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**K-12 TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF PREPAREDNESS AND TRAINING TO PROVIDE
INSTRUCTION AND SUPPORT TO ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS**

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and have found that it is complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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**K-12 TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF PREPAREDNESS AND
TRAINING TO PROVIDE INSTRUCTION AND SUPPORT TO ENGLISH
LANGUAGE LEARNERS**

Dissertation

**Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education
in the Carter and Moyers School of Education
at Lincoln Memorial University**

by

Rebecca N. Doxsee

April 2023

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Dedication

To my husband, Mitch, thank you for your amazing support and encouragement during this crazy journey. Words fail to capture how much I appreciate the sacrifices you have made to keep me going. I could not have done this without your love, dedication, and support. I love you.

To my amazing boys, Luke, and Clinton, thank you for being two of my biggest supporters. You encouraged me to stay focused on this educational journey even when it wasn't the most fun choice. I hope one day you realize how much of a role you played in this accomplishment. I love you more than you will ever know.

They say it takes a village to raise a child, and I have the BEST village. Thank you, mom, and dad, for all your support. I am sure you never thought you would be talking me through exams and deadlines at this age, but you did, and I couldn't have made it without your love, motivation, and meals. Thank you for always believing in me and raising me to believe I can do whatever I set my mind to. To my sisters, Sarah, and Alice, thank you for making me laugh and encouraging me whenever I called on my drive back from school. I love you both! Thank you, Gigi, for your warm hugs, pat on the backs, and reminders that I am doing a great job at all the things. You helped me remember that while important, seasons are temporary, and I will make it through, like I have always done. I love you.

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Abstract

The increased number of English language learners in the general education classroom created the need for teachers to be knowledgeable about how to instruct and support English language learners. Due to the minimal extant literature related to K-12 teachers' preparedness and training, specifically regarding English language learners, the purpose of this qualitative, interpretive study was to examine the perceptions of Tennessee K-12 teachers related to preparedness and training to provide instruction and support to English language learners in the general education classroom. I emailed the questionnaire to 63 potential participants and received questionnaire responses from 44 (69.84%) K-12 teachers. I analyzed the data using open, axial, and selective coding to generate three themes for my first research question and two themes for my second research question. K-12 teachers believed college coursework fell short of providing strategies, knowledge, and skills on instruction to English language learners in the general education classroom. Teacher preparedness could be improved with additional coursework and focused professional development related to English language learners in the general education classroom. Results also included K-12 teachers reported the need for more professional development to feel adequately prepared to provide instruction and support to English language learners.

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Chapter I: Introduction

According to authors of the Condition of Education (2022), the percentage of the public-school English Language Learners (ELLs) in the United States (U.S.) increased dramatically from fall 2010 (9.2%, or 4.5 million students) to fall 2019 (10.4%, or 5.1 million students). Unfortunately, only 63% of ELLs graduated from high school, compared with the overall national rate of 82% (Sanchez, 2017). Because of the increased number of diverse populations represented in U.S. schools, it was necessary for teachers to learn new ways to deliver quality instruction to meet all learners' needs (Coppersmith et al., 2019).

In examination on effective support provided for ELLs, researchers revealed general education teachers were largely not well-equipped with effective pedagogical content knowledge and skills, social and cultural knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes needed to meet learning needs of ELL students (Coady et al., 2015; Lee & Buxton, 2013; Yoon, 2008). Teachers' lack of preparation negatively affected ELLs academic educational trajectories (Master et al., 2016). According to Brisk (2018), practicing general education teachers expressed the need for professional development to support ELL students in the classroom. In addition, educator preparation programs (EPPs) felt pressured to prepare all teachers, not just ELL specialists, for linguistically diverse classrooms (Brisk, 2018). Researchers found the lack of preparation and development to teach ELL students was a contributing factor to an increased gap in achievement for ELL students (Brooks et al., 2010; de Jong & Harper, 2005).

Statement of the Problem

Researchers discovered pre-and in-service teachers were underprepared to meet the demands of the rapidly growing ELL student population (Brisk, 2018; Dabach & Callahan, 2011; Heineke et al., 2020; Li, 2013; Mills et al., 2020; O'Hara et al., 2020). Furthermore, researchers found educators received little to no training to teach culturally and linguistically diverse students (Hiatt & Fairbairn, 2018; Lucas & Grinberg, 2008; Shea et al., 2017; Sanchez, 2017; Villegas, 2018). Teachers were untrained or poorly trained and challenged with designing and implementing appropriate instruction for the growing number of ELLs in public schools, especially in low-performing schools (Vaughn et al., 2017).

Samson and Collins (2012) noted the lack of essential standards intended to develop the knowledge and skills general education teachers ought to possess to provide appropriate instruction to ELL students placed in their classroom. Preservice teachers had limited field hours working with ELL students compounding the gap in connecting policy to practice (Brisk, 2018; Hafner & Ortiz, 2021). Hafner and Ortiz (2021) addressed the need for critical pedagogy in EPPs because well-intentioned students majoring in education had distorted experiences with communities of color and even less experience with ELL students.

Researchers found most ELL students were placed with teachers who had not received training in EPPs or any professional development that provided

teachers with the necessary training to teach ELL students; therefore, I chose to focus on in-service general education teachers as my participant focus for this study. According to Mills et al. (2020), the broad range of students' background experience posed a challenge to teachers' preparedness to address such diversity in student backgrounds. Dabach and Callahan (2011) analyzed detailed classroom fieldnotes and course-taking patterns from nationally representative databases and found ample evidence of disparities in both opportunity and achievement between ELLs and English-speaking students related to teachers' preparedness to meet their needs in the general education classroom.

The purpose of this qualitative, interpretive study was to examine the perceptions of Tennessee K-12 teachers related to preparedness and training to provide instruction and support to English language learners in the general education classroom.

Research Questions

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) declared research questions should be broad while highlighting aspects of the researcher's topic. Creswell and Creswell (2018) agreed, stating the general research questions provided an insight into the overall idea of a researcher's study. Additionally, Creswell and Creswell (2018) described the research questions as the new knowledge that would be learned by the study and the questions that would be answered. The purpose of the research questions in this study was to examine the perceptions of Tennessee K-12

teachers related to preparedness and training to provide instruction and support to English language learners in the general education classroom.

Research Question 1

What are the perceptions of K-12 teachers in Tennessee regarding their preparedness and training to provide instruction to English language learners?

Research Question 2

What instructional strategies do K-12 teachers in Tennessee utilize to instruct and support English Language Learners?

Theoretical Framework

According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), a theoretical framework provided the structure or frame of the study. Creswell and Creswell (2018) explained a theoretical framework provided a lens which shaped the area of observation, the questions asked, the methods of data collection and analysis, the researcher's position, and the reporting of results. I used Bandura's (1977) theory of self-efficacy to frame this study.

Bandura (1994) defined self-efficacy as "people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives" (p. 71). Applied to the educational context, teacher self-efficacy pertained to "a teacher's judgment of their capabilities to bring about desired outcomes of student engagement and learning, even among those students who may be difficult or unmotivated" (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001, p. 784). Bandura emphasized the function of self-efficacy as it related to

learning (Tracey & Morrow, 2017). Research showed self-efficacy was significantly related to work performance regardless of the complexity of the task (Durgunoğlu & Hughes, 2010). Researchers found teachers may not adopt new strategies if they had doubts about their abilities for successful implementation and they questioned their role in shaping student outcomes (Durgunoğlu & Hughes, 2010; Gibbs, 2007). Bandura (1977, 1994) proposed four main sources of efficacy beliefs: performance outcomes, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological and affective states (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Sources of Self-Efficacy Development



Source: Bandura (1997)

According to Durgunoğlu and Hughes (2010), self-efficacy was an important component of behavior change. For pre-service teachers, the level of specific preparation and knowledge were related to their self-efficacy about teaching (Durgunoğlu & Hughes, 2010). Teachers with experience of teaching more diverse students attributed to their increased competence of collaborating with other adults in school, receiving appropriate in-service training and having had successful experiences (Gibbs, 2007). The self-efficacy of the teacher regarding ELLs influenced classroom culture and student outcomes (Mehmood, 2019). Teachers with strong self-efficacy beliefs engaged students in learning tasks, utilized effective teaching techniques, and controlled the classroom atmosphere (Fathi et al., 2020). Preparing preservice and in-service teachers to be prepared to teach ELL students led to better knowledge and higher levels of self-efficacy. This in turn translated into increased teacher commitment and better educational opportunities for ELL students (Durgunoğlu & Hughes, 2010). Therefore, I utilized Bandura's (1977) theory of self-efficacy as the framework of this study because preparing preservice and in-service teachers to teach ELL students leads to preparedness and higher levels of self-efficacy. Understanding general education teacher perceptions about their self-efficacy through training and preparation had the potential to increase student outcomes in ELL classrooms. Bandura's (1977) theory of self-efficacy provided a framework to examine the perceptions of K-12 general educators related to their preparedness and training to

provide instruction and support to ELL students in the general education classroom.

Significance of the Study

At the time of this study, limited research focused on K-12 general education teachers' preparedness and training to instruct and support ELL students, specifically in Tennessee public schools (Alamillo et al., 2011; Brooks & Adams, 2015; Feiman-Nemser, 2018; Lucas et al., 2008, 2018; Molle, 2013; O'Brien, 2011; O'Hara et al., 2020; Samson & Collins, 2012; Villegas, 2018; Yoon, 2008). From 2000 to 2014, Tennessee was one of four states who saw the largest growth in ELL students (Sanchez, 2017). I found researchers focused on a specific grade band, one school, or only one school district (McKillip & Farrie, 2020; Pellegrino & Brown, 2020). Furthermore, the existent research did not follow through with any research to evaluate the perceptions of preparedness the training provided (Master et al., 2016). De Jong et al. (2018) addressed the issue of limited research on teacher education program practices intended to prepare general education teachers for ELLs and found it remained scant. According to Samson and Collins (2012), teachers of ELL students needed the appropriate training to be able to meet their students' language and learning needs and to facilitate academic growth, yet most general education teachers lacked this training. I selected K-12 general education teachers as participants for this study due to their minimal inclusion in existent research related to their perception of preparedness and training to support ELL students. As the teaching profession

moves forward, Alamillo et al. (2011) recommended it was crucial to study how general education teachers received preparation and training to support ELL students in their classroom.

Moreover, researchers found a lack of information about the influence of professional development programs, through the lenses of general education teachers' about how these programs assisted them in adequately instructing ELL students (Alamillo et al., 2011; Molle, 2013; O'Brien, 2011; Yoon, 2008).

Teachers needed to be aware of the language of their subject area, the process of second language development, the role and interaction of learner variables, and the complex ways in which they influenced the process of learning a second language and succeeding in school (Brisk, 2018; de Jong et al., 2013, 2018; Hafner & Ortiz, 2021; Heineke et al., 2020; Lucas & Villegas, 2013; Lucas et al., 2008; Mills et al., 2020). Researchers found teaching ELLs was more appropriate when integrating content area knowledge and English language acquisition, which in turn, placed more responsibility on general education teachers to get the proper training and education to teach literacy strategies in their subject areas (Molle, 2013; Yoon, 2008). Researchers discovered preparing and training teachers, both preservice and in-service, was a matter of social justice; therefore, teachers unprepared to address such diversity in their classrooms created a disservice to ELL students which led to larger gaps in ELL students' education (Cochran-Smith et al., 2016; Mills et al., 2020; Milner, 2012; Samson & Collins, 2012; Schall-Leckrone & Pavlak, 2014).

Description of the Terms

Researchers must clarify any terms that may have been unclear or had an unknown meaning in a qualitative study (Roberts & Hyatt, 2019). Creswell and Creswell (2018) recommended readers needed identification of terms to understand a research project. The following terms were defined to clarify possible misconceptions in this study.

English Language Learners

According to the Glossary of Education Reform (2013), English language learners, or ELLs, are students who are unable to communicate fluently or learn effectively in English, who often come from non-English-speaking homes and backgrounds, and who typically require specialized or modified instruction in both the English language and in their academic courses.

General Education Teacher

For the purpose of this study, the term general education teacher referred to teachers who taught core content subject areas (i.e., math science, social studies, and English language arts) to all students, including English language learners. The teachers were not ELL specialist; however, general education teachers were core instruction experts and responsible for the content delivery of the general education curriculum, which included courses, activities, lessons, and materials the general population of a school accessed regularly (Tennessee Department of Education, 2018a).

Instructional Strategies

For the purposes of this study, the researcher defined instructional strategies as the strategies and techniques instructors use to deliver training. Instructional strategies should provide effective and productive learning by adapting to the learning styles and other needs of each learner, actively engaging learners in the learning process, helping learners become independent learners, and supporting learners in reaching their objectives (Brown, 2022).

Preparedness

Merriam Webster's Dictionary (n.d.) online defined preparedness as "the quality or state of being prepared". For the purposes of this study, I used this definition when I referenced teachers feeling prepared to provide instruction and support to English language learners.

Training

For the purposes of this study, the researcher defined the term training as professional development provided in a structured format, which resulted in improved teacher practices and learning outcomes for students. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) defined effective training as content focused, incorporated active learnings, supported collaboration, modeled effective practices, provided coaching and support, offered feedback, and included enough time to learn, practice, and implement new skills and strategies.

Organization of the Study

In Chapter I, I introduced the lack of adequate training and preparedness related to ELL students provided to K-12 general education teachers and the gap in literature related to this topic. I also included the statement of the problem, research questions on regarding teachers' perceptions of preparedness and training related to instruction and support provided to English language learners, the theoretical framework, the significance of the study, and the identification and description of terms in Chapter I. In Chapter II, I provided an in-depth, thorough review on the history of ELL students, teacher training to work with ELL students, best instructional practices for ELL students, and English language learners in Tennessee. In Chapter III, I explained the methodology I used for this qualitative interpretive study by describing the participants, data collection, and analyses utilized through a questionnaire to examine the perceptions of Tennessee K-12 teachers related to preparedness and training to provide instruction and support to English language learners in the general education classroom. I conducted the study through a basic interpretative qualitative approach to collect and analyze the data needed for the study. I created an online questionnaire guided by my research problem, my research questions, literature on English language learners, and the theoretical framework designed to utilize the research questions. I provided a detailed description of the data analysis collection conducted via snowball sampling. I also described the data analysis process with clarification of the open, axial, and selective coding process. I described my role

as the researcher, the 44 participants which provided the data for the study, limitations and delimitations, and concluded the chapter with assumptions of the study.

In Chapter IV, after the study was completed, I reported and analyzed the results utilizing the five steps for data analysis described by Creswell and Creswell (2018). Data represented the perceptions of K-12 general educators in Tennessee who provided instruction and support to English language learners. Through close analysis of 44 completed questionnaires, I generated three themes for Research Question 1 and two themes for Research Question 2.

In Chapter V, I summarized my findings of this study provided by K-12 general education teachers in Tennessee. After analyzing my data, I highlighted five implications for practice for post-Secondary schools, state, district, and school leaders. Finally, I reviewed implications for future research which focused on improving general education teacher preparedness and training related to English language learners. In the following chapter, I reviewed literature related to the history of English language learners in the United States and teacher training to implement best instructional practices when working with English language learners in Tennessee.

Chapter II: Review of the Literature

Authors of the Glossary of Education Reform (2013) defined English Language Learners (ELLs) as students unable to communicate fluently or learn effectively in English. ELL students often derived from non-English speaking homes and backgrounds and typically required specialized or modified instruction in both the English language and in their academic courses. ELL students constituted an average of 14.9% of total public-school enrollment in cities, 9.8% in suburban areas, 6.9% in towns, and 4.2% in rural areas in the United States (nces.ed.gov, n.d.). Vaughn et al., (2017) explained how one in four children enrolled in K-12 public schools in the United States will be ELL students between 2017-2032.

Teachers faced challenges with designing and implementing effective instruction for the growing number of ELL students in public schools (Cochran-Smith et al., 2016; Schall-Leckrone & Pavlak, 2014; Mills et al., 2020; Milner, 2012; Samson & Collins, 2012; Vaughn et al., 2017). Teachers received little to no training to teach culturally and linguistically diverse students (Hiatt & Fairbairn, 2018; Lucas & Grinberg, 2008; Shea et al., 2017; Villegas, 2018). Schall-Leckrone and Pavlak (2014) believed educating teachers, both preservice and in-service, is a matter of social justice; therefore, teacher education programs must equip all teachers to work with ELL students. In a qualitative study focused on a Post-secondary ELL methods course, Schall-Leckrone and Pavlak (2014) analyzed teachers' feelings of preparedness to teach ELL students and found

general educators' instructional skills varied in planning and thinking complexly about instruction. According to Mills et al. (2020), the broad range of students' background experience posed a challenge to teachers feeling prepared to address diverse student backgrounds. School district leaders tasked teachers in the public school system to ensure the quality of education provided to ELL students matched the quality provided to English speaking students (Polat & Mahalingappa, 2013). Dabach and Callahan (2011) analyzed detailed classroom fieldnotes and course-taking patterns from nationally representative databases and found ample evidence of disparities in both opportunity and achievement between ELL students and English-speaking students.

In Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), policy makers required school districts to provide professional learning opportunities for general teachers who worked with ELL students, but only 12 out of 50 (24%) states required educator preparation programs (EPP) to provide preservice teachers some type of preparation, such as targeted coursework, bilingual education and/or English as a Second Language (ESL) endorsement options, and English learner certificates (Wixom, 2015; Mills et al, 2020). Tennessee was not one of the 12 states (Wixom, 2015). De Jong et al. (2018) addressed the issue of limited research on EPP practices intended to prepare general teachers for ELL students and found it remained scant. Researchers concluded effective, transformative professional development for general education teachers of ELL students required substantial investments of time, sustained teacher engagement, and rich opportunities for

teachers to try out new practices (Brooks & Adams, 2015; Guler, 2020; Hiatt & Fairbairn, 2018; Shea et al., 2017).

Leaders in education set a goal for all multicultural nations to provide and sustain high-quality education to advance learning outcomes for all students, including the dramatically increasing linguistically and culturally diverse population (de Jong et al., 2018; Mills et al., 2020; Polat & Mahalingappa, 2013). Hafner and Ortiz (2021) addressed the need for critical pedagogy in EPPs because well-intentioned students majoring in education had distorted experiences with communities of color and had less experience with ELL students. Teachers needed a progressive and spiraling curriculum for learning to teach ELL students which included preparation, new teacher induction, and continuous professional development (de Jong et al., 2018; Feiman-Nemser, 2018; Mills et al., 2020; Polat & Mahalingappa, 2013).

