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## ACCEPTANCE

This dissertation, **LANGUAGE TEACHER DEVELOPMENT: A STUDY OF ESOL PRESERVICE TEACHERS' IDENTITIES, EFFICACY AND CONCEPTIONS OF LITERACY** by, **ANNMARIE P. JACKSON**, was prepared under the direction of the candidate's Dissertation Advisory Committee. It is accepted by the committee members in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree, Doctor of Philosophy, in the College of Education, Georgia State University.

The Dissertation Advisory Committee and the student's Department Chairperson, as representatives of the faculty, certify that this dissertation has met all standards of excellence and scholarship as determined by the faculty.

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Annmarie P. Jackson

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LANGUAGE TEACHER DEVELOPMENT: A STUDY OF ESOL PRESERVICE  
TEACHERS' IDENTITIES, EFFICACY, AND CONCEPTIONS OF LITERACY

by

Annmarie P. Jackson

Under the Direction of Amy Seely Flint

ABSTRACT

This qualitative case study explores ways in which English as a Second Language (ESOL) preservice teachers' conceptions of literacy are initially developed and how these understandings impact their emerging identities as ESOL teachers. Diaz-Rico (2008) posits that teaching of English Learners (ELs) is one of the fastest-growing professions which increases the need to prepare preservice teachers to serve the growing immigrant population. Similar to other teacher education programs, pre service teachers in ESOL focused programs often experience tensions as they embark on student teaching. There appears to be limited research-studies of ESOL preservice teachers' perceptions of their preparation and efficacy in teaching literacy to ELs in the U.S. Trier (2006) underscores that preservice teachers' understanding of literacy will

be the most crucial aspect of their learning. The research questions informing this study are: (1) How are ESOL pre-service teachers' beliefs and understandings of literacy development in language teaching shaped and revised as a result of participation in an ESOL teacher certification program? and (2) How do ESOL preservice teachers' identities shift as they experience course work and practicum?

The theoretical lenses guiding this study are Vygotsky's (1986) sociocultural perspective, situated learning theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991), identity theory (Danielewicz, 2001), and Bandura's (1982) efficacy theory. Three preservice teachers in a master's level teacher certification program at a local university in the southeastern region of the U.S. participated in the study. Data sources include interviews, observations, reflections, and lesson plans. Constant comparison method (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) was used to analyze the data. Findings indicate that these pre-service teachers adopted a multifaceted view of literacy that included both critical and socio-cultural perspectives. The importance of meaning-making, family, and culture in literacy instruction was reinforced for these teachers. Additionally, preservice teachers continuously theorize as they navigate teacher education. They are not only concerned about knowing what to teach, but how to effectively teach students. A significant implication from the study is that teacher educators need to consider the individuality of preservice teachers and provide differentiated instruction within their teacher education programs.

**INDEX WORDS:** preservice teachers, teacher development, ESOL teachers, efficacy, culturally relevant pedagogy, literacy conceptions,



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TEACHERS' IDENTITIES, EFFICACY, AND CONCEPTIONS OF LITERACY

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Degree of

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in

Teaching and Learning

in

the Department of Middle Secondary instruction and Instructional Technology

in

the College of Education

Georgia State University

Atlanta, GA  
2015

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## **DEDICATION**

This page is dedicated to Dr. Patti Lynn O'Brien, my masters' thesis advisor, of Central Connecticut State University, who helped me believe I have a voice. Rest in Peace.

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Over the last six years pursuing my Ph.D. degree, I have accomplished a lot and have grown in many ways. Sometimes, there were tears and frustrations, but mostly will power. Time and time again when I felt ‘stuck’ with coming up with ideas and expressing my thoughts, it was only one way I could look- up. So it is with a thankful heart that I want to say, “Thank you, God” for being there and for never leaving my side through it all.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

My work assignment as a reading specialist with elementary school students requires that I push into classrooms to work with small groups of students. I travel from room to room supporting teachers for six periods throughout the school day. Typically, the classroom teachers require me to provide reading instruction for the lowest performing students. My job also includes assessing students to determine their reading levels and regrouping of students based on their progress. Many of these students were born in the U.S. to non-English speaking families. Most of the students are Latino or Asian new arrivals from non-English speaking countries. These students often experience academic challenges in vocabulary and language. These are the students that teachers usually say they do not know how to help in learning to read and write.

My instructional approach and lesson planning primarily used to focus on students learning to read and achieving grade level proficiency. As a result, I rarely incorporated writing in my instruction. However, based on new county and state mandates, the classroom teachers increasingly requested my help in reading and writing. Initially, I was unsure about how to integrate reading and writing and felt ill prepared to teach writing. Writing instruction requires a clear knowledge of the writing process and knowledge of the writing domains. Since, I had no formal college training on writing instruction, it created a lot of tension and conflict for me. A lack of knowledge and low self-efficacy on how to integrate reading and writing effectively, coupled with feeling incapable of impacting English Learners (ELs) academically, became the catalyst that motivated me to pursue the doctoral program with a concentration on English Learners. My goal was to gain a deeper understanding of working with ELs in literacy, not just in reading. Since then, the several courses I have taken including *Cultural Identity, Motivation in Learning and Behavior, Reading and Writing Connection for Second Language (L2) learners,*

*Intercultural Communication*, and *Approaches and Methods for English Learners* have helped me feel more confident with working with ELs. Additionally, the strategies that I have learned have empowered me and created a personal epistemological shift in what constitutes as literacy instruction. In essence, my teaching identity has been transformed. However, about the same time I was experiencing these conflicts and shifts, I learned that I was not the only one feeling this way. Preservice and in-service ESOL (English Speakers of Other Language) teachers alike at my school were experiencing tensions about their teaching abilities to work with varying groups and academic levels of English learners.

### **Background**

The discovery that other ESOL teachers experienced challenges and cognitive dissonance occurred while I was doing an interview as part of a course requirement for my *Reading and Writing Connection for Second Language (L2) Learners'* university course. My interest was on finding out how the preservice and in-service ESOL teachers felt about teaching ELs to read and write. Several issues surfaced from the conversations I had with my colleagues. The concerns bordered on issues of confidence, preparedness, and on apprehension about what and how to teach ELs to read and write, as well as on how ESOL teachers could best support the classroom teachers. Based on conversations I had with the ESOL preservice and in-service teachers, I discovered that a few of them taught either reading or writing, depending on what they felt more comfortable in teaching, or what the classroom teachers wanted them to help with. Some of the ESOL teachers wished they had the opportunity to teach writing, while others desired to support reading or vocabulary work. Others shared challenges they faced in assessing and providing individualized reading instructions for ELs, as well as in preparing students to pass high-stake state tests based on the new federal mandates of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS).

They also felt overwhelmed with having to administer grade level and district interim reading and language arts tests on a quarterly basis to ELs who spoke limited English, in some cases due to minimal school attendance or those who had just newly arrived in the country speaking limited English.

Interestingly, one ESOL preservice teacher I spoke with was apprehensive about her upcoming student teaching at the time. I recall she was concerned about student teaching and hoped she would do well teaching her students, based on their varied reading levels. As fate would have it, this preservice teacher happened to be placed in one of the fifth grade classrooms I served in. Unbeknownst to me, she would listen in and was intrigued by the ideas and strategies I used with the small group of ELs while working in the classroom of her first practicum placement. For the second practicum several weeks later, she worked with a new arrival student who was placed in third grade, but who was reading at a beginning Kindergarten level. Again, the preservice teacher welcomed the suggestions and ideas I used with this student to support her instruction. It seemed she did not feel equipped and fully prepared to work with the ESOL population of students.

Another issue that emerged from the informal interview with the preservice teacher and the ESOL teachers is related to their sense of agency in defining their roles in the school. They described how two of them were transferred to general education classroom positions comprising entirely of ELs instead of being in their desired roles of *push-in* or *pull-out* with small groups of students. These teachers have since left because they feared they were not equipped and trained to teach a whole class of students. In school years 2012 and 2013, two more ESOL teachers were transferred to classroom positions with mostly ELs. Needless to say, they were not happy about the move and felt apprehensive about their ability to effectively teach a whole class of students

with a range of reading and writing abilities. These experiences and tensions are not uncommon in the field. Roberts (1998) expresses that new language teachers in the field of language teaching often grapple with their lack of status and direction, which may result in frustration. That is, sometimes they are placed in positions that the teachers do not feel comfortable teaching. Consequently, Franson and Holliday (2009) posit that is important for teachers in training to learn how to develop awareness and understanding of issues concerning their roles and relationships in the classroom. Teachers in training should feel prepared to teach literacy to students from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, as well as feel confident about teaching students with varied learning styles, levels, and interests within small and whole group settings, before leaving their teacher education program. These issues described do impact a teacher's identity.

In this chapter, I outline the issue of teacher identity and state a case for studying teacher identity. First, I outline pertinent issues that frame the statement of the problem in current affairs. Next, I offer the theoretical lens that frame the study. Finally, I discuss the significance of this study and describe how it contributes to the larger education and research contexts. These issues in and of themselves do not stand alone, but make up part of the broader issues facing language teaching education.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Diaz-Rico (2008) posits that teaching English Learners (ELs) is one of the fastest-growing professions. With more children entering U.S. classrooms speaking languages other than English as a first language, there is a greater need to prepare preservice teachers to effectively serve this population. Teacher education programs around the country are heeding this call by designing programs that focus on preparing teachers for English as a Second

Language (ESOL) positions. Programs vary in length, intensity, and foci; yet, preservice teachers in ESOL programs experience similar tensions as those in other teacher education programs, particularly as they embark on student teaching.

There are several issues that preservice teachers may face on entering student teaching. One concern for beginning teachers is the increase of immigrant students that reflect a myriad of diverse cultures and linguistic backgrounds. Teachers are generally not prepared to teach English with new populations of EL learners. Second, ESOL teachers sometimes possess misconceptions of how to effectively teach ELs (Verplaetse & Migliacci, 2008). Third, the variance in ESOL teacher education preparation programs, as well as the gap between teacher education and the real classroom is another challenge that preservice teachers face (Tarone & Allwright, 2005). Fourth, the personal and collective tensions which preservice and novice teachers face when working with EL learners may attribute to attrition in the field of language teaching. Each issue is further discussed in the paragraphs that follow.

**Changes in student demographics.** There has been an increase in the flow of immigrants into the U.S. over the last several years. The 2011 U.S. Census Bureau reports that people who speak a language other than English at home increased over the years; from 23,060,040 in 1980, to 31,844,979 in 1990, to 46,951,595 in 2000, and 59,542,596 in 2010. This substantial increase in population of speakers of other languages has created a need for ESOL services (Diaz-Rico, 2008). Mirroring this increase in the overall population is an increase in the school setting as well. In 2003- 2004, there were approximately 5 million English Learners enrolled in schools. (Verplaetse & Migliacci, 2008). Between the years of 2005-2008, schools reported an increase of over 7 million ELs, and a doubled growth expected over the next 20 years (Verplaetse & Migliacci, 2008). As a result of the growth, teachers are faced with the challenge of how to

prepare all students which includes ELs who speak a language besides English (Diaz-Rico, 2008).

**Misconceptions when working with EL learners.** A common misconception held by many educators, including ESOL teachers, is that ESOL teachers need to learn the home languages of ELs in order to teach them effectively (Verplaetse & Migliacci, 2008). As a result of this thinking, the teacher's role as a language teacher is sometimes questioned, since they often do not speak the diverse languages represented in many classrooms. Therefore, while knowledge of students' languages is beneficial in supporting their language development, it is not the sole source of support or means of scaffold teachers can provide for language learning. Due to the doubts that are casted about ESOL teachers' inability to speak students' languages, teachers may second guess their own abilities to meet ELs' needs.

**Teacher education in ESOL.** Teacher education programs preparing teacher candidates to work with English learners are quite diverse. For instance, program entrance requirements, curricula, and practicum placements for ESOL teachers vary across the country and among universities (Thibeault, Kuhlman & Day, 2010). There are programs that require preservice teachers to complete anywhere from 30 to 45 credit hours as part of a post baccalaureate program leading to a master's degree and certification in K-12. Some programs require 9 credit hours for an ESOL endorsement. Other programs run for 15 months, from summer to summer, with students engaged in course work, practicum experiences at secondary and elementary levels and student teaching concurrently (Dahlman, 2006; Many, Dewberry, Taylor & Coady 2009). The difference in programs may result in diverse interpretations of how prepared ESOL teachers are (Thibeault, Kuhlman & Day, 2010).

Besides the variance in the duration of the programs, the curricula may also differ which can lead to dissimilar educational experiences. For example, some programs offer opportunities for preservice teachers to observe seasoned teachers (Day, 1990; Gebhard, Gaitan, & Oprandy, 1990), while others provide opportunities to collaborate (Hones, 2000; Kaufman, 2000). These varied experiences will shape ESOL preservice teachers' understanding of language teaching in different ways. As preservice teachers navigate the program, they are primarily focused on completing courses and on meeting the requirements for graduation. Therefore, not much thought is given to the process of their learning and what they are learning. Day (2012) discusses that the greater focus for preservice teachers is on learning the craft about teaching and limited attention is given to thinking and reflecting on their understandings.

Perhaps the issue that creates the most tension for first year ESOL teachers and preservice teachers is the gap they perceive between their learning in teacher education and the real classroom situation (Tarone & Allwright, 2005). Tarone and Allwright frame this notion as the "*academic fallacy*." Academic fallacy pertains to preservice teachers' perceptions about the gap between their learning in teacher education and the real classroom. This fallacy alludes to the notion that a wealth of content knowledge and learning of English rules as well as methods fully prepare teachers for the real world in teaching ELs in the classroom. However, Tarone and Allwright (2005) suggest that often the content appears irrelevant and decontextualized to novice teachers as they engage in actual language teaching in their classrooms. It is also the case that situations vary from context to context and there are disparities in student needs.

**Attrition.** The above mentioned issues can lead to an increase in teacher attrition within schools. Attrition pertains to dropout rate of teachers. Attrition of teachers in the field of language teaching is a concern (Farrell, 2012). Researchers (Farrell, 2012; Hong, 2010) ascribe attrition to

various factors. Preservice teachers are faced with potentially stressful situations as they “face the challenges of carrying out two important tasks at the same time: teaching and learning to teach” (Hudson, Nguyen & Hudson, 2008, p.3). Since teacher identity incorporates the whole self, these issues cannot be separated from understanding teacher identity. These issues can create inner challenges for teachers to the point of some questioning their decision to remain in the field of education and specifically in language teaching. Therefore, teachers’ sense of efficacy is also a contributing factor to attrition (Farrell, 2012). Moreover, Hong (2010) alludes to the point that teacher attrition and retention in language teaching are directly linked to teacher professional identity.

In sum, the issues that seem to plague preservice and in-service ESOL teachers traverse a wide area. The increase in cultural and linguistic student demographics has resulted in new instructional challenges for ESOL teachers. Language teachers’ misconceptions about their ability to teach ELs based on the variances in languages and concerns to teach English learners can result in inner conflicts and issues of confidence. The variance in program designs and curricula, as well as the gap between learning in teacher education and reality in the classroom are additional issues that can create a tenuous atmosphere for ESOL preservice teachers. Collectively, these issues can influence teachers’ conceptions about learning, weaken their confidence in the classroom, and may lead to attrition from teaching altogether.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of this study was to explore ways in which preservice ESOL teachers’ conceptions of literacy are initially developed and how these understandings impact their emerging identities as ESOL teachers. Keep in mind that although knowledge and component skills are essential, they are insufficient for adequate performance (Bandura, 1982). Low self-



efficacy can impact knowledge and practice, resulting in teachers avoiding the activities they think they are incapable of doing (Bandura, 1982). Therefore, the study also examines the ESOL preservice teachers' understandings of literacy and their sense of preparedness in teaching literacy to English learners. The following research questions frame the study:

1. How are ESOL pre-service teachers' beliefs and understandings of literacy development in language teaching shaped and revised as a result of participation in an ESOL teacher certification program?
2. How do ESOL preservice teachers' identities shift as they experience course work and practicum?

### **Theoretical Framework**

In order to understand how the ESOL preservice teachers' conceptual knowledge of literacy developed, it is necessary to highlight social and cultural aspects of the program in teacher education. Literacy and language learning are social practices (Street, 1984). Since the nature of the study was to explore preservice teachers' understandings of teaching, learning and literacy, I adopt Vygotsky's (1986) *socio-cultural* theory to help frame the teachers' identities from their perspectives. The teachers' development as literacy teachers was situated in the teacher education program through interaction with other teachers and through their new learning. Since their understandings were socially situated within this community, it was fitting to also explore *situated learning theory* (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Additionally, over the two semesters in the program, the preservice teachers' interpretation of their position and their transformation helped shape their identities, thus the need for literature on *identity*. Finally, since I also wanted to explore the preservice teachers' sense of preparedness in literacy, I discuss

*efficacy theory* (Bandura, 1982). Collectively, these theories strengthened and guided the rationale and framework behind this study.

### **Socio-cultural Theory**

Vygotsky's (1986) sociocultural theory frames my understanding of how conception or learning unfolds. This theory presupposes that learning occurs in cultural and social arenas and includes sharing of knowledge. Thus, the social aspect views learning through interaction with others and not solely from the individual's own mental processes (Vygotsky, 1986).

Additionally, in order to negotiate the cultural realm and for meaning to ensue, language is necessary. Thus, there is a social nature to learning and language operates as a cultural tool to mediate learning and build understanding. These two constructs are developed more thoroughly below.

In explaining the idea of how learning occurs, Vygotsky (1962) highlights the importance of process of learning over the end product. That is, Vygotsky purports that it is vital to explore how concepts are formed or the means through which they are attained and not only to focus on the outcome of learning. The nature of engagements shapes the kind of learning that ensues. Moreover, the social interaction that occur during the learning process shapes the nature of learning. However, in order for learning to take place mediation is necessary and important in the process. Furthermore, cultural tools are critical for mediation or activation to occur during learning. Language is just one of the tools or contextual elements that mediates understanding between individuals and helps them in organizing their behaviors (Vygotsky, 1962). Therefore, language is critical in shaping meaning between individuals. Furthermore, learning is mediated primarily through the use of written or spoken language.

However, sociocultural lens extends beyond language as a cultural tool in the mediation of learning to also include other contextual elements. Cross (2010) in his discussion of the concept of mediation states that the act of teaching and thoughts and practice involved are intermediated by other contexts such as community, rules, and roles. These elements also operate as cultural tools within the social environment and help to shape identity. For example, the activities and discourse in a teacher education program operate as cultural tools to empower preservice teachers and build their confidence as developing teachers (Gee, 2012). The sharing of previous experiences such as learning a second language and interaction with English Learners, epistemologies, and growth of teachers can also shed light on the development of preservice teachers' identities (Clarke, 2008). These contexts and resources frame understanding of the social nature of learning and of teachers' identities (Anderson & Stillman, 2012).

To capture the shifts and changes in preservice teachers' conceptual knowledge and emerging identities, it is necessary to study the preservice teachers' understanding at the end of the program (end product), but also as they negotiated the program (the process). By so doing, I gained a clearer understanding of their thinking processes, perceptions, and any misconceptions they had that might have influenced their learning while navigating the teacher certification program. In the next section, I discuss *situated learning* as a social theory that complements Vygotsky's (1986) sociocultural theory and the social nature of learning.

### **Situated Learning**

*Situated learning* is a social theory of learning. Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998) identify *situated learning* as a social theory that is appropriate for understanding identity. Situated learning focuses on "the relationship between learning and the social situations in

which it occurs” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p.4). Through active participation, learners engage in constructive and meaningful learning. Participation does not only involve engagement in activities (the doing) but also the “process of *being* active participants” while shaping identities within the community (Wenger, 1998, p.4). Similar to Vygotsky (1986), Lave and Wenger (1991) also emphasize the importance of process in learning. Moreover, Lave and Wenger identify two constructs of situated learning as *practice shaping identity* and the other as *identity shaping practice*. As participants actively engage with others including experts, they become productive. This engagement with others and in the program helps to shape teachers’ identities, thus *practice shaping identity*. Therefore, it is in the process of engagement that identities are constructed and reconstructed. In turn, as teachers’ identities are been constructed and reconstructed, the teachers’ practice improves and is better informed, resulting in *identity shaping practice*. That is, as teachers’ confidence grow and they can become more aware of their learning and teaching. In turn, this confidence can transfer to their practice within the classroom. In light of the inter-connection between practice and identity, there is a constitutive relationship between each, where change on one affects the other (Kanno & Stuart, 2011). Thus, the process of identity formation seems cyclical in nature, not static, but is ever evolving in new situations for learning.

As learners engage in co-participation, it is more important to emphasize the kinds of social engagement and their impact on distinct types of learning versus the cognitive processes of learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Therefore, as ESOL preservice teachers negotiate the teacher education/certification program, they actively engage in not only classes on theories of learning and language, but practice particularly in their practicum experiences. Mentor teachers oversee preservice teachers while in their practicum, where the preservice teachers spend much

of their time observing their mentor teachers as well as interacting with them and students. Wenger (1998) refers to this social engagement in learning as being in a *community of practice*. A community of practice focuses on the interactions between people in specific environments for common goals. The situated nature of the experience and the shaping of new lives through activities and discourse create agency for individuals. Through the various semesters including theory classes, the two practicum experiences in different K-12 contexts, as well as during student teaching, the participants had better opportunities to hone their understanding of literacy and instruction with ELs. As a result, the preservice teachers' individual knowledge was shaped through the knowledge of the (teacher education) community (Johnson, 2006). In essence, the new understandings transformed who they became as teachers. Thus, their learning and new learning constructed their identities (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Therefore, situated learning can illuminate the link between learning and identity.

Clarke (2008) also highlights the notion of '*belonging*' as being part of preservice teacher development and identity. The act of teachers choosing teaching as a profession is indicative of their wanting to belong in this community of practice. Decisions to choose teaching and specifically language teaching creates a sense of "belonging" for preservice teachers (Clarke, 2008). Clarke found that teachers' reasons for choosing teaching ranged from previous family members who were teachers, the casting of females as appropriate for teaching, and experiences of their past teachers. Specific reasons for becoming English language teachers were also linked to the perceived prestige linked to English as a global language.

A close examination of *situated learning* theory is necessary, since it is a good balance in framing theoretical insight for this study. Moreover, situated learning theory complements Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of learning to further shed light on the social domain of

learning in teacher education as both are social theories of learning. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory does add to interpretations of social and cultural meanings, as well as understanding of how people's minds develop through interactions within society (McCarthy & Moje, 2002). However, Vygotsky's sociocultural theory does not fully expound on the relatedness between different kinds of social engagement and their impact, such as *practice shaping identity* and *identity shaping practice*, as situated learning theory does. Therefore, the coalescence of sociocultural theory and situated learning further strengthened interpretations about preservice teachers' perceptions and the development of teacher identities.

The importance of situated learning theory in this study further strengthens understanding about other complexities of learning, including context, which may influence learning. Context is not only about physical space, but also about other factors that shape people's lives. Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) refer to the critical role that context has in shaping teachers' identity. They highlight elements such as school environment, nature of learner population, professional relationships including mentors, as well as teachers' own learning experiences as shaping teachers' identities. There are also contrast in teacher education programs which result in variance in curricula, and different interpretations of teachers' sense of preparedness and effectiveness (Thibeault, Kuhlman & Day, 2010). These factors are often centered in the context in which people are situated and may affect their ways of thinking, attitudes, perceptions, and overall wellbeing.

For instance, Cross (2010) suggests that the dissonance that teachers experience in their beliefs and practice is a contextual factor, which shapes their learning. Cross further reiterates that this dissonance has resulted in a shift in methodological studies on teacher thinking and practice, from treating each construct separately, to focusing on both thought and behavior in

tandem. Studies on teacher identity are increasingly marrying teachers' thoughts and practice through methods such as interviews and observations. The result of the merger is more power and agency (Cross, 2010) for language teachers and teaching. Additionally, Lave and Wenger (1991) suggest that situated learning theory is an ideal framework for studying novice teachers' identities in second language teaching. Therefore, since this study is about identity and English Speakers of Other Languages preservice teachers who are new to teaching, it was relevant to include situated learning theory. Below, I explore the topic of identity and its significance for this study.

### **Teacher Identity**

There are various definitions for identity (Danielewicz, 2001; Milner IV, 2010). Identity is based on perceptions about individuals and how others perceive them (Danielewicz, 2001). Identity may be based on individuals' worldview, self-knowledge, and experiences and may be shaped by social context (Milner IV, 2010). Identity is ever changing, evolving, and emerging (Danielewicz, 2001; Milner IV, 2010; Wenger, 1998). Teacher identity includes the perceptions teachers have about themselves as teachers. Teacher identity is not only about how teachers feel about their development, but also how teachers feel others perceive them.

Teachers are continuously developing their teaching identities as they decide what kind of teacher they want to become and how they want to be perceived (Clarke, 2008; Danielewicz, 2001; Milner IV, 2010). Danielewicz (2001) developed the concept of '*becoming*', "the process of how a person becomes someone, particularly of how students become teachers" (p.1). *Becoming* also constitutes how a teacher perceives his or her position as a teacher. That is, it includes how an individual first defines him or herself as a teacher. Through the process of defining himself, the preservice teacher engages in "*identity development*." Consequently,

becoming a teacher involves construction of a person's identity, a process which is never "fully or finally achieved" (p.35).

While identity involves development of self, it also is shaped in social engagements (Vygotsky, 1986; Wenger, 1998,). Wenger (1998) emphasizes that the issue of identity is critical to understanding the social theory of learning and is interconnected to constructs such as practice, community, and meaning. For Wenger (1998) and Lave and Wenger (1991), identity is not only negotiated with self, but also in social engagements, thus the need to focus on both simultaneously. People gain a conscious understanding of their new selves or identities like actors by being mediated in a specific forum. Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner and Cain (1998) describe this emerging identity construct as *figured worlds*. *Figured worlds* are socially and culturally produced traditions that help people to form identities through participation. The social organizations within which identities as figured worlds are being constructed define positions or roles through day-to-day activities over time and shape identities through continuous participation and interaction. That is, figured worlds are manifested in the activities and practices people engage in, which ultimately helps them to "direct their own behavior in these worlds" (p.60).

Holland et al. (1998) suggest that figured worlds "provide the contexts of meaning and action in which social positions and social relationships are named and conducted" (p.60). The identities that are shaped affect how a person acts within these figured worlds. New interpretations are born through associations in the figured worlds. As people's identities are formed through specific activities unique to these worlds, people will start enacting behaviors that are particular to these worlds. In essence, figured worlds provide a channel for agency. Therefore, as the preservice teachers navigated through the two semesters of the study, they



adopted different positions about their learning, which reshaped their identities. Their beliefs and perceptions about language teaching were transformed and retransformed since most were new to education. Wenger (1998) states that all new learning shapes identity. Their new learning reshaped their identities and understandings about who they were becoming as teachers. Their positions and views of themselves were constantly being changed.

**Is it About Role or Identity?** There has been an influx of studies on the importance of teacher identity on teacher development (Britzman, 1994; Freese, 2006; Olsen, 2008; Sexton, 2008). Britzman's and Sexton's studies specifically highlight the importance of understanding the difference between role and identity in teacher development. Each study has a few similarities with the other. For one, both Britzman and Sexton feel that roles are assigned to individuals. Role is "what one is supposed to do" and is assigned to individuals (Britzman, 1994, p.59). Both feel that the construct of role and identity are not synonymous. However, Britzman feels that role is externally and publicly administered, while identity is negotiable and internal. Identity requires a personal commitment. Therefore, identity is self-discovery about knowledge and about who you are as a teacher. I will also add identity includes who one wants to become. Identity formation is about knowing yourself and what you stand for. It is something one has to commit to and adopt. These constructs are critical to teacher development.

On the other hand, Sexton (2008) describes teacher role as a formalized understanding of what it means to be a teacher. Identity is shaped more through the resources teachers utilize as they negotiate the formalized understanding of what they are (Sexton, 2008). Identity development pertains to how the individual is positioned or how he positions himself, by the resources he utilizes, and through experiences that shape his professional identity. Sexton's findings show that it was the active engagement and use of resources coupled with participants'

initial goals and their experiences in the program that shaped their professional identity. This suggests that teacher identities may be manifested in different ways, hold diverse meanings for individuals, and vary through stages of their learning. Further, a consonance between role and identity occur when teachers' personal goals match the program's expectations. On the other hand, when teachers' personal goals do not gel with the program's agenda, it results in dissonance. Therefore, teachers play a critical role in their professional identity development.

McCarthy and Moje (2002) in their discussion on why identity matters infer that the issue of identity is essential in discussions of literacy. Since "it seems that selfhood and identity are linked, and because mind and consciousness (as socially constructed) have something to do with learning and using literacy, we can argue that identity and literacy are linked in important ways" (McCarthy & Moje, 2002 p. 228). Therefore, there cannot be separation between preservice teachers' views of literacy, their early literacy experiences, and instructional beliefs, since perceptions help frame conceptions of literacy. Moreover, a critical examination of identity can afford teachers' voice and shape their sense of agency. The implications of having a strong sense of teaching will help hone and affirm teachers' identities.

### **Efficacy Theory**

Readiness to teach is one of the issues preservice teachers grapple with in their teacher education program (Wong, Fehr, Agnello & Crooks, 2012). They also reflect upon their efficacy of teaching (Wong, Fehr, Agnello & Crooks, 2012). Self-efficacy theory is associated with Bandura (1982). Efficacy pertains to the feeling of one's ability to successfully engage in a task. It includes one's belief about their capability to do something (Ruddell & Unrau, 2004). That is, it is the degree of confidence that an individual espouse in carrying out the skills or steps in an

activity. As such, if an individual feels they are capable of performing a task and doing it well, then he is more likely to have a high self-efficacy (Bandura, 1982). The reverse is also true.

Self-efficacy can also afford certain levels of confidence to perform roles that a person would never have thought they previously could have. Consequently, the more confidence level rises, then the stronger an individual's self-efficacy becomes. Teacher efficacy pertains to teachers' perceptions about how well they are able to carry out their roles as teachers. Teacher efficacy also pertains to their self-esteem in teaching. Thus, teachers with "low self-esteem are less likely to rise to teaching challenges" (Ruddell & Unrau, 2004, p.962). The degree of teacher efficacy impacts how teachers perform and ultimately shape students' motivation and achievement (Duffin, French & Patrick, 2012). Therefore, examining preservice teacher's efficacy and how it shapes their identity would project a more comprehensive picture of their growth.

It is necessary to also determine how the preservice ESOL teachers feel about literacy instruction for ELs. "Understanding teacher candidates' perceptions of their readiness to teach ELLs can provide a window into their thinking and perhaps, by association, their actual readiness" (Wong, Fehr, Agnello & Crooks, 2012, p. 5). Therefore, self-efficacy theory is instrumental in understanding preservice teachers' perceptions of their readiness. Self-efficacy theory complements critical theory, situated learning theory, identity theory, and the sociocultural perspective. Efficacy mostly focuses on roles and how well one is able to perform in that role. Identity development includes more than role and cognitive ability. Issues of thinking, complexities in learning, context, history and language are important constructs for identity development. Self-efficacy focuses on the individual and internal sense of self. Issue of relationship, which sociocultural theories and situated learning promote are not central in

efficacy theory. Therefore, collectively all the theories strengthened the study on identity and teacher development.

### **Definitions of Key Terms**

*Discourse*: not just spoken but written language; may include ways of thinking, dressing, acting  
(Gee, 2012)

*EFL*: English foreign Language. students who are studying English in a country  
where English is not the primary language (Verplaetse & Migliacci, 2008).

*ELL*: English Language Learner (this term will be used only if cited in a study)

*ELs*: English Learners.

*ESL*: English Second Language

*ESOL*: English Speaker of Other Language. Students with  
another primary language who are learning English.

*Identity*: “a way of talking about how learning changes who we are and creates personal histories  
of becoming in the context of our communities” (Wenger, 1998, p. 5)

*Language learning*: students learning a second language whose native language or  
language spoken at home is not the target language.

*Language teachers*: Native (language users whose primary language is English) or non-native  
(English is not their primary language) teachers

*Language teaching*: refers to teaching a second language such as English to students  
learning English as a second language.

*Literacy development*: instances of what is reading, writing, the reading-writing connection,  
online and media literacy activities.

*Literacy events*: “the observable activities taking place in a particular setting” (Flint, Maloch, &

Leland, 2010, p. 15). Usually activities involve texts, written or spoken such as guided reading writing documents, and literature discussions.

*Literacy practice*: “involves one cultural, social, political, and historical ways of interacting and making sense of the world” (Flint, Maloch, & Leland, 2010, p. 15). Typically, literacy practices are framed from people’s ideologies about literacy development (Flint et al. 2010)

*Mediation*: Within the sociocultural theory (SCT) realm, “mediation refers to the ideas that humans rely upon tools and other social and cultural artifacts to regulate the world around them” (Cross, 2010, p. 440).

*Program mediation*: Literacy and language discourse and activities at the program and practicum sites.

*Second language learners (L2)*: Students who are learning another language besides their primary language including English Learners (ELs).

*Self-Efficacy*: Participants’ perceptions and level of preparedness.

### **Significance of the Study**

The significance of this qualitative study is in response to Farrell’s (2012) call to further explore issues that impact second language teacher retention and attrition. The study also helps to inform teacher educators’ understandings of the elements that shape development of teacher efficacy (Faze & Vale, 2012). Cross (2010) in his discussion of a conceptual framework for research in language teacher cognition or thinking suggests that any framework for language teaching on cognition or teachers’ understanding should “accommodate the tensions and contradictions that arise within cognition” (p. 438). He points out that although there is empirical evidence about the dissonance between teacher thinking and practice, the issue of *why*

the tensions have evolved and *how* they can be addressed is necessary. Preservice teachers are often faced with tensions about their positions as teachers and students. They struggle with perceptions about issues of role and identity in their internship (Britzman, 1994). Feelings of efficacy and perceptions about preparedness also make up preservice teachers' cognition and thinking. Interviews, reflective writing, observations and documents are qualitative methods that can help glean teachers' thinking (Cross, 2010). Therefore, a study exploring ESOL preservice teachers' understandings helps to highlight some of the apprehensions they may face about literacy teaching before engaging in student teaching and help bring critical awareness to the importance of acknowledging these issues before assuming full teaching responsibilities.

