results**

The primary research question for this study was How do first year teachers perceive their preparation of working with English language learners? The participants' responses to this question reflected their willingness to help their ELL students. Most participants also expressed their desire to have had more opportunities in learning how to work directly with ELL students in their preservice teacher education program. This is evident in the statements below:

“I wish I would have had a full class completely devoted to ELL students where that professor can give us...here's all the resources. Here's these books. Here's ideas for teaching them in small group. Here's ideas for how to help them in math, reading, different tools and tricks.” (Participant 2)

“I don't feel like I had much experience in the teacher education program because we didn't specifically have to observe an English language learner or help an English

language learner, which it could be more helpful.” (Participant 4)

“I think more one-on-one with them [ELLs] would have benefitted me some more, to just have that interaction.” (Participant 6)

“I felt like our professors were great and that they were available to us and helpful, but I think the more observation hours you get, the better.” (Participant 1)

### **Central Research Question**

The central research question asked: How do first year teachers perceive their preparation of working with English language learners? During the interviews, the participants were able to freely share their perceptions about their preparation for working with English language learners. The participants shared their thoughts about having ELLs in their classroom and their ability to teach them. The participants also shared their desire to have had more opportunities to work with ELL students in their preservice teacher education program. They agreed that ELLs needed more one-on-one teacher and student interactions, and that they needed additional support in fulfilling their students’ needs.

All six participants noted that the instructors in their courses mentioned the importance of addressing the needs of English language learners. The participants stated that they had at least one specific course in their preservice teacher education program that addressed it thoroughly. The participants expressed their desire to have had more experiences in their preservice teacher education program that explored various opportunities including a) integrating subject areas, b) making modifications and accommodations, c) having more observations and/or tutoring sessions with ELLs, d) learning about and exposure to different curriculums, and e) learning a different language. The findings revealed a pattern of limited knowledge and preparation of how to teach ELLs. The following responses from the participants provided a better understanding of how participants perceived their preparation and knowledge of teaching ELLs.

“I haven’t had a whole lot other than there was a little girl in student teaching that she spoke Spanish but she spoke English too. So, that’s the only one thing I’ve ever experienced.” (Participant 3)

“I had the Multicultural Populations class but I wish I would have had a full class completely devoted to ELL students and maybe it could be something where you would go and observe a class with a lot of ELLs, and we could tutor them, or we could observe an ELL teacher.” (Participant 2)

“I haven’t had experience with having to teach English language learners yet, and the only things I have seen other teachers do is sometimes they will sit down with the students, one-on-one, while they are using like an iPad program, or they’ll just give them the iPad and just let them go. They won’t really assist them.” (Participant 4)

“I was prepared somewhat to step into a classroom. As far as ELL students, I had the ideas, and I think that’s great that we do come out of school with the ideas and knowing



and talking about it, especially in the last course about how many ways we can reach multicultural families and the things we can do. But, I just think you can't beat real life experiences." (Participant 6)

The categories that emerged from discussion on pedagogical content knowledge were insufficient amounts of coursework, field experiences, and professional development that addressed ELL instruction. The participants particularly felt they could have experienced more one-on-one learning opportunities with ELLs throughout their preservice teacher education program. The participants expressed how important pedagogical content knowledge is by explaining what they had to do for their ELL students and ultimately all students.

### **Coursework**

Another area of concern to the participants was their coursework. The participants indicated that the courses consisted of minimal time spent on ELL instruction. They all agreed that one course specifically addressed the needs of ELL students. They stated that all of their courses mentioned that they would need to address the needs of their ELL students in their classroom. However, they felt they needed more practice.

"I think there was only one that was specifically for English language learners and learning how to deal with that but all of them [instructors] kind of hit the topic at some point or the other." (Participant 3)

"One course was taken during student teaching and that was the Multicultural Populations which was devoted to learning about ELL. I had other courses that would talk about it here and there." (Participant 2)

“One course specifically addressed English language learners but all courses touched on it and talked about how you could integrate, whether it was math, science, social studies and how you could always modify and integrate ELL curriculum.” (Participant 4)

“The Multicultural Education college class and even the Media and Technology. We learned a lot about that [the needs of English language learners]. I know we went over it. I feel like in all of the hours that we took there was always some talk of modifications for ELL kids.” (Participant 1)

“I feel like we briefly touched on it on a lot of them [courses]. There’s a few of them that we went in depth with. I know we talked a lot about ELL in Multicultural and Special Populations, Teaching Social Studies, and then we talked about it in Principles of Teaching.” (Participant 5)

### **Field Experiences**

“Not a whole lot. I did the afterschool program in Weatherford but I think there was only like five hours with that. That was it.” (Participant 3)

“I would say very few hours when I was actually going through my coursework.”  
(Participant 2)

“A lot of my field experience was done here in Weatherford. There wasn’t a large diversity of ELL learners so I don’t want to say that I observed very many, but I’ve observed at least 10-15 hours of some ELL learners.” (Participant 4)

“I did one field trip in which I went to a school in Oklahoma City and the majority of the students there were ELL students. Other than that, I don’t think I had a lot of just specifically ELL field trips. We did also do the Frogs and Flies program. That was one

program we did, where we went and tutored and the majority were ELL students.”

(Participant 6)

“During my education courses, I think I had over 100 observation hours. I did my student teaching in Clinton, and there were a lot of ELL kids there.” (Participant 1) “During my student teaching, I worked hands-on a lot with them. I’m not sure how many hours.