In this chapter, I began a review of extant literature with a history of ELL students in the United States. Following the history of ELL students in the United States, I examined preservice and in-service teacher development programs for ELL students, practices used, and effective practices to educate ELL students. I then shifted my focus to best instructional practices used to educate ELL students and the research behind each practice. Finally, I concluded chapter two by focusing on requirements to teach ELL students and challenges to meet those requirements in the state of Tennessee.

History of English Language Learners in the United States

From the 1920s to the 1960s federal policy makers immersed ELL students in English speaking classes only, also known as the “sink-or-swim” approach (Colorín Colorado, 2015; Crawford et al., 2008; Villegas, 2018). Teachers provided few or no remedial services and held ELL students at the same grade level until enough English was mastered to advance in subject areas (Colorín Colorado, 2015). In 1964 policy makers passed the Civil Rights Act (Moran, 2005). The Civil Rights Act, also referred to as Title VI, prohibited discrimination based on race, color, or national origin in the operation of all federally assisted programs (Moran, 2005). Individuals created Title VI to focus on the subordination of Blacks; however, Title VI did not address the problems of linguistic minorities (Moran, 2005). Since the 1970s, educational policy makers focused on the population of students coming to U.S. public schools with a primary language other than English (Jimenez-Castellanos et al., 2022). In this section, I will discuss legal cases in the U.S. regarding the ELL population including: Bilingual Education Act, 1968; *Lau v. Nichols*, 1974; *Castañeda v. Pickard*, 1981; No Child Left Behind Act, 2001.

Bilingual Education Act, 1968

Students with limited English-speaking ability gained their first official federal recognition through the Bilingual Education Act (BEA) of 1968 (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2022; Stewner-Manzanares, 1988) as part of the Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. Policy makers of

BEA (1968) offered capacity building in the form of grants to local districts and states to develop and offer educational programs in the native language (Hakuta, 2011). Policy makers used poverty criterion in Title VII for eligibility; however, bilingual education was seen as a strategy for repudiating the effects of poverty and cultural disadvantage (Little Cypress-Mauriceville Consolidated Independent School District, 2022). Policy makers also used Title VII to begin the process of formally recognizing ethnic minorities and to provide differentiated services for reasons other than segregation or racial discrimination (Stewner-Manzanares, 1988). Through the BEA (1968), the U.S. government used BEA (1968) to acknowledge, for the first time, students who needed specialized instruction (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2022; Stewner-Manzanares, 1988). Stewner-Manzanares (1988) stated the *Lau V. Nichols* case and the Equal Educational Opportunity Act of 1974 as the two most notable events to influence the 1974 Amendments.

Lau v. Nichols, 1974

During the landmark case of *Lau v. Nichols*, the United States Supreme Court decided language minority status created discrimination and indicated the Limited English Proficient Students (LEPS) must be provided support to access the curriculum (Jimenez-Castellanos et al., 2022; uslegal.com). *Lau v. Nichols* (1974) began as a discrimination case in 1970 when a poverty lawyer, a lawyer who protects the rights of the poor, decided to represent a Chinese student who was failing in school because he could not understand the lessons and was given

no special assistance. The U.S. Supreme court decided unanimously in favor of the plaintiffs, ruling that “there is no equality of treatment merely by providing students with the same facilities, textbooks, teachers and curriculum; for students who do not understand English are effectively foreclosed from any meaningful education” (Hakuta, 2011, p. 163). Hakuta (2011) pointed out students with limited proficiency in English became a protected class. ELL students deserved the same treatment and school districts needed to take affirmative steps to ensure meaningful learning experiences for all students (Hakuta, 2011; Sutton et al., 2012). Jimenez-Castellanos et al. (2022) reported *Lau* did not articulate students must receive a particular educational service, but instead supported the mandate that districts take “affirmative steps to rectify the language deficiency in order to open its instructional program” (p. 2). Shortly after *Lau*, policy makers enacted the Equal Education Opportunity Act of 1974 (EEOA), which required states to take appropriate action to eliminate language barriers which impeded the equal participation of ELL students in the educational programs (Sutton et al., 2012). Researchers found the courts provided no guidance in the statute or on its brief legislative history on what it intended by selecting “appropriateness” as the operative standard and the *Castañeda* test placed the burden on plaintiff-parents to demonstrate the inappropriateness of language assistance programs (Jimenez-Castellanos et al., 2022; Sutton et al., 2012)

Castañeda v. Pickard, 1981

In the key Fifth Circuit Court decision of *Castañeda v. Pickard* (1981) the court interpreted Sect. 1703(f) of the Equal Education Opportunity Act of (1974). Policy makers substantiated the holding of *Lau* and reaffirmed schools cannot ignore the special language needs of students (Jimenez-Castellanos et al., 2022). The plaintiffs (i.e., Lau) urged the court to construct ‘appropriate action’ requiring programs to incorporate bilingual students’ primary language (Jimenez-Castellanos et al., 2022). Researchers found the courts used the phrase “appropriate action” and not bilingual education or any other educational terminology, which left school districts to decide the appropriateness of the programs (Jimenez-Castellanos et al., 2022; Stewner-Manzanares, 1988; Sutton et al., 2012). While the members of the court noted Congress had not provided guidance in statute or in their brief legislative history, members of Congress created a three-pronged, science-based test requiring English language assistance programs for ELL students to: 1) be based on sound educational theory; 2) have adequate resources for program implementation; and 3) provide continuous assessment to determine if students’ English language deficits are being addressed (Jimenez-Castellanos et al., 2022; Sutton et al., 2012). While intended to ensure an equitable education for ELL students, *Castañeda* was used to support restricted English-only education and made it possible for questionable education programs to continue indefinitely (Jimenez-Castellanos et al., 2022). Researchers explained the court decisions following *Castañeda*’s three-pronged test reduced the ability of

ELL parents to influence the quality of educational opportunities afforded to their children (Jimenez-Castellanos et al., 2022; Sutton et al., 2012). The policy makers of the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), and more specifically, the English Learner Acquisitions Act (ELAA) made provisions which endorsed parental participation and expanded education options for program delivery (Sutton et al., 2012).

No Child Left Behind Act, 2001

Policy makers of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (i.e., the reauthorized Elementary and Secondary Education Act) required all states to identify ELL students, measure their English proficiency, and include these students in state testing programs to assess academic skills (Samson & Collins, 2012). According to Samson and Collins (2012) by federal law, classroom instruction must be modified to meet the needs of ELL students. Teachers implemented accommodations and instructional practices depending upon state laws and the proportion of ELL students in the district (Samson & Collins, 2012). ELL services ranged from bilingual/dual language instruction (i.e., where the home language and English are used), to structured/sheltered English immersion classrooms (i.e., where English is modified for ELL students), to mainstream classrooms (i.e., where ELL students receive ESL support within the classroom, or push-in) to time spent in an ESL classroom (i.e., pull-out) (Samson & Collins, 2012). According to Harper and de Jong (2009) NCLB overlooked the needs of ELL students in several important ways. Policy makers of NCLB ignored the

needs of ELL student, touting the importance of ‘highly qualified’ teachers, but failing to recognize ESL/bilingual education as a core content area for teacher preparation (Harper & de Jong, 2009, p. 140). Harper and de Jong (2009) explained how NCLB was written for leaving no child behind, ELL students were left behind in classes with teachers who failed to acknowledge their linguistic and cultural differences, have their academic strengths and needs addressed, and have their progress measured through tests which did not accurately assess what they learned (Harper & de Jong, 2009, p. 140). In 2015, United States President, Barack Obama, signed into law Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which modified NCLB (2001). Under NCLB (2001), the BEA (1968) became the English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement Act (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2022). Samson and Collins (2012) explained how research showed little attention was paid to the role of systemic factors which contributed to inadequately trained teachers and the associated low academic outcomes for ELL students. According to Milner (2012) the next level of education is “an education that moves beyond the rhetoric of policy and reform to one of practice, commitment, effort, and results” (p. 241). Researchers explained how this charge should not be limited to individual teacher’s efforts only; rather, there should be concerted institutional support at local, state, and federal levels to enforce systematic structural changes to create an education truly responsive to cultural diversity (Harper & de Jong, 2009; Schall-Leckrone & Pavlak, 2014; Li, 2013; Samson & Collins, 2012)

Teacher Training to Work with ELL Students

Researchers found pre-and in-service teachers were underprepared to meet the demands on the rapidly growing ELL student population (Brisk, 2018; Dabach & Callahan, 2011; Heineke et al., 2020; Li, 2013; Mills et al., 2020; O'Hara et al., 2020). Universities did not provide preservice teachers quality support for instructional practices to teach ELL students, nor were instructional moves typically articulated at the correct level of detail to enact effective instruction in their classrooms (O'Hara et al., 2020). University-based faculty and educational researchers played pertinent roles in advancing the dialogue on integrating pedagogy and instructional practices for ELL students to develop teacher expertise (Brisk, 2018; Dabach & Callahan, 2011; Heineke et al., 2020; O'Hara et al., 2020; Hafner & Ortiz, 2021).

Brisk (2018) viewed teaching ELL students as an opportunity for improving the education of all students. Brisk (2018) suggested an educational transformation with knowledgeable faculty, appropriate curriculum coursework, and extensive, in contexts field experiences to provide preservice teacher candidates with good models of instruction for ELL students. Alamillo et al. (2011) explained how the constant changes in the education of preservice teachers reinforced the need to keep higher education faculty up to date on policy and curricular changes affecting ELL students, even more so with general teachers who interacted with ELL students daily.

Polat and Mahalingappa (2013) researched general education teachers who had ELL students. The researchers used three questionnaires (e.g., Background Information, Beliefs about Responsibility for ELL students, and Beliefs about Instructional Supports) to determine the differences in female and male and preservice and in-service content area teachers' beliefs about the inclusion of and responsibility for ELL students' language development and academic achievement. Researchers discovered preservice teachers believed more strongly that "The modification of coursework for ELL students would be difficult to justify to English speaking students" (Polat & Mahalingappa, 2013, p. 70) than the in-service teachers. In addition, preservice teachers seemed to hold biases which would be detrimental to ELL students' language development and academic achievement (Polat & Mahalingappa, 2013).

Villegas (2018) discussed the negative consequences for ELL students taught by unprepared teachers and recognized the lack of preparation reported by many general teachers had profound implications for the academic outcomes and future life changes of ELL students. Adept teachers needed to make subject matter comprehensible because ELL students must simultaneously learn the English language and academic content (Brisk, 2018; Kim, 2020; Lucas et al., 2018; Villegas, 2018). Through Mills et al. (2020) empirical review of research, little was known about the extent to which the reported learning gains from educational preparation programs persisted over time into the general education classroom because the preservice teachers were not followed-up with after

completion of the study. Therefore, in this section, I discussed teacher development through Education Preparation Programs (EPPs), in-service teacher development, and lastly, the need for general teachers' professional development.

Educator Preparation Programs

Despite the large and growing ELL population, leaders at higher education institutions failed to keep up with the growing demands of ELL courses in Educator Preparation Programs (EPPs). According to Cochran-Smith et al. (2016) scholars and practitioners in many nations agreed that EPPs needed to change dramatically if they are to succeed at preparing 21st century teachers who could work effectively with all students. This lack of preparation for preservice teachers resulted in a disproportionate number of ELL students taught by underprepared teachers; however, preservice teachers recognized the need for more understanding to work with ELL students (Hafner & Ortiz, 2021; Villegas, 2018). Alamillo et al. (2011) highlighted how preservice teachers lacked a foundational understanding and awareness of *why* the appropriate and warranted ELL strategies are needed in EPPs. Alamillo et al. (2011) researched a teacher education program at California State University. The researchers focused on faculty in the School of Education and teacher education supervisors (Alamillo et al., 2011) Researchers focused on how to improve the School of Education faculty's understanding of language acquisition to better prepare preservice teachers (Alamillo et al., 2011). Alamillo et al. (2011) conducted surveys before and after two days of an ELL seminar. The 102 participants from the School of Education

in the study acknowledged being familiar with appropriate strategies to use with ELL students; however, the 102 participants were not aware of the foundational research and theory behind those strategies. At the end of the two-day ELL seminar, participants recognized ELL theory and methods should not be addressed solely in courses specifically designed for teaching ELL strategies, but it was essential to address them across all content areas (Alamillo et al., 2011). Researchers proposed as the teaching profession moved forward, it was crucial to look at how to prepare new teachers to effectively work with ELL students (Alamillo et al., 2011).

In a similar study, leaders of the Florida Department of Education, in response to the growing ELL population, required all university faculty members complete 45 hours of professional development on issues related to ELL students (de Jong et al., 2018). de Jong et al. (2018) conducted a survey and collected interview data from 15 state institutions with elementary teacher preparation programs in a mixed-methods study designed to generate a statewide overview of ELL related faculty professional development practices in universities across the state of Florida. From the 15 institutions, 24 ELL faculty from various universities responded to the survey and 14 of those participants were interviewed. Almost three quarters of survey respondents (74%) indicated the institutions' EPP faculty were either not prepared or not well prepared to infuse ELL related knowledge and skills into their courses (de Jong et al., 2018). In addition, de Jong et al. (2018) found more than one-third (39%) of survey respondents saw translating

ideas examined in the professional development context into practice as a major challenge.

Samson and Collins (2012) reviewed professional and state level standards for teacher preparation programs, state teacher certification examinations, and teacher observation evaluation rubrics in five key states-California, Florida, Massachusetts, New York, and Texas-and examined gaps in policy and practice pertaining to general teachers of ELL students. Samson and Collins (2012) discovered how research paid little attention to the essential standards, knowledge, and skills general teachers ought to possess to provide effective instruction to ELL students placed in their classroom. In addition, researchers have coalesced key findings for teaching ELL students, including the need to emphasize the development of oral language skills, as well as the need to focus on academic language and culturally inclusive practices (Samson & Collins, 2012).

Mills et al. (2020) reviewed empirical, peer reviewed studies from 2000 through 2018 on the preparation of preservice general education teachers to teach ELL students. Mills et al. (2020) discovered preservice general education teachers held deficient views of ELL students. In many of the studies, Mills et al. (2020) became concerned that the socialization most White, English-speaking teacher candidates received predisposed them to believing students from linguistic and cultural minoritized groups lacked academic potential, thus jeopardizing ELL students school outcomes. Accordingly, study participants needed opportunities to inspect their beliefs about ELL students and linguistic diversity (Mills et al.,

2020). Mills et al. (2020) recognized preservice teachers felt the need for more modeling of effective instruction for ELL students throughout their preservice program.

To address the issue of teacher presence, a project funded by the Chicago Community Trust, *Language Matters*, specifically partnered with teachers and leaders working in linguistically diverse classrooms, schools, and communities (Heineke et al., 2020). Heineke et al. (2020) created the *Language Matters* project to build capacity at schools and networks to design and implement linguistically responsive instruction, specifically focused on strengthening language development and literacy instruction. After Heineke et al. (2020) implemented the *Language Matters* project, teachers' language development content strengthened; however, the project lacked an effective process to build professional capacity. Novice teachers felt they needed support in both foundational knowledge and practices to promote academic language development (O'Hara et al., 2020).

Lucas et al. (2008) believed direct contact with ELL students would allow teachers to see ELL students as individuals and provide teachers with a sense of the diversity among ELL students (e.g., languages, cultures, native countries, personalities, and academic backgrounds and abilities). Researchers reported spending time in a school context was essential to help future teachers envision how they might apply what they learned about linguistically responsive teaching in their preservice courses (Lucas et al., 2008). Preservice teachers benefited from the opportunity to work directly with ELL students to see ELL students as

individuals (Lucas et al., 2008). Lucas et al. (2008) found preservice teachers gained a better understanding of the diversity among ELL students—diversity of languages, cultures, native countries, personalities, and academic backgrounds and abilities. Lucas and Villegas (2013) believed teacher education programs needed to move beyond awareness of ELL related issues and be engaged in the hard work of transforming the teacher education curriculum by putting issues of linguistic and cultural diversity at its center. Following the notion of bias and inclusion of ELLs in the general education classroom, Cochran-Smith et al. (2016) believed teacher EPPs lacked equity for ELL students. Researchers identified four essential tasks which supported EPPs practice of equity when preparing preservice teachers: defining practice for equity; creating curricula and equity-centered structures tailored to local patterns of inequality; and engaging in research for local improvement and theory building about the conditions which support preservice teachers' equity practice (Cochran-Smith et al., 2016). Although teacher preparation programs appeared to follow the letter of the law, the outcome of teacher awareness indicated the preparation programs missed its spirit entirely (Dabach & Callahan, 2011). Therefore, EPPs with ELL theory and methods, linguistic diversity, and experiential backgrounds with ELL students, provided preservice teachers with the tools needed to be successful (Brisk, 2018; de Jong et al., 2018; Hafner & Ortiz, 2021; Lucas et al., 2008; Mills et al., 2020).

In-Service Teacher Preparation

Teachers were less likely to want to continue working with ELL students in the general education classrooms if they previously experienced unpredictable or negative events with ELL students (Dabach, 2015). Feiman-Nemser (2018) highlighted findings from two reviews of research on preparation and continued development of general education classroom teachers to teach ELL students. Feiman-Nemser (2018) found teachers were unlikely to teach effectively unless they had access to effective and continuous learning opportunities at each stage in their career. Feiman-Nemser (2018) went on to say,

In the case of preparing teachers to teach ELL students, the notion of a professional learning continuum is clearly aspiration. Thus, helping mainstream teachers embrace their professional responsibility to ELL students and gain the requisite knowledge and skills to teach in linguistically diverse classroom must become a shared responsibility at every career stage (p. 229).

In addition to transforming preservice teacher programs, Lucas et al. (2018) reviewed and evaluated empirical research on in-service professional learning opportunities for general education teachers of ELL students. Lucas et al. (2018) identified the most common types of learning opportunities for in-service teachers included: workshops, individual professional development sessions, collaborative activities grounded in

practice, mentoring or coaching, and learning about existing curriculum or developing new curriculum.