### **Summary**

This introductory chapter covered some of the contextual factors framing teacher identities. Theories on situated learning and identity theory can help to shape understanding of teacher identity development as it is situated in teacher education. As I explored the preservice teachers' understandings of literacy, I hoped to gather how the various contextual factors including coursework and practicum would shaping the preservice teachers' identities. Teacher efficacy is critical to teachers' perception of their preparedness. Teachers who have high self-efficacy will do better than those who do not. Therefore, efficacy theory is critical to understanding the preservice teachers' identity development throughout the two semesters. Through interviews, observations and the preservice teachers' reflections, I hoped to gain a sense of how prepared they felt to teach literacy. Collectively, these theories framed understanding of preservice teachers' identities and perceptions of their self-efficacy. Chapter two covers literature on issues that are critical to language teacher development and teacher identity and their understanding of literacy.

## CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

“Teachers, too, need to see in more than just one color, in other words to discern the complex shades of teaching and learning. When teachers start to “see” in more nuanced ways, they start to differentiate their learning from their students’ learning. Once they see this distinction they become more sensitive to the fact that good teaching is a response to students’ learning rather than the cause of students’ learning, becoming more curious about and aware of learning as they do so” (Rodgers, 2002, p.250).

Rodgers’ quote captures the importance of reflective inquiry of teachers’ practice in teacher education. Reflective practice here places the microscope on student learning and not solely on teaching. That is, inquiry on teachers’ thinking is critical in creating a sense of awareness about their understanding about teaching as it relates to student learning.

The primary purpose of this study is to explore ESOL preservice teachers’ understanding of literacy and to these understandings impact their identities as teachers. Teachers’ perceptions include thinking about their learning and not just their knowledge of content. Borg (2006) contends it is important to understand teachers’ thinking and knowledge, and how these elements inform teachers’ practice. Specific attention was also given to how the preservice teachers’ reason about their preparedness and sense of efficacy in teaching literacy to ELs as they transitioned into student teaching. The study is also aligned with the current work in language teacher research, which primarily centers on teachers’ knowledge of language teaching and practice (Cross, 2010) and includes more research interest on language teacher thinking or cognition.

The literature review is sectioned into three areas beginning with the evolving nature of language teachers' identities including the role of beliefs and teacher education, the importance of reflection in forming identity, and the impact of efficacy on identity development. Important in this discussion is the literature on reflection because it is often a tool used in teacher education programs. The research literature on efficacy sheds light on how the preservice teachers' described their sense of preparedness to teach literacy. Second, the nature of language teaching, including discussions on language teaching as social practice and a brief discussion of the history of language teaching leading up to the communicative approach of language teaching is offered because of the context and participants in my study. Literature on what literacy is considered to be in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Perspectives on literacy include autonomous and ideological models of literacy, and critical literacy. Finally, a review of literature, which focuses on preservice teacher mentoring and cultural relevant pedagogy, was included based on the findings in the study. I culminated the chapter discussing the gap I found in the research on ESOL preservice teachers and their understanding of literacy.

### **Language Teachers' Sense of Identity**

Language teacher identity research is increasingly growing in language teacher education (Clarke, 2008; Varghese, Morgan, Johnston, & Johnson, 2005). Using identity as one of the lens to explore teacher development is not a novel idea and has been of interest to many researchers (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Lee, 2012; Varghese et al., 2005). Identity development in teacher development looks at not only teachers' knowledge about subject matter, but sheds light on teachers' thinking about their learning, on what they think they know, what they need to know, and on how their understanding of their learning is been developed (Borg, 2003).



In an effort to understand language teachers' identities, a comprehensive view of their whole experiences is necessary (Roberts, 1998). Varghese et al. (2005) emphasize that a full understanding of language teacher identity requires looking at "the professional, cultural, political, and individual identities which they claim or which are assigned to them" (p.22). Although these features of identities appear as independent and unrelated entities in identity formation, they interconnect and shape understanding of preservice teachers' identities. Moreover, researchers (Varghese et al.) concede that not only knowledge about content and pedagogy but also teachers' thinking helps to shape teachers' professional identities.

More and more researchers are studying teachers' beliefs and issue of efficacy and their importance in understanding language teachers' identities. The role of reflection is also an important tool in illuminating language teachers' identity (Farrell, 2011). Clarke (2008) suggests that language teacher identity formation is related to the discourse and the communities that teachers work in. Therefore, since teacher education is one of the main communities where teacher development takes places, it is safe to say teacher identity is supported through teacher education. In this chapter, I examine literature on the role of beliefs about language learning, the role of teacher education, the role of reflection and teachers' sense of efficacy in shaping teacher identity.

### **Beliefs and Understandings about Language Learning and EL students**

Preservice teachers possess initial beliefs before entering teacher education (Clarke, 2008; Fleming, Bangor, & Fells, 2011)). These beliefs are often deep rooted and shaped by preservice teachers' previous experiences and perceptions about teaching and learning (Clarke, 2008). Often preservice teachers grapple with beliefs creating tensions between their own

theoretical understandings and pedagogical practices. Their beliefs may also influence understandings of teaching and learning (Fleming et al., 2011).

Scholars have identified various beliefs and perceptions preservice teachers may hold about ELs (Pappamihiel, 2007; Verplaetse & Migliacci, 2007; Valenzuela, 1999). For one, these beliefs may be shaped by negative perceptions about how ELs learn. These beliefs may be considered as myths (Verplaetse & Migliacci, 2007) or a deficit way of thinking about ELs' language development. Pappamihiel (2007) cites the deficit-model thinking as an attitude that some preservice teachers have towards ELs. That is, some preservice teachers' believe that if ELs wanted to learn English quickly they would (Pappamihiel, 2007). Secondly, there is also the conception that preservice teachers' beliefs include ideas that learning and cultural adaptation is a family responsibility. Since these beliefs may create tensions, thereby impacting preservice teachers' instruction and knowledge, it is pertinent to examine the beliefs (Pappamihiel, 2007). If not addressed, teachers may become subtractive instead of additive in their approach towards working with learners due to their negative perceptions (Valenzuela, 1999). Therefore, it is safe to infer that beliefs can shape attitudes, expectations, and curricular decisions for ELs.

Preservice teachers who enter teacher education have varied beliefs about language teaching and literacy, since they come from different experiences and backgrounds. These prior beliefs do impact their perceptions and learning in teacher education. Hedgcock (2002) recommends allowing language teachers to examine these existing beliefs "about language, learning processes and teaching practices" in an effort to orient them to teaching as they navigate the teacher education program (Hedgcock, 2002, p.302). Studies on language preservice teachers' show that often their previously-held beliefs shift due to new learning within language teaching programs (Clarke, 2008; Fleming et al. 2011). As preservice teachers engage in

coursework and practicum in teacher education and begin applying their new understandings based on their new learning, their previous beliefs may change. Thus, teacher education can influence teachers' beliefs and impact their identity.

### **Role of Teacher Education in Shaping Language Teachers' Identity**

Studies on preservice teacher education can shed light on the variety and complexity of practice, as well as on the reality of active participation, prior knowledge, and experience that preservice teachers bring to teacher education (Anderson & Stillman, 2012). The types of resources that preservice teachers engage in while in a teacher education program, also impact their learning and ultimately inform their teaching identities. Ruohotie-Lyhty (2013) identifies the importance of teacher education in shaping preservice teachers' identities. For instance, in Clarke's (2008) study of student teachers in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in the Middle East, he analyzed the first cohort of student teachers' beliefs. He found that the beliefs the teachers held were dichotomous and shaped by their previous experiences. At the start of the study, participant Manal, who was a language preservice teacher, held traditional views on reading involving predominantly printed material. However, by the end of the program, Manal's beliefs of reading shifted as he began incorporating different modes of student interactions, more contextual props, classroom discourse of stories, role playing, as well as more folk-tales in free-time reading. Additionally, Manal's perspective of reading grew to include planned activities based on students' needs, a concept he learned while being in the program. Clearly, his initial beliefs at the start of the program were different and were informed by his previous experiences. However, the resources of the teacher education program reshaped his beliefs to include contemporary, meaningful strategies and teaching practices and beliefs about reading.

In another study conducted by Fleming et al. (2011), the researchers investigated the beliefs that language preservice teachers brought to a professional program as well as explored how they grappled with their beliefs during training. In their qualitative case study of fifteen ESL preservice teachers, they found that all of the participants held previous knowledge of a second-language or multiple language learning experiences. They also held various beliefs about teaching roles before entering the program. The participants entered the program with pre-existing beliefs of how ELs learned. Much of the beliefs surrounded their lives before entering the program, and were shaped from experiences working with ELs, from tutoring and from experiences with their own K-12 teachers. The findings showed that the preservice teachers accepted that their initial classroom placements after completing the program would probably not be as ESL specialists, although it was their first desires. Additionally, the ESL preservice teachers' initial practicum experience in elementary and secondary classrooms with ESL students was led by mentor teachers who lacked second language training. These beliefs and nuances created tension and conflicts for the preservice teachers. However by the end of the program, the multiple cultural tools within the program were very instrumental in reshaping the preservice teachers' conceptions of language. The teacher education program incorporated use of blogging between peers about issues or any topic of interest within the program, as well as use of lectures to augment textbooks. Increasingly, through reflective practice, the preservice teachers' understanding shifted to seeing language as a social practice. For instance, one participant learned about the importance and benefits of grouping English learners in language acquisition, through blogging with other preservice teachers. Another participant attributed change in her conception to the lectures in the program. Previously, this participant thought that by solely immersing ELs with other native language speakers was the best way to learn the target

language. However, by the end of the program she learned that ELs' first language is a resource in their language acquisition.

Clearly, through interaction and discussions with other peers as well as debates, the participants were able to re-exam some of their initial beliefs of their previous experiences. These analyses helped shape their new-formed beliefs which ultimately informed new conceptions about language. These participants also showed that they were conflicted about what they considered were appropriate strategies and approach for teaching English learners based on their learning in the program. It seems that the opportunities to brainstorm, clarify, and confirm their learning about language learning through blogging sharpened and strengthened their learning and understanding of language learning and teaching.

Language teacher preparation in teacher education is complex. Preparation programs vary and may have diverse approaches and opportunities for training preservice teachers. As previously discussed, the variance in preparation may create different sense of preparedness (Thibeault, Kuhlman & Day, 2010). That is, some preservice teachers may leave the program with a more comprehensive view of how ELs learn. Depending on the models of the program, preservice teachers may complete the program having different understanding of how to teach ELs. For instance, collaboration and observations are just a few of the critical and innovative strategies some programs use in shaping preservice teachers' thinking on language teaching and learning. Specifically, collaboration and ongoing professional development among preservice teachers and with experienced teachers can help in development of teachers' thinking.

There are numerous benefits of collaboration for language preservice teachers (Hones, 2000; Kaufman, 2000). First, preservice teachers and in-service teachers' interactions can help validate and support language preservice teachers who often feel marginalized socially and

physically within their schools (Hones, 2000). Second, language preservice teachers also receive real classroom experience and greater opportunities for learning through engagement with other preservice teachers at various levels and through interactions with practicing teachers (Kaufman, 2000). Third, Kaufman (2000) suggests that collaboration between preservice teachers and other professionals can aid in reformulating “prior educational beliefs and practices” (p.52).

In Hones’ (2000) study, their vision of collaboration at the university included having in-service teachers visit preservice teachers at the university in their ESL/bilingual education teacher preparation program and engage in discussions about their work as well as other instructional and curricular goals. The preservice teachers participated in classes where reading, writing and other university course requirements were combined with second language acquisition theory class, L2 method course, and multicultural courses specific to the Hmong and Latino populations. Most interestingly, the preservice teachers met with mentor teachers from the community, who were recruited to share their community and cultural involvement with the preservice teachers.

In Kaufman’s (2000) study, the language preservice teachers and content area teachers met to have cross-disciplinary planning, a different program model that was unique to many other L2 teacher education program. The purpose of the program was to develop awareness about cross-cultural issues in and out of schools. Collectively, the studies show that, collaborative effort with preservice and in-service teachers build bridges which can afford the preservice teachers “opportunities to connect their university course work to practical field experience” (Hones, 2000, p. 13). The collaboration between preservice teachers and other professionals reinforces the point that learning is not just about the individual as a learner, but rather learning involves networking with others, exchanging ideas and resources, and building a

sense of community as a result of these alliances (Wenger, 1998). The collaborative efforts and mentorship between the preservice and in-service teachers also shaped the preservice teachers' professional understanding about reality in the classroom and community as well as helped bridge the gap between theory and practice.

Taken together, the findings of both Hones and Kaufman's studies show that language teacher preparation experiences may vary, thereby resulting in different learning experiences. That is, although both had collaborative experiences, the methods for achieving the goals were different. Programs may have contrasting resources that can shape preservice teachers' learning and conceptions in diverse ways. These findings confirm Lave and Wenger's (1991) view that the situated nature of learning with social and cultural resources, do mediate learning.

Ultimately, teachers' identities will be shaped and reshaped in different ways in each program.

Observation of other language teachers is another important component that plays a critical role in language teacher development and potentially can shape their thinking about teaching and learning. The literature on observation in teacher education infers that there are many benefits to language preservice teachers observing others (Day, 1990; Gebhard et al., 1990). For one, it affords opportunities for preservice teachers to capture the act of teaching and see "different views of teaching" (Gebhard et al., 1990, p.19). Observations help expose preservice teachers to not only the content of teaching, but shows ways of how to teach the content (Gebhard et al., 1990). Further benefits of observations include providing interactions, post observations for preservice teachers to discuss what they have learned, and to answer questions about their concerns. It is through the relating of experiences to each other that preservice teachers can gain awareness of language teaching behaviors and teaching possibilities (Gebhard et al., 1990). Observations can also build language preservice teachers' understanding

or conception of second language teaching (Day, 1990). Specifically, preservice teachers can learn principles and decisions about effective and ineffective teaching practices that they can adopt or adapt into their teaching.

Therefore, it is safe to conclude from these studies that through observations, preservice teachers can learn new ways of teaching and working with English Learners. Due to the social and cultural nature of language teaching, it is also fair to conclude that collaboration and observations are instrumental in sharpening language teachers' knowledge, building their confidence, and honing their repertoire for the classroom. Moreover, analyses of these studies support evidence of how the variance in programs and experiences can shape language teacher development. Each of these approaches situated in different learning contexts helped to shape the preservice teachers' conceptions in unique ways (Lave and Wenger, 1991).

While language teacher education provides ample opportunities for preservice teachers to grow professionally, teacher educators have to be cognizant that transferring theory into practice may also prove challenging. One stance about the cross over is that it can be "a process of wash out" just before preservice teachers embark in full teaching. (Watzke, 2007). That is, preservice teachers may find it difficult to transfer, adapt, or adopt their learning from teacher education into their classrooms. This suggests that teacher education may be disconnected with the true realities preservice teachers face in transitioning as beginning teachers (Leshem, 2008). One suggestion for ensuring a smoother transfer is that teacher educators should begin with where student teachers are, on entering a program, in an effort to see what their needs are and what is important to them (Numrich, 1996).

Johnson (1995) discusses that language preservice teachers may also become frustrated by classroom realities and their theoretical beliefs, thus creating gaps or tensions between beliefs



and what they want to do. In essence, language preservice teachers can become disenchanting about how to put theory into practice. This may be due to their teacher education preparation been decontextualized and not directly applicable to their classroom situation. As a result, Golombek (2000) posits that it is crucial to help direct language preservice teachers with how to “theorize” or think through factors that shape their conceptions of second language teaching and learning. One way of helping them theorize is to have preservice teachers *learn by doing* thereby building their knowledge through their doing. For example, besides reading articles about writing pedagogy and journaling, provide opportunities for preservice teachers to engage in actual writing of literacy pieces and literature reviews. In Golombek’s (2000) study, the preservice teachers had to write narratives about their literacy experiences and their conceptions of literacy including beliefs about reading and writing in their program. The rationale behind the hands-on writing events for the preservice teachers was to have them experience potential conflicts that their own students could possibly face. Golombek (2000) infers that learning by doing helps to alleviate some of the possible tensions potential and current students may face while writing.

Further examples of the *learning by doing* mantra are evident in other activities within language teaching programs (Hones, 2000). Language teacher education may provide hands-on opportunities for preservice teachers to engage in real life cultural exchange and learning. In the case of Hones (2000), the ESL preservice teachers gained hands-on cultural experiences by not only meeting with mentor teachers within their teacher education classes, but going on joint ventures to engage in meeting parents and doing home visits within the community. The goal of the program was to deepen understanding about the immigrant Hmong and Latino families and identify issues that were relevant to their lives. Over a ten week span, the teachers met in the families’ homes to learn about their lives. Therefore, a learning by doing approach which

incorporates hands-on learning within classrooms and the cultural learning of meeting in homes with families demonstrate ways of honing investigative and decision making skills about teaching. It can sharpen teachers' knowledge of what and how to teach (Gebhard et al., 1990)). These practices of ethnographic approaches including home visits are increasingly expanding in language teaching programs (Fong, 2004). As a result, the cultural experiences can enlighten language preservice teachers' thinking of the importance of learning about the historical and cultural background of students and their communities, which are resources coined as *funds of knowledge* (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005). Preservice teachers can learn how to incorporate the resources into their language teaching within the classroom. Additionally, the collaborative endeavors and observation opportunities reinforces the point that teacher education mediates teachers' identities.

I believe programs can still be more purposeful with providing a forum for preservice teachers to share their inner tensions and conflicts about their learning, teaching, and conceptions. I also suggest that there should be an ongoing medium for preservice teachers to find possible solutions to misunderstandings while in the teacher preparation program. That is, provide an open and welcoming environment for a dialogic relationship and meaningful conversations to take place (Koetting and Combs (2002). This resource can help preservice teachers clarify their knowledge and remove feelings of doubts and inadequacy, thereby leaving the program feeling more confident and capable of teaching all learners including ELs. The above studies covered elements, which are important for language preservice teachers' success, however a direct look at language preservice teachers' beliefs is missing. Although, the preservice teachers reflected on their experience with members of the community, there failed to be any deep indication of how the experience shaped their thinking in the classroom. Did they

feel confident in transferring the knowledge and experiences they learned while in student teaching? Reflection is one tool that allows preservice teachers to examine their teaching identities.

### **Importance of Reflection in Shaping Teaching Identity**

Reflection is one important medium for understanding language teachers' identities (Farrell, 2011). The reflective practice is a critical process of helping to sharpen preservice teachers' awareness of their beliefs, knowledge, tensions, and misconceptions. Reflecting on practice is one way of aiding and strengthening preservice teachers' development and identity (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009) and in shaping reflective practitioner (Etscheidt, Curran & Sawyer, 2012). In highlighting the importance of reflection in shaping identity, several studies emphasize its use in preservice teacher development (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Britzman, 1994; Etscheidt et al., 2012; Freese, 2006; Heydon & Hibbert, 2010; Rodgers, 2002; Sutherland, Howard, & Markauskaite, 2010).

While reflecting on practice and theory is important, failure to do so may result in inner struggles (Britzman, 1994). In the case of Freese's (2006) study, it reveals that a preservice teacher named Ryan who possessed fear and resentment when his initial beliefs, coupled with his closed-mindedness about his learning, resulted in doubts of becoming a teacher and it almost resulted in him leaving the program. Ryan initially refused to reflect in his journal about his journey through the program (a program requirement), as he did not see the benefits and felt it was unimportant and unintelligent to do so. Additionally, his perceptions of how his students viewed him, as well as his lack of ownership for his role in his students' learning caused him to concentrate more on their actions and less on their learning and on his teaching. However, at the

advice of his instructor, through direct reflections after viewing his videotaped lessons and observation of an exemplary teacher as well as written reflections of observations, he was forced to look at critical influences on his teaching and learning. Ryan's reflections on one exemplary teacher he observed, as well as a shift in his own preconceived beliefs resulted in a transformation of his thinking. Ultimately by the fourth semester, Ryan had a change in attitude and had a new perception of his identity from being a student to being a teacher. To that end, his professional identity shifted as he received direct engagement of observing quality instruction and engaging in reflective practice.

Clearly, the role of reflective practice had a critical part in shaping Ryan's identity. The result also shows that observation can reshape preservice teachers' conceptions about second language teaching (Day, 1990). In order to help shape Ryan's perceptions about the importance of reflections, the teacher education program encouraged introspection on practice and promoted reflection on individual teacher's sense of learning by having Ryan view his videotaped lessons as well as observe more learned professionals. The direct approach and forum through ongoing reflection, dialoguing, observations, and post observation conversations helped clear up several misunderstanding, fears and resentment. In this case, therefore the program also directly mediated in shaping Ryan's identity.

Reflections do offer additional benefits for preservice teacher development in teacher education programs. For one, early reflective practices throughout teacher education programs increase the chances of continued reflection in the future as novice teachers (Etscheidt et al., 2012). Reflective teaching can reshape teachers' thinking of what good teaching is to being more of "a response to students' learning rather than cause of student learning" (Rodgers, 2002, p.250). Reflections can potentially promote a more critical role of preservice teachers' literacy

understanding (Mora & Grisham, 2001) as well as highlight the development of preservice teachers' previous literacy histories (Heydon and Hibbert, 2010). For instance, Heydon and Hibbert's (2010) study using reflections sought to find out about the literacy histories and beliefs of preservice teachers in an effort to prompt more critical role of literacy understanding in their lives. The results espoused that teachers' previous literacy experiences as learners shaped their literacy practice and beliefs in becoming teachers. The researchers suggest that reflecting on the socio-political contexts of preservice teachers' narratives, as well as on their personal desires and beliefs can strengthen their literacy teaching. As they created narratives and shared with peers, they were able to see contradictions and complications in their life histories. Use of journals to reflect was an excellent way of extricating teachers' personal histories on literacy. These cultural tools using reflections served as a medium to give the teachers a voice. Similar to Freese's (2006) study, Heydon and Hibbert's (2010) study reflect the power of reflection in potentially creating agents of change.

In language teaching, reflection takes on an additional layer with the need for language teachers to be more critical about their teaching, the context, students' needs, and instructional impact. For instance, they should be mindful of the background experiences, the linguistic and cultural resources that students possess and how these resources may enhance instruction. By being critical reflective teachers, Bartlett (1990) suggests teachers can realize that they are not only producers, but also creators of their own history. That is, reflection can encourage language teachers to consider the underlying principles and theories behind their own teaching and help them identify nuances within teaching, teaching ideas, and purposes, possibly promoting changes in instructional practice. Thus, reflection in teacher preparation can help to stir awareness of issues that are essential to language teaching and learning, thereby informing teacher identity.

There are several suggested ways of engaging in reflective practice in language teaching. Prime methods of reflections are through written and oral exercises. Hedgcock (2002) suggests using journal entries with prompts to engage and stimulate teachers' thoughts during second language method courses. Notebooks and video reflections are also other mediums for reflections. He suggests that reflections can "generate insights into novices' current belief systems and ignite focused thought and dialogue" (p.302). Regardless of the medium used, the act of reflecting encourages opportunities for preservice teachers to think about their teaching including lesson planning, instructional strategies, approaches, the needs of their students, and the impact of their teaching on student learning.

In some of the language teaching reports identified in this study, researchers have noted the significance of reflection been used to bring awareness to preservice teachers or effect change in their mindset about instruction (Many, Dewberry, Taylor & Coady, 2009; Many, Taylor, Wang, Tinker Sachs & Schreiber, 2007; Poynor, 2005). For instance, Many et al. (2009) collected reflections, interviews, and observations for data collection from ESOL preservice teachers. Reflections were used during the summer language and literacy education courses to ascertain the participants' conceptions using the specific questions such as "what is scaffolding" and "how have I used scaffolding" (p.152). Written reflections were also collected in fall and spring as part of the data collection on preservice teachers' perspective and learning on scaffolding. Kathy, one of the participants in the study, reflected that since she perceived that her students lacked all writing and reading skills, as a result she "felt it was her job to teach them everything" (p.160). Oliver, another participant, despite his limited concept of scaffolding began to re-conceptualize his understanding of scaffolding to being more "effective student-centered teaching" (p.161). This finding supports the notion that reflections can reshape language

preservice teachers' critical literacy understanding (Mora & Grisham, 2001). Therefore, the soul-searching nature of reflection allows teacher to not only consider their students' learning, but also the effect of their teaching on student learning.

Poynor (2005) also used reflections as part of his data collection in studying preservice teachers in an ESL/Bilingual reading and language arts class. The finding espouses that their reflections included not only new learning or conceptions, but also tensions that Carmen and Paul, two participants, had about the curriculum pacing and their sense of agency as beginning teachers. Reflections can help develop teachers' thinking of the connection between theory and practice. New learning and their connections to earlier learning may be shaped and reshaped through reflective practices. Reflections can also illuminate preservice teachers' perception of their preparedness, confidence, and efficacy towards instruction (Ezer, Gilat, & Sagee, 2010; Mora & Grisham, 2001).

### **Sense of Efficacy in Shaping Language Teachers' Identity**

The way teachers may feel about their ability, their preparedness, their degree of confidence and ability to teach definitely impacts their efficacy in the classroom. In turn, as researchers suggest the level of efficacy a teacher possesses shapes her performance and impacts students' motivation and achievement (Duffin et al., 2012). Issues of efficacy definitely shape teachers' identity. Further, teacher self-efficacy impact performance in the classroom (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). Moreover, Tschannen-Moran & Hoy (2001) posit that teacher efficacy informs teachers' effort in teaching, aspires them and shapes their goal setting. Several studies (Ajayi, 2010; Ezer et al., 2010; Mora & Grisham, 2001) focused on preservice teachers' sense of preparedness and efficacy to teach. Both Ajayi's (2010) and Mora and Grisham's (2001) studies examined preservice teachers' perceptions of their literacy development in teacher

education. Therefore, these two studies are described in detail later in the section on, *What Constitutes Literacy*. These studies are important to this research, since they include several issues highlighted in this study such as use of reflections, preservice teachers' perceptions and efficacy of literacy practices.

However, in Ezer et al.'s (2010) study in Israel, the researchers examined preservice teachers' perceptions of their program preparation, significance of practice, and its impact on their teaching identity. The methodology included a questionnaire on the following areas: "(1) motivation for teaching, (2) conceptions of teaching–learning, (3) roles of teachers, (4) components of teacher education, and (5) agents of training" (p.396). The results showed high levels of efficacy in delivering instruction among the preservice teachers, which they mainly attributed to their participation in the program. The results also showed that despite the intrinsic reward of becoming teachers, only half of the participants desired to remain in teaching. For many of these preservice teachers their most important rationale for becoming teachers were for passing on values, ensuring appropriate behaviors, and violence prevention, with academic achievements as least important. Therefore, although Pendergast, Garvis, and Keogh (2011) suggest that self-efficacy beliefs can be a motivational factor for staying in teaching, it seems it is not the only factor that can ensure teacher retention. Other tensions may operate as forces that serve to discourage rather than encourage preservice teachers from remaining in teaching. Nevertheless, preservice teachers who feel a strong sense of efficacy towards content and pedagogical knowledge are more apt to remain longer in teaching.

There is limited research on language preservice teachers' sense of efficacy during teacher preparation (Dahlman, 2006; Hudson et al., 2008; Tercanlioglu, 2001). There is hardly any study on efficacy of ESOL preservice teachers during teacher preparation. The similarities



between these studies are that the participants were all language preservice teachers who wanted to gain a sense of their ability to teach during their student teaching experiences. However, there are differences in the rationales given for the preservice teachers' sense of efficacy. For one, Dahlman's (2006) study is a qualitative case study with the preservice teachers engaged in dual assessments of their own capabilities as well as their students', positioning the preservice teachers as agents of change. On the other hand, in Tercanlioglu's (2001) and Hudson et al.'s (2008) studies, the preservice teachers reflected on their own efficacy and confidence to teach. They also assessed how their program was preparing them to teach during student teaching.

Another difference in the studies related to the profile of the participants and the contexts in the studies. In the case of Dahlman's study, the participants were ESL preservice teachers, learning to teach English to students who speak little to limited English, and students who have a primary language besides English. On the other hand, the participants in Hudson et al.'s (2008) as well as in Tercanlioglu's (2001) studies were English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers. (Although these studies are about EFL teaching, they are included in this study as they pertain to English instruction to second language students and also due to the limited studies on ESOL preservice teachers on the issue of efficacy). EFL teachers teach English to English Learners as an academic subject in settings where English is used as a secondary language and as a tool in the society for communication with outsiders (Diaz-Rico, 2008). Therefore, the EFL preservice teachers are adults learning to teach English and who are often improving on their own ability to speak English at the same time. The English Foreign Language class is often treated as a subject much like an American student studying Spanish or French to meet a foreign language requirement.

Dahlman's (2006) study considered sociocultural aspects of teacher learning including the preservice teachers' views about their background knowledge. The students received four student teaching placements at the elementary and secondary levels. The teachers were each being trained to teach ESL and a foreign language. They were required to learn about English grammar, cultural diversity, instructional strategies, assessment, L2 acquisition and standards. The results showed that the teachers explained their knowledge base in relation to their students'. That is, the preservice teachers compared their efficacy of knowledge to their own students' background knowledge and found that they had a large knowledge base compared to their students'. Helene, one of the participants, described herself as an expert in the knowledge of language and culture, which increased her confidence to teach. Furthermore, her sense of agency was heightened as she felt it was her duty to motivate and encourage her students to become knowledgeable. Dahlman alluded to teachers focusing on their own knowledge gains, instead of just comparing themselves to other expert teachers. "Being able to see tangible signs of the gains in their knowledge base helps teachers gain self-efficacy, which plays a crucial part in successful teacher education and teacher learning" (Dahlman, 2006, p.20). In light of the preservice teachers' strong efficacy in their ability to teach language and the heightened sense of responsibility to motivate their students, it is safe to say that preservice teachers can be reflective practitioners, which can result in change in their instructional practices and expectations for student learning. These realizations also suggest that language preservice teachers are able to recognize the need for change or growth within themselves and make necessary adjustments in their teaching. To that end, reflecting on efficacy and strengths can create a shift in preservice teachers' identities and impact teaching of English Learners.

Hudson et al.'s (2008) and Tercanlioglu's (2001) studies explored EFL preservice teachers' perceptions of their ability to teach specific content area subjects before their practicum. Both groups of preservice teachers showed low level of confidence and readiness to teach literacy-related courses to their students. There are specific rationales given for the low efficacy anticipated to teach English. For instance, Hudson et al. (2008) explored the EFL preservice teachers' thoughts before entering their field experience. At the end of their program, these preservice teachers expected to work with university students. In their study, the researchers used a questionnaire with ten open-ended questions to ascertain the preservice teachers' perceptions. According to Hudson et al.'s (2008) finding of the ninety-seven participants studied on learning about teaching EFL writing during their practicum, the themes created showed that forty-one percentage of them lacked "confidence and knowledge for teaching writing at secondary schools" (p.1). As such, they wanted to learn how to teach different genres of writing, learn about classroom management, as well as learn how to provide feedback to their students about their writing. Therefore, Hudson et al. recommend incorporating specific guidance on writing genres, topics, and on student motivation in writing as part of teacher education program. In analyzing the concerns of the language preservice teachers, it seems that they were engaged in critical assessment of their learning and ability to teach, which resulted in reshaping of their sense of efficacy in teaching writing. That is, these teachers were aware of what they knew and what they did not know, understood that there were missing links in their learning, and were forth coming with stating their concerns. These actions are clear indications of the shift in the preservice teachers' conceptions about their learning and in their identities as rising language teachers. The program provided the forum that helped illuminate these tensions and provided opportunities for change.

Tercanlioglu (2001) explored how English Foreign Language (EFL) preservice teachers perceived themselves as readers and their ability to teach reading. The researchers also looked at the evaluation of the teacher education program as it relates to teaching reading. There were 132 preservice teachers who participated as part of the Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) program at a Turkish university. The results showed that the preservice teachers had low confidence as readers themselves. Their attitude towards reading was not high although there was a positive correlation. Given the lack of growth between the third and fourth year preservice teachers' perceptions of themselves as readers, the researchers suggested the importance of explicit "attention to preservice teachers' self-efficacy beliefs" as part of the teacher education program (p.13). Their future recommendation was for researchers to examine "the content of preservice EFL teacher perceptions in the social and cultural context" (p. 14).

### **Summary of Beliefs and Identity**

The review of the above literature on teacher identities, teacher education, reflections, and efficacy espouse that several researchers are engaged in studying preservice teachers and language preservice teachers' thinking and conceptions. The review also shows that teacher education models vary in their programs, resources, and opportunities that preservice teachers experience in preparing to become teachers. Observations and collaborations are two components that are used in some programs to help in preservice teacher preparation.

Increasingly, more and more programs in language teaching utilize reflections and ethnographic studies as cultural tools to sharpen preservice teachers' understanding of the importance of cultural, historical and linguistic resources students bring to school. Reflection is a valuable tool to help create reflective practitioners, illuminate tensions, and identify misconceptions about learning and teaching as well as affirm understanding of teaching and

learning. In some studies, preservice teachers' confidence and efficacy about their learning strengthened while in teacher education programs. To that end, the studies show the positive effect of cultural resources and providing a forum to help preservice teachers connect theory and practice.