Then, with Positive Pathways, I think there were a couple of students there that were ELL.” (Participant 5)

### **Professional Development**

“The only thing I’ve had is the courses. Other than that, I haven’t had any professional development yet.” (Participant 3)

“The only training I really had is with my coursework. I haven’t had any professional development.” (Participant 2)

“I want to say that most of my professional development for ELL learners came from my college courses so far.” (Participant 4)

“I do think the courses that I did take gave me a lot of ideas I could do that would help me in lesson planning to try to incorporate things, like ideas for how to teach an English language learner. There hasn’t been a lot since I’ve graduated. I don’t guess specifically for ELL students.” (Participant 6)

Even though the participants expressed concerns about not having enough professional development on ELL instruction, they were very positive about the benefits of professional development. They mentioned their willingness to make content material clear to their ELL students and the importance of embracing multiculturalism and diversity.

The interviews revealed that most of the participants did not have much preparation in teaching ELLs. Only one out of six teachers felt they had many direct learning opportunities with ELLs. The interviews revealed that the teachers understood that instruction needed to be comprehensible for ELL students through the use of building background knowledge, encouraging the use of their native language, and celebrating cultural differences. The participants emphasized their overall goal as providing an environment conducive to learning for all of their students, including ELLs.

“I wouldn’t say I’m an expert just because I haven’t been exposed to ELL learners for very long in the classroom. I would say for the most part, my coursework has helped me see where I need to modify.” (Participant 2)

“I’m very hard on myself. I would say I’m decent at least, maybe at the bottom of proficient but there’s always room to grow and be better.” (Participant 4)

“I’m still learning. I don’t feel like I am where I need to be but I feel like it’s something I’m trying to consider when I’m planning.” (Participant 6)

“I think the way I perceive it now is definitely more confident. I feel more confident now that I’ve taught a semester.” (Participant 1)

“I’m obviously going to hopefully progress and learn more as I go. I think I’m ok. I think I’m pretty good but it will be a new challenge every year because every kid is going to be different.” (Participant 5)

Each participant expressed that their preservice teacher education program consisted of courses that addressed the importance of meeting the needs of all learners, including how to make modifications or accommodations for ELL students. Additionally, all of the participants

expressed their compassion for ELLs and their awareness of the various different learning styles.

One of the participants stated:

“It [involvement with ELLs] made me think more about how clearly I could like get across a skill or a point...just seeing their struggle to translate or watch them kind of their little wheels turn as they were trying to figure out how to put it in their language and bring it back to English.” (Participant 6)

Another participant remarked:

“By working with English language learners, it is not as scary as what it seems whenever you hear it in a course in college and they are saying here is how you diversify. You’re like oh, my goodness. I don’t know how I’m going to do it but a kid is just a kid and working with them at their level is so much simpler than they make it in theory. Practice is a little bit easier.” (Participant 4)

However, many of the participants believed they did not have many, if any, direct, hands-on learning opportunities with ELLs. One of the participants stated:

You can’t learn everything that you need to learn in college. I think everyone’s first year of teaching you just don’t expect what’s going to come. I feel like the university did a good job of preparing us but like whenever I think about my experiences, it’s not necessarily what I learned in class. It’s what I learned observing or tutoring.”

(Participant 1)

## **Challenges**

All participants described their challenges with working with ELLs. They claimed that they do not have the adequate support and resources to be effective as a teacher of ELLs. The

participants explained the different kinds of support they need to ensure they are effective as a teacher of ELLs.

“Just having somebody who’s experienced like maybe somebody who is an English language learner going through school. That way they experienced both sides and know how to help by what they went through.” (Participant 3)

“I would like more support from the ELL teacher, more support from the district, and more training. I haven’t gone through any training about how to teach ELL students through my district. I obviously have experienced it in college but it’s not coming from the district.” (Participant 2)

“I’ve always thought about how it would be helpful for me to be in a situation where someone is trying to make me read in a different language. I feel like you know they [ELLs] come in this different world, and we’re just like you need to know this. You need to understand this. Why don’t you remember this? If you have more support in like really how to teach, not just reading, but you know in all subjects. So, like more support within our district would be great.” (Participant 1)

“I think even just having someone onsite that could help when I feel like there’s like a communication problem. It would be nice to have someone onsite that could help when I’ve reached a point where I can’t bridge that gap.” (Participant 6)

“If I had someone that would come in and show me exactly how to do it. It would take a few days of their time but it would probably be worth it in the long run.” (Participant 5)

#### **Chapter 4 Summary**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand how first year teachers interpret their experiences in learning how to teach ELLs. Specifically, the purpose of this study

was to examine how first year teachers view the effectiveness of their preservice teacher education program relating to addressing the individual needs of ELL students. This chapter presents the findings of the research based on interviews. Data analysis revealed three themes: (a) pedagogical knowledge, (b) collective teacher efficacy, and (c) instructional support. Chapter 5 addresses the conclusions and recommendations gleaned from the study for educators and administrators of preservice teacher education programs.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusions**

### **Introduction**

Creswell (2013) indicated that the purpose of phenomenological research is to explore a phenomenon with a group of individuals who have experienced the phenomenon. The purpose of this research study was to understand how first year teachers interpreted their experiences in learning how to teach ELLs. This study also provided educators with suggestions and recommendations for use in ELL instruction in preservice teacher education programs. Data was collected from six first year teachers who work in Oklahoma schools via semi-structured, one-to-one interviews.