Mentoring

According to Murphy et al. (2019) mentoring is an element which encouraged collaboration and provided support to teachers as they trained and transitioned to new challenges. Not only did new and preservice teachers benefit from mentoring, but researchers found experienced teachers learned to instruct in new certification areas benefited from being mentored by experienced colleagues (Murphy et al., 2019). Mentoring provided teachers an opportunity for reflective activities, communication, and feedback; all of which evolved and eventually facilitated belief changes (Song & Samimy, 2015). Teachers of ELL students had concerns about increased accountability for their students' progress as measured by standardized test (Bauler & Kang, 2020; Samson & Collins, 2012). Teachers of ELL students needed the appropriate training to be able to meet their students' language and learning needs and to facilitate academic growth, yet most teachers lacked this training (Samson & Collins, 2012). Most state leaders did not have specific required coursework relating to the unique learning needs of ELL students and teachers could not teach ELL students adequately (Dove & Honigsfeld, 2018; Harper & de Jong, 2009; Samson & Collins, 2012). Teachers enacted practices more effectively when mentors made the practice evident and manageable enough to allow teachers to visualize how the practice fit into their own teaching methods (O'Hara et al., 2020). O'Hara et al. (2020) found

developing models of professional development for mentors and teachers provided a potentially powerful approach for improving the quality of instruction for ELL students. O'Hara et al. (2020) explained how these models grounded the necessary foundational knowledge, identified essential instructional practices, and presented the dynamic moves needed for their enactment. Similarly, Martin-Beltran and Percy (2014) used a sociocultural theoretical framework and studied collaborating teachers' shared use of tools to communicate teaching goals, externalize learning, recontextualize their understanding of teaching and transformed their practice.

O'Hara et al. (2020) conducted an exploratory, qualitative study to examine the foundational knowledge and instructional methods needed for academic language teaching of ELL students. The researchers synthesized data from two independent studies to contextualize findings on essential instructional practices within the process of mentoring new teachers (O'Hara et al., 2020). O'Hara et al. (2020) drew from the case study the practice of experienced mentors from a university-based induction program. Mentors for new teachers offered the promise of building foundational knowledge and guiding dynamic instructional moves for academic language development of ELL students (O'Hara et al., 2020). O'Hara et al. (2020) found the proximity of mentors to actual real-time classroom practices strategically impacted novices' development compared to preservice teacher education. Similarly, Murphy et al. (2019) found new teachers working with a mentor differed from their experience as student teachers because of the

collaborative process. Murphy et al. (2019) sought to gain insight into perceptions of teachers' experiences in a program which provided licensed general education teachers with a path to certification as ELL teachers using a mentoring cohort model. Offered within a graduate education program in TESOL, the program employed mentoring by senior ELL teachers with the dual goal of augmenting participants' skills in working with ELL students and contributing to their development as school leaders (Murphy et al., 2019). Murphy et al. (2019) noted participants in the study felt supported through working with and being mentored by a knowledgeable colleague; they also reported an increased sense of their own professional attributes and an appreciation for the impact of the mentoring process in all areas of their lives. When ELL teachers were seen as collaborative partners rather than as individuals with sole responsibility for fixing ELL students, schools developed a culture of instructional practices which acknowledged the need for all teachers to take responsibility for ELL students and required a shift in teacher thinking (Russell, 2015).

Teachers who participated in mentoring programs found the learning to be positive, effective, and beneficial to their teaching practice and leadership (Murphy et al., 2019; O'Hara et al., 2020; Song & Samimy, 2015). Samson and Collins (2012) suggested ELL and bilingual teachers should serve as collaborators in helping general education teachers meet their students' needs. Therefore, mentor programs helped build the foundational knowledge and dynamic instructional moves to support ELL students' academic language development

(Murphy et al., 2019; O'Hara et al., 2020; Song & Samimy, 2015). Mentor programs provided school-based peer coaches the opportunity to collaborate with ELL teachers and explore how general teachers' beliefs influenced their classroom practices for ELL students (Ernst-Slavit & Poveda, 2011; Murphy et al., 2019; O'Hara et al., 2020; Russell, 2015; Song & Samimy, 2015). Unlike mentoring, co-teaching required a more structured system when providing supports to general education teachers with ELL students.

Co-teaching

Bauler and Kang (2020) found the recognized approach of co-teaching between ELL teachers and general teachers helped address the needs of ELL students in schools around the world; most co-teaching models did not fully consider the complexities of most classroom situations (Bauler & Kang, 2020). Consistency of co-teaching practices and integrating collaboration into the center of the school culture to address both assets and needs of ELL students were necessary but overlooked conditions for co-teaching (Bauler & Kang, 2020; Dove & Honigsfeld, 2018). Researchers believed when leveraged properly, the ELL teacher collaborated with the general teacher in rich ways (Bauler & Kang, 2020; Martin-Beltran & Percy, 2014; Murphy et al., 2019). Dove and Honigsfeld (2018) explained how co-teaching for ELL students is compromising balance of planning and delivery of instruction among teaching partners. Harper and de Jong (2009) highlighted the dangers of one-size-fits-all models of ELL inclusion in the mainstream classroom, which ignored the diverse needs of ELL students.

Martin-Beltran and Peercy (2014) examined how ELL teachers and elementary general teachers constructed tools for collaborating and conceptualizing lesson plans. In a five-month professional development series, for 26 teachers from 11 different schools in the greater metropolitan Washington DC area, Martin-Beltran and Peercy (2014) used a cross-case analysis which focused on three ELL-general teacher pairs in three different elementary schools. Researchers found teachers created and used tools to communicate and clarify their own teaching goals; co-constructed their expanding knowledge base for teaching linguistically diverse students; and negotiated ownership of space, students, and teaching voice within a shared teaching activity (Martin-Beltran & Peercy, 2014). Martin-Beltran and Peercy (2014) argued teacher collaboration served as a way for teachers to externalize their thinking and learning, and to make these processes evident to themselves and others. Teachers focused on ELL students as a shared group of learners which compelled teachers to attend to students' different process of learning, helped ELL students access the curriculum, and developed teacher's ability to modify the instruction in response to the ELL students' needs (Martin-Beltran & Peercy, 2014). As Lucas and Grinberg (2008) argued, these issues needed to be central, rather than marginal, to teacher education. For co-teaching to succeed, teachers needed time, commitment, and structured opportunities built into the school day for a range of collaborative instructional activities (Dove & Honigsfeld, 2018).

Bauler and Kang (2020) conducted a study in a linguistically diverse K-12 school district of 6,900 students in Long Island, New York. In 2015-2016, Bauler and Kang (2020) opened access to all collaborating teachers within the four K-4 elementary schools in the district to participate in the study. In 2016-2017, researchers worked with a more select group of teachers involving 12 teams of ELL and content teachers, which totaled 43 teachers from four elementary schools (Bauler & Kang, 2020). In a three-year qualitative study, Bauler and Kang (2020) found there is no right co-teaching model. With limited co-planning time, teams of co-teachers developed resilient practices which endured throughout the course of three years despite many constraints (Bauler & Kang, 2020). Three core practices which emerged from the research were co-teaching and subject matter; equality of roles; and full inclusion of ELL students (Bauler & Kang, 2020). Researchers found when the teachers worked collaboratively students were more engaged in academic talk (Bauler & Kang, 2020). Bauler and Kang (2020) asked teachers about the benefits of co-teaching in the three surveys and revealed 83.3% of teachers noted all students in their classrooms (ELL students and non-ELL students) collaborated more by working in pairs or small groups. Bauler and Kang (2020) found 79.2% of teachers checked the option to support all students' academic language. Similarly, Martin-Beltran and Peercy (2014) found when teacher collaborated on student learning and co-taught lessons, student engagement was higher. Dove and Honigsfeld (2018) discovered over ten years of research on co-teaching all teachers were teachers of ELL students and

responsible for supporting their social-emotional well-being, acculturation, language development, and overall school success.

Teachers in all content areas needed to view themselves as language teachers and attend to academic language development in their instruction, as this practice should not be confined to English language arts teachers (Andrei et al., 2019; O'Hara et al., 2020; Samson & Collins, 2012). Lucas et al. (2008) found general teachers needed to learn about the language and academic backgrounds of the ELL students in their classes. Researchers found ELL students were at a disadvantage for learning when teachers lacked the knowledge and pedagogical skills to support ELL students (Brooks & Adams, 2015; Kim, 2020; Lucas et al., 2008; O'Hara et al., 2020; Villegas, 2018).

Teachers' Need for Professional Development to work with ELLs

Brooks and Adams (2015) found practicing general education teachers regularly reported they felt inadequate, struggled to teach ELL students, and eager for new practices which increased ELL comprehension of content, engagement in the classroom, and improved performance on assessments. Teachers' instructions impacted by these beliefs resulted with teachers highly resistant to changes unless provided with further professional development opportunities (Brooks & Adams, 2015; Kim, 2020; Lucas et al., 2008; O'Hara et al., 2020; Villegas, 2018). Russell (2015) discovered there seemed to be a growing consensus on what effective teaching for ELLs in content classrooms might look like (i.e. use of scaffolding strategies, focus on linguistic demands, culturally responsive pedagogy,

awareness of sociopolitical influences), we know less about how this ELL responsive instruction is enacted or learned by novice teachers in the mainstream (p. 30).

School leaders encouraged teachers to learn from and collaborate with skilled colleagues to leverage existing expertise (Russell & Von Esch, 2018). The population of ELL students grew much faster than the numbers of well-trained specialists in ELL instruction (Russell & Von Esch, 2018). Teachers benefited from professional development models for mentors and teachers grounded in the necessary foundational knowledge which identified essential instructional practices, used dynamic moves needed for their enactment, and provided a potentially powerful approach for improving the quality of instruction for ELL students (O'Hara et al., 2020). Lucas et al. (2018) conducted a meta-analysis and found two major themes related to teacher learning: knowledge about language as it relates to curriculum and/or instruction, and changes in instructional practice for teaching ELL students. Teachers' knowledge about language and changes in instructional practices for teaching ELL students highlighted the importance of teachers' development about language (Lucas et al., 2018). Understanding the importance of student-centered and inquiry-based practices promoted interaction with their peers and scaffolding for ELL students (Lucas et al., 2018). General teachers lacked an understanding of these practices and relied on ESL/bilingual teachers and paraprofessionals to effectively instruct ELL students (Brooks & Adams, 2015; Polat & Mahalingappa, 2013).

New teachers found themselves placed in classrooms lacking the knowledge of how to practically work with ELL students (Brisk, 2018; Hafner & Ortiz, 2021). Preservice teachers had limited field hours working with ELL students which compounded the gap in connecting policy to practice (Brisk, 2018; Hafner & Ortiz, 2021). Furthermore, teachers often entered the general education classroom with limited information on meeting the needs of ELL students, and some entered with limited foundational knowledge of academic language development (O'Hara et al., 2020). Moreover, Dabach and Callahan (2011) highlighted gaps between ideals and realities which ELL students faced in securing education opportunities. One key aspect Dabach and Callahan (2011) found was the necessary instructional modifications for ELL students to have meaningful access to a full curriculum. Researchers have increasingly recognized general teacher professional development as a valuable strategy for addressing both teacher and student learning (Shea et al., 2017).

Kim (2020) researched Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) teachers' beliefs about educating ELL students from written portfolio reflections after a yearlong ELL professional development program. Out of 36 teachers, 64% obtained skills to reevaluate and improve their beliefs and knowledge about teaching ELL students after receiving professional development training (Kim, 2020). Teachers needed to understand how to make content comprehensible to ELL students, to foster their development of English, and provide them support for learning (Kim, 2020; Lucas et al., 2008). Merely placing

ELL students into mainstream classrooms without appropriate pedagogical modifications violated civil rights laws (Dabach, 2015 p. 266; *Lau v. Nichols*, 1974). Therefore, teachers' knowledge of modifications became an especially significant point of focus because teachers shaped central aspects of classroom contexts ELL students encountered (Dabach, 2015).

Teachers and researchers learned through professional development to direct general teachers on information which developed an understanding about the education of ELL students (Kim, 2020; Lucas et al., 2008; O'Hara et al., 2020). Capturing individual teachers' orientations toward teaching ELL students alone would likely be insufficient for informing policy and practice (Dabach, 2015). It is essential that professional development provided educators with opportunities to explore what they do with students as they simultaneously reflect on how they think about students (Molle, 2013). Teachers needed to successfully carry out differentiated instruction; however, for this to happen teachers required professional development support to hone their expertise with linguistically responsive teaching (Kim, 2020; Lucas et al., 2008; O'Hara et al., 2020).

Best Instructional Practices for ELL Students

Teachers grappled with how to best meet the increasing needs of ELL students as school populations diversified (Heineke et al., 2022). Scholars asserted general teachers played central roles in larger efforts to prioritize ELL students, given ELL students required equitable access to rigorous learning alongside peers while developing language (de Jong et al., 2013; Fenner 2014;

Heineke et al., 2022; Lucas et al., 2008). The well-prepared teacher was integral in bolstering academic achievement for ELL students (Gandara & Maxwell-Jolly, 2006). Teachers benefited from explicit instruction in utilizing advocacy tools to serve as a voice for their ELL students who might not yet be able to advocate for themselves (Fenner, 2014). Teachers must be aware of the areas in which ELLs required advocacy efforts and the reasons these efforts are needed (Fenner, 2014). ELL students received effective instruction when teachers have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to work and help them access the content (Fenner, 2014). Policy makers approved state and federal mandates requiring teachers to link their instruction to sound researched based practices. (Verplaetse & Migliacci, 2008). ELL students placed in mainstream classrooms required teachers to be prepared to teach students from different linguistic, cultural, and educational backgrounds (de Jong et al., 2013; Harper & de Jong, 2004). According to de Jong et al. (2013) teachers needed to be aware of the language of their subject area, the process of second language development, the role and interaction of learner variables, and the complex ways in which they influenced the process of learning a second language and succeeding in school. In addition, de Jong et al. (2013) believed teachers of ELL students must know how to apply their knowledge of and about ELL students in the context of top-down local, state, and federal policies and modify their instruction accordingly. This section addressed the literature on the most popular methods and frameworks providing rigorous, equitable, research-based practices for ELL students.

Linguistically Responsive Teaching

Researchers recognized Linguistically Responsive Teaching (LRT) as the fundamental role of language in school learning and the connections between language, culture, and identity (Lucas et al., 2008; Lucas & Villegas, 2010, 2011; Shoffner & De Oliveira, 2017). ELL students spend their entire instructional day in mainstream classrooms in which instruction occurred in English because most students spoke English. (Fenner, 2014; Harper & de Jong, 2004). Unfortunately, teachers well-intentioned efforts to include diverse learners in general education reforms were often based on their misconceptions about effective instruction for ELL students (Harper & de Jong, 2004). According to Guler (2020) teachers oversimplified the content, taught below grade level materials, excluded ELL students in discussions, or used unnecessary accommodations. General teachers who disregarded these cross-cultural differences or discounted ELL students' first language, literacy, cultural identity, or self-esteem did not create effective learning environments (Coady et al., 2003). For this reason, teachers need to be equipped with the knowledge or some key principles of second language learning to confidently instruct ELL students (Lucas et al., 2008). A Linguistically and Culturally Responsive Teacher (LCRCT) framework afforded teachers the knowledge and skills to understand and incorporate students' language and cultural diversity in conjunction with successfully teaching academic content (Coppersmith et al., 2019).

Researchers examined a framework for teacher development focused on orientations, pedagogical knowledge, and skills for preparing linguistically responsive teaching (Fieman-Nemser, 2013; Lucas & Villegas, 2013). Lucas and Villegas (2013) suggested a developmentally appropriate pre-service curriculum for preparing linguistically responsive teachers. Fieman-Nemser's (2001) framework provided a systematic way to design the curriculum to incorporate desired content while preventing unnecessary redundancy (Lucas & Villegas, 2013). The LRT framework is consistent with the TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages)-NCATE (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education) standards (Lucas & Villegas, 2013). Lucas and Villegas (2013) defined the three parts of LRT: 1) sociolinguistic consciousness 2) value for linguistic diversity and 3) inclination to advocate for ELL students. Teachers who integrated elements of linguistically responsive teaching into their classroom instruction developed the skills necessary to meet the learning needs of ELL students and better prepared ELL students for the critical literacy demands of the 21st century (Guler, 2020; Shoffner & De Oliveira, 2004).

Sociolinguistic Consciousness

Solano-Campos et al. (2020) explained how sociolinguistic consciousness reflected an understanding of the interconnections of language, culture, and identity. Researchers recommended teachers develop sociolinguistic consciousness and understanding for ELL students' use of language and the influences linked with sociocultural and sociopolitical factors, such as race,

ethnicity, social class, and identity (Lucas & Villegas, 2011; Lucas & Villegas, 2013; Shoffner & De Oliveira, 2017). When teachers recognized language, culture, and identity are interconnected and provided space for ELL students to connect their race, ethnicity, and identity to the lesson and classroom environment, teachers automatically opened doors for ELL students' educational experiences (Lucas & Villegas, 2011; Lucas & Villegas, 2013; Shoffner & De Oliveira, 2017) Teachers needed to recognize it is neither effective nor ethical to expect ELL students to learn English at the expense of leaving behind their home languages and dialects (Shoffner & De Oliveira, 2017). Understanding the linguistic and cultural strengths and potential barriers for ELL students also provided teachers with a basis for setting explicit language and cultural goals for learning (de Jong et al., 2013; Guler, 2020).

According to Lucas et al. (2008) a safe welcoming classroom environment with minimal anxiety about performing in a second language is essential for ELL students to learn. In addition, teachers whose primary responsibility to teach students subject matter (particularly secondary-level, or social studies teachers) did not view themselves as language teachers nor be expected to become experts on language; however, they could learn to identify and articulate the special characteristics of the language of their disciplines and make these explicit to their ELL students (Harper & de Jong, 2004; Lucas et al., 2008).