### **Gap in the Literature on ESOL Preservice Teachers' Efficacy in Literacy Instruction**

The literature on language preservice teachers suggests that despite having method and theory classes in teacher preparation, language preservice teachers may experience doubt about their learning. These apprehensions can determine the degree of efficacy and ultimately the level of confidence teachers manifest towards teaching. While one study focused on ability to teach writing (Hudson et al., 2008) and the other on ability to teach reading (Tercanlioglu, 2001), they lacked the concept of viewing reading and writing as interrelated subjects, where each builds on the other and are part of what constitutes as literacy. Further, though Dahlman's (2006) study examined the ESL preservice teachers' perceptions about their efficacy to teach, the focus was more on teaching language and culture and comparison of their efficacy of their knowledge base to their own students. Missing from these studies are the language preservice teachers' perceptions about teaching literacy – both reading and writing. Furthermore, there seems to be no study that I could find on ESOL preservice teachers' sense of efficacy towards teaching literacy- both reading and writing. Therefore, it is this gap on ESOL preservice teachers' efficacy relating to literacy that this proposed study explored. The issue of efficacy through mentorship is described next as it evolved from the data collected in this study. The participants in my study stressed the importance of mentoring in supporting their teaching identity.

### **The Role of Mentorship in Teacher Education**

The alarming rate of attrition in teaching has been long standing among especially newcomers (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). However, studies show that beginning teachers with mentors are more likely to remain in teaching past their first year of teaching (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). In this study, mentoring is operationally defined as the support that new comers receive from experts within the field. Traditionally, mentoring is provided in schools for new teachers as a means of scaffold to help socialize teachers in the teaching profession. Mentoring programs range from a single encounter at the start of the school year to ongoing organized meetings typically for few years (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). Clearly, the level of mentorship can shape the qualities of mentors and mentees.

What are the qualities of a good mentor? Rowley (1999) has outlined several descriptors that identifies who is a good mentor. For one, Rowley (1999) explains that a good mentor possess a spirit of commitment to mentoring. That is, a good mentor understands the importance of being persistent in understanding the difference maker they are as well as being committed to the time and energy this investment requires in shaping teachers. Secondly, a good mentor shows acceptance towards beginning teachers. That is, a good mentor understands that a beginning teacher is in the process of developing as a teacher and a professional. As such, the mentor is willing to understanding that the mentee will demonstrate traits that will need sharpening over time. Third, a good mentor demonstrates strong skillset in instructional support by sharing experiences such as team teaching, observations as well as team planning, mentor teachers reflect their skillsets. Rowley (1999) recommends providing mentors with the necessary training on knowledge skills as well as dispositions on what it means to be effective support for mentees). A fourth descriptor that is critical to building good mentors is the ability to operate in different

interpersonal context as mentees vary in their needs, dispositions, and personality. He further discusses that this skillset can be shaped through reflective practice and a willingness for mentors to be objective in their mentoring. A fifth attribute that Rowley (1999) describes that is important is for mentors to be open to continuous learning by staying abreast with effective strategies on mentoring. By attending workshops, college courses, and reading professional articles, as well as sharing new learning with mentees, mentors can learn to become better problem solvers (Rowley, 1999) and remain relevant. Finally, a sixth quality that sets a good mentor apart is the ability to instill hope and optimism in mentees. By developing an attitude of positivity, mentors can help shape mentees who meet their potential and who learn effective ways to overcome challenges in the classroom (Rowley, 1999).

There are many values and purposes for mentoring. For one, mentorship can enhance teacher efficacy. Teachers with high self-efficacy are more inclined to create favorable learning atmosphere for students (Yost, 2002). Furthermore, they approach teaching with more confidence and surety in goal achievement (Yost, 2002). However, mentorship is not just for new inductees, but also for preservice teachers. The benefits of mentorship in teacher preparation can yield lasting dividends from student teaching into teachers' own classrooms.

Gratch's (1998) study focused on the role of mentorship in preservice teachers' success. For instance, in Gratch's (1998) study on an induction for beginning teachers, it showed the benefits of mentoring for in-service as well as preservice teachers. The mentoring program was part of the teacher certification for continued education for beginning teachers. In Gratch's (1998) study, ten first year teachers as participants were interviewed over a period of the study on the role of mentorship in their lives. While the participants shared many concerns about school operations, personal concerns, as well as instructional concerns, they also shared the value of their mentors

who they depended on in their teaching lives to help support them to navigate the challenges they faced as preservice teachers and as first year teachers. One participant, Gina had hoped to receive guidance on the effectiveness of her teaching from her mentor teacher during her first year of teaching. Instead, the mentor teacher's vision for friendship coupled with the mentor's far proximity in the building made Gina frustrated at times. Gina described feeling resourceful as she ventured out and received ideas and material from other teachers including the principal's support with difficult children. In retrospect however, Gina credited much of her success from the critical role of her mentor while in student teaching. She recalled her mentor teacher allowed her to be actively involved in the classroom and with the students from very early in her student teaching, since Gina took over the running of the classroom from very early in the semester. Gina also had regular reflection sessions with her mentor teacher which strengthened her resolve to adopt much of her mentor's good practices in her own classroom. Gina attributed the relationship with her mentor teacher in encouraging her to stay in teaching and in feeling confident in her ability as a teacher. For Gina, while the material and resources were critical to her success, she credited most of her success to the respect and support from her mentor teacher. Below, I discuss the issue of cultural relevant pedagogy in teacher education. This literature was added later in the study based on the findings. The participants in this study stressed the importance of cultural relevance in instruction.

### **Cultural Relevant Pedagogy in Teacher Education**

Increasingly, teachers in the U.S. are receiving students from various linguistic and cultural backgrounds. For many of these students, their primary language is not English, making it prudent for teachers to learn how to effectively meet the students' linguistic needs. Many students immigrated from South America, Asia, and the Pacific Islands (U.S. Census Bureau,



2004). As such, there are various cultural issues that teachers and students alike need to negotiate in order for students to be successful academically. Fong (2004) posits that immigrants are best served by “professionals who apply general knowledge about the immigrants’ home country, traditions and values, family dynamics, and communication patterns, as well as the political, economic, and social circumstances, when working with them” (p.22). Further, Fong stresses that it is incumbent for caretakers working with immigrant students to realize that each group has strengths and resources that they bring from their home environment. Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti (2005) coined these resources as *funds of knowledge*, which incorporates the competences students gain from their family experiences and from their communities. These funds of knowledge also include the literacy families engage in within their families and communities. Moreover, these funds of knowledge may become cultural resources that create relevance in instruction (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005).

When teachers are intentional about forging meaningful instruction that is critical to students’ lives and their learning, their pedagogy becomes culturally relevant. Researchers have variant terms coining what it means to incorporate relevance in instruction. Terms such as *cultural relevant teaching*, *multi-cultural instruction*, *culturally responsive teaching* (Gay, 2002), as well as *culturally relevant pedagogy* (Ladson-Billings, 1995) represent ways of framing relevance in instruction. Ladson-Billings (1995) refers to *cultural relevant pedagogy* (CRP) as a means of empowerment for students. The aim of CRP is for student to attain *academic success*, *cultural competence*, and to *critical consciousness* (Ladson-Billings, 1995). *Academic success* relates to the learning students need to attain in school in order to be active citizens in society (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Teachers can ensure academic success by attending to students’ academic needs and by encouraging students to choose excellence. Ladson-Billings (1995)

describes *cultural competence* as the essence of retaining cultural integrity along with academic success. Teachers are able to foster cultural competence by utilizing students' culture as a bridge connecting students' out of school experiences with their in-school instruction. Shaping culturally competent students includes teaching them how to learn about themselves, learn about others, and identify how people's situations determine empowerment (Milner IV, 2011).

Consequently, teachers engaged in CRP validate their students' culture and prepare them to examine inequities around them (Milner IV, 2011), thereby creating critical thinkers and agents of change. (CRP will be the term used in this study for consistency).

Acknowledging students' culture in the classroom and incorporating it in instruction is demonstrates what it means to be culturally competent. For one, by validating students' out of school experience, it can help make connection to their in-school learning as well as activate new learning. Students' first language may also serve as assets and not as deficits (Valenzuela, 1999) in supplementing their learning in the classroom. In her reminder to educators, Delpit (2006) suggests that students' languages are interconnected to their lives as well as to their families and communities, ultimately shaping their identities. Therefore, it behooves teachers to utilize the linguistic legacy students' bring to school. Furthermore, everyone benefits when all student voices and languages are embraced (Delpit, 2006). Moreover, recognizing students' language and voice sanctions them as experts of their own lives in the teaching process (Valenzuela, 199).

Researchers (Au & Jordan, 1981; Barnes, 2006; Heath, 1982; Moll & Gonzalez, 1994) have studied how cultural experiences, values, and traditions embedded in the curriculum creates relevance in student learning. In Barnes' study (2006), she explored how preservice teachers teach in a culturally responsive way. She studied 24 preservice teachers who incorporated culturally responsive teaching framework in their reading instruction of their elementary

students. The preservice teachers were trained to incorporate cultural understandings in a reading methods class at a teacher education program. Data were collected through weekly on-line self-assessments of chapter readings. As part of their CRP training, the preservice teachers completed two in-class activities to prime their conception of CRP. The first assignment required the preservice teachers to complete an autobiographical poem on their cultural experiences. The preservice teachers were also required to utilize the Cultural Diversity Awareness Inventory and to share their multi-cultural competency, which reflects their attitudes as well as beliefs on cultural awareness. Each preservice teacher designed lessons, engaged in readings, led micro-teaching on the cultural relevant readings for about four weeks. The preservice teachers also engaged in 15-visit field experience in an elementary school, where the teachers each worked with two children for thirty-five minutes twice a week. Additionally, the preservice teachers engaged in biweekly group discussions at their university class on diversity issues relevant to teaching and learning for diverse students. As part of their cultural relevance platform, the preservice teachers communicated with parents regularly through letter writing, newsletters, phone calls and notes. The newsletter included advice on reading activities for parent-child engagement. The preservice teachers also had discussions with students' in-service teachers to explore their progress in their class. In some cases, preservice teachers engaged in two observations at some of the student. Through interviews with in-service teachers, the preservice teachers were able to capture further understandings about literacy teaching in diverse settings. Using reflections, the preservice teachers were able to share their conceptions as well as cultural activities as part of an Inquiry Project. The preservice teachers met frequently for 15-minutes after field experiences at the school to debrief on their work with multi-cultural work and review lesson objectives. The results showed that preservice teachers as well as professor and grad

assistant for the study felt frustrated, which may be attributed by the previous private and parochial assignments. Additionally, some preservice teachers wished to learn more content knowledge and pedagogy without elements of diversity, and a structured field experience. Further, some preservice teachers were not flexible in their dispositions and in reflecting on students' backgrounds.

In the next section, I discuss how language teaching and learning evolved as social practice. Then, I explain a brief history on how language teaching shifted from a grammatical to a more communicative approach to teaching. This discussion is necessary since my study is about ESOL teachers which falls under language teaching. Furthermore, there are similarities with language teaching development and how literacy has evolved over the years.

### **Language Teaching and Learning as Social Practice**

The nature of language teaching now places more emphasis on communication, including writing, speaking, listening, and reading. These communicative acts are critical for language development. Language teaching and learning is developed through interactions, collaboration, and learning with others and through others. Therefore, language teaching and learning is not seen as something that is done to and for an individual, but with the individual through active engagement. This supports the ideology that language development occurs in a social arena. It is safe to conclude that the point of view of language teaching and learning as being social practice emerged from shifts in perceptions of language being viewed through a social and cultural domain. Gee (1997) describes the emergence of language through practices and routines in shared not isolated practice. Therefore, it is through social engagements that language helps to shape meaning. This point further confirms Lankshear's (1997) views that "language is social practice in which meanings are made, fixed, and shared publicly" (p. 23). It suggests that

individuals have to learn language from and through others and within cultural activities in their environment. Through active engagements and daily activities within the context, the learner is able to develop their language. Consequently, it is important for preservice teachers to understand the social nature in language learning in order to plan developmentally appropriate lessons to match learners' learning styles, abilities, needs, and interests.

Richards and Rodgers (2001) suggest that much of the shifts and changes in language teaching methods are due to changes in the kind of proficiency learners need and changes in theories of the “nature of language and of language learning” (p.3). In the 1840s to the 1940s, the focus of language teaching was on reading and writing grammatical correct sentences, a method called the Grammar-Translation Method. Reformists in the late 1800s suggested an emphasis on the spoken language and on instruction of vocabulary and grammar being taught in contexts. The Direct Method surfaced around the end of the 1800s to early 1900s with an emphasis on more language use in the classroom, on a reduction of use of textbooks in the classroom and pioneered the “methods era” (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). The trajectory during the “methods era” included methods such as the Audiolingual Method, Situational Method and the Communicative Approach, to name a few.

The Post Methods era fosters a balance between teacher's knowledge and beliefs about teaching and learning. While a teacher's role is important in this framework, context is equally critical for shaping instruction (Lochland, 2013). Teaching practice is shaped by context. This suggests teaching and learning is situated within the context. Therefore, a teacher needs to be intentional and purposeful about utilizing sociocultural, educational and political contextual factors to shape instruction. Lochland (2013) refers to *situated pedagogy* as one of the framework for language teaching in the post method era which is shaped by situational factors. .

Table.1 shows the historical trajectory of language teaching shifting from the grammar approach to the communicative teaching approach. Situated pedagogy is now added as part of the post method era.

Table 1

**Table 1. History of Language Teaching Methods**

<b>Language Teaching Method</b>	<b>Focus OR Purpose</b>
Grammar-Translation Method (the 1840s to the 1940s)	The focus of language teaching was on reading and writing grammatical correct sentences.
Reformists (late 1800s)	Emphasis on the spoken language and on instruction of vocabulary and grammar being taught in contexts.
The Direct Method (the end of the 1800s to early 1900s)	Emphasis on more language use in the classroom, on a reduction of use of textbooks in the classroom.
Methods era	Includes Audiolingual Method, Situational Method and the Communicative Approach
Post Methods era	Situated Pedagogy aims to balance teacher-generated theory and contextual conditions.

### Summary

Since there have been shifts in language learning from a psychological to a sociocultural approach to language learning, language teachers have adopted new ways of working with language learners. Instead of a large focus on grammar, instruction is more balanced to include communication and interaction. Further, as more emphasis is on language, and lesson planning reflects less textbook dependence, the literature shows teaching and learning tailored to the

contexts students are situated in and based on their needs. In the next section, I answer the question that I still have unanswered: What is literacy in the 21st century? It is important to include literature on literacy since the study is about preservice teachers' understanding of literacy.

### **What is Literacy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century?**

“From a sociological perspective, the work of literacy teachers is not about enhancing ‘individual growth’, ‘personal voice’, or ‘skill development’. It is principally about building access to literate practices and discourse resources, about setting the enabling pedagogic conditions for students to use their existing and new discourse resources for social exchange in the social fields where texts and discourses matter.” (Luke, 2000, p.450).

Luke's quote captures the essence of the shift in what constitutes as literacy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The customary view of an individual investment (Luke, 2000; Luke & Woods, 2011) in becoming literate has shifted to include a social forum (Luke 2000, Luke & Woods, 2011). Instead of one mode and method for navigating literacy, multiple mediums as well as perspectives offer possibilities. Once, literacy was believed to be based solely on mastery of skills using written texts (Luke & Woods, 2011). However, Meek (1991) posits that “literacy is more than traditional ways of reading and writing” (p.66) and print books. The changing view of literacy includes “living with differences, in school, in the world, within societies and cultures” (Meek, 1991, p. 67). Therefore, literacy is no longer perceived as entailing universal meaning, but is shaped through peoples' everyday lives within and across cultures in their “human expression and work” (Luke & Woods, 2011, p. 9). Therefore, based on multiple perspectives

and range of experiences in peoples' lives, literacy is not seen as singular but pluralistic, thus the need for the concept of *literacies* and not literacy.

In this review of the literature on literacy, I first discuss two contrasting views Street (1984) identifies as models of literacy. Then, I describe what new literacies entails, its implications and advantages. After, I outline what critical literacy is including some studies on beginning and preservice teachers engaged in critical literacy (Lewison, Flint, & Van Sluys, 2002). Finally, I outline the case for the gap in the literature through four studies on ESL and ESOL per service teachers and literacy. To close, I recapped chapter two by summarizing how the nature of language teaching had evolved to bring prominence to social contexts and the need for new literacies and critical literacy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **Autonomous versus Ideological Models of Literacy**

In this section, I discuss two literacy models which are considered contrasting paradigms of 'viewing literacy'. One model, the *autonomous* model of literacy, is more traditional and is manifested in the old way of looking at literacy. The discussion will show the practices, materials, and ways of engagement used in this model. Then, I describe the *ideological* view of literacy including conventional practices and activities. This practice seems to align with more contemporary way of literacy practices and with the social practice ideology. I provide examples of three studies (Ajayi, 2010; Luke 2000; Trier, 2006) which show a shift in preservice teachers' perspectives of literacy from an autonomous to a more ideological view of literacy.

Street (1984), in his discussion of what constitutes literacy, identifies two definitive models of literacy. He highlights two perspectives of literacy: the *autonomous* and *ideological* models of literacy. Both are viewed as competing models of literacy. An *autonomous model* of literacy is described as been isolated in nature with an emphasis on cognitive skills that are



learned gradually and developed stage by stage and are void of social contexts (Bartlett, 2008). It infers that ways of engaging in literacy events are universal and that outcomes should be the same across settings. That is, it seems ‘a cookie cutter approach’ is applied for literacy learning and teaching. Traditionally, this model was the dominant view of literacy and had the appeal as the natural approach to literacy (Street, 1995). As such, an *autonomous model* of literacy includes drill practices, repeated practice and students’ regurgitation of what they learned mostly through the teacher’s understanding of literacy. Teachers’ conception of literacy is accepted as the ultimate meaning and students are not seen as expert learners. Therefore, it implies students’ contributions of literacy are subtracted from the learning community. Furthermore, it seems this approach limits rather than empowers learners.

On the other hand, an *ideological model* of literacy infers that literacy is a social practice, and that reading and writing should be reflective of and shaped within each cultural setting. The interaction between students and individuals illustrates the social nature of this model. An ideological view includes variation in “conventions which people internalize” (Street, 1995, p. 133). There are different and multiple views of what constitutes as literacy. It is from this view that literacy practices extends from being merely the events or engagement in activities, to include people’s conceptions of processes in reading and writing (Street, 1995). Therefore, the ideological approach to literacy links thought and practice. The teaching and learning communities include both teachers as well as students as experts learning from each other. This model also underscores the point that concepts of literacy varies across culture and context (Street, 1984). Literacy practices are shaped within and by the dictates of the context and the culture. In light of the literacy that is tailored to the needs of people within a context, it is safe to infer that time and space are unrestrictive (Curwood & Cowell, 2011). Therefore, literacy

transcends beyond the walls of the classroom. Clearly, the ideological model of literacy is empowering for learners and appears more in line with 21<sup>st</sup> century literacy. Three studies I found directly focus on how the preservice teachers' understanding of multi-literacies, which is categorized as being part of the ideological framework, grew as a result of being in a teacher education program (Ajayi, 2010; Trier, 2006; Luke, 2000). Notably, these were not language preservice teachers but their perspectives will shape understanding about what constitutes as literacy in this study. I will briefly describe each study before contrasting and comparing them.

The descriptions of the studies help shape understanding of the ideological model of literacy. In the case of Ajayi's (2010) study, there were 48 participants who were either elementary or secondary education students in a blended program. They had taken at least two literacy courses in the program. Ajayi (2010) found that the preservice teachers were aware that their understanding of literacy practices with new media technologies impacted their conceptions of literacy and they realized that skills for navigating multi-literacies are part of real life and daily activities. Multiliteracies afford opportunities for multiple modes of representing literacy, multiple meanings, and interpretations that readers can make. However, there were mixed reviews about their preparedness from the program to teach multi-literacies. Through the survey and the courses taught the researchers' were able to ascertain the preservice teachers' perceptions of how the program's theories shaped their understanding of literacy. Luke's (2000) study espoused how the teacher education program in Australia incorporated media studies and a cultural study to help teachers reconceptualize literacy in a double undergraduate degree program. Students had to write analytic essays as part of the data collection. Deliberate and purposeful efforts were made to reshape the preservice teachers' traditional views of literacies to include new literacies concepts. The findings showed that at the end, the undergraduate teachers

had a deeper understanding of multi-literacies in internet technology (IT) and felt better prepared to teach literacy.

In Trier's (2006) study, the researcher introduced the preservice teachers to Gee's Discourses by having them read and write analytical essays. The teachers also had to identify and write about their primary and secondary Discourses. To further, empower preservice teachers on literacy practices, the teachers read Barton and Hamilton (1998)'s definition on literacy events. Preservice teachers also reviewed school films to analyze the kinds of literacy events they saw. The teachers underwent a shift of their limited autonomous views of literacy to a more ideological model of literacy including multi-literacies. However, while there are similarities with participants' new understanding of literacy across the studies of multi-literacies and new ways of conceptualizing literacies, there are a few differences between the studies. One difference between Ajayi's (2010), Trier's (2006) and Luke's (2000) studies is that Ajayi's study is a mixed method study with qualitative and quantitative data gleaned through a survey. On the other hand, Luke's and Trier's studies are both qualitative studies. Therefore, the methodology and means for gaining the preservice teachers' understanding and conception differed across the studies. The focus in Trier's and Luke's studies was to intentionally create change in the preservice teachers' ways of thinking about literacy through the teacher education program. However, in the case of Ajayi's, the researchers primarily sought the preservice teachers' perception of their own learning and roles as a result of being in the program. Overall, the findings revealed the role of teacher education in shaping and stimulating critical awareness of teachers' conceptions of learning and teaching (Milner IV, 2010). The studies' findings on the preservice teachers' level of understanding and sense of preparedness to teach in using more

ideological model of literacy adds to the field of literacy education and highlights the importance of preservice teachers' awareness of teaching and learning while in teacher education program.

**New Literacies.** Several scholars believe that in order to be “fully functioning in the 21<sup>st</sup> century requires using *new literacies*” (Lapp, Moss, & Roswell, 2012, p. 367). With the rise of technology, the internet is seen as “the defining technology for literacy and learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> century” (Leu, McVerry, O’Byrne, Kiili, Zawilinski, Everett-Cacopardo, Kennedy & Forzani, 2011, p.5). Therefore, a discussion of new literacies in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is instrumental in framing the concept of literacy in the present study. The average preservice teacher entering the ESOL program has grown up in the new literacies era and is utilizing 21<sup>st</sup> century technological tools. Moreover, they will teach students who are natives of technology, since from birth to now, most K-12 students have been navigating technological tools to communicate in their everyday lives. Consequently, failure to acknowledge the importance of new literacies in shaping the preservice teachers' conceptions of literacy in the present study would portray a limited representation of their identity.

Increasingly, interpretations of literacy have transformed to keep abreast with new technologies (Leu et al. (2011). These changes suggest that there are new ways to communicate, construct meaning, and deliver instruction. In essence, there are new ways of learning and teaching literacy. There are various contributing thoughts about the meaning of new literacies (Curwood & Cowell, 2011; Lapp Moss & Roswell, 2012). According to Lapp, et al. (2012), new literacies “include the skills, strategies, and dispositions necessary to adapt to changing technologies influencing all aspects of life,” (p. 367). The implications are that the shift in technologies affect teachers and students' conceptions and practices of literacy.

Scholars state that new opportunities in learning literacy can help students sustain depth in reading and in construction of text (Lapp et al., 2012). Some of the new skills provide additional opportunities for students to collaborate and communicate more than previously (Sweeny, 2010). Time and space are no longer restricting (Curwood & Cowell, 2011). Therefore, students can engage and participate in literacy activities in their own time and where they choose. Through spaces provided for new literacies, students may now view “education as something they do rather than something that is done to or for them” (Lapp et al., 2012, p. 376). Moreover, since many students are already engaged in navigating many of the mediums used for new literacies in and out of school (Lapp et al., 2012; Sweeny, 2010), it suggests more students already possess resources and skills for new literacies.

For teachers, new literacies offer new advantages and ways for teaching. For instance, new literacies offer innovative ways for teaching reading and writing (Sweeny 2010). Researchers, also posit that the internet era has redefined literacy and communication practices for students (Sweeny, 2010) and teachers alike. Since many students are already engaged in utilizing new forms of technologies, teachers can capitalize on these strengths and knowledge that students possess in shaping literacy instruction. To that end, teachers can find creative ways to utilize and connect students’ out of school technology skills with their in-school literacy activities (Sweeny, 2010).

The term new literacies infer that there is more than one mode of literacy. Scholars suggest that being literate now requires some combination of technological skills such as knowledge of how to blog, text, Skype, do iMovie, or use Facebook and wiki (Leu et al., 2011). These modes of engaging in literacy allow students opportunities for communicating in and outside of school. For instance, through blogging students can post their political views, seek

others' opinions, ascertain help, and vent about issues they are passionate about. Using Facebook, teachers can update homework information, post reminders of tests and study resources. Text message programs such as *Remind 101* may be used to alert students to bring books to class and update project information. Instagram may be used to post pictures, text, and provide opportunities for two way communication within and outside the classroom. In light of the abundance of communicative benefits, visuals, and ease with navigating several technology forum, new literacies can “support differentiated learning across social, cultural, and economic differences” (Lapp et al., 2012, p. 376) and further enhance academic success for all learners. Furthermore, new literacies offer additional communicative opportunities for English Learners (Lapp et al., 2012) where they can interact with other students as well as with teachers.

**Critical Literacy.** There are various views of what critical literacy entails (Gee, 1997; Gregory & Cahill, 2009; McCormick, 1996; Norris, Lucas & Prudhoe, 2012). Norris, et al. (2012) suggest critical literacy can develop readers' ability to question, explore and critique issues of power between readers and authors. Moreover, critical literacy extends beyond comprehension and making connections to include ability to be analytic about the social conditions surrounding reading and writing practices in a culture and ultimately makes it possible for people to “take action within and against them” (McCormick, 1996, p.303). Gee (1997) writes that critical literacy is about being able to “juxtapose Discourses, to watch how competing Discourses frame and re-frame various elements” (p. xviii). Further, it addresses issues of whose interest and goals and what power relationships are at play within Discourses. Recall, Discourses are not only about engaging in spoken conversation, but is about ways of doing, speaking, acting, and includes the values and beliefs people hold (Gee, 2012). In other words, critical literacy provides the opportunity to analyze ways of being in the world. Gregory and Cahill (2009) suggest that it

provides us with a forum to be reflective and stimulate action in social issues. Critical literacy may look at the ways individuals communicate, the agenda behind their message and its effect and implications on its receivers and participants. The implication in the classroom is that a view of critical literacy includes examining texts and their hidden meaning to determine if they subtract rather than add to or enhance all learners' needs and interests. As a result, critical literacy offers "opportunities for students to examine text from multiple perspectives" (Gregory & Cahill, 2009, p.12.)

Critical literacy highlights issues of power and language relations. Traditionally, literacy is promoted from a Eurocentric or western view only, overlooking the literacy legacies of other cultures. As a result, ways of teaching literacy typically seek to promote a hegemonic perspective and one way of viewing literacy. However, from a critical literacy view, other ways and interpretation of literacies are considered, as well as attention is given to underlying meanings which may empower some, while disenfranchising others. Therefore, an understanding of the social and political nature of literacy is fundamental to shaping meaning of critical literacy and offers implication for text interpretation (Meller & Hatch, 2008).

Knowledge of critical literacy can shed light on issues that preservice teachers may deem as significant in literacy instruction. I argue that an awareness of critical literacy takes on an even more important layer in shaping conception about how to support English Learners with linguistic and cultural differences within the classroom. For one, preservice teachers will need to be understanding of students from different cultures with possibly different perceptions and ways of literacy from that of the dominant culture (Street, 1995). Knowing which type of texts, the amounts of preparation including use of different modes of teaching and how to incorporate resources that ELs bring to the classroom serve to sharpen teachers' literacy pedagogy and can

ultimately empower and help level the playing field of their students' learning. Moreover, when teachers are sensitive to the underlying meanings within texts (printed or electronic), they are more informed to explain these issues with their students, thereby teaching students how to be critical learners themselves. In essence, an understanding of the role of critical literacy within the classroom can help shape preservice teachers' identities.

Several studies about critical literacy abound in the field (Lewison, Flint, & Van Sluys, 2002; Luke & Woods, 2011). These studies show how critical literacy may be manifested in the classroom (Lewison et al.) and potential benefits (Luke & Woods, 2011). They also offer ideas for empowering beginning and preservice teachers who are just transitioning from teacher education to the classroom. Interestingly, in Lewison et al.'s study, the thirteen teachers were forth coming and eager to learn about how honing their understanding of critical literacy would enhance their literacy instruction in the classroom. They were all at different stages in their conception of critical literacy. However, the very act of expressing interest and wanting to problematize this ideology suggest that the teachers were being reshaped as critical thinkers themselves. In essence, they were empowered and there was an obvious shift in their identities and perceptions of what literacy should entail in the classroom.

For instance, Nancy, one of the participants in their study, considered a 'newcomer' based on limited conception of critical literacy, slowly changed her instruction to incorporate rich book discussions. The students were taught to create and ask questions as well as answer interpretative ones. She explicitly taught the students how to question certain ideologies within texts, consider various and multiple perspectives of a topic, text or situation, and make connections to theirs' and others' lives. In an effort to promote social justice awareness, Nancy also tried to teach the students how to critically look at the underlying meanings within texts.



Nancy's own awareness of social and political forces within texts and educational issues surfaced as she joined in discussions with other participants about the issue of standardized testing and the kinds of language used in texts that served to exclude some readers. For the researchers in the study, they too were able to self-reflect on their own practice to identify ways their research approach might enable or disenable others or promote particular agenda. It is safe to say that the introspection within Lewison et al.'s study showed growth in the participants and cognizance of issues that are considered crucial to developing learners' and teachers' literacy conception.

In the case of Luke and Woods (2011), they emphasize that critical literacy necessitates turning "learners into teachers and inventors of the curriculum" (p.12). It also incorporates "engagement with the major texts, discourses, and modes of information in the culture" (p. 15). Students are extended technical resources that help to equip them in how to critically analyze texts. Luke and Woods further stress that critical literacy provides the trajectory to bridge literacy with everyday life. It is multifaceted since there is a myriad of approaches to access the information about cultures, societies, and texts in and outside the classroom (Luke & Woods, 2011).

Taken together, both Lewison et al.'s and Luke and Woods' studies on critical literacy unravel issues that are rudimentary to preservice teachers' growth. The need for preservice teachers to reflect on their practice can aid in promoting more perceptive teachers who are willing to produce change in their instructional practice and become social agents of change. In turn, more informed teachers are able to shape students who are creator of knowledge and analytic thinkers, cognizant of the ramification of underlying meaning within texts. Moreover, awareness of critical literacy can help students make connections between their learning and

issues within the classroom, as well as with life outside the classroom.

**Research on ESOL Preservice Teachers and Literacy.** Below, I highlight four studies on language preservice teachers' conceptions of literacy (Aoulou, 2011; Many et al., 2009; Many, Taylor, Wang, Tinker Sachs & Schreiber, 2007; Poynor, 2005). These culminating studies help build the case for the gap in this study. As student teachers venture out in their practicum, they will encounter and participate in varied literacy practices. Preservice teachers' supervising teachers at their practicum may or may not hold traditional views of literacy instruction (what Street alludes to as autonomous literacy approaches). The supervising teachers may also include ideological literacy approaches including social interaction and new literacies and multi-literacies. In both cases, the ways of literacy practices and events will inform the preservice teachers' conception of literacy. In reviewing the literature, there is not an extensive amount of literature on language or ESOL preservice teachers and literacy. The four studies I have found focus on language preservice teachers' conception of literacy and are included in a table (see Table 2.).

Table 2

**Table 2. Studies of Preservice Teachers' Conception and Sense of Preparedness in Literacy**

Source	Focus	Context	Research Methods	Results
Many, Dewberry, Taylor & Coady, (2009)	To explore ESOL preservice teachers' conceptions and abilities for providing scaffolding to ELs.	Three preservice ESOL teachers with diverse scaffolding views; Alternative masters' program in reading and ESOL in the U.S.	Naturalistic design; initial interviews, written essays of conceptions of learning/teaching/L2; field notes on instructional practices observed; formal interview end of summer for	One preservice teacher's views on scaffolding was unchanged, the others' views grew in understanding and appreciation of scaffolding support. Scaffolding support is linked

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			connections of scaffolding; lessons and written reflections	to one's understanding of language and literacy development.
Many, Taylor, Wang, Tinker Sachs & Schreiber (2007)	“The need to understand preservice teachers' knowledge and ability to implement specific forms of reading instruction for diverse learners”. (p.20).	Eight preservice teachers. Alternative master's program for reading and ESOL certification in the U.S.	Participant observation; constant comparison method; beginning and ending interviews of scaffolding literacy.	Preservice teachers scaffold students' literacy strategies such as sounding out, predicting and composing, building and activating knowledge. They were <i>overwhelmed</i> with the range of literacy processes needing scaffolding.
Poynor (2005)	To examine if there is any influence of the ESL transaction reading method course on preservice teachers shifting to 1 <sup>st</sup> year teachers	ESL endorsement class/ reading and language arts method class/student teaching/ 1 <sup>st</sup> year teaching.	Field notes of class interactions, copies of reflections and assignments, interviews, observations during student teaching and 1 <sup>st</sup> year of teaching.	The transaction methods experience significantly changed their understandings of teaching ELs and influences their teaching. They still had some tensions.
Aoulou (2011)	The purpose of the dissertation study was to ascertain how prior beliefs and experiences shaped ESOL preservice teachers learning	Nine ESOL preservice teachers in an ESOL program at a large urban university in southeastern U.S.	Using modified Language Teaching/ Learning Beliefs Questionnaire, reflective essays, observations, interviews, focus group; done over	The findings suggest that the teacher educators were instrumental in the preservice teachers' development.

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in teacher preparation	3 semesters.	Further, the participants' views on reading were shaped by their 1 <sup>st</sup> language reading experience. They lacked the confidence for L2 reading instruction.
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Table 2 summarizes the four studies I have identified as relevant to this study of ESOL preservice teachers' conception of literacy as well as their preparedness to teach literacy. The major trend in the studies is the change in preservice teachers' conceptions of literacy and literacy practices. It seems most showed deepened understandings of literacy and resulted in changes in the teachers' beliefs and instructional strategies. These new conceptions appeared to be mostly as a result of the knowledge or experiences learned in the teacher education program and were illuminated due to reflections.