The conceptual framework and research literature supporting the need to address the individual needs of ELLs in public schools guided this research study. Additionally, the framework was guided by research indicating that teachers face multiple challenges in teaching ELLs, including social and academic language. As noted in Chapter 1, the number of ELLs in public schools is increasing across public schools in the United States (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016). All preservice teachers must be prepared to meet the needs of diverse learners, including ELLs, by their preservice teacher education program. Through an awareness and understanding of diverse learning styles, teachers can use pedagogical skills to address individual needs of students. Therefore, the effectiveness of preservice teacher education programs can determine whether teachers are equipped with the content and pedagogical content knowledge and skills needed address the needs of diverse student learners.

The focus of this chapter was to synthesize the research information and provided a comprehensive summary of the findings. This was done through an in-depth discussion of the following elements: the summary of the results, discussion of the results, discussion of the



results in relation to the literature, limitations, implications of the results for practice, policy and theory, recommendations for further research, and conclusion based on the findings of this phenomenological research study.

### **Summary of the Results**

Much of the research literature indicated that the number of ELLs in public schools is increasing drastically. This means that teachers need to be adequately prepared in preservice teacher education programs to teach these students. The purpose of this research study was to collaborate with first year elementary teachers to examine how they interpreted their experience in learning how to teach ELLs in their preservice teacher education program. A qualitative research methodology was used to answer the following research question:

RQ1: How do first year teachers perceive their preparation for working with English language learners?

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the conceptual framework for this phenomenological research study was supported by Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory (1991). Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory (1991) was used to frame the themes to explain how teachers use their past experiences to formulate current ideas, practices, and teaching strategies. Rodríguez (2013) explained that teachers connect learning acquired in their preservice teacher education program with personal life experiences, which can ultimately affect their formation of professional dispositions. Therefore, preservice teachers must be provided with the common foundation of linguistic, academic, and cultural knowledge needed to work with ELLs. Much of the research literature indicated that preservice teachers are not being adequately taught to teach ELLs for several reasons. This research study confirmed what the research literature stated about preservice teachers receiving insufficient instruction and preparation.

Roy-Campbell (2013) noted that insufficient instruction regarding ELLs can occur in preservice teacher education programs because teacher educators who prepare preservice teachers did not receive effective preparation regarding ELL instruction in their own preservice teacher education program. Additionally, Hallman and Meineke (2016) purported that teacher educators need professional development to enhance their understanding of teaching ELLs. Through professional development, teacher educators can broaden their content and pedagogical content knowledge as well as strengthen their ability to integrate an awareness of teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students (Hallman & Meineke, 2016). Furthermore, Rodríguez (2013) suggested including collaborative projects and reflective exercises in preservice teacher education programs so preservice teachers can demonstrate what they gained from their instruction and how they connect their learning with personal experiences to develop their professional dispositions.

The researcher applied a transcendental phenomenological research model as described by Moustakas (1994) to this study. Moustakas (1994) purported that human science research should be conducted to unfold new knowledge of every day human experiences, behavior, and relationships. This qualitative research study examined meanings through human experiences and empirical perspectives that helped to understand the perceptions of first year teachers regarding their preservice teacher education preparation. Specifically, this research study examined how first year teachers view the effectiveness of their preservice teacher education program regarding ELL instruction.

Moustakas' (1994) methodological steps were used to organize, analyze, and synthesize data to address internal and external validity. This research study included six participants who graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education from XYZ University in the fall

of 2016 and completed the same preservice teacher education program. Five of the participants were first year teachers with six months of teaching experience, and one first year teacher had been teaching for less than a month. Data were collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews that identified factors that affected preservice teacher learning and professional development.

The researcher analyzed the data thematically throughout the data collection process to clarify meaning. As a result, five categories emerged from these three major themes: pedagogical content knowledge, teacher efficacy, and challenges. The categories derived from pedagogical content knowledge were: coursework, field experiences, and professional development. Preparation was generated by the theme teacher efficacy, and instructional support and resources were the categories generated by Challenges.

The themes and categories were significant in answering the central research question and in understanding the importance of pedagogical content knowledge, teacher efficacy, and challenges that teachers face. The participants expressed that teachers should learn how to use their pedagogical content knowledge to present curriculum to students with diverse backgrounds using a variety of instructional strategies. The participants also revealed that teacher efficacy must be developed and enhanced in preservice teacher education programs. The teachers' sense of efficacy and confidence will help them use information more effectively to meet the needs of all students, including ELL students. Lastly, the participants described the lack of instructional support and resources as a challenge for teacher effectiveness. The participants felt that, with appropriate training, support and resources, teachers can meet the diverse learning styles and needs of their students. Through quality instruction, support, and resources from teacher

educators and other professional educators, teachers can improve delivery of instruction, student engagement, and achievement for ELLs and all students.

### **Discussion of the Results**

Several important findings contributed to the understanding of first year teachers' perceptions on their preparation of working with ELLs as a result from this study. As discussed in Chapter 4, the participants experienced a number of issues that restricted their preparation for teaching ELLs. The first significant finding from this study was the participants' perceptions regarding their knowledge about ELL instruction. The participants felt that the coursework and field experiences in their preservice teacher education program did not provide ample opportunities to learn how to work directly with ELL students. In addition, there was a lack of training, instructional support, and resources for ELL instruction during their preservice teacher education program. Overall, the participants felt that they needed more direct experiences that could have increased their understanding of how to address the individual needs of ELLs.