Value Linguistic Diversity

Teachers valued linguistic diversity by demonstrating a genuine respect for and interest in their ELL students' home languages rather than an expectation to leave home languages outside the classroom (Shoffner & De Oliveira, 2017; Solano-Campos et al., 2020). General education teachers must learn to look *at* rather than *through* language used in the classroom to understand the linguistic demands of their content areas and then carefully structure learning tasks according to ELL students' needs (Gibbons, 2002). ELL students' language and academic learning cannot be disentangled (Lucas et al., 2008). Lucas et al. (2008) outlined linguistically responsive pedagogical practices teachers incorporated to strengthen the foundation of linguistic responsiveness. According to Lucas and Villegas (2013) teachers needed to determine the challenging linguistic features of academic subjects and activities. Lucas and Villegas (2013) found key vocabulary, complex sentences, and academic language which created barriers to the academic subjects and activities. When teachers identified these potential barriers and provided supports, ELL students were set up for success and successful completion of the task (Lucas et al., 2008; Lucas & Villegas, 2013). Lucas et al. (2008) highlighted the need for ELL students to have access to comprehensible input just beyond their current level of competence, and ELL students must have opportunities to produce output for meaningful purposes. Teachers needed to draw student's attention to the structure of the English language used in specific academic contexts and provide appropriate feedback for

ELL students to further their oral and written academic language development (Harper & de Jong, 2004). Shoffner and De Oliveira (2017) noted teachers needed to learn about ELL students' language backgrounds, experiences, and proficiencies to implement differentiated instruction and create curricula aligned to students' needs, strengths, and interests. Coppersmith et al. (2019) conducted a study at a Midwestern university through Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) courses and professional development. Researchers studied the implementation of the linguistically and culturally relevant content teacher framework (LCRCT) through a project called Quality Teachers of English Language Learners (QTEL). Coppersmith et al. (2019) revealed when teachers used content and language objectives (as taught through the SIOP model) ELL students accessed the lesson due to their understanding of the goals for the day. In addition, Coppersmith et al. (2019) illustrated leaders and teachers designed instruction where teachers would critically examine their socio-cultural beliefs through metacognitive procedural practices and develop critically needed content and discourse competencies to teach ELL students in diverse classrooms. Linguistically responsive teachers saw linguistic diversity as a valuable resource and recognized it derived from cultivating bilingualism in individuals (Lucas & Villegas, 2013). Such value for linguistic diversity promoted trust of teachers by students and heightened expectations of students by teachers (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Teachers advocated for their ELL students by linguistically responding and

providing access to all programs and levels of instruction (Coady et al., 2003; Fenner, 2014).

Inclination to Advocating for ELL Students

Researchers suggested teachers should actively advocate for ELL students to improve their learning experiences (Solano-Campos et al., 2020; Fenner, 2014; Shoffner & De Oliveira, 2017; Verplaetse & Migliacci, 2008). Teachers countered the too-frequent marginalization teachers experienced in the mainstream classroom and promoted asset-oriented approaches beyond the classroom, including family engagement (Solano-Campos et al., 2020; Shoffner & De Oliveira, 2004). ELL students were most successful when they had equitable access to all school resources and programs (Coady et al., 2003; Fenner, 2014). In addition, ELL students deserved increased accessibility to enrichment and extracurricular activities (Coady et al, 2003; Fenner, 2014). Teachers needed to access and leverage linguistic and cultural resources not readily available in the classroom (Coady et al, 2003; Fenner, 2014). Furthermore, teachers needed to share information about ELL students' learning progress and persistent needs with relevant faculty, ELL students' families, and other key stakeholders (de Jong et al., 2013). Lucas and Villegas (2013) expressed the need for teachers to believe they could, and should, advocate for ELL students. Through community-based learning experiences, teachers developed a more contextualized understanding of ELL students, their families, and communities (Lucas & Villegas, 2013). These experiences enhanced teachers' empathy and desire to advocate for their ELL

students (Lucas & Villegas, 2013). In addition, teachers needed to know when and how to adapt proposed and accepted best practices and be able to articulate the necessity for alternatives to support ELL students (de Jong et al., 2013). ELL students' learning experiences increased when teachers actively advocate for their ELL students (de Jong et al., 2013; Lucas & Villegas, 2013; Shoffner & De Oliveira, 2017).

Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol

Echevarria et al. (2017) developed the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) Model as an approach for teachers to integrate content and language instruction for students learning through a new language (p. 17). Luster (2011) explained how the SIOP model was used in all 50 states and in several countries around the world. Teachers used SIOP for almost 20 years and the relevance of SIOP continues to emphasize on rigorous academic standards for all students such as the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) (Echevarria et al., 2017, p. viii). Echevarria et al. (2017) stated several approaches for teaching ELL students emerged over the years; however, SIOP remained the only research-validated model of sheltered instruction. Researchers explained how the SIOP model provided a systematic approach which made content accessible, facilitated high-quality instruction by providing effective tools for teaching ELL students, and consistently focused on academic language development (Luster, 2011; Song, 2016). Echevarria et al. (2017) explained how SIOP provides guides for planning, implementation, and

evaluation of effective mainstream instruction for ELL students (Echevarria et al., 2013). With SIOP lessons, teachers identified content and language objectives taught through a variety of instructional practices (Echevarria, et al., 2013).

Song (2016) conducted a study which explored whether providing systematic SIOP PD training with guided coaching sessions helped participating teachers improve their instructional strategies. Song's (2016) study consisted of 65 sixth-twelfth grade teachers in a small Midwestern school district from August 2008 to May 2011. In this mixed methods design, Song (2016) used surveys and interviews to answer two research questions regarding the SIOP training and coaching. Song (2016) found most of the participants perceived they had improved their linguistically and culturally responsive teaching strategies for their ELL students through the SIOP PD and coaching sessions. Participants responded to the second research question by explaining how they perceived their roles for and attitudes toward ELL students after the PD training and coaching sessions. The majority (68.8%) of participants reported SIOP reduced their frustration and general attitude about ELL students; 27.1% (13 participants) responded it was frustrating to deal with ELL students (Song, 2016). Song (2016) reported the participants frustration was with ELL students' low English proficiency, which made teaching content more challenging. Song (2016) proposed the participants frustration derived from their attitude rather than skills and knowledge about coping strategies, given their exposure to the PD model for two years through numerous SIOP trainings and coaching sessions (Song, 2016). The data resulting

from this study showed the teachers who participated in SIOP training and coaching sessions perceived their coping strategies significantly improved through the systematic PD and reported on the importance of interaction with ELL students (Song, 2016).

Song (2016) found school districts across the country did not provide essential professional development and training even though these best instructional practices demonstrated improved success for ELL students. According to the literature, I found the state of Tennessee fell behind in providing training on best practices for ELL students.

English Language Learners in Tennessee

According to the leaders of the Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE) (2018b), between 2011 and 2018, the ELL population across Tennessee increased by 45% and continued to grow. Tennessee teachers and policy makers envisioned districts and schools exemplified excellence and equity to equip all students with the knowledge and skills to successfully embark upon their chosen path in life (TN Department of Education, 2018, p. 4). Tennessee district and school leaders continued to support ELL students in meeting, at a minimum, the average growth standard for English language proficiency; however, research showed no training or professional development for K-12 general teachers regarding the continued support of ELL students meeting the expected average growth for English language proficiency.

Tennessee State Policy

TDOE English as a Second Language Manual (2018) mandated ELL programs provided to students identified as ELL must increase their English language proficiency. Under ESSA, all ELL students were expected to meet the same academic standards as their non-ELL peers. Therefore, should a parent waive the ELL student's right to ESL services, the district must provide such services in the general education classroom (TDOE, 2018). Meeting this goal ensured more ELL students would have access to the Tennessee Academic Standards and engaging curriculum, preparing all students for a more seamless transition and meeting their individual goals (TN DOE, 2018, Framework, p. 6).

The updated policy included the following requirements: 1) all teachers working with ELL students must be trained on the World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) English language development standards; 2) tailored ESL services can now be considered at a WIDA ACCESS score of 3.5 (previously 3.6); and 3) beginning in 2018-19, all ELL students would have an Individual Learning Plan (ILP) (TN DOE, 2018, p. 5). These state board changes provided guidance on how ELL students would be supported in a strong partnership between ESL and general education teachers (TDOE, 2018); however, the lack of training for teachers to implement these strong partnerships did not exist.





World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA)

The World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) consortium is a non-profit cooperative group promoting educational equity for English learners (TN DOE, 2018 Manual, p. 5). The WIDA Consortium is a member-based organization made up of U.S. states, territories and federal agencies, and is dedicated to the research, design and implementation of a high-quality, standards-based system for K-12 English learners (WIDA, 2022). Since 2014, Tennessee leaders were members of the WIDA consortium (TN DOE, 2018 Manual, p. 5). Beginning in 2015-2016, Tennessee leaders transitioned to the WIDA ACCESS assessment as the English Language Proficiency Assessment (ELPA) for ELL students. By 2024-2025, leaders set the goal for the state of Tennessee to have 75% of ELL students met the appropriate growth standard on the WIDA ACCESS. Meeting this goal ensured more ELL students would have access to the Tennessee Academic Standards and engaging curriculum, preparing all students for a more seamless transition and meeting their individual goals (TN DOE, 2018, Framework, p. 6).

The WIDA standards framework contained five components, including: 1) Can Do Philosophy; 2) Guiding Principles of Language Development; 3) Age-Appropriate Academic Language in Sociocultural Contexts; 4) English Language Development Standards and Performance Definitions; 5) Strands of Model Performance Indicators (TN DOE Manual, 2018, p. 5). WIDA defines the ACCESS assessment as:

ACCESS for ELLs is a suite of large-scale English language proficiency tests for K–12 students. It is one component of WIDA’s comprehensive, standards-driven system that supports the teaching and learning of English language learners (ELLs). The purpose of ACCESS for ELLs is to monitor student progress in English language proficiency on a yearly basis and to serve as just one of the many criteria that educators consider as they determine whether English learners have attained an English language proficiency level that will allow them to meaningfully participate in English language classroom instruction (WIDA, 2022).

The proficiency level score described the student’s performance in terms of the six WIDA English Language Proficiency Levels: Level 1 (Entering); Level 2 (Emerging) Level 3 (Developing); Level 4 (Expanding); Level 5 (Bridging); Level 6 (Reaching). The proficiency level score is a whole number followed by a decimal. The whole number reflects the student’s proficiency level, and the number after the decimal reflects how far the student has progressed within that level. For example, a student with a score of 3.7 is at proficiency level 3 and is over halfway toward achieving proficiency level 4 (WIDA, 2022).

Language Domain	Proficiency Level (Possible 1.0-6.0)						Scale Score (Possible 100-600) and Confidence Band See Interpretive Guide for Score Reports for definitions					
	1	2	3	4	5	6	100	200	300	400	500	600
Listening 	4.0						368					
Speaking 	2.2						320					
Reading 	5.5						530					
Writing 	1.5						190					

Source: WIDA (2022)

Miley and Farmer (2017) conducted a quantitative study in a rural Tennessee school and examined the differences in achievement between ELL students who achieved proficiency levels on the WIDA ACCESS and non-English learners as it related to Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) achievement, specifically in English language arts and math. Miley and Farmer (2017) found proficiency levels increased for ELL students; however, the level of achievement growth on academic content was at a lower level, both individually and as compared to their English-speaking peers. Miley and Farmer (2017) provided valid research implying ELL students needed additional time, instruction, and resources to reach proficiency in the target language to ensure success in all their academic endeavors. In addition, Miley and Farmer (2017) found these results significantly decreased due to the lack of training of content area teachers, as it pertained to their exposure to teaching diverse student populations. Teachers required professional development in gaining an understanding of how to analyze and interpret the data from English language

proficiency assessments because ELL students' achievement is directly correlated between effective and equitable assessments (Miley & Farmer, 2017).

Challenges for General Teachers in Tennessee

Due to the changes in the ELL student population in Tennessee, state and local officials and teachers struggled to meet the needs of these learners in the school setting where literacy skills are critical to success on standardized assessments (Pellegrino & Brown, 2020). Pellegrino and Brown (2020), professors at the University of Tennessee, explored the collaboration between a high school social studies teacher and an ESL teacher. Pellegrino and Brown (2020) shared these experiences to inform those interested in teacher PD and collaboration to support ELL students (Pellegrino & Brown, 2020). Through semi-structured interviews with both teachers during the 2018-19 academic year, Pellegrino and Brown (2020) discovered some of the key elements for accommodating ELL students which helped social studies teachers. In addition, Pellegrino and Brown (2020) reiterated the importance of general teachers understanding characteristics of ELL students as learners; however, due to inadequate funding from the Basic Education Program (BEP), the ELL student to ESL teacher ratio was twice as high in poor districts than in wealthier districts which led to districts having extremely limited access to student support staff (McKillip & Farrie, 2020). ESL teachers were hired at a rate below the BEP funded rate (McKillip & Farrie, 2020). McKillip and Farrie (2020) reported how

in Tennessee's poorest districts, 10% of students were ELL compared to an average of only 3% in wealthier districts.

Tennessee utilized six program models to support ELL students. Most Tennessee schools utilized one or more of the following service delivery program models:

1. Sheltered English instruction: this model was appropriate for all levels, particularly levels 3-5(Developing to Bridging). Sheltered English instruction was one element of the sheltered instruction observation protocol (SIOP), which was a framework for teaching language and content.
2. Structured English immersion: this model was appropriate for all levels, particularly level 1 (Entering). The hallmark of this program was the focus on English, not specific content, for extended periods of time.
3. Specially designed academic instruction in English (SDAIE): appropriate for all levels. SDAIE was an approach to teach English simultaneously with content.
4. Pull-out instruction: This model was appropriate for all levels. Pull-out English instruction involved students being removed from the general education classroom to work individually or in a small group with an ESL teacher.

5. Push-in instruction: appropriate for levels three through five.

For push-in English instruction, the ESL teacher pushed in for small group instruction or co- taught in the general education classroom.

Although leaders recommended these programs for the state of Tennessee, I found a gap in the literature around the lack of training and professional development on effective implementation of these ELL programs. The purpose of this qualitative, interpretive study was to examine the perceptions of Tennessee K-12 teachers related to preparedness and training to provide instruction and support to English language learners in the general education classroom.

Summary of Review of Literature

Feiman-Nemser (2018) stated the importance of transferring learning was essential to the desirable learning outcomes, especially changes in teachers' practice and students' learning. Feiman-Nemser (2018) explained how research was needed to examine the learning processes as well as the learning opportunities to understand what promoted or limited teacher learning. Schall-Leckrone and Pavlak (2014) stated training and developing teachers, both preservice and in-service, was a matter of social justice; therefore, EPPs must equip all teachers to work with ELL students from the beginning; furthermore; continuous professional development should be implemented for in service teachers. Teachers' sociolinguistic consciousness was the first step toward changing the curriculum and seeking to learn how to contribute to the preparation

of all teachers to instruct ELL students (Lucas et al., 2008). Russell (2015) also noted we know less about how this ELL responsive instruction was enacted or learned by novice teachers in the mainstream. Researchers found teachers received little to no training to teach culturally and linguistically diverse students, which makes it more difficult knowing where to start with in-service teachers. (Hiatt & Fairbairn, 2018; Lucas & Grinberg, 2008; Shea et al., 2017; Villegas, 2018).

Researchers examined multitudes of data and published various findings on topics related to teachers and their perception of preparedness to teach ELL students (Brooks & Adams, 2015; Kim, 2020; Lucas et al., 2008; O'Hara et al., 2020; Villegas, 2018); however, more research was needed on the processes of learning and teaching so clear connections could be made between learning activities, teacher learning, and teacher practice (Lucas et al., 2018). Limited research on teacher EPPs intended to prepare general teachers for ELL students remained limited (de Jong et al., 2018). The push for mainstream teachers to teach all students high-level content, including all levels of ELL students, created a challenging instructional environment, especially for novice teachers (Russell, 2015). Researchers concluded effective, transformative professional development for general education teachers of ELL students required substantial investment of time, sustained teacher engagement, and rich opportunities for teachers to try out new practices (Brooks & Adams, 2015; Guler, 2020; Hiatt & Fairbairn, 2018; Shea et al., 2017).

While researchers examined data and published findings on topics related to ELL students in the general education classroom, little information was available related specifically to K-12 general teachers in Tennessee (Brooks & Adams, 2015; Feiman-Nemser, 2018; Lucas et al., 2008, 2018; O’Hara et al., 2020; Samson & Collins, 2012; Villegas, 2018). Researchers noted briefly in their studies a general lack of knowledge or training pertaining to ELL topics, related specifically in this paper to K-12 teacher training, professional development, and implementation and support for best instructional practices (Brooks & Adams, 2015; Feiman-Nemser, 2018; Lucas et al., 2008; Lucas et al., 2018; O’Hara et al., 2020; Samson & Collins, 2012; Villegas, 2018). In addition, researchers noted concerns about the lack of teacher preparation provided by teacher preparation programs (Brisk, 2018; Dabach & Callahan, 2011; Hafner & Ortiz, 2021; Heineke et al., 2020; Li, 2013; Mills et al., 2020; O’Hara et al., 2020) and ongoing professional development opportunities provided to general teachers (Brooks & Adams, 2015; Feiman-Nemser, 2018; Lucas et al., 2008; Lucas et al., 2018; O’Hara et al., 2020; Samson & Collins, 2012; Villegas, 2018) to help provide successful ELL instruction. More research was needed utilizing a qualitative approach to examine the perceptions of Tennessee K-12 general education teachers related to preparedness and training to provide instruction and support to English language learners in the general education classroom.

Chapter III: Methodology

Through my review of literature, I identified a gap in existing research in K-12 general education teachers in Tennessee related to preparedness and training, specifically regarding the education of English language learners. In previous studies on K-12 general education teachers' preparedness and training to instruct ELL students, I found researchers focused on a specific grade band, one school, or only one school district (Alamillo et al., 2011; Brooks & Adams, 2015; Feiman-Nemser, 2018; Lucas et al., 2008, 2018; Molle, 2013; O'Brien, 2011; O'Hara et al., 2020; Samson & Collins, 2012; Villegas, 2018; Yoon, 2008). Furthermore, the existing research did not follow through with any ELL training to evaluate the perceptions of preparedness the training provided (Master et al., 2016). de Jong et al. (2018) addressed the issue of limited research on teacher education program practices intended to prepare general education teachers for ELLs and found it remained scant. According to Samson and Collins (2012) teachers of ELL students needed the appropriate training to be able to meet their students' language and learning needs and to facilitate academic growth, yet most general education teachers lacked this training. The purpose of this qualitative, interpretive study was to examine the perceptions of Tennessee K-12 teachers related to preparedness and training to provide instruction and support to English language learners in the general education classroom. In Chapter III, I described the specific research methods and design I used to conduct my study. I described the participants, the data collections and analysis processes, limitations,

delimitations, and assumptions of this qualitative, interpretive research study to provide explanation and clarity of the methods utilized.