One of the studies, Poynor, (2005), showed deliberate effort on the teacher education program's part to reshape the preservice teachers' thinking or conceptualization of their traditional views of literacy and of working with English Learners. Poynor (2005) studied two preservice teachers in the ESL/Bilingual reading and language arts class prior to starting their student teaching but also continued through to their first year of teaching. The 'transaction class' was nontraditional with a strong focus on multicultural children's literature and issues of dialects, and included writing workshop, small group discussions, literature study and critical discussions on traditional transmission of teaching. The preservice teachers felt that the preservice 'transaction' methods course shaped their first year instructional choices. However,

the preservice teachers had a fundamental problem of always feeling pressured to move quickly through the curriculum material which was against the grain of Carmen and Paul's (participants in the study) beliefs of taking the time to honor and validate the cultural and linguistic strengths of their ELs. Both also felt that there were limited opportunities when they became first year teachers to exercise their agency as teachers. They described experiencing "tensions and contradictions between what we knew to be good teaching for language minority children- the theory learned in our methods course- and what we were actually doing (practice)" (p.171). In light of the role of the teacher education in reshaping the preservice teachers' thinking and increasing their confidence about how to assess and work with ELs, the evidence supports the criticality of teacher education in preparing teachers to work with diverse student population (Milner IV, 2010; Darling-Hammond, 2006). The finding also confirms that language preservice teachers' tension on teaching ELs may transfer into their own classroom.

Many, et al (2009) as well as Many et al. (2007) studied preservice teachers' knowledge of how to scaffold ELs' literacy. Both qualitative case studies with ESOL preservice teachers were completed within a teacher education certification program. In both studies, the researchers collected data through interviews, observations, and artifacts. The researchers did initial interviews and followed up with further questions in subsequent interviews. On some occasions, interviews were done after observations of class sessions. Researchers took field notes on the participants' instructional practices and conversations during their summer language and literacy education courses. Copies of the participants' lesson plans and written reflections were collected as part of the data source. Data were collected in fall and spring semesters. Data analysis began simultaneously as data collection using constant comparison method. Emerging patterns were found across the interviews, written reflections and classroom discourse on the preservice

teachers' conceptions of scaffolding. These patterns latter shaped themes for each participant's conception. The findings showed that in both studies the preservice teachers provided scaffolding before, during and after reading and during composition activities. However, in the case of the preservice teachers in Many et al.'s (2007) study, they discussed feeling overwhelmed with the wide range of literacy processes where they needed to provide support for students. Understanding when to ignore and when to pursue support proved to be challenging. Due to the conflicts that preservice teachers felt about the literacy processes, there is strong evidence that suggest that preservice teachers may experience tensions in their learning in teacher education (Freese, 2006).

In analyzing the four studies altogether, the general similarity is that all pertain to second language preservice teachers in teacher education programs. However, the sharp difference with Poynor's study and the other three studies (Aoulou, 2011, Many et al., 2009; Many et al., 2007) is that the focus of Poynor's study is on the teacher education's influence in reshaping the preservice teachers' thinking of traditional literacy. In contrast to Poynor's study, the other three researchers explored the preservice teachers' perspectives and conception of their learning. That is, these three studies focused on the preservice teachers' thinking and beliefs, while Poynor's study concentrated on the effect of the program's design on the preservice teachers.

A closer analysis of the three studies (Aoulou, 2011; Many et al., 2009; Many et al. 2007) shows even more similarities and differences. For one, all three studies occurred in the U.S. with ESOL preservice teachers who were pursuing certification degrees in ESOL teacher education programs. The three studies concentrated on the preservice teachers' thinking and perceptions of their development in reading. Many et al.'s (2009) and Many et al.'s (2007) studies centered on the ESOL preservice teachers' conceptions and abilities for providing scaffolding during reading

to ELs. On the other hand, Aoulou's (2011) dissertation study focused on how the preservice teachers' previous experiences and beliefs impacted their learning and growth in reading instruction within the program. In Aoulou's study, the findings showed that the faculty did draw upon the participant's previous experiences or antecedents in varied degrees to inform their learning and teaching while in the program. In some cases, the faculty did provide varying levels of scaffolding, classroom discussions, reflections, and modeling to support the preservice teachers' learning and help them clear up misconceptions about subject matter. Further findings in Aoulou's study showed that preservice teacher participants were predisposed to social justice before entering the program, which helped them to recommend a need for cultural relevance pedagogy in reading. What is notable however is that all these three studies' emphases laid heavily on reading with minimal reference to writing, with Aoulou's study comparing the participants' sense of L1 and L2 learning and teaching of reading. Literacy includes reading and writing and use of language in various forms and through multiple mediums. Moreover, the studies appeared to concentrate on ESOL preservice teachers' learning of teaching primarily constituted of print resources and minimal technology. In other words, consideration for an emphasis on knowledge or awareness of multiple *literacies* seems absent.

### **Summary of Research on ESOL Preservice Teachers and Literacy**

“The second-language-teaching field changed somewhat with the advent of the communicative approach” (Fleming et al., 2011, p.41). Now the issue of social contexts is critical to language teaching, much like the field of literacy. However, while there is a shift to a more communicative approach to language learning, still a balanced approach that incorporates grammar structure is necessary. Language teachers are often conflicted with decisions about instructional approach with teaching English Learners. Richards and Rodgers (2001) posit that

language teachers need to be cognizant that literacy and language instruction for ELs should not be informed primarily by approaches, but by the students' needs.

New views of literacy have created new ways of conceptualizing literacy. The changing views of literacy from mostly autonomous to ideological models infer that perspectives of literacy has shifted from an individual and isolated perspective to a social and cultural view of literacy. In this section, I highlighted some studies about ESOL preservice teachers who demonstrated a shift in their thinking about literacy from autonomous to ideological models of literacy. I discussed the meaning of new literacy and highlighted mostly media literacy as one mode for understanding literacy. While these elements alone do not constitute the full meaning of new literacy, they are critical in shaping understanding of preservice teachers' conceptions and perspectives. New literacy affords continuous learning inside and outside of school, at any time and across spaces. Further, it empowers learners and builds on strengths many students already possess and bring to the classroom. New literacies accommodate communicative practices for English Learners. Three of the four language studies featured ESOL teachers' learning of reading as part of a teacher education program. The studies showed the preservice teacher's thinking about a component of reading. However, the studies lacked the ESOL preservice teachers' thinking of new literacies and literacy conceptualized as a social practice. The present study will fill this gap.

### **Gap in Research on ESOL Preservice Teachers and Literacy**

A closer examination of all these four studies and of the topics discussed in the literature of the present study is pertinent to understanding ESOL preservice teachers' conceptions and perceptions of literacy and their sense of preparedness with working with ELs. However, the issues and developments are dispersed across the studies and not captured in one study. There also appears to be limited research studies of ESOL preservice teachers' perceptions and



awareness of their preparation in teaching literacy to ELs in the U.S. The purpose of this study was to fill this gap. Given the view of language and language teaching now constituted as social practice, similarly to literacy, it suggests literature on language teaching is necessary in this review of a study with language teachers. Literature on language teaching as social practice helped with framing the types of interview questions the preservice teachers were asked about their literacy instruction for ELs. By choosing to review literature on reflection, it enlightened my understanding of how to analyze the preservice teachers' written beliefs on literacy as well as sharpened my analysis of their different perspectives throughout the study. The comprehensive review of literature on literacy provided clear explanations on traditional and contemporary perspectives of literacy. This knowledge helped me to better understand the participants' conceptions of literacy as well as the lens they were using to frame their beliefs.

### **CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the perspectives of three English Speakers of Other Language (ESOL) pre-service teachers' conceptions of literacy and to ascertain how their learning shaped their teaching identities. In an effort to ascertain the participants' new and evolving conceptions of literacy and more specifically understand how they grappled with the complexity of literacy instruction for ELs, a qualitative study was ideal for answering the questions. I examined the participants' initial understandings within their course work, their oral and written discourse during their practicum settings, and their interview responses over the course of seven months. The research questions were:

1. How are ESOL pre-service teachers' beliefs and understandings of literacy development in language teaching shaped and revised as a result of participation in an ESOL teacher certification program?

2. How do ESOL preservice teachers' identities shift as they experience course work and practicum while in the certification program?

### **The Case for the Case Study**

I employed qualitative methods to answer the research questions. I believe in order to gain a more complete understanding of the participants' conceptions and meaning about their experience, I have to get as close to the phenomenon as possible. Qualitative research allows for this intimate examination of the complexities (Merriam, 2009). Through interviews and observations of course work participation and practicum experiences "thick" (Geertz, 1973) descriptions were possible. Specifically, I employed a qualitative case study as my research design. The case study best captured the preservice teachers' perceptions about what constitutes literacy and their understanding of perspectives of literacy instruction for ELs.

The decision to use a case study design in this study was based on several factors. For one, the type of research questions and the literature review I conducted beforehand are ideal components for conducting a case study (Yin, 2009). My research questions are "how" questions, which mainly deal with explanations and operational links over a certain time frame (Yin, 2009). I hoped to understand how the preservice teachers' understandings of literacy were being shaped and how their learning impacted their teaching identities over two semesters. The issue of teacher identity in language teaching is a contemporary event that researchers are examining more and more (Cross, 2010). As researchers increasingly realize how thinking and practice better inform teacher identity (Cross, 2010), more studies include data on both. Cross highlighted observations and interviews as critical in capturing complexity of teacher thinking. Additionally, since case studies allow for multiple sources of data such as interviews and observations (Yin, 2009), the case for the case study as a methodology strengthens in this study.

To that end, I was able to use case study methods to examine the preservice teachers' identities as they were being shaped and revised over a two semester period of time.

The case for a qualitative case study in this study was based on several other factors. Merriam (2009) states that a critical component of a case study is identifying 'the case' or what is being studied. Merriam further states that the case study is unique because it is a 'bounded system' which is a single entity with boundaries. The bounded system in a case study may be shaped by placing limits on the context and the phenomenon being study, based on the collection of evidence, and factors relating to time, space and numbers of individuals (Yin, 2009). This case study is bounded by time (two semesters of an ESOL teacher certification program) as well as by the participants who enroll in the program. The phenomenon studied was their shifting understandings of literacy.

Finally, sociocultural theories are ideal for illuminating studies on identities and are typically used to frame sociocultural education research. Lewis, Enciso and Moje (2007) stress how sociocultural theories and research provide a forum which shows the shift from a deficit-oriented research focus to research seeking "to understand the social and cultural practices of people from many different backgrounds and experiences" (p.3). Case study research is also ideal for sociocultural research since they seek to understand complexities of people's lived experiences.

While case studies are an ideal tool for qualitative research, Yin (2009) outlines some common mistrust against case studies that make them appear unreliable for research. A common perception is that case studies are not rigorous enough for research and that the procedures are considered inconsistent. Another perception is that case studies ideally do not lead to scientific generalization, making it a questionable methodology. The length of time for completing a

research is another factor that creates mistrust about case studies. However, the strength of the case study far outweighs the cons. There is much more to be gained than lose with use of this design. While another research design such as a history study utilizes similar techniques as the case study, it lacks the bonus features of direct observation and interviewing of the participants in real time (Yin, 2009). Additionally, the design techniques of multiple data collection sources including interviews, observations, and documents, further favored the case study design for gaining the participants' meaning. Therefore, in light of the type of research questions and the contemporary event being studied, the case study was ideal for this study.

Dyson and Genishi (2005) underscore that meaning is more than the shared repertoire people have, but also includes the context that ultimately shapes the interpretation of their experiences. These researchers clarified that context is not only pertaining to the physical setting but the situational factors at play that shape meanings for people within the context. As such, the qualitative case study allows researchers to “see what some phenomenon means as it is socially enacted within a particular case” (Dyson & Genishi, 2005), p.10).

### **Position of the Researcher**

Bogdan and Biklen (2007) state that it is not possible for researcher to be completely free of biases but that researchers should declare possible biases and ways to limit them. As a reading specialist working with ELs over the course of 11 years, my own experiences and interpretations were brought to bear on the research questions, design, and analysis. I believe that these experience and the history I bring to the study gives me a sharper eye and enriches the study's methodological decisions. For instance, my classroom experience with varied activities, strategies and curricular planning for ELs informed the types of interview questions that I deemed important to probe in the study. However, I am aware that I need to be cautious about

projecting my views onto the participants (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). My interest in studying ESOL preservice teachers is a result of inner conflicts I had observed and learned from ESOL colleagues and a preservice teacher at my school.

I was mindful and cognizant of my ethical role as a researcher to remain neutral towards these biases as much as possible to better interpret the participant's lived experiences. Based on my dissertation focus on ESOL preservice teachers, I took courses on ESL teaching and learning. Pursuing these courses in some way positions me as an insider. I approached the study with an open mind to learn about the participants' own meanings by encouraging them to describe and explain their stories as thoroughly as possible. I asked for elaboration to ensure clarity as told and seen from their perspectives. I included interview questions that highlight the participants' own experiences before entering the program and while in the program. The documents I selected from the participants including written reflections and lesson plans are authentic pieces as part of the program's requirement by course instructors. In analysis and reporting, I included the participants' own words as much as possible to tell their story truthfully and project them as experts of their own lives.

It is my hope that through interviews and discussions, the study would bring a sharper awareness to the critical issues that preservice teachers should consider and reflect on prior to starting student teaching. I also hoped that the participants' sense of awareness would shape them to become agents of change by seeking out the necessary knowledge or resource they need before they started student teaching. In the next section, I discuss the context of the study, which in this case is a particular teacher education program. I describe the contextual features at play such as the program requirements, a profile of Cultural Issues for Bilingual and English as a

Second Language Teacher and Theory and Pedagogy in the Study of Reading classes, the University-based Literacy Clinic and practicum experiences within the program.

### **Context**

I begin with descriptions of two settings that were pertinent to this study: the university classroom, including the University-based Literacy Clinic, and the K-12 sites where the participants engaged in. Fairway State University (a pseudonym) is an urban university in the southeastern U.S. It is a public research university which hosts many colleges of which the College of Education is just one. It recruits over thirty thousand students annually from the U.S. and other countries around the world. Its central location in the metropolitan area situates it along the bus and train line, affording easy access for many students. Fairway offers over 200 undergraduate degree majors and minors in its colleges. The university also offers several online programs which makes it accommodating for non-traditional working students as well as students who desire an online experience. The degree programs range from business, sciences including nursing, computer science, education, religious studies, to women's and gender studies. The ESOL master degree is only one of the many degrees in the College of Education.

**ESOL program requirements.** The Master of Arts in Teaching (M.A.T.) degree program requires a minimum of 45 credit semester hours which ultimately leads to state certification at the initial level in ESOL, as well as meets requirements for a reading endorsement. The goal of the program is to prepare teachers to work with English learners in P-12 settings. Students holding a bachelor's degree in any field are welcomed in the program. The language requirements for entering the program is that potential candidates may have experience working with ELs, have successfully completed a semester of foreign language, completed two to three semesters of a foreign language, or have one year experience studying abroad. Potential

preservice teachers are typically interviewed to ascertain their level of dedication and commitment to the rigor of the program. Students are also asked about their rationale for entering the program and for pursuing teaching. All students are required to submit a portfolio demonstrating their learning of standards at the end of the program.

The program includes courses in literacy, ESOL, applied linguistics, research methodologies, and social foundations. The preservice teachers are expected to take three literacy courses: Theory and Pedagogy in the Study of Reading, Literacy in the Content Areas, and Assessment and Instruction for At-Risk Readers. They also take three ESOL courses: Cultural Issues for Bilingual/ESL Teacher, Applied Linguistics for the Bilingual/ESL Teachers, and Methods and Materials for the Bilingual/ESL Teacher. Further requirements include three Applied Linguistics courses: General Linguistics, Sociolinguistics, and English Grammar for ESL/EFL Teachers. The three internship courses: Practicum I and Practicum II in the fall, and Practicum III (student teaching) in the spring serve the program's requirement for field experience. Preservice teachers also take three credit hours each of the following courses: Psychology of Learning and Learners, Social and Cultural Foundations of Education or Multicultural Education, Method of Research in Education, and Characteristics and Instructional Strategies for Students with Disabilities. Student entry and the program schedule is sequential and typically runs from summer through the next summer. For example, the literacy courses, ESOL courses, and curriculum and instruction courses are only taught in specific semesters, requiring students to pursue them during the scheduled times they are offered in certain semesters. The other courses may be taken in any order and during any semester while in the program. The courses are all taught at the university by instructors holding PhD degrees which specialize in the respected fields.

As mentioned earlier, the program includes four semesters (e.g., summer, fall, spring, and summer). During the first summer semester, the participants receive coursework on theories about second language learning and teaching, as well as fundamental reading theories for six weeks at the university. Below, I describe two critical courses: Cultural Issues for Bilingual and English as a Second Language Teacher and Theory and Pedagogy in the Study of Reading. The culture class was important to the participants as they made many references to the course over the data collection period. The theory reading class was critical to this study to further ascertain how the program mediate the participants' literacy learning.

**Cultural Issues for Bilingual and English as a Second Language Teacher Course.** The goal of the Cultural Issues for Bilingual and English as a Second Language Teacher was to prepare students to explore culture and cultural issues and to ascertain the role of culture in children education. The course also covers linguistic and cultural knowledge in the K-12 school setting for English learners. As part of the course requirements the participants were required to tutor one student in their home. The preservice teachers had to identify a learning goal and design lessons to help their individual student master targeted literacy skills. In subsequent classes, each teacher was required to share with the whole class how the student was developing in their language communication both written and spoken, and receive feedback from the instructor and group for future instruction. Each preservice teacher was responsible for additional presentations as part of the course requirement.

During class meetings, there were course readings, discussions about readings, as well as lectures. Similar to the Theory and Pedagogy in the Study of Reading class, the preservice teachers reflected on their experiences in their journals. The Cultural Issues for Bilingual and English as a Second Language Teacher class was also taught over the summer with the theory



reading class, where preservice teachers attended twice a week. As a result, learning from the theory reading class facilitated learning in the Cultural Issues class, as well as helped preservice teachers' in their tutoring field experience.

**Theory and Pedagogy in the Study of Reading Course.** The goal of the Theory and Pedagogy in the study of Reading class was to teach the preservice teachers specific strategies, methodologies and identify potential material for teaching reading to all students but particularly English learners. The course also addresses theories that are critical to the understanding of reading. This course was the first method course in their program coursework.

The class met twice a week in a classroom of the College of Education over six weeks during the summer. Each class session lasted for two and a half hours. The routine of the class instructional framework included lectures, class discussions, and group discussions. Much of the discussions surrounded the readings and interpretations or connections about the theories. The instructor elaborated on the principles of the theories and gave personal and practical classroom K-12 experiences of the application of the theories. Students were encouraged to join in discussions about the reading and make connections to their experiences with tutoring of current students as well as previous students they taught. The syllabus for the course covered topics on theory, literacy development and social learning perspectives. The major textbook for the class was *Lenses on Reading: An Introduction to Theories and Models* (Tracey & Morrow, 2006). They were also responsible for reading several journal articles and include their thoughts in their reflections.

As part of the class during the summer, the preservice teachers were required to write ten reflections of their textbook reading and class discussions in a double entry journal. The preservice teachers were responsible for turning in these reflections each successive class period.

The reflections included not only details of their readings, but also their thoughts and insights about the readings, including how the theories were informing their understanding of literacy, as well as how the theories framed the practice they were currently engaged in or that they observed while in the program. The preservice teachers were also required to engage in a culminating project assignment profiling a selected reading theorist's contributions to the reading field. The theorists were classified as being part of the behaviorist, cognitive, or socio-cultural paradigm. Preservice teachers worked in peers and presented their learning using visuals and audio presentation.

**University-based Literacy Clinic.** The preservice teachers also met at the University-based Literacy Clinic twice over the summer as partial requirement of the Theory and Pedagogy in the Study of Reading class. The Urban Literacy Clinic is an on-site laboratory classroom where teachers in training meet for classes and tutoring instruction. The preservice teachers met at the University-based Literacy Clinic to observe how theories transfer to practice in actual teaching events. While the preservice teachers did not engage in actual teaching at the University-based Literacy Clinic, they observed in-service classroom teachers, who were tutoring middle school students from area middle schools as fulfillment of their master's degree. Recall, Day (1990) emphasizes the criticality of language preservice teachers engaging in observation as necessary in shaping their conception of second language teaching. The ESOL preservice teachers sat in among the students and the teachers and took observational notes. The notes included details of the lesson themes, instructional framework, and students' responses and interactions. The preservice teachers were required to reflect on the types of literacy practices they observed and identify which reading theories the in-service teachers were incorporating in their lessons.

**Practicum I and II Experiences.** As part of the certification program requirement, the preservice teachers participated in two practicum experiences at two different schools, in two different grades during the fall semester with the prospects of engaging in the third level for their final practicum or student teaching in the spring. The rationale for engaging in various levels was to provide the preservice teachers with a range of experiences that would better prepare them for their own classrooms after leaving the program. During the practicum experiences, the preservice teachers were evaluated by their university supervisor, who observed their teaching experiences in the classroom. In addition to their practicum courses, the participants also continued to take course to fulfil the M.Ed. program requirements.

The participants' first practicum experience lasted for six weeks for twenty hours each week. The goal of this first practicum was to provide opportunity for the participants to receive field experiences under the supervision of mentor teacher at the schools. The participants were not required to teach lessons during this first experience, but mostly observed their mentor teacher. As much as possible, they took notes and wrote reflections on their experiences as part of their first practicum. The participants were also encouraged to observe other teachers within the school to gain as much teaching information as possible. During the second practicum experience which lasted eight weeks, the participants were in the classroom for up to 20 hours a week, planning and teaching a variety of lessons. The participants were required to teach four lessons over the eight weeks period. This experience was intended to strengthen the preservice teachers' experiential knowledge by linking theory to practice. They designed literacy lessons to teach ESOL students in small and whole groups. They wrote and taught few literacy lessons as part of their course requirement. Over time at the second practicum, the participants gradually

assumed lesson planning responsibilities for up to three weeks of the curriculum instruction to meet program requirement.

While at their practicum experience I and II, the preservice teachers were required to work closely with the mentor teacher, who was the main teacher for the classroom at each K-12 level. The mentor teacher provided feedback and opportunities for the preservice teachers to grow professionally. The mentor teacher also provided feedback to the supervising teacher from the university about the preservice teachers' development while in the practicum experience. Much of the learning in K-12 setting came from the mentor teachers' modeling and in a few cases observations from other teachers in the school. Before agreeing to the assignment for supervising preservice teachers, the mentor teachers watched a video on their role and expectations in supporting the preservice teachers.

During the spring semester for their third practicum experience, the preservice teachers participated in student teaching for 40 hours weekly for 16 weeks, where they were mostly responsible for managing the classroom, as well as planning and teaching lessons. The participants were required to complete a four-week unit of lessons in all subject areas for 90 minutes daily. Eventually, the participants were required to assume the role of the classroom teacher. The preservice teachers continued to take additional course work in the evenings at the university. Kanno and Stuart (2011) suggest that having the opportunity to teach more than one semester is important in teacher development. Further, as the preservice teachers engaged in practice within the various communities and with different activities, their teaching identities were being shaped and reshaped (Wenger, 1998). During the second summer session, which is the fourth semester, the preservice teachers finalized any unfinished courses in the sequence of courses as well as complete a portfolio for completion of the certification program.

## Participants

At the start of the study, I visited the *Theory and Pedagogy in the Study of Reading* methods class at the university to familiarize myself with the setting. I also formally introduced myself and my study to the class during the first week. I explained the purpose of the study and the voluntary nature, as well as what would be considered short term and long term commitments, if chosen. Short term requirements meant all eight participants were welcomed to complete the questionnaire, and had the potential to be in the study. The long term requirements of the selected participants included participating in interviews, observations, and sharing written reflections and lesson plans over the two semesters. I also outlined possible benefits of the study such as how the study could highlight awareness of the preservice teachers' understanding of literacy.

The year of the study, the program had an enrollment of eight preservice teachers. Participant selection for the study was conducted by using purposive sampling from the pool of the eight preservice teachers in the program. Three participants were selected. While this number of participants may seem low, it was necessary since I was the sole researcher. It afforded more ease and realistic management of the data collection and analysis. I choose the three participants based on their responses to an initial questionnaire that was administered to the whole class of eight preservice teachers during my first visit. (See Appendix E for questionnaire). Researchers (Aoulou, 2011; Ezer et al., 2010; Hudson et al., 2008) utilized questionnaires with preservice teachers to frame their perceptions on teaching and learning. However, I had to first ascertain written consent from each of the eight original preservice teachers in the class. All of the preservice teachers agreed to answer the questionnaire.

There were various considerations outlined in the questionnaire. Since the preservice

teachers hailed from different backgrounds, they naturally had different experiences. The questionnaire ascertained information about the participants' histories, perceptions, attitudes and knowledge about teaching literacy. Knowledge of participants' histories was important for understanding their conception about learning and teaching. I requested reasons for entering teaching, experiences with learning a second language, and with working with ELs. Olsen (2008) posits that teachers' reasons for entering teaching sometimes range from gender-based reason, family traditions, perceptions as caregivers, and high self-efficacy to understanding reading and writing. In this study it was important to know how, if in any way, previous experiences with ELs informed their decision for entering the program. Since the students the preservice teachers would be working with students who would be learning English, it was necessary to also ask about the preservice teachers' philosophies about learning a second language as well as their personal experiences with language learning. As a researcher, I also considered how the experiences of the ESOL preservice teachers I worked with informed the selection process. Some of my ESOL colleagues have mixed feelings about teaching reading and writing to their ELs. That is, a few do not feel knowledgeable about teaching literacy to ELs. Others have a preference of teaching reading more than writing and vice a versa. Consequently, I felt it was necessary to examine the participants' beliefs about how students learn literacy and how comfortable they about felt teaching reading and writing. As much as possible, I selected participants from different gender, race, and culture. Typically, teachers are white females from middle class families. Their lived experiences are sometimes different from their students' lives. Also, since females are often associated with being caregivers, they have traditionally predominated the teaching career. However, it has been my experience that teachers of any race and male teachers can advocate for students and make connections to their lives. As a result, the

three participants, Lauren, Larry, and Mary were purposively selected since they met these criteria.

After recruiting the three participants for the study, I received official consents from them for the longer phase of the study. The signed informed consent outlined the purpose of the research, my role as a researcher, and benefits and risks to them as participants (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). The signed consents were included as part of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) protocol. I submitted IRB approval four weeks before the study began. I assigned a pseudonym for each participant for being part of the study. The three participants were Lauren, Larry, and Mary. Table 3. *Profile of Participants* outlines critical details about each participant.

Table 3

**Table 3.** Profile of Participants

Names	Previous Experiences	Program Expectation	Undergraduate Degree
Lauren (white female)	Experience in curriculum planning for K-12 & adults	Hoped to develop strong mentorship relationships	Horticulture
Larry (white male)	Tutoring experience with Brazilians no K-12 experience	Hoped to learn from others to be an effective teacher	International Affairs
Mary (Black female)	Tutoring experience in after school K-12 program	Hoped to be a better prepared teacher	French

### **Lauren**

Lauren is in her early thirties. Lauren was born in the southeastern U.S. She attended public schools during her elementary, middle and high school years. Previous to pursuing the ESOL degree, she engaged in extensive tutoring opportunities with K-8 students in afterschool and summer programs. Most of these students were refugee students receiving English instruction at the refugee center. She also worked in the Peace Corp teaching English to K-5<sup>th</sup> grade students. In high school, Lauren worked in a refugee center with students preparing them

in a job readiness program. Her goal was to prepare students for life after college, including postsecondary education, and entry into the work force or military service. She also helped students complete their high school diploma. She has also worked teaching English to international Center for Disease Control (CDC) professionals, scholars, and university students.

Lauren stressed the importance of reading and the role of her mother in teaching her to read. She recalled how her mom would brag about teaching her to read at a very young age. She stated that learning came very easy for her and that she always was aware that she was ahead of her other classmates. Interestingly however, Lauren never felt smart until her senior year in high school. During this timeframe, she helped tutor students in Spanish 1 and 2 classes, since she was academically ahead of most students. She is pursuing ESOL teaching because she enjoys the different nationalities and the multiple opportunities she gets to speak different languages such as Spanish. Moreover, in each of her tutoring experiences post high school, she had the opportunity to design her own curriculum to teach people English. These experiences have also greatly influenced her decision in becoming an ESOL teacher versus pursuing social work. She wishes to teach in a public high school when she completes the certification program.

Lauren explains that she learns best through direct instruction. That is, she needs repetition of instruction and confirmation of directions. She feels that the teachers' role is to create a sense of community in the classroom. By doing so, it will facilitate learning that is best for students. Lauren speaks two foreign languages including Spanish and Cantonese. She explained that while knowledge of three languages are a benefit, it can create processing issues to meander between the different languages. As a result, Lauren can relate to English Learners struggling to learn English:



Lauren: I can see how a lot of kids that might have two languages that they have had to learn or maybe two different families from two different backgrounds and they know these two different languages and then in addition to learning English. And having this third language, I can feel sympathetic about oh man, it just takes me longer to think about things and to process what I'm going to say because I can go a few different ways with my response (Interview 2).

Lauren's high school and college years were spent overseas, which further strengthened her ability to learn multiple-languages and provided opportunities to interact with English Learners. She has also volunteered in teaching and in an exchange program for adult English Learners including college professors. Lauren's experience working with English Learners also helped her to realize the divide among different groups of people. A great portion of her teaching experiences has been with mostly refugee students from places like Burma and Somalia. She feels these experiences have fortified her understanding of the students' lives and the struggles they have been through. Lauren has seen firsthand how some of these students reluctantly attempted to use their primary language in school. As a result, she provided havens within her classroom to promote student's languages while learning English.

Lauren's second practicum experience was at a high school that hosted predominantly immigrants and refugee students from places such as Nepal, Burundi, and Burma. Many of the students spoke limited English and received some of their instruction in sheltered classes. The school had close to 1500 students with upwards of 800 ESL students. Lauren's instruction occurred mostly in the World Literature class, which provided a sheltered content class for the immigrant and refugee students. Lauren later told me that these students had been in the U.S. anywhere from six months to 4 years.

## Larry

Larry is in his early twenties. He is a well-mannered person, who speaks with a strong southern accent, which he attributes to being born in the south eastern U.S. He attended public high school. Before entering the M.Ed. program, he did not have tutoring or teaching experience with K-12 English learners. However, he has extensive tutoring experience with Brazilian students teaching them English since being in college. Larry completed his undergraduate degree at a local university in the south eastern U.S.

Larry recalls his mom constantly reading to him and his sibling as children. He remembers having to reading a book to his mom and then being tested about it in school. Other times, the family went to the library and picked up books of his favorite series. As a result, he attributes his reading to watching his older sister and his mom and not to school. He recalls however hating reading in the lower grades and did it just because it was required. Now he enjoys reading books about social issues with inequality and cultural issues around the world. One of the reasons Larry is interested in working with ESOL students is because of his experiences working with his Brazilian students, learning about cultural issues in their country, and studying about their rampant inequities.

Larry states that he is a tactile learner, who learns best through conducting and participating in demonstrations. He also benefits from auditory instruction. His beliefs of the teacher's role is as the classroom facilitator. That is, the teacher facilitates the learning environment for students. He also feels that the teacher is no longer the center of learning and attention. Instead, as the teacher creates a conducive learning environment, it encourages and directs students to locate and identify questions and answers for themselves. He also believes the teacher's role is to provide differentiated instruction, scaffolding, interesting, and relevant

material for learning, and to provide innovative ways to encourage student writing, reading, and literacy learning:

Larry: My understanding is that when you have students that are on different levels or that understand concepts differently or grasp them differently, that you need to provide different ways to bring that knowledge into the classroom (Interview 2).

He learned how to speak Portuguese, but mostly understands how to read Spanish. Much of his learning of Spanish was from the environment around him including from his father's workers in the community:

Ann: And so I guess there's some truth to learning it in a hands on way.

Larry: Yeah, I think that's more. A lot of people probably have that method of learning. And I have it very heavily. I learn more from environment, social interaction, and just always hands-on more and interacting with people. (Interview 1).

In high school, he travelled to Spain for his last semester. He has also worked with English Learners who he met in Brazil and still tutors them through Skype. While he teaches his students English, he uses the opportunity to learn Portuguese.

Larry's second practicum experience was at an elementary suburban school where there were only fourteen ESL students in the student population. Since there were not many English learners at the school, there was only one ESOL teacher who worked with the students. These students were born in the U.S. to immigrant parents. Most of the students spoke Spanish and a few spoke French. Larry worked daily with two different groups of ELs teaching them English. The room Larry worked in was small in size and was referred to as the ESL room since this was where the few English learners received services. Along one wall of the room, there were five computers for students to work on. On another wall was a whiteboard next to a small table for

students to do work. There was also a mounted T.V., a document camera, and a bookshelf with leveled books for reading instruction. Along another wall was a kidney shaped table with four chairs for students and one for the teacher. There was also a word wall with words posted alphabetically on one wall.

### **Mary**

Mary, is in her late twenties. She is mostly serious but knows how to laugh to break the ice. She was born in the south eastern U.S. and attended public school. Mary did have tutoring opportunities working with students before entering the ESOL program. Most of the tutoring was with middle and high school students in summer camps, after school programs, and Sunday school class. Mary's minor for her undergraduate was in Urban Education at a metropolitan southeastern U.S. university.

Mary recalls that she never struggled with reading and cannot remember learning to read. However, she contributes much of her early literacy experiences to her family including her mom and her grandmother. She attended and had to repeat Head Start preschool program, since she was very young. Mary initially never appreciated the teaching profession. She felt teaching would not provide opportunity for moving upwards. However, one of her university professors encouraged her to pursue teaching and the ESOL program, due to her foreign language background, which resulted in a shift of her concept of teaching to seeing teachers as agents of change and as builders of the community.