There were many instances during the interviews where the participants' responses to questions were vague. However, the researcher used epoché to set aside presuppositions to gain new perspectives. The participants also revealed little to no interactions with ELLs in their observations, tutoring sessions, and student teaching assignment in their preservice teacher education program. Most importantly, the participants felt that even though their course instructors mentioned that modifications and accommodations would need to be made for their future ELL students, no real attempt for direct encounters with ELLs was made to learn how to make modifications and accommodations. The participants felt that they were taught that students have diverse learning styles but specific strategies and methods were not demonstrated or explored. The participants also expressed that cooperating teachers at various schools did not

model behaviors or teaching methods with their ELL students in the classroom. There were several instances where participants mentioned that ELLs in cooperating schools were given an iPad or other independent assignment while the teacher and other students continued with the daily lesson.

These research findings suggested that university administrators and teacher educators should take the initiative to review preservice teacher education programs to improve the quality of ELL instruction being provided. This includes a thorough and deep examination of how teacher educators teach second language acquisition and cultural diversity. Preservice teacher education program designers should incorporate multiple meaningful lesson examples, activities, and projects for ELL instruction. These learning exercises should be used with ELLs in cooperating schools with a high number of ELLs. This will ultimately help preservice teachers understand how to meet the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse learners. Preservice teachers should also be given opportunities to learn and practice differentiating instruction for ELLs with a greater variety of curriculum and instructional supports. Finally, preservice teachers should be provided with professional development and given opportunities for them to apply what practices they learned regarding ELL instruction.

### **Discussion of the Results in Relation to the Literature**

The literature review revealed a gap in the literature about preservice and novice teachers feeling inadequate to teach ELLs using different types of instructional strategies. Another identified gap in the literature was the collaborative efforts between preservice teacher education programs and cooperating schools. This study confirmed the literature that stated that preservice teachers receive little preparation regarding ELL instruction. This research study indicated that teacher educators do provide examples of ELL instructional strategies, but there continues to be

a lack of guidance and support from course instructors and experienced mentors in helping preservice teachers implement these strategies. To improve results, preservice teacher education programs should provide preservice teachers with a foundational knowledge that addresses oral language development, academic language, and cultural sensitivity for the development of all teachers (Samson & Collins, 2012).

The findings indicated that the participants perceived their experience as insufficient or lacking in specific guidance in teaching ELLs. Specifically, the participants expressed the lack of direct contact with ELLs. They felt that one-on-one sessions with ELLs would have aided in learning how to teach ELLs. Most of the participants also felt that they were not placed in cooperating schools that effectively addressed the needs of ELLs or had a high number of ELLs for field experiences, tutoring, and/or their student teaching assignments. They expressed that many opportunities of direct interaction with ELL students would have aided in learning how to address the needs of ELLs. The participants purported that direct contact with ELLs would have helped the preservice teachers understand how to use pedagogical content knowledge to facilitate student learning through a variety of instructional strategies. These findings were consistent with the literature in Chapter 2. As noted by Lucas and Villegas (2013), preservice teachers should have contact with individuals of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds to foster development of positive views of diversity through meaningful opportunities in school-based or community-based field experiences.

Along with the lack of direct contact with ELL students in cooperating schools, some participants expressed that the courses did not provide sufficient instruction and real life experiences in the classroom that could have aided them in understanding how to differentiate instruction for ELL students. Islam and Park (2015) indicated that teachers face a wide variety

of challenges in meeting the needs of their ELL students in the classroom because they are not taught how a second language is learned including the academic, linguistic, and socio-cultural aspects. This problem occurs partially because undergraduate degrees do not provide a thorough study on second language acquisition (Islam & Park, 2015). As noted by the participants and the current literature, preservice teacher education programs should provide teaching in the various components of second language acquisition. Teacher educators should demonstrate the use of a variety of instructional strategies and methods, and preservice teachers should have the opportunity to experience them firsthand to fully understand how to be a culturally responsive teacher (Daniel, 2014).

Lucas and Villegas (2013) mentioned the importance of preservice teachers partaking in a language immersion experience to support the development of sociolinguistic consciousness. One participant in this study explained how it would have helped them understand what ELLs experience through the learning of a different language. Specifically, the participant emphasized how it would have been beneficial to have experienced reading in a different language. This type of experience would have given the preservice teacher the ability to use pedagogical content knowledge to learn how to identify instructional skills and strategies for ELLs. This firsthand experience could have been done by participating in a lesson that was not in their native language. The course instructor or someone else who is bilingual can teach a portion of a class in a language other than English, and then have the preservice teachers engage in a meaningful conversation and reflection of the experience.

Preservice teachers should have a general knowledge of content, skills, and dispositions to teach ELLs (De Oliveira & Burke, 2015). The findings of the study indicated that participants needed further understanding of ELL students' learning needs, including academic content and

social language development. Jimenez-Silva, Olson, and Hernandez (2012) noted that ELL instruction should enhance preservice teachers' confidence or efficacy in their ability to teach ELLs successfully. The participants in this study revealed that they lacked confidence and competence in teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students. Coursework, field experiences, and professional development in preservice teacher education programs should have a positive effect on teacher efficacy. Positive influences can help preservice teachers understand how to use their knowledge to teach ELLs effectively. Therefore, preservice teacher education programs should build teacher efficacy. This should be done by making preservice teachers aware of the types of curriculum available and how they should be delivered to ELLs. By providing preservice teachers with a foundational knowledge through the use of meaningful and engaging pedagogical practices, teacher efficacy in instructing ELLs will increase (Jimenez-Silva, Olson, & Hernandez, 2012).