Research Design

In qualitative research, researchers sought to understand the interpretations of people involved in certain situations, how those people assigned meaning to the experience, and how they constructed the world around them (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Qualitative research designs became popular in applied social science fields, such as education, health, social work, and administration, as the nature of these fields dealt with the daily concerns of people's lives (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The essence of qualitative research was not simply focused on the data collected and the outcome but also the process and the understanding of the *how* and *why* of the outcome (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

I utilized a qualitative interpretive approach to conduct my study of Tennessee K-12 general educators' perceptions of preparedness and training to provide instruction and support to English language learners in the general education classroom. Although researchers categorized a qualitative, interpretive study as a basic study, the overall objective was to better comprehend how people perceived their individual daily experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

In the spring semester of 2023, I conducted a qualitative, interpretive research study using a questionnaire to better understand the perceptions of Tennessee K-12 general educators related to their preparedness and training to instruct and support English language learners in their classroom. Questionnaires

were another way to interview participants of a study without being face-to-face, either through an online platform or via telephone (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). I used the data collected through the questionnaire to highlight themes of K-12 general educators' perception of preparedness and training to instruct and support English language learners in the general education classroom. In addition, I completed a document analysis of various Educational Preparation Programs in Tennessee and their programs of study to support my research methodology.

Role of the Researcher

In qualitative research, the researcher was the primary source of data collection and interpretation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). As the only researcher involved with this study, I served as the sole collector of data through document analysis and an online questionnaire, and I analyzed the collected data independently. I developed the questionnaire for this study, conducted a pilot study, analyzed the collected data for themes, analyzed programs of study for EPPs from various Tennessee colleges, ensured trustworthiness, accounted for limitations and delimitations, and reported data accurately as reported by participants.

Creswell and Creswell (2018) noted the researcher should include statements about past experiences with the research problem and how those experiences shaped the interpretation of data. My experience as a former high school ELL teacher and current academic lead for schools who serve ELL students enabled me to interpret the questionnaire responses I received from K-12

general educators. I realized my proximity to the subject matter could have been a potential bias within my study and may have impacted the data collection and data analysis process. To mitigate the chances of this potential bias, I referred frequently to the theoretical framework, reviewed literature, and research questions as I created a pilot questionnaire, finalized the questionnaire for the participants, and collected data to the point of saturation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) I also triangulated the data by collecting responses from participants all over the state of Tennessee and analyzed programs of study from educator preparation programs at state colleges and private universities.

Also, my experience as a former ELL teacher and current position as an academic lead created potential bias related to the expected outcome of the study. Creswell and Creswell (2018) noted concerns with web-based questionnaires related to server issues, bias toward certain groups, computer competency, and security. For those reasons, I utilized the web-based program, Google Forms, to collect questionnaire responses. Google Forms provided a secure website to collect responses. In addition, I was the only researcher; therefore, I was the only person who obtained access to the participants information. Google Forms allowed me to collect data from participants without potentially biasing responses with my presence, tone of voice, or actions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Participants in the Study

Creswell and Creswell (2018) stated participants in a research study must be purposefully selected to properly answer the research questions. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) echoed a similar sentiment, stating participants must be individuals with perspectives which provided the interviewer information desired to answer the research questions. I selected K-12 general educators in the state of Tennessee as participants for this study due to their minimal inclusion in existent research related to preparedness and training to instruct English language learners. The use of purposeful sampling assisted me in better understanding my research problem and questions as it allowed me to research those closest to the work related to my study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) and in gaining insight and understanding of specific situations or experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Snowball sampling, the most common type of purposeful sampling, involved identifying a few initial participants who met the established criteria and asking them to refer other participants during the interview process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). My interest in the preparedness and training of Tennessee K-12 general educators created a necessity to ask K-12 general educators in the state of Tennessee directly about their experiences. I had four initial criteria for participation in this study:

- 1). The participant must be certified by the State of Tennessee.
- 2) The participant must teach in a public Tennessee school.

3) The participant must teach a core content subject area (i.e., math, science, social studies, and English language arts).

4) The participant must instruct or have previously instructed English language learners in his or her general education classroom.

Data Collection

Creswell and Creswell (2018) categorized questionnaires as interviews, only through a web-based or email platform. Denscombe (2007) stated questionnaires in research could be utilized when a researcher wanted to collect and analyze data in the most productive manner possible, such as utilizing an online platform to send questionnaires and obtain participant responses. I utilized a qualitative, interpretive methodology with a questionnaire to conduct this study.

Questionnaires should be utilized when the researcher wants to get a snapshot of participant's attitudes toward a particular topic (Denscombe, 2007). Denscombe (2007) recommended asking direct questions to get information straight from the participants. When there are a large number of participants in a study, participants were not all in the same location, or the overall number of questions were brief, it was advantageous to use questionnaires (Denscombe, 2007).

To gain appropriate data to answer the research questions, I included both closed- and open-ended questions about K-12 general educators' perceptions of preparedness and training to support and instruct English language learners in the general education classroom to obtain the most organic responses. I designed the

questionnaire to directly answer my two research questions. My questionnaire contained opinion and value questions, experience and behavior questions, knowledge questions, and background information questions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Designing the Instrument

I developed 10 questions for the online questionnaire using existing research and literature to make sure the questions accurately and adequately answered each of the two research questions. I reserved question 11 for snowball sampling as recommended by Merriam & Tisdell (2016). Creswell and Creswell (2018) described questionnaires as interviews conducted via a web-based platform or email. Questionnaires provided researchers the opportunity to collect data asynchronously, allowing participants to complete the questionnaire as their time allowed within a given timeframe, and prevented the facial expressions of the researcher from influencing the participants in any way (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The use of a web-based questionnaire allowed me to collect data from participants in various locations (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) with minimal disruption of their workdays, minimal loss of teacher planning time, and to protect the instructional time for both teachers and students.

Pilot Study

After developing the questionnaire for this study, I conducted a pilot test to ensure the questions accurately answered the research questions of this study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I used pilot testing to test my data collection methods

(Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Using the literature, research, and pilot testing feedback ensured I adequately posed questions which would accurately answer my research questions. Researchers noted pilot testing should be used to provide validity to the instrument, as well as to ensure understandable instructions, clear wording, provide sufficient information to collect adequate answers, and confirm the distribution method, convenience, and length of the questionnaire (Brown, 2022; Cochran, 2021; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Roberts & Hyatt, 2019).

I used convenience sampling to complete the pilot test with three individuals who taught in a K-12 public school, were certified to teach in the state of Tennessee, and were not involved in the actual study. One pilot participant had less than five years teaching experience and currently taught ELL students in a middle school ELA classroom. Another pilot participant had over 10 years of teaching experience and taught high school ELL students in the ELA classroom. The final pilot participant had 14 years of teaching experience in the elementary classroom. These participants were purposefully chosen due to their variety of experience in teaching ELL students.

Pilot participant one suggested adding a question to capture what region from the state the participant worked to capture if there is a difference in trainings offered in various regions of the state. Pilot participant one liked the simplicity of the questions and recommended keeping them short and to the point. Pilot participant one took 23 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

Pilot participant two suggested combining questions four and five because of their similarity. It took 17 minutes for pilot participant two to complete the survey. Pilot participant three suggested adding a linear scale to capture the level of effectiveness the professional development and educator preparation programs offered. In addition, pilot participant three suggested keeping the questions short and concise. The third participant suggested numbering my questions in the survey to prevent confusion. They also suggested revising question number four because of its similarity to question number five. Pilot participant three took eight minutes to complete the questionnaire.

Administering the Questionnaire

After analyzing pilot test responses, I used feedback from the pilot participants to alter the format of the questionnaire and questions. I rephrased one question and added a linear scale question to capture the participants perception of the level of effectiveness the professional development offered. In addition, I added a multiple-choice question to mitigate confusion for the question that followed. I ensured the responses accurately answered my research questions. I then concluded the questionnaire in preparation to send it to educators via snowball sampling. (see Appendix A).

The questionnaire consisted of 10 questions, with question 11 reserved for snowball sampling. I added the three times from the three pilot participants and divided by three to get an average time for completion. This time was added to the letter sent to participants to inform them of the approximate time it would take to

complete the survey. Of the 10 questions, questionnaire questions three, four, five, six, and seven answered research question one. Questionnaire questions two, eight, nine, and 10 answered research question two. There were two multiple choice questions, six open-ended questions, and two linear scale questions.

I conducted data collection during the 2023 spring semester, which was the semester subsequent to obtaining IRB approval. I closed access to the questionnaire within seven days of the teachers receiving the link and after 44 participants completed the questionnaire. I referred to all 44 teachers as participants for simplicity and for the purpose of this research, regardless of their official titles within their schools.

Permissions

Prior to collecting data, I requested and received approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Lincoln Memorial University. Once approval was granted from the IRB, I individually emailed potential participants through professional contacts in multiple Tennessee school districts information about participation in the study. In the email, I included an invitation to participate in the study and a statement of implied consent (see Appendix B). I provided participants with information regarding their rights and responsibilities as participants in the study and my rights and responsibilities as the researcher prior to participation in this study.

To conduct this study, I utilized snowball sampling throughout the study by asking each participant to recommend as many Tennessee K-12 general

educators who might be interested in contributing to this study and to provide the contact information for those recommendations. Participants were asked to provide participant recommendations who not only worked at the same school as them, but also any professional contacts they knew of that met criteria for the study. Participants were emailed a letter. The letter was in the body of the email and contained the link to the questionnaire. Once participants accessed the link, consent to participate in the study was implied, which was clearly explained in the implied consent letter. I requested participants complete and submit the questionnaire within two weeks of receiving the initial invitation to participate in the study. A follow up email was sent as a reminder to all participants to complete the questionnaire one week after the initial email.

Methods of Analysis

According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), data analysis was the process of making sense of the data and constructing meaning for the purpose of answering research questions. Data collection occurred simultaneously with data analysis (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016); as questionnaire responses were received, I began reading through the data repeatedly to look for general themes and ideas. Google Forms allowed me to sort participant responses by questions. For data analysis purposes and to assist in maintaining the confidentiality of the participants, each participant response was coded upon the completion and submittance of the questionnaire for the purpose of presenting the data.

Creswell and Creswell (2018) described a five-step process for analyzing data, which included preparing the data for analysis; reading through all the data; coding the data; generating descriptions and themes; and representing descriptions and themes. After collecting data until saturation and annotating participant responses, I began the coding process. Creswell and Creswell (2018) defined saturation as the point in which the data no longer yielded new information. I utilized data collected from the web-based questionnaires to develop themes related to K-12 general educator preparedness and training to provide instruction and support to ELL students in their classroom.

Creswell and Creswell (2018) stated utilizing the coding process helped the researcher to generate common themes in the data collected and better organize and label participant responses. I began coding with the raw data, which consisted of the K-12 general educator questionnaire responses, which I printed from Google Forms with response organized by question. I started the open coding process, writing notations in the margins beside data which could be relevant in answering the research questions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). After I completed the open coding process, I grouped the participant responses by common themes to form the axial codes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Finally, I used the axial codes to determine selective codes or themes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Through this process, I retrieved selective codes that directly answered my two research questions. Once all questionnaire data were analyzed and my coding process was complete, I kept the questionnaire data in a locked location in my

home, only accessible by me for three years after the completion of my study. I deleted the online questionnaire responses and data from Google within 30 days of completing the data collection process.

Document Analysis

Bowen (2009) stated document analysis was a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documented material-both printed and electronic. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) stated converging several sources of data or perspectives from different sources added validity to the study. As a means of triangulating the data, I analyzed documents which allowed me to learn more about the Educator Preparation Programs in the state of Tennessee as related to ELL courses, which further supported the findings from participants in my study.

I retrieved programs of study from four state universities in east, middle, and west Tennessee and two private universities located in east Tennessee. I collected curriculum details and requirements for elementary educator preparation programs as well as secondary educator preparation programs. When I researched these programs, I searched for the following criteria:

- a. the school had to have an Education Preparation Program
- b. the school was accredited
- c. program of study for the 2021-2022 or 2022-2023 school year
- d. words within the program of study such as: English language learner, English as a second language, and language

Bowen (2009) stated “documents provided background and context, additional questions to be asked, supplementary data, a means of tracking change and development, and verification of findings from other data sources” (p. 30-31). These programs of study allowed insight on the various courses offered to preservice educators and their potential preparedness to instruct and support ELL students. In addition, these documents were the most effective means of gathering data when events can no longer be observed or when informants have forgotten the details (Bowen, 2009).

I completed an in-depth online search for educator preparation programs at various post-secondary institutions for elementary (i.e., grades K-5) and secondary (i.e., grades 6-12) education specific courses. First, I located the elementary education specific courses. Next, I examined the specific courses offered for English language learners or diverse learners, which included instruction based on racial, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic variation based on the criteria listed above. I completed this same process for secondary education courses. Lastly, I recorded the number of colleges which offered courses to educators that specifically prepared them to instruct and support ELL students within elementary and secondary education preparation programs.

Trustworthiness

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) found qualitative researchers concerned themselves more with trustworthiness over reliability, replicability, and validity.

Due to this deep involvement of the researcher conducting the study, objectiveness, or lack thereof, was a constant threat to the credibility and trustworthiness of this qualitative study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Creswell and Creswell (2018) suggested triangulation; member checking; rich, thick descriptions; and the clarification of researcher bias as ways of ensuring the trustworthiness of a qualitative study. Triangulation involved using multiple sources of data (Bowen, 2009; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

I strengthened the trustworthiness to this study throughout the data collection and analysis process by collecting data from Tennessee K-12 general educators from multiple schools and districts which represented varying demographics and did not include my place of employment. Creswell and Creswell (2018) stated, “If themes are established based on converging several sources of data or perspectives from participants, then this process can be claimed as adding to the validity of the study” (p. 200); this allowed me to triangulate data by identifying themes across various sources of data and checking for accuracy across all participant responses. Additionally, all teachers were asked the same 10 questions in the Google Form survey. This also aided triangulation by examining the data from multiple respondents and using the exact same method of wording to collect the data from each participant (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Snowball sampling was the most common method of purposeful sampling used for data collection (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I relied on snowball sampling

because this type of sampling prevented researcher bias. Initial participants selected additional participants, giving me no control in participant selection, which provided no guarantee of variety in the sample (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). To mitigate this bias, I selected a variety of general educators who taught in different districts across the state of Tennessee to begin the initial web-based questionnaire. In addition, participants transcribed their own responses which acted as a measure of member checking. Also, I was not present when participants completed the questionnaire to inflict body language, tone, and/or expressions; therefore, all participants were free from my influence as the researcher.

Furthermore, according to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), the use of multiple methods of collecting data can be seen as a strategy for obtaining consistent and dependable data, as well as data that are most congruent with reality as understood by the participants (p. 252). For that reason, I completed a document analysis of various Educator Preparation Programs in the state of Tennessee. I examined information collected through different methods to corroborate findings across data sets and thus reduced the impact of potential biases which could exist in a single study (Bowen, 2009).

Limitations and Delimitations

Roberts and Hyatt (2019) defined limitations as aspects of a study that were out of the researcher's control and had the possibility of affecting the overall results of a study or negatively impacting the interpretation of the researcher's findings. A limitation to this study was that I could not control for background

knowledge, experience, or training these general educators possessed. Because my participants were from different school districts in the state of Tennessee, I could not control for the training provided by the different school districts, the number of ELLs general educators were exposed to, and the quality of instruction the participants possessed.

Roberts and Hyatt (2019) defined delimitations as decisions made by the researcher to limit and narrow the scope of the study. One delimitation of this study related to the web-based questionnaire. Even though the questionnaires were anonymous, teachers may not have felt comfortable to answer the questions honestly out of fear of confidentiality and anonymity. I addressed confidentiality and anonymity through the use of Google Forms and my implied consent letter. Because I did not collect names or email addresses in the questionnaire, I, as the researcher, did not know who had completed the questionnaire. This delimitation was addressed on the invitation to participate in the study by clearly stating participants would remain confidential and would not be identified.

Another delimitation of this study was the use of snowball sampling to select participants. The snowball sampling strategy limited the participants for my study. Also, snowball sampling limited the number of responses from participants in all regions of the state. I asked each participant to refer as many as possible potential participants who met criteria and could further the research; however, not all participants made referrals. Additionally, I could not contact some potential participants due to inaccurate contact information or teachers being

unavailable at the time. Furthermore, some potential participants did not respond to any of my emails, text, or reminders. These factors limited the number of participants for the study.

Another delimitation to my study was the use of web-based questionnaires as the sole data collection instrument. I chose to use questionnaires to collect more responses from general educators across the state of Tennessee; furthermore, in a timely manner. Through the use of web-based questionnaires, participants were not able to ask clarifying questions if they encountered a question that was confusing, or they could have even interpreted the question incorrectly, in turn, skewing the data I received. Web-based questionnaires added to the delimitations of this study because I was unable to observe the feelings, emotions, body language, and facial expressions of the participants or ask clarifying questions to gain better understanding of given responses (Roberts & Hyatt, 2019); however, I felt the questions asked on the questionnaire were clear and concise based on results of the pilot testing and could be answered accurately by participants without my presence.

Assumptions of the Study

Roberts and Hyatt (2019) defined assumptions as “what you take for granted relative to your study” (p.111). The first assumption I made when conducting my study was all teachers who participated by answering the questionnaire had some personal knowledge about supporting and instructing ELL students. Furthermore, I assumed most participants had obtained at least

some minimal training related to English language learners. Second, I assumed participants who agreed to participate in the study met the explicit criteria to determine eligibility for participation in the study because they self-selected to be included in the study. Third, I assumed participants responded to the questions on the questionnaire truthfully and accurately; I had no evidence suggesting otherwise. I informed participants that all information collected and the names of participants would remain confidential.