Mary speaks French as a foreign language. Her first experience with English Learners were in high school. She also has experiences learning French with English Learners in France after high school. One of her most memorable moments is in France at a cultural program where she studied with people from countries such as Vietnam, China, German, Ukraine, and also

America. She fondly remembers leading a group with some Vietnamese and Chinese members and being responsible for reporting the groups' findings including comparing the differences between the cultures. While it was difficult to facilitate due to the various languages, she was successful in imparting their similarities and differences. As a result of this experience, Mary's attitude to teaching ELs is that they all have different experiences, which will shape their perspectives, ultimately it should shape the instruction students receive.

Mary's second practicum was in a suburban area elementary school with a large ESL student population. The English learners were mostly Hispanic students born in the U.S. to immigrant parents. The students did speak English but still had difficulty with language and vocabulary. Therefore, the students in Mary's third grade class were in a mainstream setting of twenty-four students receiving English language instruction. Twenty-three of the students were Hispanics and one African American. An ESOL teacher pushed in daily and work alongside the classroom teacher to support students' learning.

The classroom I observed Mary in had six clusters of four desks where the students sat in groups of four. There were at least three computers in each clusters of four desks along with headphones. There was an overhead projector. Students' work were posted on the walls. On one bulletin board, the students' writing and drawings were posted. On another bulletin board at the front of the classroom, there were anchor charts as well as instructional charts. On one of the charts, there was the /ed/ suffix and three different sounds noted for /ed/. Another chart showed the /ing/ ending and described how to use words ending with this pattern.

### **Data Collection**

A couple months before the program began, I met with the coordinator of the program to learn more about the courses that the preservice teachers take over the summer and fall

semesters, as well as the course requirements for program completion. Data collection covered these two semesters. This information helped shape some of the interview questions. I also met with the instructor of the *Theory and Pedagogy in the Study of Reading* class two weeks to introduce myself and explain the nature of the research. I obtained the syllabus for the class and verified the course requirements and assignments. In order to develop a full understanding of the participants' conceptions, I conducted interviews, wrote field notes they participated in class and in their practicums, and collected artifacts from their coursework and their teaching.

### **Interviews**

I conducted four in-depth semi-structured interviews with each participant over the two semesters of the study, which aided in understanding their teacher identities. Interviews are essential and key to case studies (Yin, 2009). Interviews are targeted and can directly focus on the case study topic. Interviews are ideal for case study because they highlight human issues (Yin, 2009). All interviews, lasting 45 – 60 minutes and occurring at the university library were audiotaped. I included interview protocol of guiding questions for each set of interviews (See Appendices A, B, C, and D). The interview protocol is “a written version of the main questions” (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 147).

The first set of interviews were conducted at the beginning of the study in the second week of June during the program in the summer. The interview questions focused on the preservice teachers' professional lives and about what they did before pursuing teaching. I ascertained their rationale for entering teaching profession, specifically language teaching. I established what their experiences were with ELs and their beliefs about how ELs learn. I obtained the preservice teachers' perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes of working with ELs and their understanding of what literacy meant to them. I also explored how the preservice teachers

feel about literacy instruction. I inquired about their expectations for being in the program. That is, I wanted to know what they were hoping to attain in the program and how best they felt it would prepare them for student teaching in the spring. I inquired about their philosophy of reading and writing and what they deemed as important reading and writing practices for instruction. I transcribed the interviews immediately. Follow up questions as a result of the first interview and reflection were used to guide the interview questions for the second interview over the summer. That is, I allowed for flexibility of adding or deleting questions, and seeking clarification as needed, during the second and subsequent interviews.

The second set of interviews were during the fifth week of the summer session in mid-July of the teacher education program. The rationale for doing an interview at that point was two-fold. For one, I wanted to understand how the time in the teacher education program up to that point was shaping the teachers' discourse about language teaching and literacy for ELs. Additionally, I inquired about the literacy events and practices within the *Theory and Pedagogy in the Study of Reading* methods class. These reports were used to corroborate other data sources such as field notes of observations of the theory reading method class over the summer and the participants' reflections. That is, after reviewing the first and second reflections collected, I reread and asked follow up questions during the second interview. The second set of interviews were administered to give me a better understanding of the participants' future decisions, goals, rationale, expectations and plans for their practicum experiences in the fall.

The third set of semi-structured interviews were conducted the third week of their first practicum in October. Specifically, I hoped to ascertain how the preservice teachers' first practicum experience influenced their understanding of learning and teaching ELs literacy (Kanno & Stuart, 2011). This interview was used to substantiate the third reflection notes to

ascertain how the participants were developing their understanding of literacy. This third set of interviews helped me confirm or disconfirm the teachers' projected goals and expectations for the practicum and corroborated their reflections. The interviews were transcribed and coded immediately to secure any emerging patterns.

The fourth and final set of interviews were conducted during first week of December of the preservice teachers' second practicum experience in the fall. During this interview, I hoped to understand how the preservice teachers felt about their practice experience at a different K-12 level. That is, what were the similarities and differences in approaches for working with students at varying K-12 grade levels. I inquired about the literacy practices that they felt had informed their knowledge of working with ELs. Ultimately, I hoped to understand how prepared the preservice teachers felt as they headed into student teaching. I also asked follow up questions about previous interviews, patterns in the reflections, lesson plans, and patterns within the field notes of all previous observations. I kept the interviews in a secure place and assigned pseudonyms to protect participants' confidentiality (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). The participants also had a chance to review the interviews transcriptions as part of member checking process to ensure agreement with the information in the interviews.

It is my hope that the participants benefited from the interviewing process by being more reflective of their learning (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Interviews highlight ones' thoughts. Cross (2010) alludes to the methodological shift in researchers increasingly using interviews along with observations to study thoughts and practice. While interviews are "key ingredients" for case studies, researchers should take cautionary steps against possible bias, poor recall, and inaccuracies from interviewees (Yin, 2009). As a result, there is a great need for corroboration from other sources, such as observations.



## **Observations**

Observations are ideal for covering “events in real time” (Yin, 2009, p. 102). Observations are also perfect for covering the full context of a case (Yin, 2009). However, it is important to be mindful that observations may be time consuming and may have a level of reflexivity resulting in participants contriving their actions. Therefore, I operated as a non-participant by sitting in the back of the room. In this study, the observations were done over two semesters and in two different settings. I collected field notes as I observed the participants which were transcribed and added to the data source. The first set of observations were conducted during the Theory and Pedagogy in the Study of Reading methods class at the university during the summer. These initial observations were conducted for two and half hours twice a week over the six weeks summer semester, totaling twelve observations of this class. I took field notes of the instruction and conversations of literacy. The notes entailed instances of literacy practices, lectures, and discourse during the class. The contributing discourse and statements of the participants were noted and used to shape subsequent interviews. I wrote memos of the literacy activities that ensued during each reading theory methods class to determine how they helped to shape the ESOL preservice teachers’ learning within the teaching program. These observations were also used as corroborating evidence for the research question about participants’ learning and development occurred during coursework.

The second set of observations occurred at the local K-12 settings the preservice teachers were placed in during the fall semester. Since there were minimal lesson planning and teaching required at the first practicum experience, I observed the participants at their second practicum site for ninety minutes during their literacy blocks in November. The preservice teachers were responsible for some lesson planning and instruction at their second practicum, where they spent

20 hours each week. They were required to teach 3-5 lessons on a mini-unit relating to the students' literacy curriculum and students' needs. I took field notes during this practicum observation. This observation better informed my understanding of how they were developing in their conceptions of literacy and helped corroborate the literacy practices they discussed in their previous reflections. I operated as a non-participant observer by sitting towards the back in their classrooms, where I could take field notes undisturbed and unobtrusive (Kanno & Stuart, 2011).

Specifically, during the second practicum in the fall, I observed the activities that the preservice teachers planned and listened to the types of questions and follow-up responses they used during their instruction. Additionally, I was able to see how the participants reflected on their lessons. That is, I had deeper insight about meanings the participants were gaining from the activities they planned and how these engagements were informing their understanding of literacy and how ELs learn literacy. I wrote field notes for each observation.

Any questions I had of my observations were noted in an effort to strengthen subsequent interviews. I included memos of any patterns that I saw emerging throughout the study. The field notes below describe my observations of a lesson at the participants' second practicum.

### **Documentations: Artifacts Collected**

Yin (2009) suggests that the "most important use of documents is to corroborate and augment evidence from other sources" (p.103). The strength of the document lies in the fact that they can be reviewed repeatedly (Yin, 2009). In the case of my study, I reviewed four different reflections from each participant over the two semesters. Two sets of reflections were collected during the summer as part of their class assignments for the *Theory and Pedagogy in the Study of Reading* methods class and the other two reflections were collected during the fall semester as required for their practicum experiences. The reflections shed light on the preservice teachers' thinking about the program and their practicum experiences. I also analyzed two lesson plans

during the second part of the practicum in the fall to gain a sense of their understanding of what is critical for literacy instruction for ELs. The lesson plans reflected the literacy practices and events as well as the types of questions that drive the preservice teachers' thinking. The questionnaires and syllabus of the *Theory and Pedagogy in the Study of Reading* methods class were collected and included in the data set to help answer the two research questions.

As mentioned previously two of the four reflections I collected were part of the prescribed syllabus for the *Theory and Pedagogy in the Study of Reading Method* class in the summer. These reflections were among ten required over the six weeks by the course instructor. Expectations for these reflections include analysis of the experiences in the Urban Literacy Clinic, connections to course readings and how they could apply the new learning. The other two reflections I collected were during the fall semester when the participants were in their practicum course and attending classes at the university in the evenings. As part of coursework requirement in the fall, the preservice teachers wrote reflections about their experience, about lesson planning, and about their learning in practicum and coursework.

In sum, data collection included questionnaires, interview transcriptions, and field notes of observations. Reflections, theory method class syllabus, and lesson plans were used as artifacts to substantiate teachers' shaping and reshaping in learning and teaching literacy for ELs. Data collection occurred alongside data analysis.

### **Data Sources and Data Management**

The data collection process started from the first day of observation in the *Theory and Pedagogy in the Study of Reading* class during the summer. For 6 weeks, the preservice teachers received theoretical background on teaching ELs. In the fall, the preservice teacher practiced in two areas of their choice: K-5, middle school or high school. Therefore, I collected data over two

semesters. Table.4 below shows the data source including observations, interviews, field-notes and artifacts that substantiated the finding for the research questions.

Table 4

**Table 4.** Research Questions and Projected Data Sources

Research Questions	Data Sources
1. How were ESOL pre-service teachers' beliefs and understandings of literacy development in language teaching shaped and reshaped as a result of participation in an ESOL program?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• field notes of reading methods class and practicum in fall</li> <li>• participants' written reflections</li> <li>• transcripts of 4 sets of taped interviews</li> <li>• course documents and assignments</li> </ul>
2. How did ESOL preservice teachers' identities shift as they experience course work and practicum?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• field notes of reading methods class and practicum in fall</li> <li>• participants' written reflections</li> <li>• course documents and assignments</li> <li>• transcripts of 4 sets of taped interviews</li> </ul>

### Data Analysis

Rubin and Rubin describe qualitative analysis as a process to “discover variation, portray shades of meaning, and examine complexity” (p. 202). Therefore, since data analysis is an on-going process of interpreting collected data within a study, data analysis occurred simultaneously with data collection from the onset of this study (Many et al., 2009).

The first step in the analysis was transcribing the first rounds of interviews immediately after they occurred, followed by triangulating across each participant's data from the

questionnaire, the initial interview, first and second reflections as well also field notes from observation of the reading method class to identify any initial conceptions of literacy. That is, I read and reread transcriptions of the first interviews and first reflections which were collected to identify initial patterns of each participant's thinking that emerged within these documents and looked for instances of literacy understanding. Then, I constantly reread across the first and second interview transcriptions and reflections looking for patterns. I wrote memos of the patterns noted. As data collection continued in the fall, I conducted and transcribed the remaining interviews as well as collected the additional reflections and lesson plans. These artifacts as well as the field notes of observations for the summer and for the second practicum experiences were organized in a data profile.

### **Constant Comparative Method**

I used *constant comparative method* (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) for further analysis. Constant comparative method can allow for analysis within-case and across cases. This is necessary for capturing individual and collective meaning as well as to help illuminate similarities and differences. Through constant comparative method, I was able to analyze the data for categories, patterns, and themes. .

I uploaded all the data in Dedoose Qualitative analytic software as part of open coding phase. I also uploaded the artifacts including the reading method class syllabus, lesson plans, and the reflections into Dedoose program. It made it easy and accessible to have all the data in one place for quicker and more comprehensible view of all the data and for further triangulations of the data. During this open coding phase, I assigned a few initial codes to the *Code Cloud* (data bank of all the codes within the software) based on initial analysis of patterns noted in the data before uploading them. For instance, the participants made several references to literacy during

the first interviews. Consequently, I created a root code named *concept of literacy* in keeping with the research question. Root codes are the general codes given to words, phrases, quotes or paragraphs of a text.

Next, I created excerpts within each data piece by applying these initial codes where appropriate. Excerpts are created by highlighting section of the transcript that are considered significant for coding. In some cases I excerpted phrases, whole sentences, or paragraphs within the data piece by examining each line of written data. I then assigned more root codes based on the patterns I observed within the data. However as I continued creating further root codes, I also made child codes, that I felt more closely framed specific meaning within the data. Child codes are sub codes within root codes. For instance, since the three participants discussed their family as being instrumental in teaching them to read, I labeled a child code within the root code for *concept of literacy* naming it *family literacy*. This created an even larger code system with 54 codes.

Some of the root codes in the Code Cloud were *concept of literacy* with child codes such as *confidence with teaching literacy*. Another root code was *experiences with English learners* and child codes *adult experience* and *K-12 experience* based on when the participants worked with English learners. Another root code is early reading experiences with child codes family role as well as community role.

The next phase of the analysis was axial coding. Axial coding is grouping of the open coding (Merriam, 2009). During this phase, I created categories for the codes exported from Dedoose into a word document program. That is, I categorized codes based on their relevance to other codes, emerging themes and patterns as well as how they served as answers for the research questions. I initially had eight categories, but reduced them to five categories as there

were overlapping. The initial categories I created were *literacy understanding*, *teacher role*, *differentiation*, *mentorship*, *cultural understanding*, *confidence with teaching literacy*, *program role*, and *self-efficacy*. The final categories I kept were *literacy understanding*, *program role*, *understanding of theory*, *mentoring*, as well as *cultural understanding*

**Literacy understanding.** The category of *literacy understanding* addresses issues relevant to the participants' views or experiences with literacy. Codes such as *confidence with teaching literacy*, *new literacy understanding*, *literacy for ELs*, *family literacy*, and *philosophy of reading and writing* are included in this section. The participants discussed their perceptions of what is important in reading and writing. They also highlighted issues that they consider as critical to student literacy development including the family and community.

**Program role.** The category *program role* was used to capture meaning for quotes related to experiences that the participants had that were as a result of being in the program. For instance, this code includes the rationale the participants gave for joining the ESOL program as well as rationale for becoming teachers. Therefore codes *rationale for ESOL* and *rationale for teaching were included in this category*. Recall these participants all were from non-educational fields including a French major, horticulture studies, and international affairs. This suggests the participants had strong intents and persuasions towards teaching as the discourses revealed in the findings.

**Understanding of theory.** The category *understanding of theory* covers several codes connected to theory. The participants constantly talked about theories and how to apply them. Therefore, each reference to names of theories and discussion of theories were classified as *theory*. Quotes or discussion about application of theories or conflicts about theories were labeled under *procedure versus theory* since it revealed how the participants were theorizing

about their learning and how to transfer theory into practice. Categories such as *differentiation* and *teacher's role* were eventually collapsed in this category as they reflected how the participants' engagement in varied literacy practices and strategies resulted from theoretical understandings.

**Mentoring.** Mentoring was one of the biggest codes induced from the study. This category represented one of the ways the participants developed their confidence in teaching over the two semesters. The participants stressed the importance of having a mentor while in their practicum. They eventually credited much of their success in the program to their relationship with their second mentor and mostly demonstrated strong confidence after this experience. Other codes such as *classroom management* and *self-efficacy* helped to frame interpretation of how the participants' confidence developed while in their practicum. That is, the more involvement in teaching and working with students strengthened the participants' classroom management and efficacy in teaching.

**Cultural Understanding.** The participants spent an extensive amount of time addressing the issue of including students' culture in instruction. Some of the quotes in the findings highlighted specific examples of how they incorporated the students' culture in their lesson plans. On numerous occasions, the participants discussed the importance of creating relevance in teaching to enhance students' learning, to motivate them, and to help students make connections to their lives. This category included codes about *cultural understanding* and *cultural relevance*.

During this axial coding phase, I read and reread across the data sources to determine further patterns and themes. I reduced and recoded the initial codes from individual codes to create broader, but relational understanding and categories among the three participants' data. I continued to cross analyze each sets of codes and categories within and across each participants'



data to determine general themes in interpretations of the participants' understanding of literacy including the final interviews, final reflections, and field notes. I reread the data to full saturation, to ensure that there were no new patterns, themes, or categories, and solidified connections and corroboration between data sources.

### **Qualitative Validity and Trustworthiness**

Lincoln and Guba (1985) propose four criteria for determining the validity and trustworthiness of qualitative research. These criteria better reflect the philosophical and underlying assumptions brought on by qualitative researchers. The criteria include: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

**Credibility.** Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe credibility as the multiple ways employed to understand a phenomenon. In my study of studying ESOL preservice teachers' understanding of literacy, the participants were provided numerous avenues and opportunities to share their individual perceptions and experiences. Multiple measures and multiple sources of evidence include source documents, interviews, and field notes for observations (See Table 4 for data sources). Prolonged engagement with the participants and triangulating data sources to verify the proposed themes further strengthened credibility in the study.

Credibility also pertains to the authenticity of a study. I am aware that there are multiple meanings and understandings about the phenomenon based on how each person constructed meaning of his conceptualizations. Therefore, I conducted *member checking* with the participants at various points in the analysis to ensure there is no misinterpretation of meaning (Merriam, 2009). The interviews were sent to the participants to read and for them to submit any concerns.

**Transferability.** Transferability refers to the notion of "thick description" (Geertz, 1973) to develop a descriptive context-relevant narrative. To achieve this level of detail, the interview

questions and observations sought to understand participants' background experiences, motivations for teaching, and insights into their own perceptions of teaching and learning. I sought to construct rich detailed case studies of the participants as they engaged in coursework and initial practicum experiences.

**Dependability.** I have an audit trail of all the data sources collected as evidence within the study uploaded to Dedoose. The audit trail included description of all the processes and steps taken in the data collection, data analysis and the rationale for research decisions (Merriam, 2009). I recorded my reflections, questions and analytic notes or interpretations of the data in a journal. I also kept all data in separate files organized in my computer for inspection, if needs be (Yin, 2009). In light of the possibility of many data sources being used for corroboration of the same phenomenon and the case study database for possible inspection and as proof for conclusions, it strengthened the findings and interpretation in my study. Use of "direct quotations and excerpts from field notes" also substantiated findings and conclusions (Duke & Martin, 2011, p. 14).

**Confirmability:** The decision to also cover two semesters of participants' experience versus one semester aided with *saturation* of the data, as I tried to substantiate and exhaust all possible meanings. Saturation pertains to the degree of substantiation or corroboration that occurs in a study, where each sets of data corroborate. The cross analysis of the data source for individual participants as well as across participants further strengthened the case for saturation of data. Throughout the study, I sought to minimize my own biases and assumptions by using participants' own words and reporting fully their understandings of literacy development and working with EL learners.

## Research Timeline

The timeline for the research is listed below in Table 5 Research Timeline

Table 5 Table 5: Research Timeline

Date:	Data Sources
<p><b>April 2013</b></p> <p><b>June 2013 Week 1 &amp; 2 Class</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Successfully defended Prospectus</li> <li>IRB approval for study, Met with professor; got syllabus;</li> <li>• Questionnaire administered to theory reading method class per consent approval; selected and gained approval from participants</li> <li>• Observations (ongoing) General description of the setting, and field notes of theory reading methods class including hunches and thoughts/questions</li> <li>• Collected reflection 1 from preservice teachers' journals from reading methods class</li> <li>• Ongoing data analysis</li> </ul>
<p><b>June 2013 Week 2 Class</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interview 1: previous professional lives; rationale for education</li> </ul>



<p><b>January 2014- August 2014</b></p> <p><b>September 2014- February 2015</b></p> <p><b>March 2015</b></p>	<p>checking; interview 4:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• continuous analysis of data- created themes</li><li>• and completed analysis of data in Dedoose program</li><li>• wrote chapters 4 &amp; 5. Edited and revised all chapters</li><li>• Defended Dissertation</li></ul>
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## CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS

This study explored how three ESOL preservice teachers' understandings of literacy developed as they navigated two semesters of their teacher certification program leading up to student teaching. The results focus on how their emerging teaching identities were shaped as they learned more about literacy and EL learners while in the certification program. Vygotsky's (1986) *sociocultural perspective*, *situated learning theory* and *efficacy theory* were used to situate the analysis and shape interpretation of the preservice teachers' experience. The primary stance that guided this study is that the preservice teachers' thoughts as well as their practice would collectively provide a better understanding of their teaching lives. Interviews, observations, and artifacts helped frame interpretations about the participants' understanding in literacy. In this chapter, I present findings that emerged from the collected data.

The first theme, *Multi-faceted Views of Literacy: A Teacher's Toolkit* identifies the participants' perceptions, philosophy of reading and writing as well as their understanding of literacy. The second theme *Agency Reciprocity: Cultural Understanding in Literacy* resulted from the category *cultural understanding*. The third theme is *Mentoring Matters*, which includes data on *mentoring* and *confidence*. The fourth theme, *Growing into Being a Teacher: The Act of Becoming* was extrapolated from the categories *program's role* and *understanding of theory* as well as *procedural vs. theoretical*. The chapter concludes by showcasing the different shifts in literacy understandings and teacher identity for each participant.

### **Theme 1: Multifaceted Views of Literacy: A Teacher's Toolkit**

The three preservice teachers, Lauren, Larry and Mary, demonstrated evolving understandings of literacy development during the two semesters of coursework and practicum experiences. While the participants were similar in what they considered essential to develop

literacy in English learners, over time they gained different levels of importance. Critical components of literacy development as noted by the preservice teachers include repeated practice, meaning-making, family involvement, and culture in students' literacy development. These understandings are aligned with varied theoretical perspectives of literacy. It should be noted however that development of these perspectives did not always follow a linear path, but in some way overlapped each other.

### **Literacy as Repeated Practice**

All three participants initially talked about literacy in relation to the repeated practice that is involved. The practice participants alluded to describes how readers make sense of text by engaging in mental operation of isolated skills, drills and repeated practice with the aim of improvement over time. It also includes readers' abilities to be able to accurately recall isolated details on what they read. For example, Lauren describes how one needs to engage in a lot of practice to maintain oral language as well as to read and write. Here, she describes her view of literacy as something you practice in an effort to get better and to maintain the language:

Lauren: I think the more you do them the better you get. Honestly, the more you practice, it's like with anything- the more you practice, the more you use it, the better you get. And at the same time, it's hard, if you are doing, two and three languages you have to keep all of them up. Because whenever I practiced more of another language or go to somewhere else and I'm speaking exclusively in that language, then I would always come back and I would forget English words, or not be as sharp with exactly what I want to say. So I think that's my philosophy too- to practice being literate, and practice and challenge yourself, especially in what you are trying to learn. But also to stay sharp and use it, but don't lose it- the other languages that the kids know (Interview 1).

This same sentiment of isolated and repeated practice is noted in her philosophy of teaching that she wrote on the last day of the *Theory and Pedagogy in the Study of Reading* methods class. Lauren wrote that in the process of learning to read, students “need to be able to identify words and letters and components for literacy” (Lauren, Final Reflection, summer 2013).

Mary names different skills that readers use to make sense of text, including “recognition of words and letters,” “understand the context of the passage” and “summarize and put it into their own words” (Interview 1). Her view is primarily centered on printed text. During observations of the *Theory and Pedagogy in the Study of Reading* class over the summer, Mary raised her uneasiness about a student she was tutoring who did not know his letters and sounds. She was worried that he would not be ready for school based on what she considered as shortcomings at the time. Critical to her understanding of literacy at that time was the need for readers to identify letters and then words. She also felt that if the student’s parents were not practicing these skills with him, he would not be able to maintain what he had learned previously. While Larry doesn’t name particular skills, he mentions that literacy is “reading, writing and kind of comprehension of what you read.” He goes on to say, “elaborating upon that I would think working with the student in literacy, I would probably have them read a text and kind of understanding the meaning of it” (Interview 1).

In essence, the participants’ initial views of literacy reflect their perception of foundational skills which are necessary for learning to read and write. In some ways, it seems the participants’ views of literacy included a linear process of reading surrounding readers’ knowledge of words and test of knowledge of their reading (Hall, 2003). In analyzing this view



closer, it appears it is in line with a, cognitive processing perspective, where reading involves defined parts that require practice (Alexander & Fox, 2004; Hall, 2003).

### **Literacy as Meaning-making**

As the summer semester progressed however, the participants' views expanded to include multiple components of literacy. The participants' explanations encompassed aspects of comprehension or meaning-making that learners engage in as they read. Ruddell and Unrau, (2004) have long concluded that reading is not only about skill practice, but that reading is more about constructing meaning, which requires higher level thinking. Looking more closely at the syllabus for the reading method class during the summer, one goal stated the teachers "will be able to develop strategies for comprehending, interpreting, evaluating, and appreciating a wide variety of texts" (course syllabus, summer 2013). The main text, *Lenses on Reading: An Introduction to Theories and Models* (Tracey & Morrow, 2006), explored theoretical as well as practical discourse about the components of reading including comprehension. Throughout the series of interviews, the participants described a plethora of activities that their students engaged in to build meaning of texts. Mary and Larry described in detail the importance of not only having students regurgitate answers to show what they recall, but more importantly teaching students to be strategic readers and writers. Also through interviews as well as observations, the participants required students to share their thinking behind their learning.

To illustrate, while in her second practicum, Mary placed emphasis on students gaining meaning versus completing or just covering the curriculum. It was essential to her that students engage in critical discourse by supporting and substantiating their answers. For the second part of the lesson, the students worked on their research writing assignments. Students were required to research careers they had an interest in for the future. As students identified a new fact about

their career, they recorded these facts on strips of paper. After collecting the note strips with facts, they classified them in categories. Throughout the categorizing component, Mary questioned the students about where they felt the facts belonged and asked them to share rationale for their choices. It was not enough that students identified facts, instead students had to declare their thinking behind their selection.

Mary also identified specific strategies that she uses to help students build meaning as they read. Of prime importance is activating her students' prior knowledge. She activates their prior knowledge by either engaging them in discussion, or by giving "them something to write down or fill out while you are talking about it just to kind of open up the prior knowledge and get them ready to receive what they're getting ready to read" (Interview 3). She continues by noting additional strategies that she considers critical for meaning making:

Mary: Also the different reading strategies that I'm learning as far as connection, inferences, prediction and also note taking and the use of concept maps....I put that in my lesson plan or begin a review activity or try to put something in there that will connect everything that we have been learning up to today, because we are going to add onto it today. (Interview 3).

Mary describes being purposeful about incorporating reading strategies in her lessons to help students understand what they are reading, why they are reading, and how to apply their new learning. The countless comprehension strategies are designed to also build continuity in students' learning by connecting old to new learning. Mary exhibited this expanded view of literacy to include meaning- making when I observed during her second practicum. She started the lesson by reminding students that they were introduced to the concept of conjunctions the day before, which demonstrates an importance of connecting the old information to the new. She

also reminded students to write notes in their learning log. The actual writing, she explained later, serves the dual role of students' learning being reinforced through different modalities including listening, speaking, reading and writing. Furthermore, the note-taking helped students to retain the information. Her questioning strategies reflect an understanding of the importance of building instruction with an emphasis on students comprehending what they were learning:

Mary: If an independent clause means can stand on its own, what about a dependent clause?

Student: Can't do anything by itself.

Mary: Exactly! It can't do by itself. It depends on another sentence. (Field notes, Practicum 2).

Larry names different comprehension skills that he deems critical for learners' literacy development. Similar to Mary, he sees value in teaching students comprehension strategies:

Ann: And so now, what's your attitude today? I know I had asked you a while back, but what's your attitude towards literacy now and your understanding of what's important as it relates to literacy?

Larry: I think literacy right now is my key to the most important thing, because I'm focusing on that in all my lesson plans with teaching the active reading skills at school and then the content area strategies that I'm doing now in the tutor session. I'm working a lot in literacy and I see that most of its now the key to succeeding in school with content area books and readings and literacy. And I feel that all of it is kind of connected and all of it stems from literacy and what the students are comprehending. And right now I'm teaching on how they can comprehend better by asking questions, context clues,

scheming and so I think it's basically the key to them mostly succeeding right now  
(Interview 3).

As Larry, navigated the teacher education program further, he demonstrated shifts in his understanding of literacy. Larry's perspective of literacy not only comprised the practicing of skills, but included students' critical thinking about the underlying meaning behind their learning. For instance, he was intentional about having students focus on meaning as they read more content area texts. He integrated literacy skills in the content area subjects to create more depth in his instruction. Therefore, he was not just having students learn how to read words. Additionally, he describes providing students with the tools they need such as active reading skills and reading strategies as a way of building comprehension.

Integrating language arts in reading instead of teaching it in isolation was important to Larry. Therefore, as often as possible, he read literature or children's book aloud while incorporating rhyming and phonemic awareness activities for his Kindergarten English learners learning English. By so doing, Larry wanted his students to see how the skills they practice transfer to the context of reading books. In one of his lessons, he first read the children's book, *The Parrot Tico Tango* (Anna Witte, 2004). He then asked students questions about what they remembered about the text that was read aloud to them. After checking for meaning, he asked students if they heard any rhyming sounds. He further asked students to explain what they noticed about the rhyming of words with similar pattern. That is, Larry wanted students to explain the patterns they noticed so that they could transfer this learning as they read. Only after discussion of the text and assessment of students' understanding, did Larry inquire if "they remember any rhyming words in the books" (Larry, Lesson Plan, October 2013).

Lauren also referred to comprehension as essential in literacy development. Her new learning included various hues of comprehension- speaking and listening, as well as the importance of the role of vocabulary in building meaning:

Ann: What's your current understanding of literacy now and its relevance for English Learners? I've asked you this question each time.

Lauren: I think that it's definitely reading and writing and the more that I'm learning about things different components of comprehension are speaking listening or vocabulary all ties into literacy (Interview 3, Lauren)

Over time however, similar to Larry, Lauren alludes to the shift in her view of literacy as being as a result of her new learning while in the program. She, too, demonstrated the importance of teaching English Learners tools to become strategic readers. When I observed Lauren in a 10<sup>th</sup> grade World Literature class for her second practicum experience, it was evident that she was placing emphasis on meaning making in reading. She taught the students the features of graphic novels, as well as showed students how to read them. She invested a chunk of time for vocabulary and background building to set the stage and context for her ELs. Therefore, Lauren, did extensive pre-reading skills to help the students with understanding the process of reading graphic texts:

Ann: Do you want to talk a little bit more about how the model of instruction was given to the students that I observed in that particular lesson? Because I really enjoyed it.

Lauren: So, in that lesson they were reading a book, Persepolis, it was a graphic novel and all of the books that the students read weren't that style but for that one we gave the students a tutorial earlier in the week when it was how to read it, ... after we taught them how to read that kind of a novel then we also went into some of the background of Iran

because that's where the novel took place and did a lot of vocabulary exercises (Interview 4).

Lauren intentionally had the students read and summarize the text in distributive ways, by stopping between readings to ask questions about the text, to ensure that they were gaining the meaning of the text. She also provided study guides and had students watch a movie to further reinforce their understanding of the text. Lauren further engaged the students in higher level analysis skills by having them compare their own countries to the setting, Iran, in the text. The students critiqued their country's class system and issues of justice to Iran. Further analysis of one of her reflections shows that Lauren's instructions are shaped by her beliefs about designing lessons that focus on students' conceptual understanding:

Good teachers anticipate which skills will be difficult for students and plan to assist them with those skills. I have been trying to anticipate which vocabulary words my students will need assistance with in our readings. Sometimes I over-estimate their schema and other times I underestimate. Almost every lesson, the vocabulary I have preselected isn't the vocabulary we end up focusing on by the end of the lesson. Students of diverse backgrounds may need more schema or explanation if they haven't been exposed to the same things as mainstream students (Lauren, Reflection 5).

Therefore, in light of the participants' focus on meaning-making as well as with them being intentional and engaging in critical instruction with students, it suggests that the participants were not only focusing on practice and repetition. Rather, they seemed to understand the importance of critical thinking in literacy. Over time the participants incorporated higher level thinking activities instead of only practice of reading and writing skills. More specifically, the participants progressively and intentionally taught students reading strategies to help them

negotiate different types of texts. They taught pre-reading skills such as vocabulary building, prior knowledge activities and used activating strategies that connect previous to new learning to help set the stage before students read. As the participants' knowledge improved in the program, they incorporated more activities for students to negotiate texts during and after reading including summarizing and making inference. This demonstrates a progression in the participants' understanding of what is essential in literacy instruction. Furthermore, as they encourage students to explain their thinking and rationale behind their answers, they are shaping critical thinkers and helping students to make more connections in their learning. A close analysis of this stance to literacy reveals a constructivist or problem-solving approach to literacy (Hall, 2003). Hall identifies teachers with this stance as being more critical of decontextualization of literacy, thereby valuing texts with more natural language patterns. Additionally, teachers with this stance, are able to understand more about the reading strategies readers use, thereby placing less focus on pronunciation and practice.

### **Literacy as a Family Affair**

This theme of Literacy as a Family Affair evolved inherently from the experiences of all three participants. Each referred consistently about the efforts of their parents in shaping their own literacy. Specifically, they all in their first interviews gave credit to their mothers for teaching them how to read as children. Below three participants' excerpts follow:

Ann: Do you have any other memories about your early reading experiences of how you think you learned how to read?