This research study focused on the understanding of common perceptions of first year teachers regarding their experiences in ELL instruction in their preservice teacher education program. This study consisted of in-depth interviews of first year teachers that provided qualitative data to help understand how teachers are prepared to teach ELLs in preservice teacher education programs. Like most of the current research in Chapter 2, the research findings indicated that teachers do not understand or know how to address the diverse learning needs of students. The study revealed that preservice teachers need multiple and prolonged opportunities in working with culturally and linguistically diverse learners (Fitts & Gross, 2012). This study aided in the understanding of recent literature which indicated that teacher educators, university administrators, and cooperating teachers must work together to improve the effectiveness of teacher preparation through preservice teacher education programs.



## **Limitations**

As with all research studies, potential problems or limitations with this study can be identified. However, limitations can also provide recommendations for future studies and to what extent the findings can or cannot be generalized (Creswell, 2012). One limitation of this study was that data was drawn from a limited number of participants. The participants were purposefully selected which was ideal for conducting this study. Another limitation of this study was that the participants were all Caucasian females and native English speakers. As a result, it was important to be cautious about generalizing the findings of the study. To alleviate this limitation, the sample size and characteristics could have been increased.

An additional limitation of this study was that only one preservice teacher education program was involved in the study. A study with a greater number of preservice teacher education programs using the similar homogenous sampling group would lessen this concern and provide opportunity to explore more views and experiences of teachers. The results of this study provided a generalized interpretation based on a small scale research. Results are particular to only the participants' perceptions and experiences of educating ELLs in particularly mainstream classrooms. As a result, this study could have been expanded to all preservice teacher education programs in neighboring universities with a similar population. However, this research study provided commonalities that allow readers to understand the essence or meaning of first year teachers' perceptions on their preparation for working with ELLs.

## **Implication of the Results for Practice, Policy, and Theory**

Using Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory (1991), participants were required to complete an in-depth interview to understand how they constructed knowledge and how their worldview changed after completing their preservice teacher education program. Through

transformative teaching experiences, first year teachers can learn new or better instructional methods and teaching strategies. Mezirow (2003) contended that the role of an adult educator is to serve as a facilitator and cultural activist in an environment which fosters critical reflection and dialectical discourse. In preservice teacher education programs, teacher educators must take the facilitator and cultural activist role, as indicated by Mezirow (2003), to further enhance learning experiences for preservice teachers.

Mezirow (2003) stated that the task of adult education is to help learners understand the power of reflection to develop skills, insights, and dispositions essential in their practice. This is precisely what preservice teacher education programs should accomplish. The first year teachers in this study lacked the self-reflection and examination needed to reach their full potential. The first year teachers lacked opportunities in their preservice teacher education program to use their pedagogical content knowledge to obtain the skills needed to teach ELLs through one-on-one interactions. Also, the first year teachers were not provided with professional development that focused on the learning of culturally and linguistically diverse students. The three themes that emerged from the first year teachers' responses were crucial in the first year teachers' transformative learning. Transformative learning helps teachers to regularly reassess the validity of their learning and enables the application of what is learned in unexpected situations (Christie, Carey, Robertson, and Grainger, 2015). Therefore, new information and ideas gained in the preservice teacher education programs can affect and contribute to the teachers' beliefs, values, and perspectives. These types of experiences serve as the disorienting dilemmas as described by Mezirow (1991) which trigger self-reflection and critical reflection in teaching. Through time, the first year teachers in this study will fortunately continue to shift meaning perspectives to understand their teaching experiences.

## **Recommendations for Further Research**

This study analyzed data from interviews from a small number of participants. Based on the results of the findings of this research, this study can be expanded to a larger group of participants. Additional research studies should also be considered to explore how to effectively provide preservice teachers with the proper curriculum, training, and demonstration of instructional strategies that can enhance the learning of ELL students. Other research studies should also include several preservice teacher education programs to compare and contrast the structure, coursework, professional development, field experiences, and second language acquisition instruction.

## **Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to understand how first year teachers interpret their experiences in learning how to teach ELLs. Specifically, this study examined how first year teachers view the effectiveness of their preservice teacher education program relating to addressing the individual needs of ELL students. The literature reviewed for this study identified pedagogical content knowledge, second language instruction, challenges, teacher preparation, culturally and linguistic responsiveness, and collaboration as key components or aspects needing attention in preservice teacher education programs. The researcher utilized on-on-one interviews to obtain information. Based on the data analysis, the research revealed three themes: 1) pedagogical content knowledge, 2) teacher efficacy, and 3) challenges. Additionally, there were five categories that developed from the three major themes: coursework, field experiences, professional development, preparation, and instructional support and resources.

The results of the study indicated that the participants demonstrated concern for their lack of ELL instruction in their preservice teacher education program. The participants felt that they

lacked the proper training in curriculum, specific teaching practices, and resources. The participants also believed that they should have received more one-to-one field experiences to further develop their instructional skills in teaching ELLs. Furthermore, the participants communicated that professional development in ELL instruction would have enhanced their ability to teach ELLs.

Moreover, the participants expressed concern in their ability to meet the individual needs of ELL students. The results of the study indicated that the participants' teacher efficacy was low and that the participants expressed several challenges in instructional support and acquiring resources in the preservice teacher education program as well as at the public school where they are currently teaching. In summary, the participants expressed a need for more ELL one-one-one opportunities, professional development, and instructional support and resources.