Additionally, I assumed with little direction and assistance, K-12 general educators participants checked their emails daily, could easily access their email accounts, and would be able to follow the link to the web-based questionnaire on Google Forms. Finally, an additional assumption was educators who agreed to participate in my study would provide a sample that was representative of K-12 general educators in the state of Tennessee. I assumed that the large sample of participants spread out through multiple regions of the state of Tennessee would make this study generalizable; meaning, the results of this study would be useful for a broader group of people or situations (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Summary of Methodology

Given the gap in existing literature, the purpose of this qualitative, interpretive study was to examine the perceptions of K-12 general educators in Tennessee related to preparedness and training to provide instruction and support to English language learners in the general education classroom. In Chapter III, I

described the qualitative, interpretive design utilized to answer the research questions, my role as the researcher, and the participants of the study. Also, I provided a detailed description of the data collection conducted via snowball sampling using a Google Forms questionnaire and data analysis process, including an explanation of the open, axial, and selective coding process. In addition, I completed a document analysis of five state universities and their EPP programs. Finally, I discussed the strategies I used to mitigate threats to the trustworthiness of this study, the limitations, delimitations, and assumptions relative to this study. In Chapter IV, I shared my data analysis and results of the stu

Chapter IV: Analyses and Results

At the time of this study, limited research focused on K-12 general education teachers' preparedness and training to instruct and support ELL students, specifically in Tennessee public schools (Alamillo et al., 2011; Brooks & Adams, 2015; Feiman-Nemser, 2018; Lucas et al., 2008, 2018; Molle, 2013; O'Brien, 2011; O'Hara et al., 2020; Samson & Collins, 2012; Villegas, 2018; Yoon, 2008). I found researchers concentrated on a specific grade band, one school, or only one school district which resulted in focused studies (McKillip & Farrie, 2020; Pellegrino & Brown, 2020). Furthermore, the existing research did not evaluate the perceptions of preparedness the training provided (Master et al., 2016). De Jong et al. (2018) addressed the issue of limited research on teacher education program practices intended to prepare general education teachers for ELLs and found it remained minimal. According to Samson and Collins (2012), teachers of ELL students needed the appropriate training to be able to meet their students' language and learning needs and to facilitate academic growth, yet most general education teachers lacked this training. The purpose of this qualitative, interpretive study was to examine the perceptions of Tennessee K-12 teachers related to preparedness and training to provide instruction and support to English language learners in the general education classroom. To address the gap in literature, I collected data utilizing an online questionnaire via Google Forms, which consisted of six open-ended questions and four multiple select questions. I emailed the questionnaire link to five initially selected participants; I then

depended on recommendations from each participant to gain access to additional potential participants using snowball sampling. Within two weeks of beginning data collection, I emailed the questionnaire to 63 potential participants and received questionnaire responses from 44 (69.84%) K-12 general teachers. At the two-week point, I received no new information from the questionnaire responses; therefore, I met saturation and stopped collecting participant responses.

Data Analysis

I used the data collected through the questionnaire to highlight themes of perceptions of Tennessee K-12 teachers related to preparedness and training to provide instruction and support to English language learners in the general education classroom. I used Google Forms as my data collection tool, which generated a Google Sheet with participants' responses. Participants of this study self-selected to participate in this study according to the following criteria: certified by the State of Tennessee, taught in a public Tennessee school, taught a core content subject area (i.e., math, science, social studies, and English language arts), and instructed or have previously instructed English language learners in his or her general education classroom. For each of the research questions in this study, I utilized the coding process to help generate common themes in the data I collected and to better organize and label participant responses (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

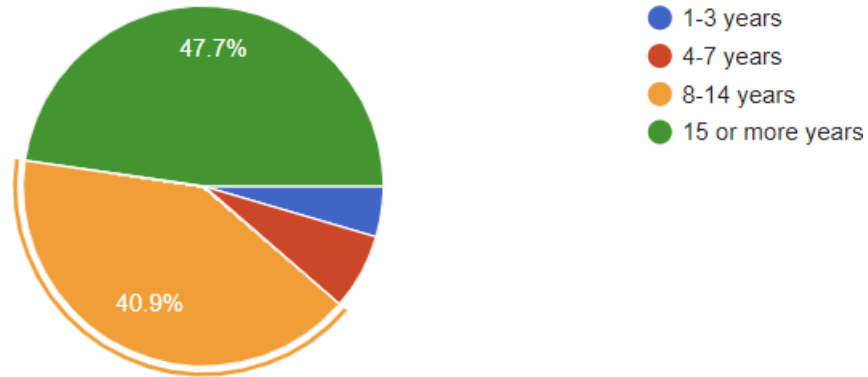
I began the data analysis process by printing and reading participants' responses to the questionnaire to familiarize myself with the information. I then

gave each participant a number and reviewed the raw data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). After I identified the raw codes, I read through the data again to create categories they would fall into. Through this process, I created six axial codes. As I analyzed participants' responses, I color-coded rows and counted the number of participants who responded with similar responses (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). For Research Question 1, I found 29 raw codes. Using those raw codes, I created six axial codes, which fit into three themes. Those three themes created a response to my first research question. For Research Question 2, I found 32 raw codes. Using those raw codes, I created three axial codes, which fit into two themes. Those two themes created a response to my second research question.

My demographic data revealed interesting information about my participants. Participants responded to the 10-question questionnaire, which included the initial question of how long they had been a teacher (see Figure 2). There were two participants (4.54%) with 1-3 years' experience. Three participants (6.8%) had 4-7 years of experience. Eighteen participants (40.9%) responded having 8-14 years' experience. Majority, 21 participants (47.7%) had 15 or more years' experience as seen below in Figure 2.

Figure 2

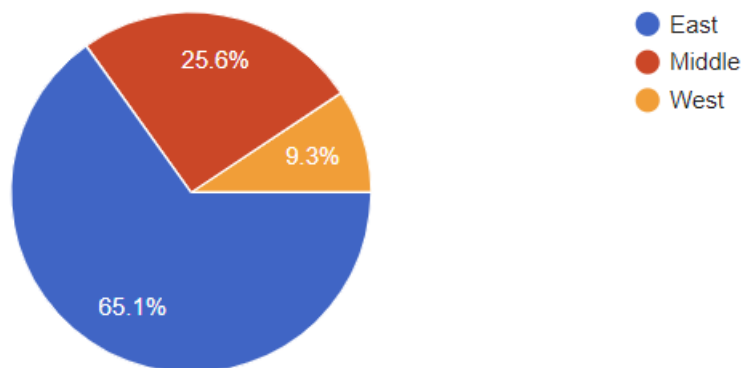
Years of Experience as a K-12 Teacher



Participants were then asked a question regarding which region in the state they currently taught (see Figure 3). There were 28 participants (65.1%) who taught in East Tennessee. Eleven participants (25.6%) taught in Middle Tennessee and four participants (9.3%) taught in West Tennessee.

Figure 3

Region of Tennessee You Currently Teach



Document Analysis

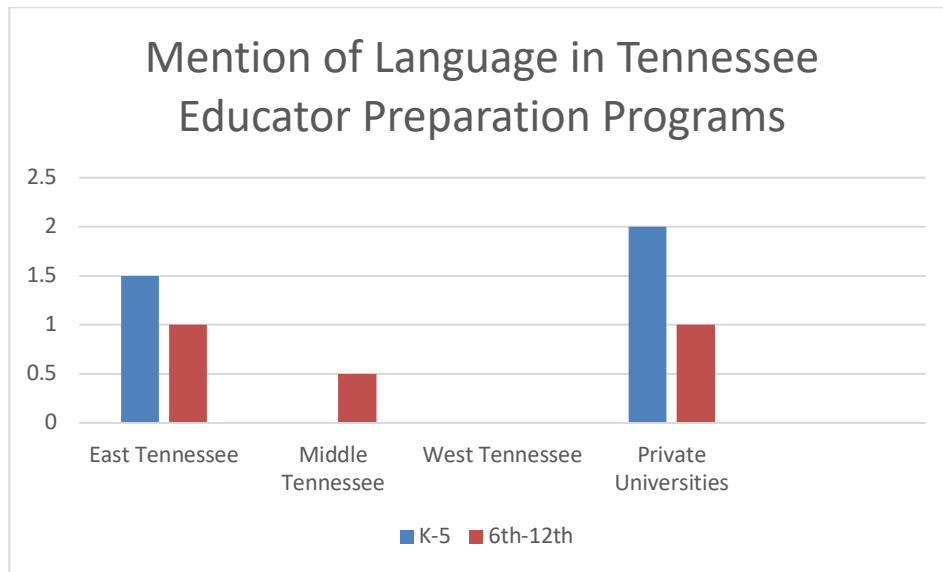
To corroborate the participants' reported perceptions of ELL preparedness and training, I completed a document analysis on programs of study from six educator preparation programs across the state of Tennessee. These educator preparation programs were approved for K-12 licensure in the State of Tennessee at six colleges and universities around the state. I retrieved programs of study from four state universities in East, Middle, and West Tennessee and two private universities located in East Tennessee. Bowen (2009) stated "documents provided background and context, additional questions to be asked, supplementary data, a means of tracking change and development, and verification of findings from other data sources" (p. 30-31).

To begin the document analysis process, I printed out the programs of study, searched, and highlighted words such as English language learner, English as a second language, language acquisition, and language. I found 14 documents that included the previously mentioned words. Then, I read through each program of study to check for any mention of language. Of the four public universities, the two public East Tennessee schools provided a three-hour course which specifically focused on instruction for English language learners. One private East Tennessee school provided a methods of instruction and support for ELL students in their K-5 EPP. Both East Tennessee private schools provided a course on teaching diverse learners in the K-5 and 6-12 teacher licensure programs. Of the two East Tennessee private universities, only one provided a course on teaching

diverse learners and language and culture for the K-5 EPP. For the 6-12 teacher licensure program, two East Tennessee public universities provided a three-hour course in literature for diversity, and one provided a content-based ESL methods course. The two East Tennessee private universities offered a two-hour course in teaching diverse learners. The course descriptions did not explicitly name English language learners, but rather a “wide range of diversity that exists in today’s general school population”, therefore, it was not known if the ELL population was addressed specifically. The Middle Tennessee programs of study did not mention any courses specifically focused on providing instruction to ELL students; however, English majors with a focus on secondary education were given an option to take a course titled Second Language Writing. The West Tennessee university did not mention any type of language, language acquisition, English as a second language, or English language learner in their programs of study in either K-5 or 6-12 education preparation programs (see Figure 4).

Figure 4

Mention of Language in Tennessee Educator Preparation Programs



I came to three conclusions based on the information analyzed from the documents. Since the East Tennessee programs of study I analyzed had multiple mentions of language in some capacity and provided at least one course specifically focused on providing instruction to English language learners, I concluded East Tennessee EPPs attempted to train and prepare teachers to support the ELL population. Since the Middle Tennessee programs of study I analyzed made one mention of language, I concluded Middle Tennessee EPPs somewhat attempted to train and prepare teachers to support the ELL population. Since the West Tennessee programs of study I analyzed had no mention of language in any capacity K- 12th grade, I concluded West Tennessee EPPs were not equipped to train and prepare general education teachers to support English language learners.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study focused on K-12 teachers' perceptions preparedness and training to provide instruction to English language learners. My questionnaire contained opinion and value questions, experience and behavior questions, knowledge questions, and background information questions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The questions asked in the questionnaire were deliberate in addressing the main research questions which guided my study.

Research Question 1

What are the perceptions of K-12 teachers in Tennessee regarding their preparedness and training to provide instruction to English language learners?

Participants provided information directly related to Research Question 1 by answering associated questions on the questionnaire (i.e., questionnaire questions four, five, six, seven, and eight). I analyzed the collected data using open and axial coding to generate themes through selective coding pertaining to Research Question 1. I found 29 raw codes as seen below in Figure 5. After I identified the raw codes, I read through the data again to create categories they would fall into. Through this process, I created six axial codes. I then fit the six axial codes into three themes which created a response to Research Question 1 (see Figure 5).

Figure 5

Perceptions of K-12 Teachers Regarding Their Preparedness and Training to

Provide Instruction to English Language Learners

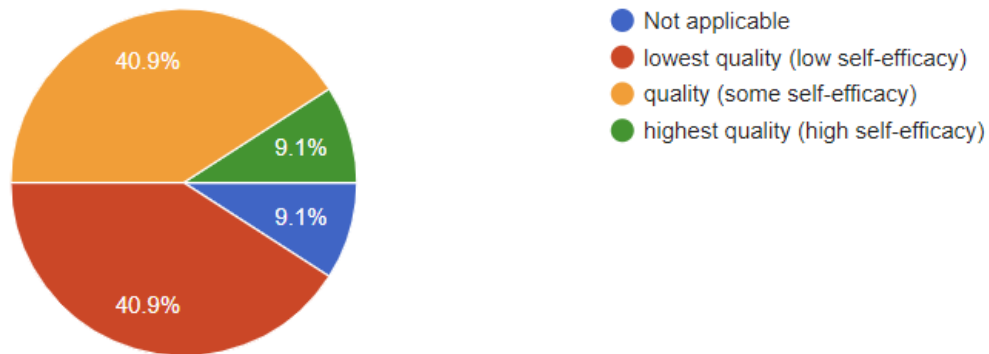
Open Codes	Axial Codes	Selective Codes	
No courses offered		<i>What are the perceptions of K-12 teachers in Tennessee regarding their preparedness and training to provide instruction to English language learners?</i>	
One course offered			
ELL strategies mentioned	Minimal Coursework in educator preparation programs		
Not one single class			
Not a topic during college			
No instruction on how to teach ELL students			
One course on the topic	Prepared through experience and/or master level classes		
Only special education			
No coursework			
No additional training			
WIDA training only		<i>K- 12 teachers believed college coursework fell short of providing strategies, knowledge, and skills on instruction to ELL students.</i>	
No trainings specifically on ELL students	Limited professional development opportunities		
Sone ELL support, but not enough			
No professional development provided			
A few trainings	Trainings are not enough, focused, or geared to providing instruction to ELL students		
ELL teacher provided support			
Had to seek out PD			
WIDA modules			
Experience			
Not at all prepared	Most teachers do not feel prepared		<i>K-12 Teachers were Somewhat Provided Quality Professional Development that Specifically Focused on Providing Instruction for ELL students in the General Education Classroom.</i>
Low self-efficacy			
Not well prepared			
Rely on ELL teacher			
Textbook, but not “field prepared	Teacher with higher self-efficacy due to experience		
Previous experience			
Moderately prepared			
Somewhat prepared		<i>K- 12 teacher preparedness could be improved with additional coursework and focused professional development.</i>	

College Coursework Fell Short of Providing Strategies, Knowledge, and Skills on Instruction for ELL students. I utilized data from questionnaire questions four and five to identify how well participants were prepared to instruct and support ELL students based on the coursework in their EPP program. This theme emerged as 21 participants (47.7%) mentioned their college coursework fell short of providing strategies, knowledge, and skills on instruction for ELL students. I utilized Bandura's (1994) theory of self-efficacy to scale their perceptions of preparedness (see Figure 6). Eighteen participants (40.9%) indicated the coursework in their educator preparation program was lowest quality which led to low self-efficacy when providing instruction and support to English language in the classroom. Eighteen participants (40.9%) reported the coursework in their educator preparation program was quality, and participants felt some self-efficacy in providing English language learners instruction and support in the classroom. Four participants (9.1%) reported their coursework was the highest quality which led to participants feeling high self-efficacy when providing English language learners instruction and support in the classroom. Finally, four participants (9.1%) indicated they had no coursework that prepared them to provide instruction and support for English language learners in the classroom; therefore, they reported not applicable.

Figure 6

Rate the Quality of Coursework You Completed as Part of Your Educator

Preparation Program



In question five from the questionnaire, participants provided their rationale for their rating on the quality of the coursework in their EPP. Twenty-one participants (47.7%) mentioned they received no coursework in the educator preparation program. Participant 2 reported, “I don’t remember having a specific class in my educator preparation program that worked to prepare me to teach English language learners. I wish there would have been an entire class devoted to it.” Participant 4 responded similarly, “ESL was not a pushed topic during my college course, it was touched on in some classes, but never a priority.”

Participant 6 explained,

“My first two college degrees are in business. Many years after earning those degrees I chose to obtain a master’s degree in educational technology/school library. The school librarian program included teacher

certification courses, but very little of this program actually included pedagogical course. If I had not been a Sunday School teacher for many years and had children of my own and felt a ‘calling’ to teach, I would not have been comfortable teaching in a public school after earning the M.Ed. Plus, I had no instruction on how to teach ELL students at all. However, I am currently enrolled in an ESL endorsement program, so I hope to learn how best to help these student.”

Participant 17 agreed, “I was not taught anything on working with ELL students until I began teaching at my current school.” This theme was supported by Participant 3 who shared, “When I went through educator preparation in college, I didn’t have one single class on teaching those that didn’t speak English.”

Participant 10 echoed, “I had no coursework pertaining to ELL students.” In addition, participant 30 reported, “I had no ELL coursework options when I was an undergraduate student.”

While other participants did not name a specific course title, six participants (11.3%) mentioned a course or courses where the focus was on Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) or best practices for all students.

Participant 13 stated, “...there is next to no coursework applicable to general ed teachers (I teach English Literature). I remember doing one module on accommodations...and this was truly framed more in light of IEP inclusions than ELL learning.” In addition to Participant 13’s comment, Participant 26 reported, “I had one course in my general education course that talked about SPED law and

nothing during my SPED certification even mentioned ELL.” Participant 34 said, “The program provided minimal instruction on how to support ELL students during Tier I instruction. The strategies that were presented seemed like best practices for all students.”

To corroborate the participants’ reported coursework for English language learners, I completed a document analysis of the programs of study from educator preparation programs. The document analysis matched the participants’ responses on the quality of coursework provided in their educator preparation program. Only two public East Tennessee schools provided a course specifically designed to address the needs of English language learners in the general education classroom. In addition, two private East Tennessee schools offered one class on teaching diverse learners, while only one of the schools provided a methods of instruction and support for ELL students. However, the Middle and West Tennessee schools did not offer any courses designed to prepared future educators to provide instruction and support to English language learners.

K-12 Teachers Were Somewhat Provided Quality Professional Development that Specifically Focused on Providing Instruction for ELL Students in the General Education Classroom.