Larry: I think I learned how to read by watching my older sister and mom (Interview 1).

Ann: Talk to me a little about your early experience of reading.

Mary: I don't ever remember struggling with reading. My first encounter as I remember- I remember my mom making me practice writing my entire name- Mary Crystal Jones over and over again on index cards (Interview 1).

Ann: O.K. Alright. Talk to me a little bit about your early experiences of reading?

Lauren: I- to be honest, I don't remember when I started to learn to read or started to learn alphabet and that sort of thing. I don't remember. I think it was one of those things. My mom likes to brag about it that she taught me when I was super dupper tiny (Interview 1).

Therefore, it came only natural for them to attribute their early reading and writing experiences to their family. Throughout the study, the participants stated that family input was one of, if not, the most critical factor to students' literacy success. From interview one, Mary suggested that "I do believe the family plays the biggest role in getting children to read" (Interview 1). She believes that the family's input has the biggest influence on the child more than teachers ever will and that her biggest frustration would be not having family involvement in a child's education. In the second interview during the summer, Mary shared concern about the student she was tutoring not recalling what he was taught since it was not reinforced at home):

Mary: Because it really does take a certain amount of rehearsal at home. And so if they are not rehearsing at home, they are going to come back to you and they've forgot it all... You know, you don't want to talk about the parenting style that's something that's just not presented to him at home. He doesn't talk much or when he does tries to talk, it's kind of it's hard for him to form words. So he's not really practicing a lot. And so it's like a fore shadow of what's to come when I do start teaching when you have so many of those in the same classroom. (Interview 2)



Mary's discussion suggests that she feels it is the family's responsibility to support students' literacy and language development. She further believes that if students are practicing or "rehearsing" at home, they can have better success in school. She is concerned that she will have many students whose learning are not supported at home.

Larry also considers parental input as having more far-reaching influence for student success in the classroom. He feels so strongly about this that he vows "when I teach I will kind of base it more off that students will learn from their environment, society and try to put the emphasis on family literacy, working with the children and also reading outside of the classroom" (Interview 2). He carried the theme of literacy as a family affair even through the second semester of the study:

Ann: So, the outside experience to you means a lot inside the classroom. Is that the case?

Larry: I think so, with every subject and content area that children, or students always go back to their previous knowledge. And most of it comes from what they learned at home. That's what happened for me.

Ann: Okay, and so how do you imagine you would weave that into your instruction, especially literacy?

Larry: Well, right now I've been teaching on the active reading skills, the strategies like connection, visualization, questioning... and I try to pull in stuff they do in their house. Like visualizing...do you read at home, do you see your mom reading a magazine? Do you see your mom reading a book? Do you look at the cover and wonder what the book is about? ...The movies you watch, do you kind of predict the endings with your family? (Interview 3).

Larry was intentional about finding out how his students engage in literacy outside the classroom. By finding out about students' home literacy practice, Larry's vision was to incorporate this knowledge in his instruction in the classroom. Larry's understanding of the impact of students' home or out of school experiences in shaping their prior knowledge within the classroom was evident in his discussion of their previous knowledge being shaped from what they learned at home. It seems that Larry and Mary both attribute the family's influence as important to a student's academic success. Lauren emphasize also that maintaining students' home language is critical to their learning English. To that end, Lauren understands the value of children's primary language in their academic success as well as in supporting family members with limited English:

Lauren: It's not just about you. It's about your career. It's about your family. You need to stay fresh with your language because you are going to be involved with your family for the rest of your lives and you're going to need to advocate. And you're going to need to take care of them. It's your responsibility. (Interview 2).

Hall (2003) in her discussion of nature of students' literacy in and out of school made reference to practices students engage in outside of school. For one, the discussion surrounded teachers finding out about frequency of students' out of school reading, what types of texts they read and to whom they were reading. Hall (2003) feels that students may be engrossed in several literacy practices outside of school that teachers fail to connect to student learning in the classroom.

### **Culture Shaping Meaning-Making in Literacy**

The participants were also cognizant of the role of students' culture and out of school experiences in their in-school learning. Specifically, the participants felt that it is necessary to make students' literacy relevant to their lives out of school. Their constant references to have

students “ready to go in the real world” and making learning “functional” for students demonstrates the participants’ perspective of the importance of cultural aspects in students’ literacy learning. Lauren, Larry, and Mary shared specific ways literacy should be connected to students’ lives.

For one, when asked what is the best literacy practices for English learners in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Lauren explains the importance of using every day reading materials students will use at some point of their lives:

Lauren: ... I think it would be better to have our kids when they are in high school being prepared to deal with the things they are going to be reading like applications, electricity bills, and contracts and resumes and those aspects of literacy like things that you can use that are substantial. Because I’m just more of a logical person like I had mentioned before, like those kind of things that you’re going to be able to use I see more value in, and I see students seeing more value in that (Interview 2).

Similar to Lauren, Larry emphasizes connecting students’ literacy to world issues and what they read about in the newspaper, in articles, or online. He believes by doing so, it would improve students’ writing to look like what they read online (Interview 2):

Larry: I think schools and literacy may move away from the classics and students may start focusing on maybe world issues and even social problems. Just because now, they are more aware of it in their literacy because they read about it every day. And it’s in their face as soon as they log on. I think their writing will look like it as well. At least I hope so, because when they read it more – I think the reading from the online is more the newspaper style and the articles. They’re more geared to how they want you to write.

These are evidence that the participants' reference to using components of students' out-of-school experiences and things in their lives reflects their perspective of the importance of cultural aspect to student learning. Mary further contends that the focus of literacy for the 21<sup>st</sup> century should be about preparing students to function in society. The more they are able to understand, the more they will be able to function in society:

Ann: But what comes to your mind as it relates to what literacy should look like for students here in the 21<sup>st</sup> century versus students 20 years ago?

Mary: Being able to function in society. Period. You have to have a certain reading level to be able to function successfully. That's how I feel it's been presented now. Just being able to function.

Mary also explains that being able to function means being able to "function outside of school and expanded situation in grocery store filling out applications, writing a check, if they even have to do that in the future" (Interview 4).

Evolving over time, the participants began to conceptualize literacy as more than decoding print. They began to identify the role of culture and family in developing literacy practices (Hall, 2003). Further, they feel students' culture is a critical component to meaning making in literacy as it provides relevance to students' lives (Hall, 2003). Collectively, issues of family, experiences from students' culture, and community reflect a *sociocultural perspective* to literacy.

## **Theme 2: Agency Reciprocity: Cultural Understanding in Literacy**

*Agency Reciprocity: Cultural Understanding in Literacy* was the second theme that resulted from the data. The category underlying this theme is *cultural understanding*, with codes such as cultural relevance. The participants emphasized the need for teachers' cultural understanding and

relevance in literacy instruction. They also believe it is equally important to advocate for their students as well as teach them how to be agents of change. That is, by incorporating students' culture and bringing awareness to social issues, it would help foster more relevant and meaningful lessons for students. Gay (2002) suggests that using students' culture and experiences as channels in instruction maintains interest and is stimulating for culturally diverse students. Furthermore, the instructional goals of using students' culture prepares them not only for academic mastery, but to be critical agents (Ladson-Billings, 1995) in society. Throughout the study, the participants consistently trumpeted that the purpose of literacy should be to prepare students for the real world. All three shared the point that providing students with relevant information is more valuable than literacy that is disconnected or far and removed from students' lives.

### **Cultural Relevant Pedagogy**

The participants were intentional about creating relevance in their teaching for students who might be otherwise marginalized and were not part of the dominant group. Recall, Ladson-Billings (1995) encourages integrating students' cultural background within lessons to build further understanding and acceptance of their cultures, thereby engaging in *cultural relevant pedagogy*. Cultural relevant pedagogy (CRP) includes incorporating current events that impact marginalized people's lives and may be built through inquiry in lessons. It also entails incorporating resources and texts that reflect students' cultures as well as other cultures around the world.

After speaking with the three participants, I discovered that while they were faced with the mandated curriculum to prepare students to meet the district and state requirements, these participants were always reflecting on the needs and knowledge of their English Learners. They

repeatedly made reference to the cultural backgrounds of their students, the conflicts and trials some had gone through, and limits that were placed on them. Therefore, it seems as these participants became intimately knowledgeable about their students, they were purposeful in creating culturally relevant lessons or stimulating inquiry about social issues. In essence, the participants increasingly sought ways to engage in culturally relevant pedagogy.

All three participants described how they used the students' culture as tools in instruction (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Mary continuously found ways to incorporate students' cultures within the curriculum. She expressed that one way of getting students to learn is connecting something that they are knowledgeable about to what they are about to learn. Mary explains the decision to use information about her Islamic students in a lesson and tells how it went a far way in extending these students' learning:

Mary: So I kind of tried to use what they already knew to get them to learn something new. Also I was able to use social things. There was a time that there were two children in there that practice Islam so we got a chance to use that in a lesson in order to get them to understand something. If you know the students, find things that they know about to make that connection, so they can remember things or learn new things. And they enjoyed it. They liked that we knew and we were not ignorant of what they practice and how we connected it to the lesson just to get them to understand things (Interview 3).

For Mary, it was necessary to become knowledgeable about each student's culture and social background including their religious beliefs and practices. She tells how the students felt appreciated when their culture was included in the lessons. Therefore, while learning specifics about students' culture was not a direct objective of the curriculum, Mary purposefully wove it in

the lessons to enhance students' understanding. She had found ways to build student interest, enhance their learning, and build cultural pride (Esposito and Swain, 2009).

Larry strategically incorporated social issues in his lesson planning. He found ways around the mandated curriculum to introduce the students to current events that were happening in the world, while still meeting the curriculum's objectives. The decision to include social issues was not a school or district decision, but one of Larry's personal goals as well as a choice to connect students' learning to the real world:

Larry: ... So, most of it now is through textbooks, or each classroom gets a magazine, the scholastic magazines, and we've been working a lot out of those just to bring the social issues in, because a lot of the scholastic magazines will have articles about Middle East, the women, and stuff like that so that's how we've been getting.

Ann: Is that part of the curriculum? Or is it that you choose to include that in the curriculum?

Larry: We choose to include it (Interview 3).

Larry explains the rationale for being purposeful about including social issues in the curriculum. While he has always had a passion for social issues based on his experience with English Learners and inequities that he had witnessed or learned about, he expresses the importance of teaching students' cultural awareness:

I think it makes me ... kind of get the students to make goals for themselves. Because, I make them aware of the culture around them. Because when I was talking in my reflections about the Brazilian students I work with, most of them come to the U.S. to study so they are more of a higher socio economic status. And the society in Brazil is geared to benefit them. They don't have to really work hard to be able to build

themselves up in the workforce in Brazil. That when you're born rich, you stay rich.

When you're born poor, you can never get out of it. (Interview 2).

Larry explains that some of the Brazilian students he taught lived privileged lives and were not cognizant of social issues impacting the poor within their own country. He further explains it was important for him to choose material that reflected as many cultures as possible and "not just the basic all white people books and stuff like that or finding something that incorporates larger amounts of cultures" (Interview 2). Therefore, he was selective of the material including magazines that he used to supplement the curriculum to reflect the cultures of various people. Larry spent time sharing not only global issues with his EL students, but he shared also current events that interrupted students' lives in other parts of the U.S.:

Ann: The issue of exposing your kids again to other social issues...you talked a lot about the Brazilian...in Brazil, how, some people, the poor, don't get a good shot at education. And you like to always express to your students the issues...some of those issues, the unfair issues that go on as it relates to education and so where does that come from for you?

Larry: I think it just comes for me from hearing stuff about it and learning, like the problems people go through trying to get an education and seeing that a lot of poor people don't receive the education. And here, the students that will have... most of them would take it for granted...that it's free. And we've actually, not this type of social issue, but I've been teaching now for the past two weeks on Hurricane Sandy and Katrina and how those kids couldn't go to school for a certain amount of time and they had to be bussed further away and the problems they faced. So we've been bringing that social issue into the classroom (Interview 3).



Therefore, by teaching about current affairs, Larry was able to identify familiar events that the students could relate to, and also understand their significance to larger social issues.

Lauren felt it was even more critical to have teachers who understood cultural relevance in the classroom. That is, she felt that teachers working with English Learners either need to have cultural awareness about the students that they are working with or even better having teachers who lived in or are from similar cultural backgrounds of the ELs:

Lauren. I do. And I like reading (text for reading method class) about what she said. I mean a lot of the things were things I already believed and felt were important...Another big thing she talked about, which was necessarily something that I read in our book, but something that I got out of it was that she talks a lot about making sure that you have teachers, in addition to teachers who aren't from the same background, that are trying to understand or are trying to be culturally responsible, that you got teachers who are from the same background of the students because they are able to even recognize gifted students better than somebody from the outside would be. They're able to relate to the students and have a better idea of what their background is. Because I've never grew up in a refugee camp. I have never even been to a refugee camp. How I'm I going to know what a good solid example for something that would be in a child memory or schema would be as well as somebody else that has been?

Ann: And so the issue of understanding the culture is important to you?

Lauren: Absolutely (Interview 2).

She explains that teachers who are intimately involved and knowledgeable about students' cultures are able to recognize learning styles and strengths more effectively than those who are not. These teachers are also able to relate to the issues and struggles that students, example

refugee students have experienced. Furuto (2004) in explaining stress factors that immigrant and refugee students undergo explains that they are often mislabeled as mentally retarded due to poor adjustment in the U.S. and parents with language barrier who cannot advocate for their children. As a result, Fong (2004) expresses that the level of knowledge or understanding caregivers have about immigrants and refugee students determines the level of treatment students will receive. Lauren wrote in her reflections about how she was able to draw upon her previous experience working with refugee students and how she became personally connected with learning about the students' lives and incorporating this knowledge in how she interacted with the students:

When I worked at Refugee Family Services I was a program coordinator, which meant that I taught the students lessons and I did casework with the students and their families. Through my case notes and case work, I was able to work directly with students and school and learn about them as individuals. I was also able to compare the situations of students from like backgrounds and I learned about the challenges they faced and the struggles the schools seemed to encounter repeatedly. Through these observations, I was able to incorporate life skills that would ease the issues my students encountered (Reflection 4).

As often as possible too, Lauren describes incorporating students' out of school experiences within the classroom. She describes further in her reflections how this created richer lessons and relevance for students:

By involving students in the learning and planning in each step of the lesson you are allowing students to bring their experiences from inside and outside of school to enrich everyone's learning. By connecting the text to the world, students and teachers can make the lesson relevant to the students (Reflection 4).

Lauren described in great lengths in one of her reflections, the backgrounds of the refugee students in her class. She was not only knowledgeable about where they were from, but addressed the camps some lived in. She knew intimate details about their religion and their groups' mores. Lauren tells how knowledge about parents' abilities to help their students with their academics was necessary in order for her to better support students:

All students are from Asia, Burma or Bhutan. Many students have never lived in these countries or don't remember living there because they spent most of their lives in refugee camps. Students from Burma lived in refugee camps in Thailand or Malaysia, and students from Bhutan have lived in refugee camps in Nepal...Parents aren't able to assist students with homework or participate actively in students' education due to time, intensive commutes, and work hours and language barriers. Students from Burma are interested in religion and heavily involved in local churches. Students from Nepal primarily practice Hinduism. Students are interested in South Korea and still have strong ties to the pop culture in their home countries...Some students are separated from their immediate families for a number of years, as some family members are permitted to resettle in the USA and others must wait in the refugee camps with other family members until they can resettle and rejoin the family. Sometimes new families form and when the students are reunited with their families, they have a stepmother or father they have never met. Their parents have missed a number of years in their child's life and development and have a hard time acclimating to their child's reentrance to the family. Students may rebel, marry, or argue with parents as they are transitioning to their new life in the United States...Many students have truancy issues that cause them to fall behind in their work. (Reflection 4).

With this knowledge about her students, Lauren explains being able to provide the necessary planning for literacy to better support their learning:

Depending on student's refugee camp and home country life they may have had little or interrupted schooling. This means that they may not have strong literacy skills in their L1. Students are allowed to use word to word dictionaries, dictionaries from their L1 or L2 are provided by the school as well. Lessons are scaffold heavily with the assumption that students are not familiar with concepts. Students are given opportunities to practice and work on vocabulary in small groups before participating in whole group activities. Students who need extra time to complete tasks are permitted to do so during differentiation of tasks. Often tasks and concepts are repeated to give students extra time and practice with language and vocabulary. Tasks are meaningful and students can connect text to self, other texts, or the world (Reflection 4).

In sum, the participants' thinking about including students' culture in instruction demonstrates an understanding about cultural relevant pedagogy, a necessary component to enhance students' interest and build motivation as they learn. As the preservice teachers promoted culturally relevant pedagogy, their thinking were reshaped to prepare students to be change agents in their communities as well as in the world (Esposito & Swain, 2009).

### **Cultural Competence: Creating Agency**

The notion of cultural relevance served as a channel of agency for the participants as well as their students. It is evident the participants' thinking about cultural relevance in students' lives helped propel them to be advocate for their students. They developed a sense of agency as they considered more cultural relevant ways of teaching, and how to effectively advocate for students' welfare. Advocating for their students meant validating the status quo of them learning English

and also developing them to be critical thinkers. Critical thinking included students being able to identify the differences between the varied functions of literacy. Advocating for students who are often marginalized took different forms for the participants. Advocacy came in the form of validation of students' language, as well as fighting for the appropriate identification of students' placement in receiving services due to language and vocabulary issues and not having them mislabeled as special education students. Mary describes the importance of speaking up for students' language:

Ann: In your last interview you mentioned that you teach the kids and that you also feel you're an advocate for them. How important is it for you to be an advocate when you're teaching English Learners?

Mary: I think it is very important because things as it is relates to educational policies are not done in their favor. For example, their lack of being able to express themselves in the English language. They may think the child lacks intelligence. I know sometimes they have problems; they may be categorized as special education. They are not really special education. It's really a problem and I kind of want it to be an equal playing field. Not just for them, but for everybody. They come with different cultures. So even when they learn the English, with teachers, when they are taking those tests there is still a lot of cultural bias in there. So even if I probably never get them to change this test text, because it's a money-making thing. But get others to kind of understand them.- I guess understand them and not see them as less unintelligent but just learning about the language. And that's a big difference (Interview 4).

Mary feels that educators should confront policies that subtract instead of make deposits into students' lives. She thinks language bias is pervasive even surrounding testing that ELs have to

take, irrespective of their language issues. She hopes to help influence change in how ELs are perceived and the biases that they are subjected to in testing and placement. Mary also vows to continue staying abreast with issues that subtract from students' cultural legacy in the classroom:

Ann: So what kind of changes or plans? How does that reflect in the plans you have in your classroom or you intend to have in your classroom?

Mary: Um, and just for the future, I myself will like to continue to be aware of what's going on, um, the different policies being put in place that may be for or against them. Then, I guess try to level the playing field by my own instruction. And have like anything, like an example. But I know it's something I will definitely run into. Just kind of do the best that I can to even the playing field as a teacher (Interview 4).

Mary hopes also to be able to intentional about creating instruction that is relevant to her students, thereby affirming their cultures. Mary talked about encouraging students to be advocates for themselves and for others, with the hope of becoming agents of change. She encourages her students to be critical in their learning. Here, Mary expounds further how students can be agents of change:

Ann: Keeping true to that point. With that understanding that you have of literacy, how do you see its relevance for English learners?

Mary: Survival. Being able to understand the world around them. Really understand it, not just function in it. And if they see something that's not good, they have an opportunity to change it because they know how to change it. A window to other worlds, other than their own. And even sometimes a window into their own world. (Interview 3).

Mary charges students to become active in changing ills around them not only for themselves, but for others. By her suggesting that students should stand up for themselves and for others, it

indicates Mary's understanding of literacy is being reshaped, to include not only literacy practices students engage in, but also the agency students develop through their learning. This theme therefore supports the research question of, how do ESOL preservice teachers' identities shift as they experience course work and practicum? as well as research question, How are ESOL pre-service teachers' beliefs and understandings of literacy development in language teaching shaped and revised as a result of participation in an ESOL teacher certification program? Mary added another layer in her understanding of literacy to not only include views of survival and functionality as designed by the dominant group, but to now include cultural awareness and advocacy of students in becoming agents of change for themselves and for others.

Lauren also sought opportunities to advocate for her students. On numerous occasions, she spoke about her students' language and the importance of them maintaining their primary language. In promoting the importance of their primary language, she refers to the students as being experts, since they know how to speak their language well and better than most people around them. She also hoped students would see the value in their own language, viewing it as an asset. For Lauren, the learning of English was just an added bonus that would create even more economic and educational currency for them:

Lauren: I don't know if I mention this in our last interview or not. But something I always try to do when I was working with the refugee students who were learning English, every single one of them was learning English as their second language. And what I would tell them is you know you are the expert in Arabic, in Burundi, and French, Somali, whatever, you are the experts in this. You already have this. When you get really good in English, you are going to have a crazy good skill set that not a lot of other people are going to have. So I think that even if it's not something you're able to integrate into

your lesson, just knowing, letting the kids know you have the skills and you have this thing; that it's going to really let you stand out. You need to get really, really good at English, so that you're going to be able to use it. And to have other people see the value in your skill, in your experience, in your background and into your insights. All of these things are going to make you unique to a typical American. So I think even if it's something that's not relevant to the lesson, it's good to acknowledge the things kids are good at because sometimes they don't even realize it. Try and get speakers to come in for career day and every single speaker I would ask or either have one of the kids ask, do you speak another language? What language do you speak? (Interview 2).

Lauren explains how rewarding it was to witness changes in the students, who eventually were reminding other students to speak their own language, suggesting that the students were developing a sense of cultural pride in their language (Esposito & Swain, 2009). Her advocacy for the refugee students' primary language included her inviting speakers to share about experiences they had learning another language.

Lauren really wanted to reinforce the importance of her students not only learning English, but maintaining their own language. She had listened to their conversations and stated she was knowledgeable as an insider in their circles and had learned how the students internalized negative attitudes about their primary languages and how some wanted to quickly erase themselves from their languages as they learned English. By hailing them as experts and validating their bilingualism, Lauren helped to position these students in a positive light, who would have otherwise been marginalized as only being refugees.

Similar to Mary and Lauren, Larry intentionally used students' experiences as a channel for teaching advocacy for the disenfranchised. Unlike the refugee students that Lauren worked



with however, Larry's Brazilian students were mostly middle-class and were considered rich by their country's standards. Therefore, he pointed out how they (the students he worked with) were actually privileged because they were from the upper class, had access to private education, and opportunities to travel to the U.S. to study. These privileges were out of the range and league of the average student in Brazil:

Larry: Many can't even go to school ever, unless it's through scholarships and unless they can walk for miles. And so the rich can actually receive public education, but most of them go to private school, because they have the means to do that. They don't have to worry to support the family. So it's a lot different. And I try to make the students aware of that even though they live in Brazil, they can live right next door to this neighborhood and have a child the same age who has never been to school and this child the same age goes to school every day. And so I try to make them aware.

Ann: O.K. That awareness is critical. How do you think that ties into their understanding of literacy?

Larry: I think it kind of helps them understand that people around them might not be literate. Because the majority in the developing countries that I teach students from, a lot of them aren't literate. It kind of encourages them that they are a prestige, because they can read and now they are learning a second language and can actually develop their reading in that language (Interview 2).

A closer analysis of this discourse shows Larry's passion in pointing out inequities in society and his spirit of advocating for the less fortunate. As Larry reminded me, he had to find a diplomatic way to share with his Brazilian students that their economic class and status in their country had privileged them in ways that their neighbors would never have. That is, literacy and learning the

English language were divides in Brazil. Therefore, Larry emphasized the point that literacy in Brazil appears to privilege some and disenfranchised others. To that end, bringing critical awareness to the inequities to his students was his way of advocating for the less fortunate as well as teaching his students to be change agents.

While there were similarities in how the participants interpreted and enacted culturally relevant pedagogy, there were differences in the groups of students that they worked with. Nevertheless, the participants found innovative ways of promoting students' language and culture as assets in their instruction, thereby engaging in culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Further, as the participants sought to direct their students' attention to cultural issues as well as to issues that affects others, it shows the participants were actively engaged in promoting awareness to social issues (Gregory & Cahill, 2009). The participants also championed students to be agentic members of society. By promoting students to critique how language divides and disenfranchise some, it points to the power relationships at play (Gee, 1997).

### **Theme 3: Mentorship Matters**

The third theme from the data is *Mentorship Matters*. The categories that supported this theme are *mentoring* and *confidence*. Lave and Wenger (1991) describe a community of practice as social engagement which accommodates the interactions between people with specific common goals. The quality of the experiences that people engage in within the community shapes the kind of learning that ensues. That is, the situated nature of the experiences can create agency for all individuals (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The professional relationships with university instructors and cooperating teachers as well as with other teachers at their practicum sites provided ways for socializing the three participants in the teaching profession. These interactions

afforded opportunities for building mentorship relationships and constituted part of the professional development the preservice teachers received while in training. Martin (2012) points to the importance of establishing supportive networks for teachers as a means of professional development. Over the course of the study, all three participants highlighted the role of their mentors in their teaching lives in various contexts and situations. While none of the research questions officially targeted the role of mentorship and feelings about mentors, the participants all in one way or another discussed mentorship in circuitous ways. As a result, the theme of mentorship naturally evolved from the data as a mechanism in developing teacher identity.

Mentorship, in this study, refers to the support that individuals receive from more learned or experienced ones, such as the care, advice, and endorsement that preservice teachers may receive from their cooperating teachers while in practicum. The preservice teachers discussed mentorship either directly or indirectly. Mentorship served many purposes and framed various situations as described by the participants. For instance, the participants all had anticipated expectations for their cooperating teachers while in the two practicum experiences. They viewed mentorship as a valuable tool for their success, while in the program and in some cases after the program. There were celebratory moments applauding the collaborative relationships in lesson planning and instruction during practicum. However, in some case, the participants also expressed moment of doubts, disappointments, and uncertainties about negotiating the relationship with their mentors.

### **Expectations of Mentors in Practicum**

Lauren and Larry articulated expectations of their mentors as part of their goals for the program. They hoped for a mentorship role where they could learn from their mentor about how to effectively offer instruction. Lauren shared her desires for a mentor from the onset of the

program. She yearned not for a superficial interaction, but for a professional relationship during her practicum, where she would receive advice to aid in her teaching decision-making. Lauren also thought a strong mentorship relationship could lead to the potential of a good reference for her after leaving the program:

Ann: As it relates to your practicum experience in the fall what is it you're hoping for?

What are your expectations and what are you hoping to gain from that experience?

Lauren: I hope that – to be honest, the biggest thing that I would like to gain out of my experience is to work with another teacher that I really connect with and develop a mentor type of relationship with a teacher. Because I have been in jobs before where I had a mentor and it was so nice. Somebody was looking out for and telling you about different opportunities. And just really helping you to make decisions and helping you to identify your gifts. (Interview 2).

Therefore, for Lauren, she perceived mentorship as critical to her present and future development as a teacher. In the case of Larry, he expressed being concerned from very early in the study about not feeling knowledgeable about how to work with students with various academic levels and learning styles. As a result, he anxiously awaited his practicum and student teaching experience where he hoped he would obtain first hand and real world experience by working with another teacher:

Larry: Yes. I'm just concerned. I'm looking forward to the student teaching still. Just to observing a teacher. Learning ways to work with more than one student and then being able to understand the different learning techniques of the students. (Interview 2).

Larry became visibly uneasy as he talked about being concerned. Recall up to this point he felt that he had not been prepared sufficiently to work with English learners. Therefore, he hoped to

gain meaningful ways to work with various student abilities and learning styles. While Mary did not directly express desires for a strong mentorship relationship, she did highlight disappointment she had with one of her mentorship experience during her practicum.

### **Disappointments and Doubts of Mentorship**

While the participants had high expectations for mentorship, they had moments of dissatisfactions about some handling of situations in the classroom with their mentors. For instance, they expressed concerns about their mentor teachers not releasing sufficient and timely control that would have allowed them to add more value to student success and helped them develop more teaching praxis while student teaching. The participants also expressed concerns about their mentors not exhibiting the level of support that they were expecting in order to be successful in their practicum. Both Lauren and Mary describe differences between their mentors at the two practicum experiences. They each felt that their mentorship experience at their first practicum was inadequate as compared to their second.

Lauren expressed feeling disappointed and disheartened that her expectation of having a good mentorship relationship was not met. She explained “I didn’t feel like I got that out of this experience” (Interview 3). She goes on to explain the reason for feeling disappointed:

She was a bit more territorial about the assistance that we offered to the students and interaction we had with the students and using and trying things out in her classroom.

And even when we left, it wasn’t like, oh you know keep in touch and let me know where you end up or let me know if I can help you out in the future if you ever need a letter, you know what you get, when you spend so much time with somebody (Interview 3).

Therefore, Lauren stated her first mentor teacher appeared too overly protective with releasing responsibilities and small teaching experiences to her. She hoped that she could have had more

opportunities to interact with students earlier. Lauren discussed wanting to build a rapport with her mentor teacher in an effort to secure a professional link for future growth.

Mary also expressed being dissatisfied with the mentorship support at her first practicum experience. She explains not receiving material and feedback in a timely manner. She recalls requesting lesson plans, but receiving none. As a result, she describes the mentor teacher as “flying by the seat of her pants” (Interview 3):

Whereas the first one I asked my mentor teacher what to teach, she was like just do whatever. I asked do you have any worksheet, she said just find some off the internet.

Therefore, for both Mary and Lauren, they did not feel that the level of support at their first practicum experience fully prepared them to be successful.

In the case of Larry, he explained his desire to assert more responsibility sooner in the classroom. He wanted more leeway in designing instructional framework for the students. He was however, very reluctant about expressing this desire to his mentor teacher:

Ann: Another concern that I picked up from you was the issue of feeling prepared to deal with teacher education...the field...do you feel more prepared now or that the program is preparing you to work with English learners than you did, let's say, some months ago?

Larry: I think I do. I think working in this classroom...

Ann: You want to tell me more about that?

Larry: Honestly, I really like my mentor teacher, but I feel like if she would just let me take over the classroom the kids would be more involved. Because I feel like there's a lot of independent work, so basically the warm ups given, the kids do their work and then she gives individual practice, they write and then with another guided practice they write more and so I feel like there's no teacher-kid involvement or teacher-student involvement

and so I just feel like I'm ready to take over my own classroom and try....things that I think of in my head that she should have done, that maybe I can implement.

Ann: Do you guys get a chance to ever collaborate?

Larry: Yes. Most of the time I don't like to step on her toes. So, I just ask her, "Hey can I lead the warm up exercise?" And I'll stand up and talk the whole time (Interview 3).

Larry felt so strongly about the need for student and teacher involvement and alludes that more needs to be done to ensure that students receive that one-to-one instruction to be successful. Despite Larry not realizing his full desire to lead out sooner in the classroom, along the way he learned some lessons about the importance of differentiation to serve the variance in learning styles. Moreover, this realization gave Larry a sense of agency and readiness to take over his own classroom.

### **Benefits of Mentorship: Building Stronger Levels of Confidence**

Feelings of belonging makes up part of preservice teacher development and their identity (Clarke, 2008). For Lauren, mentorship equated to feelings of connection and belonging even while in student teaching. Mentorship also equated to advocacy as she stated it meant "somebody was looking out for and telling you about different opportunities" (Interview 2). Knobloch and Whittington (2003) also posit that the level of support and feedback novice teachers receive from their mentors influence their efficacy to teach. Therefore, though Lauren and Mary perceived their first practicum experience as lacking quality mentorship relationship, they praised the level of professionalism they received and encountered on their second experience, which helped build their confidence and level of efficacy.

Lauren describes how her second mentor teacher gave her more freedom to exercise her full potential as a student teacher. The freedom allowed her to plan, teach more engaging and

interactive lessons, as well as to design more long term planning. She was also able to engage in more collaborative planning with her second mentor teacher, resulting in them doing team teaching on occasion. This collaborative effort was evident when I observed her during her second practicum. Lauren taught some components of the lesson including the activating strategy and vocabulary components of the *Persepolis* lesson, while her mentor teacher reviewed skills on theme and foreshadowing. Lauren describes her experience with her second mentor teacher:

Ann: You also talked about the mentorship experience from your first practicum. So do you feel that for this second practicum experience that you received the mentorship that you needed or you wanted, more than the first experience?

Lauren: I did, I did. I think the main thing was the teacher wasn't quite as territorial about the students and everything and kind of you did lessons and observations and more of engaging, you know, this is what I'm going to do with them and this is what I'm telling them and they also just trusted me a lot (Interview 4).

She describes how as a result of the trust that her second mentor teacher had in her, he gave her the freedom to have more involvement in lesson planning and actual teaching in the classroom:

Lauren: They allowed me to make the entire two week curriculum plan series for that book. They didn't teach every single lesson. And then some of them, for instance, if I did teach an entire lesson then the teacher would like to come in and teach the next one which is fine, because they know what they need to get done and then if I moved, I moved a little bit slower than they did but the kids, I think they were able to come in and make up some time that they had lost when I would have taught the students (Interview 4,).



Her teaching included co-teaching opportunities with her mentor teachers, who shared the teaching responsibilities with her. Lauren describes also appreciating the meaningful conversations she had with her second mentor in the high school including discussions about student success. She felt he was able to identify her capability in many ways unlike her first experience:

Lauren: In high school, my mentor teacher was really open and just more mentor-like I guess and one of the things I said last time was that something I always liked to do is when I work with somebody, get a letter of recommendation and I felt like I had enough. The key he had seen me enough and that was another thing that the first teacher didn't give me enough opportunity to really feel like. I felt like she was not able to write an accurate letter of recommendation for me, but I felt like he was able to see what I was capable of on a lot of different levels, and I was able to have discussions with him about the backgrounds of the students and kind of prove myself as a teacher. So I felt a lot more comfortable because of the way he was able to trust me with his class then he was able to do a lot of the things that I wanted to do and also a lot of the things that would enable him to write a recommendation for me (Interview 4).