The number of ELLs in public schools will continue to increase throughout the United States. Therefore, teacher educators will need to ensure that preservice teachers are provided with quality ELL instruction for all content areas. Lack of training and professional development will bring more challenges to teachers, ELL students, public schools, and our entire society if educators and stakeholders do not take a stand. Since all states mandate that all teachers be prepared to teach ELLs (Markos, 2012), it is critical that teacher educators deliver ELL instructional practices effectively and thoroughly. Specifically, teacher educators need to educate preservice teachers how a second language is learned, how to effectively apply ELL instructional methods and strategies, and where to locate ELL resources and materials.

This research study serves as a step forward in providing assistance to preservice teachers in addressing the needs of the increased number of ELL students in public schools today. The data revealed that the participants found the courses beneficial, but they expressed not having

firsthand experiences to use with the instructional strategies mentioned in their coursework and field experiences. Additionally, the participants conveyed that having more professional development in implementing ELL instructional strategies and methods would have been helpful. Therefore, it is important for teacher educators to understand and address this challenge that first year teachers face in addressing the needs of ELLs. Nevertheless, teacher educators should provide the necessary ELL instruction, guidance, and tools for preservice teachers. To accomplish this, the researcher provided several recommendations for teacher educators and university administrators.

The first recommendation is that teacher educators and university administrators should include courses in preservice teacher education programs that focus on current ELL curriculum and pedagogical content skills. This would create a more culturally and linguistically responsive program that connects content knowledge and pedagogy. By exploring variety of curriculum options, preservice teachers would have the opportunity to determine what should be taught, why a topic or concept should be taught, and how a topic or concept should be taught. In addition, preservice teachers would be exposed to different teaching methods and strategies as well as assessment options for individual lesson plans and units.

A second recommendation is that teacher educators should include a multitude of one-on-one opportunities with ELLs during field experiences. One-on-one instruction would provide valuable learning opportunities for preservice teachers to learn how to communicate with ELLs with different levels of language proficiency. One-on-one tutoring sessions would also help preservice teachers understand how ELLs learn. By designing and implementing appropriate learning activities, preservice teachers would have firsthand experience in creating activities that address the individual's learning style. During and after field experiences, teacher educators

should also conduct reflective practices to reinforce prior knowledge and identify professional identities and development.

Next, there should be an increase in collaboration and partnerships between teacher educators, university supervisors, and cooperating schools and teachers. This would ensure that preservice teachers are receiving quality instruction and guidance in teaching diverse learners. Field experiences should provide a wide variety of classroom experiences, including individual, small group, and whole group instruction. Through these learning opportunities, preservice teachers would be able to develop the skills needed to create learning environments that are culturally and linguistically responsive and address the needs of all students. Above all, preservice teachers would be given the opportunity to experience real-life situations with students of diverse cultures and backgrounds.

Lastly, preservice teacher education programs should provide professional development opportunities regarding ELL curriculum, instruction, and assessment to all preservice teachers. This would allow preservice teachers to gather materials and resources to design lessons that address the diverse learning styles, including visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and tactile. Through professional development, preservice teachers would be using current and innovative strategies that create rich classroom environments for all students. Ultimately, preservice teachers would be provided with knowledge and ideas that would further develop and expand their teaching skills, repertoire, and professional identity.

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## **Appendix A: Letter of Permission and Consent for Host University**

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

I am a doctoral candidate in Educational Leadership at Concordia University Portland, Oregon. I am currently conducting a study for my doctoral program to examine how first year teachers interpret their experiences in learning how to teach English language learners (English language learners). \_\_\_\_\_ has given approval to conduct my research, and a copy of their approval is contained with this letter. I am, therefore, requesting permission to use the \_\_\_\_\_ campus as the site for this research.

### **Purpose, Significance, and Benefits of the Study**

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to understand how first year teachers interpret their experiences in learning how to teach ELLs. This study will provide professional educators with an understanding of common perceptions of first year teachers regarding their experiences in ELL instruction in their preservice teacher education program. Specifically, the results of this study will benefit educators by providing them with information to improve the structure and effectiveness of preservice teacher education programs. It will also benefit teachers who have ELL students in their classroom by experiencing firsthand the outcomes of their teacher preparation.

### **Risk to Participants**

There are no foreseeable or potential risks to the participants. The risks inherent in this study are no greater than those normally encountered during regular classroom participation.

### **Research Plan and Method**

I plan to use interviews as my instruments for this study: two face-to-face interviews per participant with semi-structured questions. The interviews will be audiotaped, and I will take

notes during the interviews. The interviews will only be used for the purpose of gathering data for the study and administered on different days throughout the course of the study. Time commitment for each participant will be approximately two and a half hours. The participants' input is crucial to the success of my study.

### **Confidentiality**

Appropriate steps will be taken to protect the identity of the participants. The participants will be informed that participation in this study is strictly voluntary and that they may choose to withdraw at any time without any impact. I will also discuss the consent form with the participants and treat all participants with respect. To protect the identity of the participant, pseudonyms will be used. The participants will not be identified in any part of the study. Confidentiality will be maintained throughout the entire study to protect the privacy of the university and the participants. All data collected during this study will be stored in a locked fire proof safe at my university office for three years and then destroyed.

### **Participant Involvement**

Recruitment letters will be mailed to the potential participants. Once the recruitment letters have been returned and the participants have been identified, I will telephone the participants to inform them about the study and their selection. I will offer to have a face-to-face meeting to clarify any information or questions about the study. To reduce any stress or anxiety among the participants, an individual introductory meeting between the participants and I will occur approximately three weeks before the initial interviews.