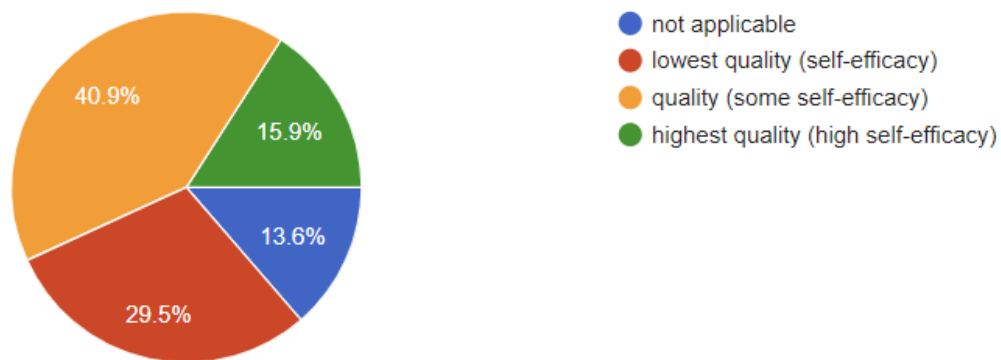
I created questions six and seven in the questionnaire to identify participants perception of quality professional development and how well it prepared them to instruct and support English language learners. This theme emerged as fourteen participants (31.8%) reported not being provided with any professional

development to increase their self-efficacy on providing instruction for ELL students in the general education classroom.

Again, I utilized Bandura's (1994) theory of self-efficacy to scale their perception of quality professional development. Question six in the questionnaire asked participants to rate the quality of professional development they attended as to how well it prepared them to instruct and support ELL students. Thirteen participants (29.5%) believed the quality of professional development they attended was lowest quality leading participants to feel low self-efficacy as to how well it prepared them to instruct and support English language learners in the classroom. Eighteen participants (40.9%) rated their professional development as quality leading participants to feel some self-efficacy as to how well it prepared them to instruct and support English language learners in the classroom. Only seven participants (15.9%) rated their professional development as highest quality or high self-efficacy as to how well it prepared them to instruct and support English language learners in the classroom. Finally, there were six participants (13.6%) who reported this question was not applicable due to not being provided professional development to prepare them to instruct and support English language learners. (see Figure 7).

Figure 7

Rate of Quality Professional Development Attended and How Well it Prepared to Instruct and Support English Language Learners



Question seven in the questionnaire asked participants to explain their rationale for the rating in question six. Six of the 44 participants (13.6%) reported they received no professional development to support ELL students. Participant 1 stated, “As a math teacher for the majority of my career, the PD for ELL has predominately centered around language arts educators.” Participant 27 reported, “I haven’t received any ELL training this year. Most of our training has been for regular students and SPED.” Participant 38 agreed and added, “I would assume that those PDs are reserved for EL teacher verses general education teachers.” In addition, Participant 14 noted, “As a general education teacher, after the coursework, I was not provided any professional development regarding ELLs.” Participant 6 communicated, “I do not recall having any PD to help me

support ELL students with the exception of online WIDA training which was a requirement for all teachers.”

Thirteen participants (29.5%) reported attending some professional development related to ELL students; however, rated their self-efficacy as low. Participant 4 stated, “I have not attended any trainings specifically for ESL, it always includes ESL with another topic, and I feel this is an area I could grow in.” Participant 9 explained, “I have not been trained specifically on how to teach them better.” In addition to Participant 9’s response regarding specifics on how to provide supports for ELL students, Participant 13 stated,

“The training we receive does not change year to year, despite new literature and data available on the topic. The training feels like a legal box that has to be checked, not a subject to be studied and practice. There are very few hands-on applications...it is more of a list of ‘Do not do this’ presented to teachers in hopes of avoiding issues instead of joyfully accommodating students.”

Eighteen participants (40.9%) rated the quality of professional development at quality, or some self-efficacy. Participant 7 reported, “Our system has had a few in-services where the sole focus was ELL instruction, but these PD sessions are few and far between.” Participant 12 explained why they chose “quality” with this explanation, “I chose ‘quality’ because many of the activities were focused on best practices with diverse learners.” Similarly, Participant 19 added to the perception of Participant 12,

“We are trying. We’ve bumped it up, but it feels overwhelming as they try to have us do more with less people and less resources and less money. We have an administrator who leads the PDs, and she is passionate and all-in, but in my classroom they’ve shoved students with IEPs, 504 plans, and ELL students into the same room general core class, and implementing all the little tricks we learn in PD is overwhelming.”

Participant 34 explained, “Professional development was helpful but I had to seek it out. It wasn’t a part of the school-based PD or PLC offerings.”

Seven participants (15.9%) rated the professional development as highest quality. Most of the professional developments were based on WIDA training, as participant 9 shared, “The in-service training along with the training videos for WIDA at the beginning of the year helped to demonstrate appropriate tools and supports for ELL students in an easy to understand method.” Participant 21 referred to the indicators in WIDA as stated, “We have learned to keep track of student growth and target accordingly in all language modalities: listening, speaking, reading and writing.” Participant 41 referenced experience and searching for best practices for all students and shared, “As a teacher I always worked with high-poverty students. One thing that I came to realize early on was that the language barrier that exists is true for both student populations. Seeking out additional supports such as Thinking Maps, SIOP, and Kagan Learning has provided me with tools and resources needed to support all student demographics.”

Teacher Preparedness Could Be Improved with Additional Coursework and Focused Professional Development. The third theme for Research Question 1 derived from 22 participants (50.0%) who reported not feeling prepared or ill prepared to provide instruction and support to English language learners in their classroom. I created question number eight to gain insight into how teachers felt about their overall level of preparedness to provide instruction and support to ELL students in their classroom. Of the 44 participants, 10 participants (22.7%) reported not being prepared at all, while 12 (27.2%) reported their feeling of preparedness was low. Participant 1 said, “I do not feel prepared at all. The population of EL students is getting larger, but no additional training is taking place.” Participant 9 stated, “I give myself a 1. I have room for growth.” Participant 10 followed by stating, “I am not very well prepared.” Participant 13 shared,

“I feel woefully unprepared to actually teach ELL students well. I do not have the skills to do so, therefore, it impacts my behavior in very real ways. Furthermore, I feel ill prepared to impact the social environment of my ELL learners because there is such a negative stigma attached to it. So many teachers display negative attitudes when the subject arises, and because of this even good ELL PD often falls on deaf ears.”

Participant 30 reported they were “not at all” prepared to instruct ELL students in their classroom. This was followed by Participant 42 who rated themselves as, “1-Room for growth.”

For those who reported an overall feeling of preparedness as low, Participant 5 stated, “I feel prepared, but I am sure there is more I could be doing to better serve these students.” Participant 7 explained, “. . . I am sure there is more I could be doing to better serve these students.” Participants 15 and 17 acknowledged the ELL teacher as a resource. Participant 15 shared, “I rely on the EL teacher to determine what is the best support for my students.” Participant 17 echoed, “I do not feel prepared at all however, I am lucky that my school has multiple EL teachers who are willing to help.” Participant 21 explained the need for more training by providing “more knowledge in speaking and understanding the language to help students gain concepts while learning the language.”

There were 22 participants (43.1%) who felt moderately to mostly prepared to instruct ELL students; however, the majority referenced their years’ experience in the classroom or their knowledge of working with Exceptional Education Students. Participant 26 reported, “My time spent teaching special education prepared me to accommodate and modify work to support ELL students I worked with. Developing language rich experiences through each lesson is what I developed during my tenure as a teacher.” Participant 28 shared the same sentiment, “As a special education teacher, I feel prepared to teach ELL students because I use many of the same strategies to teach both sets of learners.” Participant 32 spoke to their time in the classroom and reported, “I am prepared mostly due to previous experiences.” Participant 36 echoed those thoughts, “Experience is the best teacher, so I have lots of teaching experience, including

teaching English to ELs in other countries, adults in the community, and through working with the Migrant Education Program.”

Research Question 2

What instructional strategies do K-12 teachers in Tennessee utilize to instruct and support English Language Learners?

To answer Research Question 2, participants responded to questionnaire questions three, nine, and ten. I analyzed the data provided in the questionnaire by applying open codes and axial codes to render three themes related to Research Questions 2. I found 32 raw codes as seen in Figure 8. After I identified the raw codes, I read through the data again to create axial codes. Through this process, I created three axial codes. I then fit the three axial codes into two themes which created a response to Research Question 2 (see Figure 8).

Figure 8

Instructional Strategies K-12 Teachers Utilized to Instruct and Support English

Language Learners

Open Codes	Axial Codes	Selective Codes
Translate		<i>What instructional strategies do K-12 teachers in Tennessee utilize to instruct and support English Language Learners?</i>
Small Groups		
Modifications		
Partnering with bilingual student		
WIDA		
Spanish version of text		
Spanish version of assignment		
ESL teacher support		
Modification to “their level”		
Vocabulary		
Computer software programs		<i>K-12 teachers utilized translators, visuals, and modified instruction to instruct and support English language learners.</i>
Co-teaching		
Building relationships		
Online text that translates to their language		
Extended time		
Short, concise instructions		
Speaking slowly		
Gestures		
Visuals		
Scaffolding		
Using the same words and phrases		<i>K-12 teachers reported the need for more professional development to feel adequately prepared to provide instruction and support to English language learners.</i>
All strategies and tools in ILP		
Building on prior knowledge		
Experiencing what it is like to be an ELL student		
More professional development		
Interpreters		
How to modify text		
Seeing others teach ELL students		
Learning to speak Spanish		

Open Codes	Axial Codes	Selective Codes
Content specific materials		
Time to implement new strategies with support during the process		
Understanding cultural differences and its impact on learning styles		

K-12 Teachers Utilized Translators, Modified Instruction and Visuals to

Instruct and Support English Language Learners. This theme emerged from question three in the questionnaire to capture a typical day instructing and supporting English language learners. Participants shared multiple strategies they implemented in their general education classroom. Twenty-two participants (50%) mentioned the utilization of translators and/or a bilingual student as a method of instruction and support. Seventeen participants (38.6%) modified instruction to provide support to English language learners. In addition, 10 participants (22.7%) used visuals in their everyday instruction and support of English language learners.

Eleven participants (25%) specifically mentioned using a bilingual student to instruct and support ELL students in their classroom. Participant 2 stated, “In classes with English language learners, I pair each English language learner with a bilingual student if possible. I can only speak English; therefore, all of my instruction is in English.” Participant 4 also shared, “I always assign a bilingual “buddy” to a struggling ESL student.” Participant 9 followed by reporting, “They can interpret for each other if they don’t understand.” Participant 23 agreed with

this method of support, “I have had bilanguage students translate.” Participant 34 shared, “Students have opportunities to work together.”

Eleven participants (25%) also utilized translators. Participant 15 explained,

“The day begins with an English greeting and usually the student ask to speak into my phone translator in order to share his previous evening. The class models our community morning and the student imitate their actions. Next the student logins into Lexia English and work (5 minutes) before trying to interact with student in the group. My phone translator is used often to communicate with my second grade student who never spoke English before entering my room three weeks ago... I ask the student to used my language to communicate which causes struggles for the student and I struggle with that as well. We use my phone translator when explaining expectations and the next assignment.”

Participants 2 explained they utilized “Google translate when the student needs a break from thinking and speaking in both languages.” Participant 28 included their background as a special education teacher, but “With the various language spoken in our school, I also utilize Google translate when students need a break from thinking and speaking in both language while trying to complete math work.” Participant 13 shared,

“Our county mandates that we cannot give ESL learners translations of the text they are reading, as it does not support best practice. This is difficult

for my students who speak no academic English. I always post our daily agendas on Google Classroom, then once I get the rest of the class started, I sit down with my ESL kids and translate using Google translate.”

Seventeen participants (38.6%) referenced the use of modifications in their typical day of instruction and support to ELL students. Participant 7 explained, “I modify assignments and accommodate these students as needed and required by the WIDA standards.” Participant 10 shared, “Most of the modifications involve clearly explaining directions and providing alternate activities particularly when working with written expression.” Participant 37 stated, “I typically have to provide scaffolding and modifications with assignments to these students.” Participant 38 explained their modification as “repeating the instructions as needed.” Participant 2 reported, “I do not count word problems for points, but do have the students listen and try to pick up on things as we work through word problems. I use the online interactive textbook which will instruct the students and help them because there are many different languages available.” Participant 8 listed, “repetition, short concise instructions, and phrasing, use of the same words and phrases, explain expectations.” Participant 19 listed similar modifications, “wait time, speaking slowly, avoiding idioms and culturally entrenched turns-of phrase, technology, use of images, a lot of gestures.” Participant 21 followed with, “scaffolding, one step directions, picture clues, vocabulary, peer helpers.” Participant 28 elaborated on various modifications,

“I use direct instruction, small group instruction, one-on-one instruction, peer tutors/partners, vocabulary strategies to make work connections, checking for understanding, making sure to break down word problems to make them accessible to all learners with highlighting, underlining, and circling keywords and phrases, extended time on quizzes and tests, additional time on assignments, guided notes, and chunking of material.”

Participant 13 voiced they, “Build relationship with the students first and foremost, focus on their social and functional vocabulary, scaffolding instruction, incorporating technology, peer tutoring, vocab instruction, reduce reading load, etc..” Participant 32 echoed the same sentiment, “Assess where their students are and build on that prior knowledge.”

Question nine in the questionnaire addressed the strategies, knowledge, and skills used most to instruct and support ELLs. Ten participants (22.7%) mentioned the utilization of visuals as a strategy to support ELLs. Participant 14 reported, “I try to design instructional materials that include visual and auditory cues for students.” Participant 10 stated, “Lots of images as part of lectures, interactive video.” Participant 38 echoed they used, “pictures, slower talking and practice words for daily routine. Participant 40 included, “visuals, sign, sentence stems, thinking maps, visual cues, fluency practice...” and Participant 41 also stated using “visuals, hands on experiences, modeling, pre-teaching, more group interactions/project...”

K-12 Teachers Reported the Need for More Professional Development to Feel Adequately Prepared to Provide Instruction and Support to English

Language Learners. I created questionnaire question 10 to identify the strategies, knowledge, and skills general education teachers needed to feel more prepared to instruct and support ELLs. The second theme for Research Question 2 emerged due to 29 participants (65.9%) responding with the need for more professional development. Participant 7 expressed the need for “specific examples from ELL teachers on best practices they consider to be the most helpful.” Participant 9 followed, “I would like a PD on the best ways, materials, where to find extra resources, testimonials from students as to what works best for them, etc.”

Participant 22 emphasized the need for “professional development would be helpful in helping me feel more prepared to teach ELLs.” Participants 33 noted, “I would like more professional developments that are geared toward effectively teaching ELLs.” While participant 35 shared the same needs and asked for “continued professional development throughout the school year.” Similarly, participant 38 reported, “Everything that pertains to teaching ELL students correctly.” Participant 2 asked for “strategies for helping them read math problems.” Participant 44 reported, “Scenario practice better equips me to engage ELL strategies.”

Participants also shared the need for specific examples and training regarding instruction for ELL students. Participant 2 shared, “Honestly, I am not really sure. Maybe having to sit through a class in a language I don’t speak so that I can

understand exactly how the students feels. Strategies for helping them read math problems.” Participant 13 reported,

“We need actual ESL training in an andragogy context! There needs to be more funding for ESL learning (both teachers and students). Teacher should be more accountable and have to submit updates and list interventions given periodically so these students aren’t simply cast aside for the semester. ESL professionals should offer applicable and contextualized suggestions that lay people can easily use in practice! There is so much we could do!”

Ten participants (22.7%) mentioned the need to learn the language and participate in cultural training to increase their strategies, knowledge, and skills to best instruct ELL students. Participant 18 expressed they “are not sure other than being able to speak the language myself.” Participants 19 shared, “Being fluent in Spanish is the only option for me. Eventually, to remain effective, this is what I’ll have to do.” Similar to participant 19, participant 21 shared “understanding to listen and speak the language” is a choice skill to increase instruction and support to English language learners. Participant 23 explained, “Knowing Spanish would help. Having software that can translate would be useful. More specifically, participant 28 elaborated,

“I feel ways to communicate with families and guardians in a timely matter. The ease and ability to work with translators when working with families so families feel comfortable and apart of the community they are

now living in. Attempting to make sure literature to and from school is translated into the native language of the parents. Understanding the different cultures and customs of our students, so they feel integrated and part of the school community.”

Five participants (11.3%) included the need to learn more about cultural differences. Participant 34 provided additional information, “Understanding how cultural differences can impact learning styles. Strategies on how to truly access students and not assume low skill set due to limited English.” Similarly, Participant 37 shared, “For students who are new to the educational setting as high school students-how to provide a quality educational experience for students who are new to the educational setting and speak little to no English.”

Summary of Results

The purpose of this qualitative, interpretive study was to examine the perceptions of Tennessee K-12 teachers related to preparedness and training to provide instruction and support to English language learners in the general education classroom. I used a qualitative, interpretative research process to analyze documents, questionnaire data, and to answer my two research questions for this study. The analysis led to open codes, axial codes, and themes derived from K-12 Tennessee teachers’ responses. Data represented the perceptions of K-12 general educators in Tennessee who provided instruction and support to English language learners. Through close analysis of 44 completed

questionnaires, I generated three themes for Research Question 1 and two themes for Research Question 2.

I answered Research Question 1 with three themes developed from data and document analysis. For theme one, I determined the college coursework for K-12 teachers in the general education classroom fell short of providing strategies, knowledge, and skills on instruction for ELL students. For theme two, K-12 teachers were not prepared through professional development that specifically focused on providing instruction and support for ELL students. Finally, the third theme for Research Question 1 explained K-12 teachers' preparedness could be improved with additional coursework and focused professional development. In addition, I completed a document analysis that led to two themes. My first theme was East Tennessee schools provided at least one course specifically focused on providing instruction to English language learners. My second theme highlighted Middle and West Tennessee educator preparation programs were not equipped to train and prepare general education teachers to provide instruction and support to English language learners.

Through data analysis, I generated two themes to answer Research Question 2. For theme one, I determined K-12 teachers utilized translators, modified instruction, and visuals to instruct and support English language learners. The second theme for Research Question 2 acknowledged the need for more professional development on strategies, knowledge, and skills to provided quality instruction to ELL students. In Chapter V, I provided discussion on the

study, including implications for practices, recommendations for further research, and conclusions of the study.