As a result of the level of professionalism in the second practicum experience, Lauren recalls receiving a level of trust from her mentor teacher, sufficient for him to write her a meaningful recommendation. In light of the collaborative efforts and sense of trust, Lauren's level of confidence increased and she was able to get much more of her innovative ideas accomplished than previously. Lauren's description of the difference of both her mentorship experiences shows a conscious effort on her part to be reflective of her teaching experiences and analytic about her

educational investments. It also shows an intentional effort on her part to be perceived as a professional from very early in teacher education.

Mary also describes having a more fulfilling experience with her second mentor teacher. The mentorship included not only her cooperating teacher, but other teachers at the school. Collectively, the teachers provided the level of support and professional development that helped her to be successful as a teacher:

Mary: Support and structure was better. I learned more. It was not only my mentor teacher, but other teachers around the school gave me so many ideas. Gave me so many material. Answered all of my questions....But these teachers had plans ...They gave me their lesson plans...You can look at this and kind of draw your ideas from this. (Interview 4)

The other teachers at the school not only provided material and shared their lesson plans, they were also available to provide much needed feedback that helped affirmed Mary's learning more:

And after each lesson, I could go to them and say o.k. what did I do or what could I have done better. And they were really open about it. And really positive and always gave me constructive criticism. And like I say always giving me ideas...So they were able to tell me this is not going to work with this group... (Interview 4)

Mary further described how the support that she received from the community at her second practicum helped build her confidence to teach and built her efficacy.

It is evident that the participants had high expectations for their mentor teachers at their practicums. They hoped to establish more than guidance on how to teach and on lesson plan designs. They desired to maintain professional relationships with their mentors. Clearly, there

were tensions about trust and freedom within the classroom between them and their first mentors. However, eventually Mary and Lauren were able to develop the trust and support from their second mentors as well as other teachers. While Larry expressed concern about not leading the class as he wanted in his first practicum, he was able to learn the importance of differentiation in lessons. The participants' sense of efficacy seemed to improve as a result of their perceptions of more trust and freedom between them and their mentors during the second practicum. All three participants developed more confidence and a sense of agency over the course of the two semesters, thereby strengthening their teaching identities.

#### **Theme 4: Growing into Being a Teacher: The Act of Becoming**

*Growing into Being a Teacher: The Act of Becoming* is the fourth theme extrapolated from the data. The categories that inform this theme are the program's role, teachers' roles, understanding of theory, and self-efficacy. The codes supporting this theme are new learning, introspection, program expectations, procedural vs. theoretical, confidence in teaching literacy and self-efficacy. The theme *Growing into Being a Teacher: The Act of Becoming* evolved from the data as the participants tried to figure out the meanings and application of theories, their positions as developing teachers, and the implication on their teaching lives. Preservice teachers enter teacher education with their personal experiences, beliefs, and perceptions about teaching and learning. They also enter the program with certain expectations. As preservice teachers decide what kind of teacher they want to become and how they want to be perceived, they are continuously developing their identities (Milner IV, 2010; Danielewicz, 2001; Clarke, 2008). Recall Danielewicz (2001) describe the process of how a person negotiates teaching and perceptions of their positions as constituting the act of "*becoming*." Preservice teachers also have anxiety and fears about the unknown. While these feelings and angsts are normal and well

founded, they can stand to effect tensions or affirmations for preservice teachers. These feelings can impact preservice teachers' sense of self or their identities.

The three participants started out the program with their own expectations of what they deemed would ensure their success as ESOL teachers. Through coursework, lectures, reading, and the experience at their practicum, they received opportunities for new learning. However, the participants experienced some mixed feelings about their teaching identity, their learning, as well as about their understanding of theories. That is, along the way they questioned their roles as developing teachers and struggled to understand the meaning of theories and how best to apply them. Similar to preservice teachers in Fleming et al.'s (2011) study, the participants in this study experienced tensions about their learning. Eventually, the practicum experience provided a forum for them to apply deeper understanding of theory. Further, through much introspection, the participants were able to gain a deeper understanding of theory application. In turn, their confidence in teaching literacy and sense of self efficacy greatly improved.

### **Am I a Teacher or a Student?**

As the participants navigated the program they grappled with issues of identity, leaving them wondering if they were a student or a teacher. Two of the participants were anxious about their learning of subject matter. For Larry, the material was unfamiliar; while for Lauren, she did not feel as challenged as she anticipated. Larry grappled with both the pedagogy of learning to teach and the content knowledge of the subject. On his learning, he commented, "I've taken now two of the ESL education classes and three or four of the regular education classes and I feel like I'm not prepared yet. And I'm hoping the practicum prepares me better..." (Interview 1). Larry also seemed anxious about having to take tests on the content he would someday need to teach his own students. For Larry, he anticipated applying the content knowledge sooner with students.

He also felt he learned best through experiential knowledge and would have benefitted by hearing from or having more observations of experienced teachers.

On several occasions, Lauren felt that she was knowledgeable about many of the concepts she was learning while in the program. She expressed not feeling challenged by some of the learning. She had expectations about other concepts and resources that she would have liked to learn more about. Particularly, she hoped to learn about more technology programs that could be used to support her literacy instruction.

Unlike Larry and Lauren, Mary expressed feeling more like a teacher while she was in the ESOL program. Her previous undergraduate experiences left her feeling as though she and her classmates were not treated as beginning teachers. She felt she learned the subject of French and not how to teach the language to others. The ESOL program, however, was adequately preparing to be an effective teacher:

Ann: And what are your expectations for this program you think?

Mary: I will definitely be prepared. And it will- because right now I'm learning that as I was doing my minor, they were teaching me about education. They were teaching me about teaching. But now I recognize in my masters, we are treated like teachers. So instead of being taught like a student that is learning about teaching and education, we are taught as if we are teachers and educators already. So, I feel that I will be prepared and be more confident in my strategies, in presenting materials, and all of that. I just feel like I will be prepared" (Interview 1).

Mary expounds more in a follow-up interview about feeling like an insider now that she is in the ESOL program, a feeling she couldn't express before. Now she was able to implement some of the things she had learned previously as well as during the ESOL program:

I was like on the outside looking in. Basically, we learned about different theories, but we weren't expected to practice them. We would learn about the issues in education and write about them, but we didn't really talk about how it would affect us in the classrooms. We just said these are the issues. We kind of studied around the issues of education. Now I feel like I'm inside of it. Like O.K. This is what's going on. This is what we are expected to do throughout the year for the 180 days. How are you going to function? Like I'm inside of it now. O.k. How are you going to applying these theories? Not only reading about them, and know that they are interesting, but how are you going to apply these theories? That's how I feel like I'm being treated like a teacher. Actually I can do something with the stuff that I'm learning, not just to be informed about it and be able to talk about it, and sit at a round table and discuss it but I have to actually apply it all (Interview 2).

While being in the ESOL program, Mary felt that she was gaining a deeper understanding of theories and their application in the classroom. She hoped the actual practicum experience later would further facilitate her learning of how to apply theories in the classroom.

### **Theorizing Can Make or Break You**

The participants not only had conflicts about how they perceived their identity while learning coursework, rather they also shared some tensions they had in understanding how theories translate into practice. At the start of the summer, the participants' understanding of theories seemed mechanical, as they made constant references to the theories they were learning at the time in their coursework. Mary states that "I'm stuck on what theory is this and it kind of throws me off" (interview 2). Mary and Larry also expressed feelings of tensions about theories that they had learned while in some of their classes in the program. That is, the participants

talked described struggling with the meaning and application of some theories. For instance, Mary wrote in her reflection about a theory on maturation and its relation to children's ability to read. Mary feels that the author's reasoning puts limits on children's ability to read at a young age. She boldly questioned how the author could have arrived at this conclusion. When asked to elaborate on this tension, Mary continues:

Mary: For me, what I've noticed with working with youth period, is that, I guess not as a teacher, but from adults in general, they are really looked over with my experience with teaching middle school and high school... Adults have a lot to say in what they're doing. But the children don't. They can't make all the decisions. They're looked over. But they don't really have a voice. It's always somebody saying this is what you're able to do and this is what you're not able to do. I see this as a problem. I guess I just value the minds of our youth because they are our future. I wasn't frustrated, I just thought it was kind of crazy to say that. I feel like it was very limiting, very limiting. How are you going to say that we should start reading at six? Does that mean a five year is not able to do it? A three year old is not able to do it? A two year old is not able to do it? It is very limiting. You're not given a chance. It's almost like chains put on you or like a cell gate. You can only go this far. I don't know. It's very limiting. (Interview 2).

Mary clearly feels that adults often underestimate children's capability and robs them of their voice. She feels however that children should be given choices about issues to do with their own lives; to do otherwise is devaluing them and is less than human.

Similarly, Larry expresses in "some of my classes right now am having conflicting ideas of literacy and reading and how they comprehend it" (Interview 2). One of the chief contributing factors was the uncertainty he had after learning about two theories on reading approaches in

separate classes. While he had learned one view or approach to teaching reading in his psychology class, he then learned a different view in a reading theory class. Needless to say the dichotomous views added to most of the conflicts he stated he had about understanding how to teach reading. Larry ended up feeling confused about which was the ideal approach that would work with his students:

Larry: I remember. It was in the psychology class they focus more on when you are reading guiding the students into reflections, providing the questions at the beginning of the reading or having them focus on certain topics while they are reading. They say that helps to promote comprehension or something like that. But in the theory and the reading class and I think one TESL class I took, I don't remember the number, but it focus more on the student should read the text, you shouldn't provide the focus and stuff like that. So I was wondering which would be the best or finding the common ground. (Interview 2).

Larry tried to understand each viewpoint from a theoretical stance. He mentioned struggling to come to a "common ground." While Larry did not perceive any of the theories as being wrong, he felt confused in deciding, which was the ideal approach that would work with his English learners. He later explained in follow up discussions that he eventually resolved that he would have to choose his approach based on his students' learning styles and needs. That is, he would "need to find the common ground and know my students and figure out what more benefits their comprehension of the literacy (Interview 2). Therefore, through Larry's reflection on the theories, he was able to identify tensions he was experiencing that was impacting his learning of literacy. Later however, he was also able to create resolutions and affirmations about his learning and understanding of theories.



### **New Understandings About Theories**

Interestingly, as the program and semesters progressed, the participants found ways to start amalgamate their learning, practical experiences, and understanding of theories. While in some cases, they initially had tenuous moments and felt resentful about the intent of some theories and conflicted about their applications, the participants began understanding the purpose of theories and in some cases were applying the theories second naturedly. That is, it seemed the participants, especially Larry and Mary, grew to understand the role of theories in shaping their learning and teaching. Larry expresses how “I’m now able to see how theories have been incorporated in the classroom through the readings and Ms. C actually brings in her own experience” (Interview 2). They developed ways at framing theories in a non-mechanical way. As a result, they garnered a level of confidence in their perception of the theories and their applications. Larry describes how he began to apply theories without much thoughts:

Larry: And so I’m still trying to find my way in the classroom, I think.

Ann: Okay, but can you explain what you mean by ‘trying to find your way’?

Larry: I guess trying to... Well, what’s been my hardest challenge right now is my class is two hours long. I’m on a block with them and I teach them for two periods and for me it’s hard to find out what I’m doing and make it long enough to where I don’t, like finish my lessons so quick, or I don’t extend them over the time. And then my kids, how each one of them are on a different ability level and so these people may be working on trying to combine their active reading skills. Like doing questioning and visualization at the same time. While this student, over here that I’m working with is further behind...he hasn’t even grasped the skills yet.

Ann: Okay

Larry: So it's kind of... I'm just trying to work with differentiation and stuff. So the theories ... I've kind of left behind (Interview 3).

However, three quarters way through the study, while Larry appeared to understand theories and their applications better, it was not without its challenges. He further explains not understanding how to design proper pacing of his lessons. Larry also expresses challenges with teaching students of varying abilities or levels. Mary alluded to taking ownership for her learning of the theories. That is, she describes how she was purposeful about trying to comprehend theories:

Mary: Yeah. I want to feel prepared...My confidence level of applying those theories- it doesn't happen as often as I would like it to. For me, I'm taking in so much and sometimes when I was reading is like I would read about the theories and I would read my Psychology book and read those other books and I am able to say this is what this is and this is what I did and this is how I can do this. But if I don't write it down, I forget. And I'm thinking is that one day it's going to be automatic. It's kind of scary because I want to be able to sit down and do a lesson plan and think about those theories. Because they matter (Interview 2).

Mary talks about actively testing her understanding of how to apply theories by reading, applying and crosschecking against the theories as a form of assessment, with the hope of the process becoming automatic.

While Lauren did not seem to have issues with applying theories, she showed shifts in her overall understanding of the meaning of theories. She attributed the new learning to what she had been reading in the method class in the program. While reflecting on the new learning, she was able to formulate a more comprehensive interpretation of literacy:

Ann: That came on for you. I know I've asked you in the first interview of your understanding of literacy. What is your understanding of literacy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? Describe what you think that should look like.

Lauren: I think that something that I have also read in the socio-constructivism theory type things that I have read for this course is that literacy isn't just reading, but it's also writing, it's also speaking. It's all of these different things. It's just language in general- it's all encompassing of literacy. So I can see that in especially in an English as a second language setting how having all holistic ways to communicate in English would be a part of literacy. Because sure it's reading of course. But then, it's also writing and then being able to talk about what you have read, as well (Interview 2).

Further, Lauren was now able to solidify her learning of literacy for English learners and identify the components that would most benefit them. Thus, Lauren's understanding of literacy was affirmed through her reading in her theory class and through the application of learning. When I observed her in her classroom, it was evident that she was incorporating all these components of literacy including reading, speaking, and writing with her refugee immigrant students.

In sum, there was a definite shift in the preservice teachers' theoretical knowledge to include a more practical knowledge base. The participants initially experienced some conflicts in their understanding and operated in a mechanical way in their application of theories. They struggled to find their way in applying theories and finding a common ground with the theories. Gradually their understandings of literacy development and teaching began changing. They started developing agency in applying the theories in more non-mechanical manner, thereby application became more second natured and automatic. They were no longer constantly framing their

understanding of literacy by referencing the theoretical concepts. In essence, it seems their level of confidence in understanding and application of theories was increasing gradually.

### **Practicum and Field Experience Matters**

Throughout the two semesters of data collection, the participants struggled to understand how theory translates into practice in the classroom. In many ways, they yearned for real practice in the classroom to come sooner. Larry and Mary in particular wanted the classroom experience, since they did not have much in the way of working with students in K-12 settings. Planning and executing lessons in the classroom particularly helped Larry experience an increase in confidence about his ability to teach. He stated that putting his learning in practice was an eye opening experience, as things did not always necessarily work according to plans. There were “teachable moments” that occasionally occurred requiring change in some parts of the lesson. Training could not prepare him for all unexpected events. Instead, through the continuous practice and trial and error of “being out in the classroom and seeing what works” and what does not, he was able to gain a better understanding of curricular planning and instruction (Interview 3):

Ann: Now that you have had your first practicum experience, describe that experience.

What was it like?

Larry: I really enjoyed it. I learned a lot. Honestly, I’m not nervous to be in the classroom anymore. I’m ready to have my own.

Ann: Woo-Hoo!

Larry: So, it’s been a very good experience for me. That I’ve just learned a lot about how to do lesson planning and stuff like that because here, even with the practicum, I have to do such detailed lesson plans that I panic. I have to follow minute by minute because it

has to be typed up like that. But I just type it up and then just go with the flow. So, I'm not as nervous as I was (Interview 3).

Larry expressed a growing feeling of confidence over and over based on his learning in the classroom. He is convinced that had he not received the actual practice in the classroom, then he would not have felt confident about his teaching. Therefore, in light of the practice experience, Larry's efficacy towards working in the classroom has increased:

Larry: I think so because I was so nervous about being in the classroom, I was contemplating other jobs, because I was so nervous but now I'm not nervous at all. I'm just nervous about finding a place to be an ESOL teacher...

Ann: And you attribute that to...

Larry: Just having the experience in there now.

Ann: Experience in the actual classroom?

Larry: Yes. (Interview 3).

Similar to Larry, Mary also attribute her rise in confidence to the actual experience in her field experiences. Although the theory and method classes laid the ground work, the actual field experience further solidified her learning and ultimately built her level of confidence. Mary too had great expectations for her practicum experience and looked forward to it with great expectations:

Ann: What was it that you hoped for?

Mary: I just wanted to learn. I wanted the experience and I wanted to know if it was something I could do. If it was something that was right for me and something I would be able to handle. And yes it is something I feel like I will love to do (Interview 3).

Now that she began the practicum experience, she was able to reflect on her actual teaching in the classroom. Many realizations came as a result of actual experience working with the students in the field. While reflecting, Mary describes receiving firsthand knowledge of how assessments of students' learning and instruction help to drive instruction in the classroom. In other words, she realizes teacher education could not fully prepare teachers for everything that they would face in the classroom. Through the actual act of planning, teaching, and reflecting on lessons and on the students' feedback, Mary was able to make adjustments and changes to her instruction:

I'm understanding how they're learning in the reading. And how they learn helps me guide them with, whether or not I'm doing too much, or I'm doing too little. It helps me with my presentation... with understanding how they learn,...with what helps them and with what's not going to help them. So that helps me as well...depending on which activities I pick or how long I stand up and teach and also realizing that I talk a lot more to them than they talk to me. I realize that as I continue to look over, because most of my lesson plan is coming from the literacy clinic with Dr. C. And so I'm really trying to get them and assessing myself saying, okay Mary there needs to be more group activity, there needs to be more of the students' talking to you and more of the students talking to each other, instead of me standing in front of them. Because that's boring and their minds are going off somewhere else. But I didn't know that I did that. (Interview 3).

Through reflection on her learning and teaching, Mary shares the importance of English learners benefitting from group work and talk. She further describes how modifying her lessons to include both teacher-directed and student-directed components holds students' interest and promotes learning. As part of her lesson on 'research information on chosen career for an informational text', she included differentiation for students by "splitting (students) into groups

to research careers of information (Lesson plan, Nov 14, 2013). Mary reflected on the feedback from her university supervisor on how it helped her to improve her classroom instruction. With the improvement in her instruction and constructive feedback from her supervisor, Mary's level of confidence in teaching improved tremendously. She stated that "they (teacher educators) prepare us for what's to come out there. So I feel pretty prepared. And I'm not as nervous as far as.... The question is not will I be able to do it anymore because I know I can (Interview 3, Mary).

Lauren also felt very confident about her literacy development and being ready to have her own classroom. She states that she "feel like my literacy instruction, I feel like I've had really good instruction in that and I can't really see any kind of gaps." She alludes also that she felt she had "been given pretty good instruction in the literacy instruction too" (Interview 4). She also expresses that she feels prepared to "work with kids individually, or large groups, or small groups, in the high school levels than I feel really confident about any kind of situation" (Interview 4). That is, the program had prepared her for the classroom. She expressed that she thinks the "only way I've really grown is I understand more how to teach a lesson, and how to manage my time in my classroom and it's made me want to just finish and get my own classroom (Interview 3). Therefore, in light of Lauren expressing a strong sense of confidence in literacy knowledge and differentiation, as well as feelings confident about having her own class, these are clear evidence of her strong efficacy towards being ready for the classroom.

*Growing into Being a Teacher: The Act of Becoming* highlights how the participants grappled with both theory and practice as they participated in coursework and practicum experiences. Reflections of their struggles and conflicts and then of their hope of automaticity

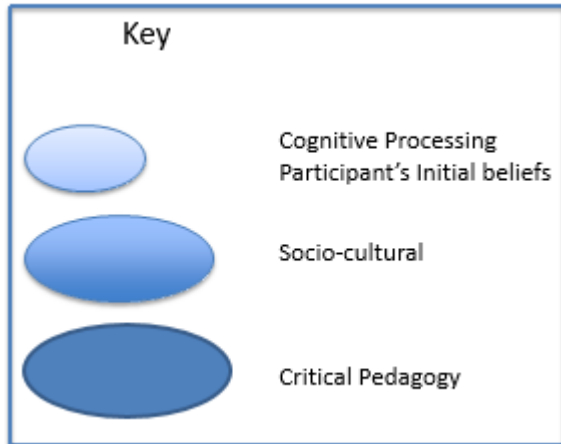
and of weaning themselves from framing all lessons around theories played a significant role in shaping emerging teacher identities and what it means to be a literacy teacher for EL students.

### **Bringing All Themes Together: Highlighting the Shifts**

To further the discussion on participants' evolving understandings of literacy development, I describe each individual participant as their own case. I return to previous discussions of their beliefs of literacy, how the program reinforced these shifts and how ultimately, their identities as literacy teachers of EL students were revised over time. The three participants have similarities in their understandings, but the discussion highlights differences in how they theorized their understanding of literacy, how their beliefs shifted and how they felt about their own teaching identities.

In an effort to represent the movement and shift of each participant's understanding of literacy and his/her resulting identity, I created a visual, a timeline of sorts to complement the narrative for each participant. A key (see Figure 1) is included that shows what each symbol represents. The size is significant in the first symbol, which represents the participants' initial understanding that appears linked to previous experiences of literacy. In a few cases, these theoretical symbols are overlaid on each other to reflect times when a participant aligned with more than one theoretical perspective. A second key (see Figure 2) is included that represents the level of confidence each participant exhibited towards their literacy understanding. The moon phases are used with the quarter moon representing "little confidence", half-moon for "developing confidence," three-quarters moon for "strong confidence" and the full moon for "very strong confidence." Figures 3, 4, and 5 show the progression of literacy understandings and confidence in teaching for Lauren, Mary, and Larry respectively over the two semesters.





**Figure 1:** Key that reflects theoretical perspectives of literacy

Figure 1



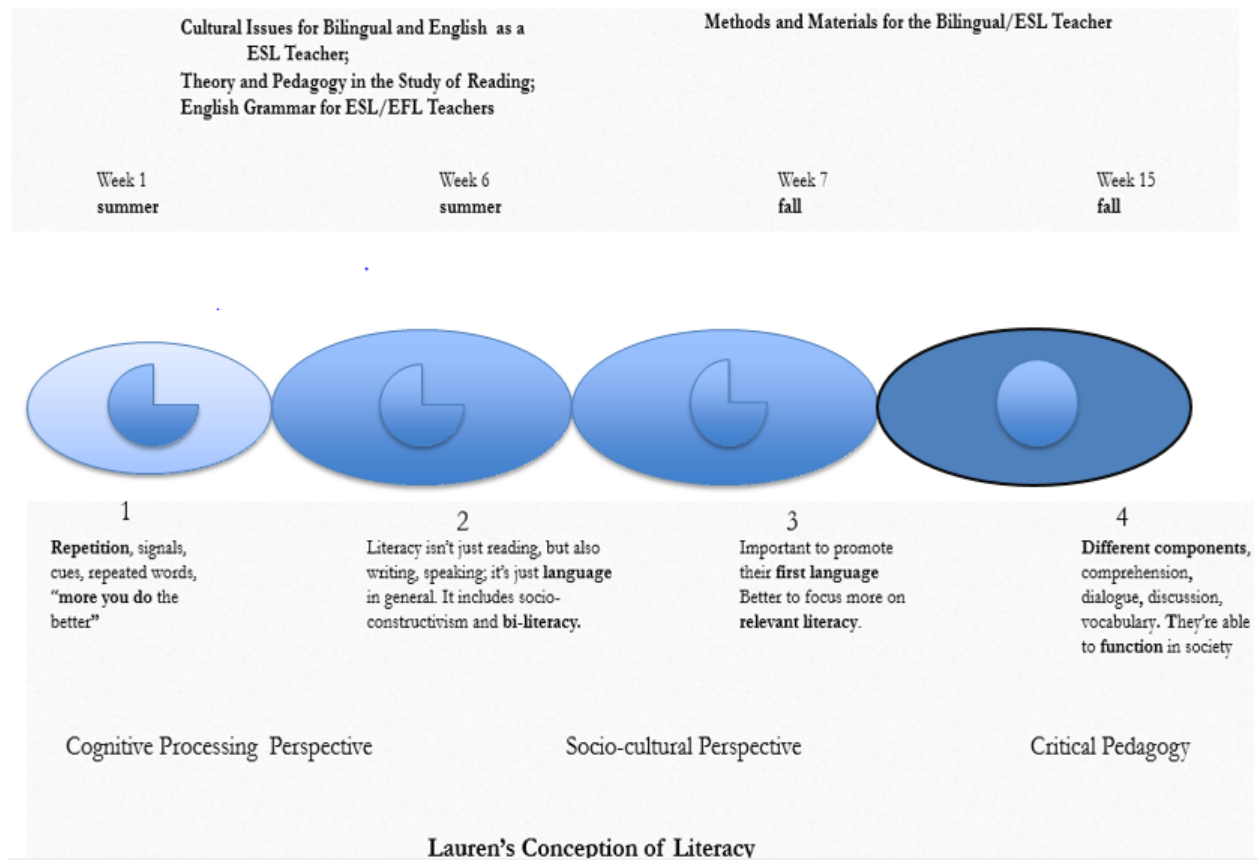
**Figure 2:** Key that reflects confidence levels in literacy understanding

Figure 2

### **A Snapshot of Lauren: *Literacy is Reading, Writing, Speaking and Functioning***

Lauren's previous learning and experiences were essential to her initial beliefs. She shared how her mother was instrumental in her early literacy experiences, but that she did not recall much about learning to read or knowing the alphabet. She also discussed how learning came easily for her in school and that she often tutored other students or helped them with homework in their language classes. Before entering the ESOL program, Lauren designed

curriculum for co-workers who were learning English in the U.S. and overseas. She expressed her confidence and love in creating curriculum and lessons.



**Figure 3:** Lauren's shifts in literacy development and teacher identity

Figure 3

### Lauren's Shifts in Conceptions of Literacy

Lauren was selected as one of the participants based on her experience working with English Learners locally and internationally. She had a plethora of experience working with K-12 and adult English learners. At the start of the program, Lauren's understanding of literacy was "being able to read and write." Lauren stated that she felt reading and writing was more about practice and that "the more you do them (reading and writing), the "better you get." She went on to explain that literacy should include repetition, signals and cues. These comments aligned more

closely with cognitive processing perspective. This perspective emphasizes the alphabetic principle, puts a heavy focus on decoding of words and reading development occurs in stages (Hall, 2003). By the end of the six weeks summer course session, Lauren's conception of literacy had shifted to reflect a socio-cultural perspective. Hall (2003) describes socio-cultural perspective as placing emphasis on social and cultural context and authentic activities. Au's social constructivism theories were important in shifting her perspectives to highlight the importance of the home, students' language and culture in instruction. Framed with this lens, she described a broader view of literacy, "...literacy isn't just reading, but also writing, it's also speaking...it's just language in general." Adding to this broader view, Lauren also reflected on the role of bi-literacy, which encourages students' first language in supporting their learning of a second language.

Lauren's conception of literacy continued to evolve to focus more on students' language and relevance of the lesson, as she moved into the fall semester. This shift was evident in her written reflections where she discussed at length the importance of language and how students' bilingualism made them experts. As highlighted earlier, Lauren encouraged her students to be proud of their language and to be advocates for their parents who spoke limited English. She also felt that it was necessary that literacy should include creating relevance in students' learning. Lauren elaborated that relevance meant including "more nonfiction, or current events and a lot of things culturally" (Interview 3). For Lauren, it was equally important to incorporate students' out of school experiences including language and culture with their in-school learning. As she implemented lessons in her sheltered English classes, she included rich discussion of the characters in the *Persepolis* story. She engaged her students in a vocabulary game with girls competing against the boys. And in an effort to create relevance in the lesson to her students'

learning, she had the students compare their countries of origin to the Iranian setting in the story. For Lauren, literacy was also about engaging in other communicative practices and included more than individual investment. Her understanding was that literacy was social in nature and included issues of power. Lauren's conception of literacy had shifted to be more of a critical pedagogy. Hall (2003) describe critical pedagogy as engaged with questions about language and power.

By the end of the second semester, Lauren added to her initial definition of literacy as "definitely reading and writing" to include "different components of comprehension." and recognizing how different activities (e.g., discussions, dialogues, vocabulary) tie it all together. She notes the purpose of literacy in this comment, "Literacy is being able to read and being able to write and even articulate things that you need to communicate with other people. Its communication and being understood by other people... I think literacy for the English language learners is just to get them to a point where they're able to function in society" (Interview 4).

Therefore, Lauren's conception of literacy had shifted from cognitive processing perspective to a more expansive and multifaceted view of literacy. She envisioned literacy to be more than one type of practice or events that students take part in literacy. For Lauren, literacy was about students learning to create meaning, engaging in reading, speaking and writing in an effort to communicate about relevant issues and ultimately participate in real life situations in their lives. To that end, these practices were means to an end to help students to function in society.

### **Lauren's Shifts in Teaching Identity**

Lauren started the program feeling confident in her understandings of literacy and culture. She explained "a lot of the things that I'm learning in that class (Cultural Issues for

Bilingual/ESL Teacher) are things that I already have had a lot of experiences.” What she wanted to learn was how to work with all age groups. She wished to learn about the different grade levels to have “the option to teach all grades” literacy. (Interview 1). Lauren was optimistic in saying she knew that definitely by the end of the program she would be ready to go into the classroom. By the second interview, Lauren shared her feelings about the classes she had and how they were impacting her learning of literacy. For instance, she described at length how her *English Grammar for ESL/EFL Teachers* class while challenging, was enlightening her understanding of literacy and how to transfer her learning to various age groups

I’m having the hardest times in my linguistics class. But, I feel like it’s one of those ones that has really kind of opened my eyes to language in general. And how English is broken down compared to other languages. I feel like that has been really enlightening for me...And I’m also able to as I’m learning about these linguistic theories and breaking down grammar and sentence structure and words and that sort of thing, then I’m able to kind of think o.k. well this would work out with this age group and then other things I like to use. So I think this class has been good. (interview2)

Lauren’s identity as a teacher began to shift as she engaged in her practicum experiences. While her coursework was providing some perspective on how to apply her learning to classroom instruction, Lauren was anxious to gain more hands on experience working with students. She felt this would strengthen her understanding of teaching literacy sooner. Lauren expressed having a much better learning experience and understanding of literacy by her second practicum. Lauren described how she developed a level of trust with her mentor teacher, which further facilitated ample opportunities for her to try out different lessons and ideas. She believed her mentor teacher gave her more freedom to plan and teach literacy units. Lauren was able to

incorporate some of her learning from her coursework shaped by her beliefs in her instruction. She also engaged in co-teaching experiences with her mentor teacher, which further strengthened her teaching identity. By the end of the second semester, Lauren emphasized that she felt comfortable working with any grouping, “I could work with kids individually, or large groups, or small groups, in the high school levels then I feel really confident about any kind of situation” (Interview 4).

### **Summary of Lauren’s Shifts**

Clearly, Lauren’s conceptions of literacy evolved over the course of the study. At the start of the study, Lauren based her conception on the literacy events students engage in including practicing skills to get better in literacy. By the middle of the study, Lauren’s conception expanded to include not just reading and writing but other language domains such as speaking. Lauren also embraced students’ language and incorporating relevance in students’ instruction as critical to their literacy development. Her understanding by the end of the study included a repertoire of perspectives which covers practices students engage in both inside and outside the classroom as well as the resources that students bring from their experiences.

As Lauren theorized about her understanding of literacy, she was able to incorporate her learning into her instruction with success. At the start of the study, Lauren exhibited confidence in deepening her understanding of literacy and in her ability to learn innovative ways to teach literacy. By the end of the program, Lauren expressed feeling more confident in teaching literacy with students of varying abilities, learning styles and grade levels. She felt very ready to have her own classroom.

### **A Snapshot of Mary: *Literacy is Survival, Opportunities, and Empowerment***

In order to gain a better understanding of the shifts in Mary's conceptions of literacy, it was necessary to learn about her previous learning and experiences, since these elements would inform her initial beliefs. She willingly talked about her initial experiences with reading and writing. Mary shared how her great grandmother who was 'up in age' taught her how to read, but that she did not remember how she actually learned to read. She also shared that she never struggled with learning to read. Previous to entering the ESOL program, Mary worked with after school programs at her church and also tutored K-12 children. She did not have much experience teaching literacy working with English learners prior to entering the teacher certification program. She had one rich cultural experience with an adult cultural exchange program in France.

### **Mary's Shifts in Conceptions of Literacy**

One of the main reasons Mary was selected for the study was based on her stance about working with a group of English learners from various backgrounds in the cultural exchange program in France. During the first interview, I asked Mary how her learning from the cultural exchange group would influence her teaching with English learners. Mary stated that based on the various backgrounds and experiences ELs have, they bring different perspectives to their understanding of literacy. She felt that information about students' backgrounds and experiences was critical for shaping instruction.