### **Further Information**

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me by email or by phone. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than myself,

please contact my Dissertation Chair Dr. Jillian Skelton at by email or phone. This research study has been reviewed and approved by the Concordia University Portland Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

*Verónica Aguiñaga*

Veronica Aguiñaga

## **Appendix B: Participant Recruitment Letter**

Dear Participant,

I am a graduate student under the direction of Dr. Jillian Skelton in the Department of Educational Leadership at Concordia University–Portland. I am conducting a research study on how first year teachers interpret their experiences in learning how to teach English language learners (ELLs). I am, therefore, requesting your voluntary participation for this research study.

### **What You Will Be Doing**

To be in the study, you must first give consent by signing the attached consent form. Then, you will be offered to have a face-to-face meeting with me, the researcher, to clarify any information or questions about the study. The individual introductory meeting between you (the participants) and I will occur approximately three weeks before the initial interviews. Next, you will be asked to participate in two one-to-one interviews. The first interview will allow me to obtain contextual information. In the second interview, you will tell about how you learned to teach English language learners. Each interview should take approximately an hour of your time. We expect approximately 8 volunteers. No one will be paid to be in the study. We will begin enrollment on June 1, 2017 and end enrollment on June 30, 2017. The findings of the study will be provided to you upon request.

### **Risks and Benefits**

There are no risks to participating in this study other than providing your information. However, I will protect your information. Any personal information you provide will be coded so it cannot be linked to you. Any name or identifying information you give will be kept securely via electronic encryption or locked inside a secure place at my locked university office.



When I look at the data, none of the data will have your name or identifying information. I will refer to your data with a code that only I, the principal investigator, know links to you. This way, your identifiable information will not be stored with the data. I will not identify you in any publication or report. Your information will be kept private at all times and then all study documents will be destroyed three years after I conclude this study.

Information you provide will help understand what preservice teacher education programs can do to improve instruction and curriculum in order to address the needs of ELLs. You could benefit by this study by reflecting upon the meaning of your experience and becoming aware of key ways you can address the individual needs of ELL students.

### **Confidentiality and Right to Withdraw**

This information will not be distributed to any other agency and will be kept private and confidential. The only exception to this is if you tell me about abuse or neglect that makes me seriously concerned for your immediate health and safety.

Your participation is greatly appreciated, but I acknowledge that the questions I will be asking are personal in nature. You are free at any point to choose not to engage with or stop the study. You may skip any questions you do not wish to answer. This study is not required and there is no penalty for not participating. If at any time you experience a negative emotion from answering the questions, I will stop asking you questions.

### **Further Information**

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me by email or by phone. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than myself, please contact my Dissertation Chair Dr. Jillian Skelton by email or phone. This research study has been reviewed and approved by the Concordia University–Portland

Institutional Review Board (IRB). With respect to any research- related problems or questions regarding subjects' rights, participants may contact the Concordia University Portland IRB at [irb@cu-portland.edu](mailto:irb@cu-portland.edu). Thank you for your favorable response and support in this research effort.

Sincerely,

*Verónica Aguiñaga*

Veronica Aguiñaga

## Appendix C: Informed Consent Form for Research Study

Concordia University-Portland Institutional Review Board  
Approved: May 26, 2017; will Expire: May 26, 2018

### CONSENT FORM

**Research Study Title:** First Year Teachers' Perceptions of their Preparation for Teaching English Language Learners

**Principal Investigator:** Veronica Aguinaga

**Research Institution:** Concordia University- Portland

**Faculty Advisor:**

#### **Purpose and what you will be doing:**

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to understand how first year teachers interpret their experience in learning how to teach English language learners (ELLs). Specifically, this study will examine how first year teachers view the effectiveness of their preservice teacher education program relating to addressing the individual needs of ELL students. We expect approximately 8 volunteers. No one will be paid to be in the study. We will begin enrollment on June 1, 2017 and end enrollment on June 30, 2017.

To be in the study, you must first give consent by signing this form. Then, you will be offered to have a face-to-face meeting with the researcher to clarify any information or questions about the study. The individual introductory meeting between the researcher and the participants will occur approximately three weeks before the initial interviews. Next, you will be asked to participate in two one-to-one interviews. The first interview will allow the researcher to obtain contextual information. In the second interview, you will tell about how you learned to teach English language learners. Each interview should take less than an hour of your time.

#### **Risks:**

There are no risks to participating in this study other than providing your information. However, we will protect your information. Any personal information you provide will be coded so it cannot be linked to you. Any name or identifying information you give will be kept securely via electronic encryption or locked inside a secure place at the researcher's locked office. When we or any of our investigators look at the data, none of the data will have your name or identifying information. We will refer to your data with a code that only the principal investigator knows links to you. This way, your identifiable information will not be stored with the data. We will not identify you in any publication or report. Your information will be kept private at all times and then all study documents will be destroyed three years after we conclude this study.

#### **Benefits:**

Information you provide will help understand what preservice teacher education programs can do to improve instruction and curriculum in order to address the needs

of ELLs. You could benefit by this study by reflecting upon the meaning of your experience and becoming aware of key ways you can address the individual needs of ELL students.

**Confidentiality:**

This information will not be distributed to any other agency and will be kept private and confidential. The only exception to this is if you tell us abuse or neglect that makes us seriously concerned for your immediate health and safety.

**Right to Withdraw:**

Your participation is greatly appreciated, but we acknowledge that the questions we are asking are personal in nature. You are free at any point to choose not to engage with or stop the study. You may skip any questions you do not wish to answer. This study is not required and there is no penalty for not participating. If at any time you experience a negative emotion from answering the questions, we will stop asking you questions.