Chapter V: Discussion of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative, interpretive study was to examine the perceptions of Tennessee K-12 teachers related to preparedness and training to provide instruction and support to English language learners in the general education classroom. At the time of this study, a gap existed in the literature on teachers' preparedness and training to instruct ELL students. I hoped to expand the body of literature related to this topic by elevating the voices of K-12 teachers in Tennessee. Generalizations in this discussion were limited to Tennessee K-12 teachers because no other state was included in the questionnaire process; therefore, the evidence from this study must support the conclusion until future research either disproves or substantiates the findings.

Using Bandura's (1977) theory of self-efficacy, I sought to gain knowledge of K-12 teachers' perceptions of their preparedness and training to provide instruction and support to ELL students. As Brisk (2018) noted, mainstream teachers were more effective when they viewed ELL students as equal members of their class, deserving the same high expectations and support that all other students receive. Bandura's (1994) theory of self-efficacy when applied to education is defined as "a teacher's judgment of their capabilities to bring about desired outcomes of student engagement and learning, even among those students who may be difficult or unmotivated" (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001, p. 784). As the teaching profession moves forward, Alamillo et al. (2011)

recommended it was crucial to study how general education teachers received preparation and training to support ELL students in the classroom.

I collected data via snowball sampling using an online questionnaire via Google Forms from 44 participants who offered insights and opinions concerning their perception of preparedness and training to provide instruction and support to ELL students in the general education classroom. The findings of this study showed teachers needed more coursework and professional development to feel self-efficacious and successful in providing instruction and support to ELL students. In addition, the findings from the document analysis of the six educator preparation programs I investigated also corroborated participant perceptions. Brooks and Adams (2015) reported, ... it is sadly apparent that few teacher licensure programs require significant preparation for linguistically diverse students and professional development initiatives often ignore the needs of these students (p. 294-95). Eighteen participants (40.9%) reported that they received no coursework in their EPP program that would provide them with the strategies, knowledge or skills needed to provide instruction and support to English language learners. In addition, Middle and West Tennessee universities did not provide a course for future educators in their programs of study. Two East Tennessee schools provided a three-hour course which specifically focused on instruction for English language learners. One private East Tennessee school provided a course on method of instruction and support for ELL students in their K-5 EPP. Both private schools located in East Tennessee provided a course on teaching diverse

learners in the K-5 and 6-12 teacher licensure programs. Twenty-eight of the participants (65.1%) in the study reported teaching in East Tennessee.

Dabach and Callahan (2011) found ample evidence of disparities in both opportunity and achievement between ELLs and English-speaking students related to teachers' preparedness to meet their needs in the general education classroom. Teachers needed to successfully carry out differentiated instruction; however, for this to happen teachers required professional development support to hone their expertise with linguistically responsive teaching (Kim, 2020; Lucas et al., 2008; O'Hara et al., 2020). The results of this study aligned with the literature that overall teachers did not feel adequately trained or prepared to provide instruction and support to English language learners in the general education classroom.

Furthermore, the themes which emerged from Research Question 2 highlighted the need for more instructional strategies to instruct and support ELL students. Teachers grappled with how to best meet the increasing needs of ELL students as school populations diversified (Heineke et al., 2022). Twenty-nine participants (65.9%) reported the need for more training on instructional strategies, knowledge, and skills to provide quality instruction and support for ELL students in the general education classroom. These findings are a result of a Tier I misconception. Understanding K-12 teachers' perceptions about their self-efficacy through training and preparation had potential to increase student outcomes in the general education classroom. Teachers needed to successfully

carry out differentiated instruction; however, for this to happen teachers required professional development support to hone their expertise with linguistically responsive teaching (Kim, 2020; Lucas et al., 2008; O’Hara et al., 2020). This study provided findings which elevated the need for additional strategies, knowledge, and skills to increase teacher self-efficacy which leads to quality, Tier I instruction.

Implications for Practice

This study provided schools, districts, and the state of Tennessee a deeper understanding of the perceptions of K-12 teachers preparedness to instruction and support ELL students. At the time of this study, English language learners were the fastest growing population in the state of Tennessee (Sanchez, 2017). After analyzing my data, I highlighted five implications for practice for post-Secondary schools, state, district, and school leaders.

Post-Secondary schools, states, and districts should improve educator preparation program coursework and training for in-service teachers to increase achievement for English language learners. Improving training would increase the self-efficacy of teachers in all grade levels and contents. Colleges and universities should use this study to better develop coursework to specifically provide an understanding in the complex ways English language learners need instruction and support. As a result of this study, teachers (40.7%) reported at the completion of their EPP, no courses were offered to adequately prepare them to instruct and support ELL students. To increase teacher efficacy, colleges and universities

should increase the courses required to obtain a teaching license in the state of Tennessee. Fifteen participants (34.9%) reported they taught in middle or west Tennessee. The document analysis revealed that of the one state university in Middle Tennessee and one state university in West Tennessee provided no opportunity for future teachers to participate in a course which focus specifically on providing instruction and support to English language learners. Furthermore, teachers with 15 or more years' experience reported experience, not research based practices, gave them a higher self-efficacy in providing instruction and support to English language learners. In addition, teachers with 8-14 years of experience related their knowledge and skills to special education training and not specific best practices for ELL students.

Administrators and developers of education preparation programs should allow future teachers the opportunity to plan for and instruct English language learners in their content setting. As part of a curriculum reform effort in colleges and universities, professional development which truly aimed to support faculty in infusing their respective courses with ELL content demanded more than establishing a minimum requirement (de Jong et al., 2018). Potential teachers would benefit from direct, explicit instruction to various skills and strategies used in planning and the implementation of those strategies in a real classroom. As the population continues to rise across the state of Tennessee, the likeliness of future teachers having ELL students in their classroom is greater; therefore, colleges and

universities should utilize this research to prepare opportunities for teachers to develop a higher self-efficacy as they exit college and begin their teaching career.

School districts and school administrators should recognize the need for quality professional development in their districts and schools. Fourteen participants (31.8%) reported not being provided with professional development to increase their self-efficacy on providing instruction for ELL students in the general education classroom. State, district, and school officials should provide on-going professional development opportunities for teachers in all content areas and at all stages in their career to increase their self-efficacy to meet the needs of students with various language and cultural backgrounds. These opportunities would lead to better outcomes for all students through increased engagement, improved instruction, and increased achievement. Districts and schools should use these findings to create an opportunity for ELL specialists to provide training in the complexity of language acquisition and how to apply that to various subjects. In addition, this study revealed the need for professional development to make it applicable to the work of the content teacher; therefore, professional development should not be limited to a one and done approach. Districts and schools should provide multiple opportunities to learn and apply their learning to their students to increase self-efficacy for teachers and decrease the opportunity gap. These trainings need to be grounded in teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students and should encompass a variety of strategies, knowledge, and skills to address the whole student. For teachers to feel successful in this large

undertaking, teachers need high quality training that includes field hours which allows teachers to connect policy to practice.

When preparing and planning for future trainings, administrators and school district leaders should consider the lack of instructional strategies K-12 teachers in Tennessee are using to instruct and support their ELL students. Teachers utilized the strategies they felt were best for their students; however, the finding indicated most teachers are not using best practices to instruct and support English language learners. Teachers needed to be aware of the language of their subject area, the process of second language development, the role and interaction of the learner variables, and the complex ways in which they influenced the process of learning a second language and how to succeed in school (de Jong et al., 2013). Based on the results from this study, teachers were not applying all these variables when instructing and supporting ELL students. Participants reported they used strategies (i.e., translators, bilingual peers, visuals, overly modified tasks) which do not lead to best practices and support for ELL students to be successful in learning and interpreting the content delivered.

For teachers to feel adequately prepared to provided quality instruction and support to English language learners, school district leaders and administrators should provide resources to build the teachers' capacity. Investing in the Sheltered Instructional Operational Protocol (SIOP) or Linguistically Responsive Teaching would give teachers an opportunity to learn best practices. SIOP provides teachers with the strategies and knowledge needed to use the high-

quality instructional materials with ELL students. Echevarria et al. (2017) explained how SIOP provides guides for planning, implementation, and evaluation of effective mainstream instruction for ELL students. Teachers need to be equipped with the knowledge or some key principles of second language learning to confidently instruct ELL students (Lucas et al., 2008). In addition, school and district leaders should plan for supports in the implementation of these new strategies.

Again, these findings necessitated the need for improved and expanded coursework in educator preparation programs, on-going professional development, and more effective strategies to support ELLs. With the wide gap of knowledge from educators and the evidence of lack of training and use of best practices, timely, quality training is needed across the state of Tennessee, particularly in the Middle and West regions.

Recommendations for Further Research

In this study, my goal was to gain better insight to the perceptions of preparedness and training to provide instruction and support to English language learners. These recommendations for future researchers provided actionable steps to add to the research base and increase understanding on this topic. Although I collected information on teachers' perceptions of preparedness from coursework and training, I did not specifically ask for detailed titles of the coursework or training. Future researchers could expand on teachers' experience in education preparation programs with a particular focus on the course, including, but not

limited to, coursework and required reading, and textbooks used to lead the course. Educator preparation programs in Middle and West Tennessee should examine the courses and requirements for the courses offered in East Tennessee programs and research the effects on self-efficacy of the teachers who completed the courses focused explicitly on instruction and support for English language learners.

In addition, future researchers could expand on the trainings provided by districts and schools focused on specific training titles and who delivered the training. Determining courses and trainings provided and who delivered would allow for more specific details to what is potentially missing in coursework and training for teachers. Future researchers would benefit from a focused study on instructional practices and teachers understanding on the implementation of these instructional practices and how they increased achievement of English language learners.

This study used a questionnaire via snowball sampling; therefore, I was not able to ask for a more specific explanation of their instructional strategies, knowledge, or skills utilized in their classroom. Future researchers would benefit from in-person interviews or observations. By using in-person interviews, researchers could ask participants to elaborate on or explain responses to questions allowing for better analysis of findings of instructional strategies teachers utilized and if teachers felt those practices grew student understanding of the content. Observations would allow for researchers to collect data on the

implementation of instructional strategies in various classrooms at varying grade levels. Observations would help mitigate the discrepancies between the teachers' rating of their self-efficacy and their rationale. Conducting this study in all regions of the state, east, middle, and west Tennessee, would allow state leaders to identify trends and respond accordingly.

Moreover, future researchers could replicate the same study in schools, dividing participants into years' experience to corroborate on the findings in educator preparation programs and the impact of those courses in the real world. This study would allow a deeper dive into any potential disconnect from textbook to application in the general education classroom. Future researchers could add observations of classrooms to corroborate the findings on any potential disconnect from textbook to application in the general education classroom. Observers should use the Linguistically and Culturally Responsive Teacher (LCRCT) framework or one or more of the SIOP strategies to gauge the teachers' impact on instruction for ELL students.

Finally, future researchers could use purposeful sampling and focus on larger school districts across the state of Tennessee or expand it to the southeast region of the country. This study used snowball sampling; therefore, I was limited to how many participants responded in each region of the state. Expanding the study to larger districts or an entire region would provide federal policy makers more data to identify larger trends leading to more specific and informative next steps. In addition, expanding the document analysis to include more schools from

Middle and West Tennessee as well as more private institutions across the state. This would give a greater perception of the Post-Secondary schools in Tennessee in regards to courses offered in the Educator Preparation Programs specifically for providing instruction to English language learners.

Conclusions of the Study

Within the framework of Bandura's (1977) theory of self-efficacy, the purpose of this qualitative, interpretive study was to examine the perceptions of Tennessee K-12 teachers related to preparedness and training to provide instruction and support to English language learners in the general education classroom. I utilized purposeful sampling to identify participants in this study based on the following purposeful sampling criteria: the participant must be certified by the State of Tennessee who taught in a public Tennessee school, taught a core content subject area (i.e., math, science, social studies, and English language arts), and instruct or have previously instructed English language learners in his or her general education classroom.

Forty-four participants from all three regions in the state of Tennessee offered insights and opinions to their level of preparedness to provide instruction and support to English language learners in the general education classroom. The findings of this study were important because they added to the extant literature on the perception of preparedness to provide instruction and support to English language learners in the general education classroom. K-12 teachers were not provided quality coursework in educator preparation programs to provide

instruction to English language learners. Additionally, teachers were not provided with training which specifically focused on providing instruction and support to English language learners. Teacher preparedness to instruct and support students with best instructional practices fell short; therefore, lowering the self-efficacy of teachers and the quality of instruction to English language learners.

Educational leaders and policy makers must consider the perceptions of K-12 teachers to provide adequate coursework and training to instruct ELL students in all classrooms. Teachers should be given the opportunity to increase their skill and knowledge on providing instruction to all children that sit in the desks of their classrooms. Researchers found preparing and training teachers, both preservice and in-service, was a matter of social justice; therefore, teachers unprepared to address such diversity in their classrooms created a disservice to ELL students which led to larger gaps in ELL students' education (Cochran-Smith et al., 2016; Mills et al., 2020; Milner, 2012; Samson & Collins, 2012; Schall-Leckrone & Pavlak, 2014). In addition, researchers explained how this charge should not be limited to individual teacher's efforts only; rather, there should be concerted institutional support at local, state, and federal levels to enforce systematic structural changes to create an education truly responsive to cultural diversity (Harper & de Jong, 2009; Schall-Leckrone & Pavlak, 2014; Li, 2013; Samson & Collins, 2012)

Education is not a one size fits all approach; therefore, all teachers should be provided with quality courses, training, and strategies to utilize with students

who are learning a new language. With this growing population of students, these improvements will allow all students to be successful, close opportunity gaps, and create a culture of learning that embraces all learners.

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Appendix A
General Educator Questionnaire

Preparedness and Training to Instruct ELL Students

Please do not include information that could specifically identify students when answering any of the following questions. This will ensure students' privacy is not violated.

⋮

1. How many years, including this year, have you taught?  Multiple choice ▾




1-3 years ×

4-7 years ×

8-14 years ×

15 or more years ×

Add option or [add "Other"](#)

  | Required 

2. What region of Tennessee do you currently teach?

- East
- Middle
- West

3. Describe your typical day as you instruct and support English language learners.

Long answer text

⋮

4. How would you rate the quality of course work you completed as part of your educator preparation program as to how well it prepared you to instruct and support English language learners in your classroom. (*self-efficacy is defined as "a teacher's judgment of their capabilities to bring about desired outcomes of student engagement and learning, even among those students who may be difficult or unmotivated"*).

- Not applicable
- lowest quality (low self-efficacy)
- quality (some self-efficacy)
- highest quality (high self-efficacy)

5. What is the rationale for your rating on the quality of coursework you completed as part of your educator preparation program as to how well it prepared you to instruct and support English language learners in your classroom.

Long answer text

6. How would you rate the quality of professional development (PD) you attended as to how well it prepared you to instruct and support English language learners in your classroom. (*self-efficacy is defined as "a teacher's judgment of their capabilities to bring about desired outcomes of student engagement and learning, even among those students who may be difficult or unmotivated"*).

- not applicable
- lowest quality (self-efficacy)
- quality (some self-efficacy)
- highest quality (high self-efficacy)



7. What is the rationale for your rating on the quality of professional development you completed as to how well it prepared you to instruct and support English language learners in your classroom.



Paragraph

Long answer text



Required



8. Please describe your overall level of preparedness to provide instruction and support to English language learners in your classroom?

Short answer text

9. What strategies, knowledge, and skills do you use most to instruct and support ELLs?

Long answer text

10. What strategies, knowledge, or skills would help you feel more prepared to instruct and support ELLs?

Long answer text

11. To help with this research, please provide the names and contact information (email and/or phone number) for as many teachers as possible who you feel could contribute to this research and meet the established criteria:

- a) certified and licensed by the State of Tennessee
- b) teach a core content area (math, science, social studies, English language arts)
- c. instruct or previously instructed English language learners within your classroom

Please note: Recommendations do not have to work with you in the same school.

(Remember your identity will be kept strictly confidential by the researcher. Your answers and participation are voluntary in this study.)

Long answer text

Appendix B

Participation Request and Implied Consent Letter

Researcher: Rebecca Doxsee

EdD Candidate at Lincoln Memorial
University
Rebecca.doxsee@lmunet.edu

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Bethany Powers

Professor and Chairperson at Lincoln Memorial
University bethany.powers@lmunet.edu

Dear Educator,

Your participation is being requested for the research study entitled *K-12 General Educators' Perceptions of Preparedness and Training to Provide Instruction and Support to English Language Learners*. This study is in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Lincoln Memorial University, where I am currently enrolled. Your participation will be extremely valuable to me due to your knowledge and expertise in this subject area; therefore, I am kindly requesting your participation in my research study. Participation in this study is voluntary. Please read the information below and contact me via email or cell phone number listed above with any questions you may have before deciding to participate. If you consent to participate, please click the link provided in this email to begin the questionnaire.

You are eligible to participate in this study if you are a certified educator in the state of Tennessee and teach or previously taught English language learners in the general education classroom.

This study includes 10 questions to be completed via an online questionnaire and will require approximately 15-20 minutes of your time. You may refuse to answer any question or discontinue your involvement at any time without penalty. If at any time you discontinue the questionnaire, your results will be discarded. Your responses will be kept strictly confidential, and data will be stored in secure computer files and secure storage location in hard copy. Any report of this research that is made available to the public will not include your name or any other individual information by which you could be identified. Your decision to participate will not affect your current or future relationship with Lincoln Memorial University.

There are no known harms or discomforts associated with this study, as it involves minimal risk and is an effort to highlight your current success as an educator and the support you provide to individuals in your school. To prepare for this study, I am asking that you consider your role as an educator and share those experiences to the

best of your knowledge.

This research has been approved by the Lincoln Memorial University's Institutional Review Board. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you may contact the Institutional Review Board at irb@lmunet.edu. Additional contact information is available at www.lmunet.edu/administration/office-of-research-grants-and-sponsored-programs-orgso/institutional-review-board-irb

By moving forward and completing the questionnaire linked in the email, you are agreeing that you work as a certified educator in a Tennessee public school district, you are over the age of 18, and you give your implied consent to participate in this study.

Thank you for your consideration to participate in my study,

Rebecca Doxsee

Survey Link