**Contact Information:**

You will receive a copy of this consent form. If you have questions you can talk to or write the principal investigator, Veronica Aguiñaga at email [REDACTED]. If you want to talk with a participant advocate other than the investigator, you can write or call the director of our institutional review board, [REDACTED] (email [REDACTED]).

**Your Statement of Consent:**

I have read the above information. I asked questions if I had them, and my questions were answered. I volunteer my consent for this study.

_____	_____
Participant Name	Date
_____	_____
Participant Signature	Date
<u>Veronica Aguiñaga</u>	_____
Investigator Name	Date
_____	_____
Investigator Signature	Date

Investigator: Veronica Aguiñaga; email: [REDACTED]  
c/o: Professor: Dr. Jillian Skelton;  
Concordia University – Portland  
2811 NE Holman Street, Portland, Oregon 97221



## Appendix D: Interview Protocol

During the first interview, contextual information about the participant's life experience will be obtained. The interview will be audio-taped and will be approximately 60 minutes in length.

1. Where and what do you teach? How long have you been teaching them?
2. Describe your teaching experiences with other languages.
3. Review the given definition of an English language learner. In what ways do you concur with this definition? In what ways do you disagree with this definition?
4. How many courses did you take in your teacher education program that addressed the needs of English language learners? What were the titles of the courses?
5. Regarding field experience, how many hours did you observe or work with English language learners?
6. Did your involvement with English language learners impact your perspective on teaching these students? How?
7. Can you give me some background on your training or professional development of teaching English language learners either before or after you became a teacher?
8. Can you tell me about the experience you had with teaching English language learners in your teacher education program?

The second interview will be scheduled within a week after the first interview. This interview will also be audiotaped and will be approximately 60 minutes in length. The participants will be asked to reflect on the meaning of their experiences.

9. Can you describe for me the different ways that you as a classroom teacher have to teach English language learners?
10. Describe approaches or protocols that have been successful for teaching ELLs? Why were they successful?
11. If you could design your own ELL program, what things would you include? What things would not work?
12. Share two or three specific experiences you had with ELL or program administrators that might help other teachers.
13. What are the advantages and disadvantages of having English language learners in your classroom?
14. What forms of kinds of support would you like to have that would make you more effective as a teacher of English language learners?
15. How effective do you think ELL curriculums are and what if anything could be done to improve them?
16. Can you tell me how you perceive your ability of teaching English language learners in your classroom?
17. Do you perceive your role as a teacher any differently due to having English language learners in your class? If so, how has it changed?
18. Do you have anything else to add to our discussion?

## Appendix E: CU IRB Approval Letter



DATE: May26, 2017

TO: Veronica Aguinaga  
FROM: Concordia University- Portland IRB (CU IRB)

PROJECT TITLE: [1050783-1) First Year Teachers' Perceptions of their Preparation for Teaching English Language Learners  
REFERENCE#: EDD-20170428-Skelton-Aguinaga  
SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: APPROVED  
APPROVAL DATE: May26, 2017  
EXPIRATION DATE: May26, 2018  
REVIEW TYPE: Facilitated Review

REVIEW CATEGORY Expedited review category# [enter category, or delete line]

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this project The Concordia University-Portland IRB (CU IRB) has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio. Attached is a stamped copy of the approved consent form. You must use this stamped consent form.

This submission has received Facilitated Review based on the applicable federal regulations.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the project and insurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require that each participant receives a copy of the consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this committee prior to Initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others (UPIRSOs) and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this office. Please use the appropriate reporting forms for this procedure. All FDA and sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.

All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must be reported promptly to this office.

This project has been determined to be a project. Based on the risks, this project requires continuing review by this committee on an annual basis. Please use the appropriate forms for this procedure. Your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date of May 26, 2018.

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years after the completion of the project.

If you have any questions, please contact [REDACTED] - portland.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Concordia University-Portland IRB (CU IRB)'s records. May 26, 2017

## Appendix F: Host University IRB Approval Letter

[REDACTED]

June 8, 2017

Ms. Veronica Aguinaga  
[REDACTED]

Re: IRB-PHS Application

Dear Ms. Aguinaga,

The Protection of Human Subjects Committee, through expedited review, has approved your research entitled:

“First Year Teachers’ Perceptions of Their Preparation for Teaching English Language Learners”.

It is the responsibility of the researcher to notify the committee and submit any modifications to the study protocol prior to implementation. It is also the responsibility of the researcher to submit an annual report if the study extends past a year and a final report upon completion of the protocol. IRB FORM # HS-3 is provided on the [REDACTED] web site for your use in completing annual and final reports. For institutional compliance and auditing purposes, you are required to maintain all records pertaining to your conducted research including any informed consent forms for three years after completion of the research. For funded research, consult the time required for retention of records by the funding agency. ([REDACTED] disposition policies should be used when disposing of research records.) Annual reports must be received and approved by the PHSC by the anniversary date of the original approval.

The committee wishes you much success with the study.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]



## Appendix G: Statement of Original Work

I attest that:

1. I have read, understood, and complied with all aspects of the Concordia University- Portland Academic Integrity Policy during the development and writing of this dissertation.
2. Where information and/or materials from outside sources has been used in the production of this dissertation, all information and/or materials from outside sources has been properly referenced and all permissions required for use of the information and/or materials have been obtained, in accordance with research standards outlined in the *Publication Manual of The American Psychological Association*

Verónica Aguiñaga  
Digital Signature

Veronica Aguiñaga  
Name (Typed)

1/10/18  
Date