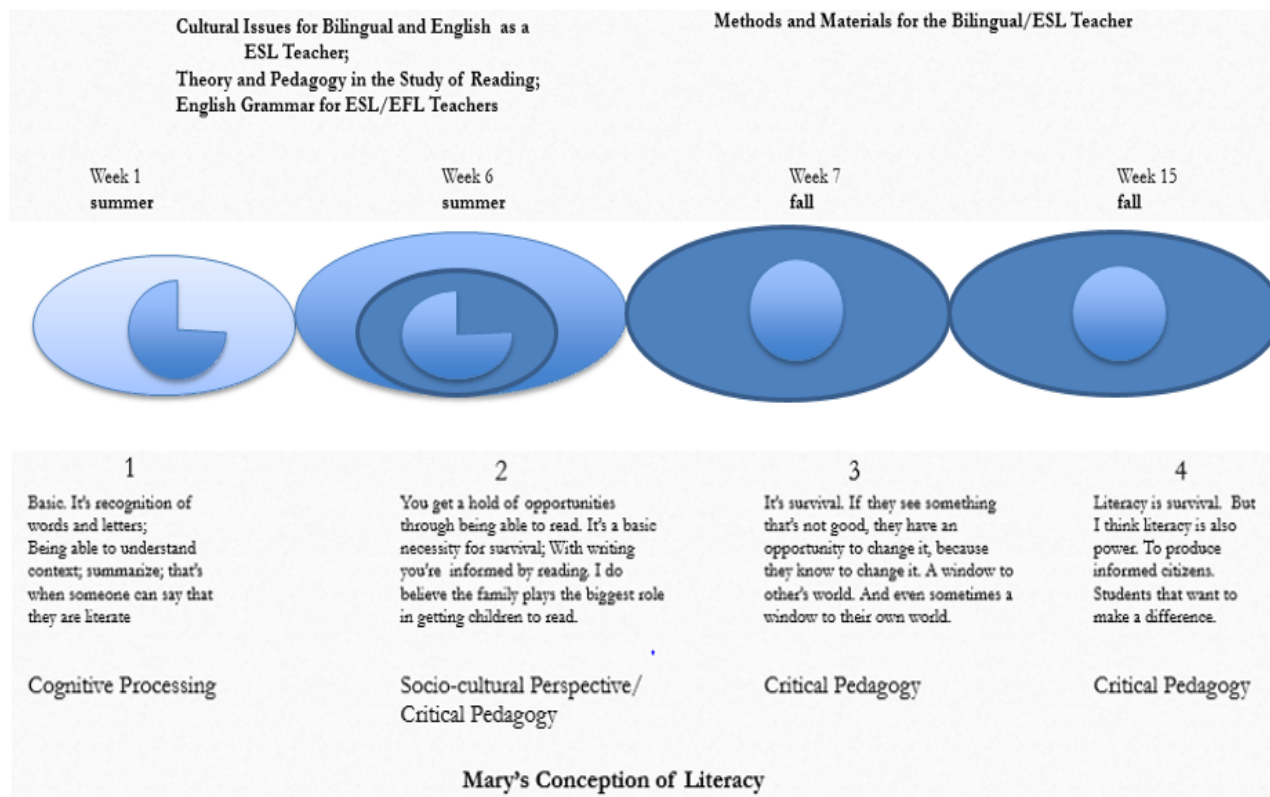
At the start of the summer, Mary's understanding of literacy included "recognition of words and letters." She further explained that literacy "was also about being able to understand the context of a passage... and being able to summarize it" (Interview 1) For Mary, only if students are able to engage in these practices, could they be considered literate. Her initial understandings were aligned mostly with the cognitive processing perspective. During one of the

early group discussions in the Theory and Pedagogy in the Study of Reading course, Mary discussed how the four year old student she worked with was struggling with letters and sounds and how she felt this would make it difficult for him to succeed in school.

By the end of the summer course, Mary's understanding of literacy was reshaped to align more with a socio-cultural perspective. She described literacy as being survival and as a way to "get a hold of opportunities" (Interview 2) and that "reading and writing are means for providing information. She went on to state that she "believes the family plays the biggest role in getting children to read" and providing the opportunities for children to succeed (Interview 2). Mary emphasized the importance of culture in students' literacy development. That is, she began to feel students' culture and socio-economic class impacts their understandings in the classroom. Agency became a central piece of Mary's understanding of literacy development. Her perception of literacy envisioned people being able to bring about change for others as well as for themselves. Literacy is "a window to other's worlds, and even sometimes a window into their own world" (Interview 3). Literacy was not only for individual investment but included investment in others. Mary perceived literacy as social in nature and including power. Her conception of literacy had shifted to align with critical pedagogy

For Mary, literacy invites students to be critical about issues of power in society. Furthermore, her understanding of literacy includes students being motivated enough to want to make a difference. Therefore, Mary's conceptions of literacy grew to be multifaceted. Literacy was not just about skills that people practice, but a channel for survival, a link between home and school, as well as access to opportunities and empowerment.





**Figure 4.** Mary's Shifts in Literacy Development and Teacher Identity

Figure 4

### Mary's Shifts in Teaching Identity

Mary started the program feeling fairly confident in her understanding of literacy. At the beginning of the program, she hoped she could learn how to teach English Learners and she wanted to be prepared as well as become confident in strategy instruction. Mary's identity in being an ESL teacher started shifting as she engaged in practicum in the fall. While she did not feel sure in her knowledge of literacy instruction at the end of her first practicum, she expressed a stronger sense of confidence in her knowledge about literacy instruction by the end of second practicum experience. She felt grateful for all the resources and support she received in her second practicum that strengthened her learning. For example, she credited "the practicum...., the observations (in other teachers' rooms), which she felt "kind of better prepared her for the different scenarios" (Interview 4). She specifically praised the mentorship that she received at

her second practicum in helping her to be successful in her literacy understanding. She was thankful for all the teachers around the school who gave her so many ideas, material as well as answering her questions. From these experiences, Mary's identity as a teacher shifted in how she theorized about her teaching and understanding of literacy. She explained how the feedback she received from her university supervisor on the use of "does it sound right" as a meaningful cueing prompt was critical in shaping her literacy understanding and how best to support her students' language development. Mary expressed feeling "more prepared than I did before I started the semester and that I've grown more confident in knowing that I'm better prepared than I was when I started" (Interview 4).

Thus, as Mary engaged in more reflection about her understanding of literacy and her instruction, she became more aware of the strategies that she was using to support her students. She also became more cognizant of how her knowledge and the kind of literacy instruction impacted her students' understanding. This sharpened awareness in her knowledge and sense of preparedness increased Mary's sense of efficacy and built stronger confidence in teaching literacy.

### **Summary of Mary's Conceptions**

Mary's conceptions of literacy evolved tremendously over the course of the study. Her initial view of literacy was about people's ability to identify letters, to sound out words and understand the basic meanings of what they read. For Mary, her conception of literacy initially amounted to practicing skills which brings about individual attainment and growth. Over time, Mary's notion of literacy progressed to include access to opportunities people could receive as a result of their abilities to read and write. She also embraced the role of the family in helping to provide opportunities for students' literacy development. For Mary, literacy also leads to more

prospects and ultimately operates as a means for survival. Mary's understanding of literacy grew to also include power and shaping students to be agents of change. Ultimately, Mary's concept of literacy became social in nature. That is, literacy was not just for personal success but included empowering others to be successful.

At the start of the program, Mary was determined and felt confident that she would be successful in developing her understanding of literacy. She felt that the program would prepare her with the skills she would need to understand how to teach literacy. Mary expressed feeling very confident in her understanding of literacy and desired having her own classroom by the end of the study.

#### **A Snapshot of Larry: *Literacy is Family, Strategies, Knowledge, Culture and Voice***

Larry's earlier experiences before entering the program were essential to his initial beliefs on literacy. When I met with Larry, he shared how he learned to read by watching his older sister and mother. He shared that he does not recall learning to read through school but through home as well as the community. He further explained how he learned to speak Spanish from working at the construction worksite with his dad who had Hispanic workers. Larry tutored Brazilian high school students before entering the ESOL program.

#### **Larry's Shifts in Conceptions of Literacy**

Larry's tutoring experience with EL students overseas, as well as his limited experience working with students in K-12 contributed to my selection for him to be in the study. When I interviewed him at the start of the summer, he described literacy as being "reading, writing and kind of comprehension on what you read and write" (Interview 1). . He explained further that, "reading always gives way to writing, but I don't think it goes vice a versa, where writing encourages reading" (Interview 1). Therefore, it seems Larry's initial conception of literacy

views reading and writing as separate entities that support literacy. It also seems at that time in the program, Larry's perspective about literacy was about students' in-school literacy practices. Similar to Mary and Lauren, these comments aligned more with a cognitive processing perspective.

By the end of the six weeks summer course session, Larry's conception of literacy had also shifted to include a socio-cultural perspective. His belief of literacy was that "students will learn from their environment, and society". Like Mary, he also stated how he would "put the emphasis on family literacy and also reading outside of the classroom" (Interview 2).

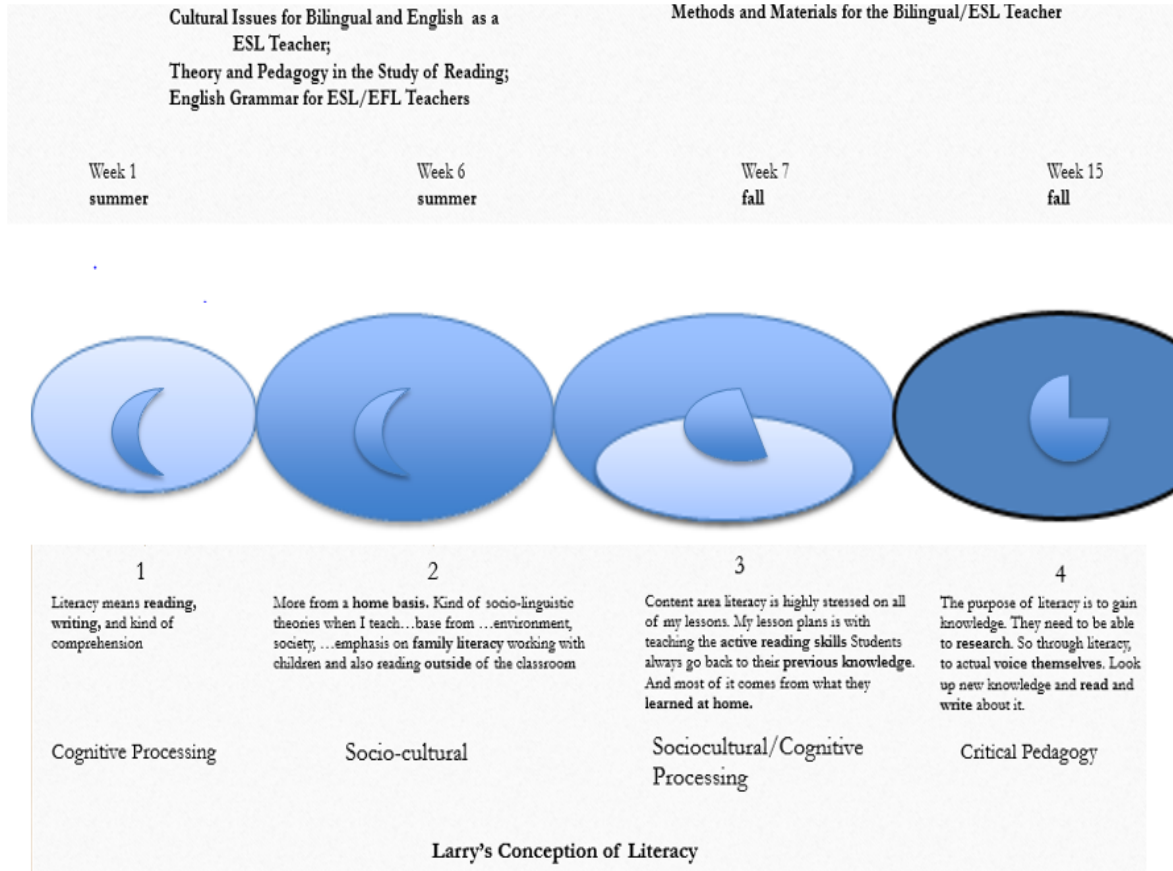
Therefore, Larry's understanding of literacy instruction was that it should incorporate students' in-school and out-of school literacy practices. Larry's socio-cultural perspective was evident in his reflection, where he reiterated that family literacy was the basis of literacy development. He also noted that students' literacy should include awareness about their own culture as well as other's culture and that he was tying cultural understanding into what they were learning. Larry confirmed that his belief was based on his learning from his Theory and Pedagogy in the Study of Reading course that literacy was "more from a home basis and kind of socio- linguistic or socio-cognitive theories" (Interview 2). These references to culture also reflects his learning from his Cultural Issues for Bilingual/ESL Teacher course.

By the fall, Larry's views of literacy shifted to include activating English learners' previous knowledge. For Larry, literacy now meant linking students' learning outside the classroom with learning of content area reading strategies in the classroom. Larry's lessons reflected emphasis on content area strategies which were evidence of transfer of his learning from his Methods and Materials for the Bilingual/ESL Teacher course. Therefore, Larry's

concept of literacy shifted to a multifaceted view of literacy which aligns with socio-cultural perspective as well as cognitive processing perspective.

By the end of the study, Larry's perspective of literacy was about students having access to gain knowledge, as well as research. Larry also felt it was critical that through literacy, students were able to actually voice themselves and given opportunities to share the knowledge they learned. Clearly, Larry's understanding was that literacy serves multiple roles and that there is no one best way to teach reading and writing. It is evident, that while his perspective of literacy reflected a cognitive processing perspective, he began exhibiting an emerging understanding of critical pedagogy. He also felt it was crucial for teachers to get to know their students' learning styles to be able to teach them appropriately.

Larry's conception of the literacy by the end of the study evolved from a single view of literacy to having multiple perspectives and ways of teaching literacy. The teacher's role in incorporating students' culture and family in their instruction was critical to students' learning.



**Figure 5.** Larry’s Shifts in Literacy Development and Teacher Identity

Figure 5

**Larry’s Shifts in Teaching Identity**

When Larry started the program, he stated that he wanted to learn how to be an effective teacher through working with others in his coursework and practicum. He also expressed that he hoped “the practicum encourages me further in literacy and teaching literacy” (Interview 1).

He also hoped to understand how to teach literacy to students with various learning styles.

By the end of the summer session, Larry expressed that “I feel like I’m not prepared yet and “I’m hoping the practicum prepares me better”. (Interview 2). Larry also stressed some conflicts he was having in his coursework with understanding different theories about literacy. He had deep

concerns that he would not be able to provide the appropriate instruction to support his struggling students- as well as learn how to teach various learning styles and levels of students.

As Larry engaged in his practicum however, he expressed feeling more prepared and knowledgeable in his understanding of literacy and teaching his English Learners. He expressed “I think I’m ready” and that he was building up more confidence. (Interview 3). Larry attributed the new learning specifically to his experience at his practicum. He shared how “the practicum experience has just opened my eyes to literacy that not everybody is at the same level also in the classroom and through differentiation, I can work one-on-one in helping too” (Interview 3).

While Larry expressed feeling confident in his understanding to teach literacy and working with English Learners, he did however share concerns about not knowing how to accommodate different learning styles. By the end of the study however, Larry expressed feeling a stronger sense of confidence in not only his understanding of literacy but also in his ability to differentiate his lessons for various levels of students. He expressed that, “I feel like I’ve learned to actual teach literacy better”. He felt he could teach students with “the different levels of literacy, writing, and reading skills” that they had. (Interview 4). He attributed his confidence in his literacy instruction to the reading classes and the literacy classes that he had taken.

The evidence shows that Larry initially did not feel confident in his understanding of literacy and his ability to teach literacy. However, overtime through the coursework and practicum he developed a firmer understanding of the meaning of literacy. His confidence to teach literacy also improved dramatically. At the end of the study, he also shared that “I really enjoyed it (practicum). I learned a lot. Honestly, I’m not nervous to be in the classroom anymore. I’m ready to have my own” (Interview 4).

### **Summary of Larry's conceptions**

Larry's conception of literacy evolved over the two semesters of the study. His initial view of literacy was just about reading and writing practices students engaged in within the classroom. By the end of the summer however, his conception grew to include family and community as critical resource to students' literacy development. Furthermore, Larry's understanding of literacy developed to include not only students' in-school but also their out-of-school experiences. By the end of the study, Larry's perspective of literacy included students' ability to gain knowledge, to research and to share their own voice about their learning.

It is evident that as Larry theorized about literacy, he experienced conflicts in his knowledge and application of theories. However, although Larry had tensions in his understanding of theories, he did eventually start incorporating learning from his coursework into his instruction.

At the start of the study, Larry expressed doubts about becoming prepared to teach literacy before embarking on student teaching. He also grappled with identifying appropriate strategies for a struggling student. Even leading up to practicum in the fall, Larry expressed doubts about being ready to teach literacy. However, he eventually expressed feeling more prepared and felt that he would be ready to teach literacy by the end of the program and that all the literacy classes he took had shaped his understanding of literacy. He felt more confident about how to differentiate his lessons to teach various learning styles and levels. Eventually, he shared that he was not nervous anymore and that he was ready to have his own class.

### **Summary of All Three Participants: Tying it All Together**

A close analysis of each individual case shows that the participants had similarities in their initial understanding of literacy. These beliefs seemed to be linked to their previous



experiences before entering the teacher certification program. Overtime, the evidence shows that the participants' beliefs were been shaped and reshaped. While there were variances in their conceptions at different times throughtout the study, the participants had some significantly important beliefs about literacy. These revised beliefs included students' language and culture as well as relevance in literacy instruction.

The participants also felt the need to connect students' previous and out of school learning with their in-school learning. The three participants acknowledged the importance of empowering students and giving them a voice as a critical component of literacy. That is, the participants' views of literacy surpassed students engaging in mere acts of reading and writing for the sole function of individual investment and success. The participants on varying levels viewed literacy as attaining success not only for themselves but for empowering others and becoming agents of change. Therefore, the evidence shows the participants' understanding of literacy grew to be multifacted and social in nature.

Another point worth noting is that the participants' new learning in the program impacted their understandings about literacy. Their decisions to incorporate what they had learn in their coursework in their practicum further confirmed their commitment to adopting new ways of viewing literacy. The new learning of literacy was also shaped through the support the participants received from the mentor teachers in their lives.

As the participants' conceptions of literacy grew throughout the program, the participants became more intuitive about their identities as teachers. While one participant initially felt he was not confident about learning how to teach literacy to varied levels of students, the three participants eventually expressed feeling more confident and having increased sense of efficacy to teach literacy by the end of the study. Their commitment to include students' culture, their

primary language and relevance in their instruction was reflected in their lesson planning as well as in their instruction. To that end, the participants' expectations for being in the program were been realized up to that point in the program leading into their student teaching.

The goal of the study was to explore how ESOL preservice teachers' understanding of literacy developed and shaped their teaching identities. The findings show that the participants' conception of literacy is aligned with multiple views of literacy. Their views of literacy highlight the criticality of practice, meaning-making, family, and students' culture in learning. Overtime, the participants' views evolved to include relevance and empowerment in instruction. Therefore, the multiple views reflect the *ideological model* of literacy (Street, 1995) that embodies literacy as holding different meaning for people in different contexts. As a result of the participants' perspectives on literacy, they embrace *cultural relevant pedagogy* (Ladson-Billings, 1995, which promotes students' culture and language in teaching and learning. The findings also show the participants' agency was fortified, resulting in them encouraging their students to be proud of their primary language, to be advocates for their family and begin questioning issues of power in texts and in their learning. Consequently, some students in turn became agentic as they celebrated their languages and own experiences.

## **CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION**

This study is about how ESOL preservice teachers' understandings of literacy developed and how these understandings began to shape their identities as new teachers. The findings uncovered how the preservice teachers' understandings shifted through the duration of the study and two semesters of the certification program. The findings also revealed how the preservice teachers grappled with tensions about their learning and in some cases leaving them unresolved. This chapter reviews the main components of the study and offers conclusions that were drawn from the findings in Chapter 4. To close the chapter, implications for researchers, practitioners and policy makers are highlighted. The research questions of this study were:

1. How are ESOL pre-service teachers' beliefs and understandings of literacy development in language teaching shaped and revised as a result of participation in an ESOL teacher certification program?
2. How do ESOL preservice teachers' identities shift as they experience course work and practicum?

The first three chapters lay the foundation for this study. Chapter 1 covered the problem statement and the research purpose as well as outlined the theoretical framework that guided the study. The literature review in Chapter 2 prefaced previous research on the topics of (a) language teachers' evolving identities and the role of beliefs, reflection, and efficacy (b) nature of language teaching and current definitions of literacy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century; and (c) the role of mentorship and culturally relevant pedagogy. Chapter 3 outlined the methodology include the rationale for a qualitative case study, the various data collection analysis methods including ways to ensure a reliable and credible study. In Chapter 4, there is a full description of the findings and

themes which emerged from the codes within the data. To conclude, this chapter situates the themes within the literature and presents broader claims.

In keeping true to a qualitative case study protocol, several forms of data collection medium were used. A large sector of the data included the twelve interviews collected over the two semesters, four each for the three participants. The interviews were transcribed and memos written immediately including hunches, thus accommodating follow-up questions and clarifications. Two sets of lesson plans and four reflections were collected from each of the participants. Additional data such as observations of the Theory and Pedagogy in the Study of Reading class and the participants' instruction in their practicum were used as additional documents to corroborate and provide further triangulation of the data. Yin (2009) alludes to the many benefits of the case study in providing for more triangulation of the data. By so doing, I was able to gain a more comprehensive picture of their lives, ask follow-up questions, as well as probe for more clarifications. The thoroughness of the data collection further validated the interpretations which were created based on the far-reaching data. Constant comparative analysis (Glaser & Straus, 1967) was used to collect and analyze the data simultaneously as well as a means of seeking similarities and differences from the participants' data. That is, this method also allowed me to quickly see emerging patterns and themes in their stories.

### **Summary of the Findings**

The rationale behind the questions for the research was to ascertain preliminary perceptions of the preservice teachers' understanding of literacy and then as they gained more learning determine how their thinking was revised over time. It was important to learn how the program influenced their learning. I also wanted to explore how new learning impacted the participants' sense of confidence in teaching literacy to English Learners.

While the three ESOL participants started the program at the same time and participated in similar classes, the findings showed commonalities and differences in their levels of understanding of literacy. Each participant started out with simple understandings that aligned with their initial experiences at the start of the program. The participants all had different experiences before entering the program that helped to shape their perceptions as they navigated the program. As the semesters continued, the participants' understandings seemed to evolve into deeper meanings suggesting that the program helped to reshape their new learning as well as the participants had modified some of their previous views. In other ways however, the participants unearthed different insights about their learning as they navigated the program. The discoveries evoked a plethora of feelings. Some of the emotions were tensions, affirmations, and increased levels of confidence. As a result, the themes that unraveled were from raw emotions of the participants about their perceptions of their learning and of the program.

The findings also revealed that ESOL preservice teachers' identities shifted as they experienced course work and practicum. In the beginning, the participants had great expectations about the program and expressed personal goals about what they hoped their experience would be in the program. Confidence in lesson planning, understanding literacy development, and feeling prepared to teach English Learners were critical factors that point to the program's mediation of their learning. It was evident that they had a growing sense of agency as they crossed into student teaching. At the same time, the participants struggled to fully realize their new identities. There were occasions where they chose not to openly question or tease out tensions experienced in courses. For instance, at least two participants talked about not agreeing to some of what they had learned in one class and while they talked about it amongst themselves as students, they shied away from addressing their concerns with their professor. This suggests

that the preservice teachers did not feel comfortable enough to share their feelings while in the program.

### **Drawing Conclusion about Themes**

After careful and meticulous analysis of the data, themes were extrapolated from the data. The themes serve to tell the stories of the three participants and also provide answers for the research questions. Their voices are clearly heard throughout the development of the themes. My interpretation serves to expound upon their voices and synthesize different points within the data to better tell their stories. As the themes reflect, the participants are insightful about their learning and of the influence of the program. It is apparent that the participants are aware of how their understandings of literacy development were shared by coursework, field experiences and mentorship. The conclusions drawn and augmented with extant research literature include:

1. Preservice teachers continuously theorize about conceptual and procedural knowledge.
2. Mentors help shape preservice teachers' professional identities and build confidence about teaching and learning.
3. Cultural relevant pedagogy (CRP) is critical for all teachers.

### **Conclusion 1: The Criticality of Theorizing**

The first conclusion from the study is that preservice teachers continuously theorize as they navigate teacher education in search of understanding teaching and learning. The theorizing is about conceptual as well as procedural knowledge in literacy development, and in their own understandings of teacher identity. That is, preservice teachers are not only concerned about knowing *what* to teach, but *how* to effectively teach all their students. Tensions may result as preservice teachers grapple with the classroom realities and their beliefs, ending up creating gaps

or tensions in their beliefs (Johnson, 1995). Preservice teachers may be reluctant to share conflicts while theorizing, if they feel that the environment is not supportive of dialogue (Koetting & Combs, 2002).

### **Theorizing About Conceptual and Procedural Knowledge of Literacy Development**

The results from the study revealed that the participants continuously theorized about literacy and learning throughout the two semesters. They grappled with their understandings of both *procedural knowledge* as well as *conceptual knowledge*. At the start of the study, it became clear that the participants operated in a mechanical way towards their understanding of theories. That is, as Larry and Mary wrestled to make meaning of their learning, they theorized on how best to apply their knowledge of theories. For Larry, theorizing meant “trying to find my way in the classroom” as it related to understanding *how* to apply the learning. The findings show tensions were evident in his struggle of deciding the best theoretical approach in teaching his ELs how to read.

Alongside procedural knowledge, participants continued to theorize about literacy development. The findings demonstrate how the participants shifted their understandings related to the role of family, culture, and meaning making in students’ literacy development. For example, Mary engaged in theorizing to help her understand theories in the classroom. She expressed frustration with the message of the *maturation theory*. She shared outright disagreement with the intent of the theory. For Mary, her search for meaning, created angsts. She spoke up about the theory being very limiting and that it robs young people of their voice. Still, over time, she described having a deeper conception of the *socio-constructivism* theory and its importance to the role of family and community in students’ learning. For Lauren, she began viewing literacy as inclusive of not only reading, but also writing and speaking, all components

of language. Lauren was also able to more profoundly contextualize the significance of this meaning for language learners.

Few studies focus on ESOL preservice teachers' understandings as they pertain to specific component of reading such as scaffolding (Many et al., 2007; Many et al., 2009). Specifically, Many et al.'s (2007, 2009) studies showed the preservice teachers grew in their understanding of modeling, prompting, and providing information as ways of scaffolding students' learning while reading texts. Furthermore, the preservice teachers learned the importance of not only understanding how to provide strategy instruction, but also conceptual development (Many et al., 2007). Similarly, in this study, over time the participants learned the importance of teaching students strategies to aid in meaning making. The ESOL preservice teachers' conception of literacy during the first semester revised from a simple to a more comprehensive view of literacy by the end of the second semester of the study. Through the theorizing, the participants' views of literacy broadened to include multiple perspectives of literacy, aligning them with the ideological model of literacy (Street, 1984). It should be noted that the perspectives are not necessarily linear but in some ways do overlap in their development.

### **Theorizing about Teacher Identity**

The disconnect participants experienced in their learning resulted in tensions as they sought to interpret theories. For Lauren and Larry, their perception and understandings of theory made them question their identities as teachers. Larry felt the larger emphasis on conceptual knowledge versus procedural knowledge undermined his knowledge of the content, leaving him less knowledgeable about how to teach. It became clear, the participants felt learning about *how* was more critical to them as teachers in training, than learning more about *why* they were learning the concepts. Borg (2003) states that identity development does not only pertain to the



subject matter teachers need to know, but can shed light on teachers' thoughts about their understanding of their learning. This study's finding with the tension participants experienced on how to apply learning is similar to Freese's (2006) study where a participant Ryan's tension almost resulted with him leaving teaching altogether. However, through continuous theorizing and reflecting upon practice and the support of his instructor, Ryan had a shift in his initial belief and a renewed teaching identity. The reflective practice as a form of theorizing reshaped Ryan's identity.

Lauren spoke candidly about not feeling challenged by some of what she was learning in the courses. The results of my study also show that the participants were theorizing about their *role* versus their *identity*. Britzman (1994) suggests that role is the external assignment intended for individuals. In this case, the role would be the structure of the program during coursework focusing mostly on conceptual knowledge that made the participants question their identity. For Sexton (2008) however identity pertains to how individuals position themselves, which may be manifested in varied ways. If the teacher's personal goals matches the program's expectations then there is a *consonance*. The opposite occurs however when teachers' personal goals do not gel with the program, creating *dissonance*. So it was, two participants felt the heavy emphasis on conceptual versus procedural knowledge in some coursework coupled with their desire to have experiential knowledge sooner made them question their teaching identities.

### **Shifts Reflecting Individuality in Theorizing**

The findings show that the participants each had their own way of theorizing. First, while Lauren and Larry felt conflicted about the delivery of some coursework (theory) in the program, Mary felt assured and confident based on her perception of being treated like a teacher in the ESOL program. The difference in perceptions with the participants points to variability with preservice teachers entering the program. As noted in this study, preservice teachers hail from

diverse backgrounds and experiences, which shaped their perceptions in teacher education.

Lauren's theorizing was different from the other participants. She did not exhibit tensions with comprehension or application of theories. This might be due to Lauren's previous wealth of experiential knowledge with curriculum planning and practice working with English learners before entering the program. Clarke (2008) describes how previous experiences can illuminate preservice teachers' identities.

There will always be angsts with situating theory into practice. Notable, it is risky to try emphasizing one over the other. However, when preservice teachers engage in theorizing, they can become enabled and empowered (Koetting & Combs, 2002). I argue that theorizing facilitates preservice teachers' sense of balance in their understanding of theory and practice. It also helps them grow in deeper interpretations about the importance of practice and theory, as well as their interconnection. Through theorizing, preservice teachers can also solidify their conceptions of teaching and learning in teacher education. hooks (1994) purports that "when our lived experience of theorizing is fundamentally linked to processes of self-recovery, of collective liberation, no gap exists between theory and practice" (P.61). For hooks, *theorizing* means the ability to make sense out of what is happening. It enables continued learning and questioning (Koetting & Combs, 2002). Furthermore, the dissonance that teachers experience helps shape learning (Cross, 2010). hooks further elaborates that there is a reciprocal nature between theory and practice, as well as a bond which can exist between both.

Holland et al. (1998) posits that "figured worlds in their conceptual dimensions supply the contexts of meaning for actions, cultural productions, performances, disputes, for the understandings that people come to make of themselves" (p.60). So it is, the teacher education program as figured world provided the forum for Larry, Mary, and Lauren to engage in

theorizing as they made meaning in the program. Despite their tensions in the earlier stage of the program, the participants' understanding of literacy and teaching for English learners broadened to include a multifaceted view of literacy. Consequently, the participants became confident and developed stronger sense of efficacy in teaching which resulted in them desiring their own classroom.

### **Conclusion 2: Mentorship Builds Confidence and Efficacy**

A second conclusion from the study relates to the nature of the program that learners engage in. Recall there are various models of learning for preservice teachers to participate in to become ESOL teachers (Thibeault, Kuhlman & Day, 2010). Some programs are more structured than others. Therefore, if there is more fluidity in a program, preservice teachers needing more structure tend to become anxious and apprehensive in part because they do not feel as confident. Specifically, some preservice teachers may need stronger mentoring during practicum and coursework. Strong mentorship can build preservice teachers' confidence and trust. Mentorship can also build teacher efficacy (Yost, 2002). Teacher efficacy in turn shapes and reshapes teachers' identity. Therefore, mentorship relationships in teacher education definitely influence teachers' identities.

**Practice shaping identity.** In this study, the teacher education program including coursework and practicum provided a platform for preservice teachers to build their teaching identity. The mentorship experiences preservice teachers received during practicum was a critical cultural tool in building their teaching identities. In this study, mentoring was one of the ways the preservice teachers were socialized into understandings and ways of teaching. As the participants engaged in their first practicum, they started building their own conception of mentorship relationship. The participants had their own ideas of the significance of mentors in their teaching lives. For

instance, Larry throughout the course of the study was resolute that an effective teacher for him meant learning teaching strategies to cater to different learning styles and learning how to apply theory into practice. He had hoped to learn from his mentor teacher or other experienced teachers. Lauren, having a wealth of experiences with working with English learners and curriculum designing, wanted to learn additional tools for teaching this population as well as more ways technology could enhance literacy instruction. Most importantly, Lauren hoped to have a meaningful mentor relationship to enhance her professional growth in the program as well as when she started teaching in her own classroom. Mary also wanted a mentor to help her be prepared to teach and develop confidence in teaching strategies for different students. It is evident that the participants perceived their mentors as a collaborative network that was critical to their success while in the program. Moreover, the participants hoped that their learning, confidence, and success would include the mentorship they would receive while in practicum.

Despite the participants having anticipations for their practicum experiences and mentors, all three expressed tensions about their first mentorship experience. It seems the participants were unclear about their roles and expectations while at their first practicum, which created angsts in their learning and in the development of relationship with the mentors. They ended the first practicum feeling ill-prepared that they had not receive sufficient experience with students. Two participants did not feel adequately prepared to be in the classroom. For the participants, they perceived the minimal lesson planning and limited interactions with students at their first practicum as inadequate in their preparation for the real classroom. To that end, the participants' sense of confidence was reduced at the beginning of the fall semester. This finding reflects the tenets of *situated learning* where *practice, or lack thereof, shapes identity* (Wenger, 1998). The

participants attributed their feelings of ill-preparedness to their experience at their first practicum.

**Identity shaping practice.** As the participants engaged in their second practicum however, they developed strong mentorship relationship and built higher levels of trust in their mentors. All three of the participants described feeling more confident and comfortable about teaching since they were given more opportunities to teach. The confidence and trust was also built through other meaningful relationships the participants gained from other teachers at their school who shared ideas. Lauren expressed reaching her full potential as she collaborated with her second mentor teacher on a regular basis for lesson planning and engaged in conversations about student success which resulted in her building her confidence and feeling more comfortable about teaching. She prided the way her mentor teacher learned about her, which felt would lead to prospects for recommending her professionally in the future. For Mary, her mentorship experience included the school community. That is, her immediate mentor teacher was forthcoming with material and offering of lesson ideas. She also received good advice from other teachers at the school who freely shared lesson plans and provided feedback of appropriate ways to work with varied student styles. The support Mary received through the social engagement and support from various teachers during her second practicum embodies Wenger's (1998) idea of "community of practice." Larry noted learning more from his mentor teacher about how to differentiate lessons in his second experience. As a result, he expressed feeling more confident and wanting his own classroom. Therefore, it is clear that the mentorship seemed to impact preservice teachers' efficacy in literacy instruction.

It is also evident that the different situated mentorship experiences in their practicums impacted them and shaped their teaching identities in varied ways (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Although only two of three participants' initial goal was to develop close mentorship relationship, the third also grew into understanding the importance of role of mentorship in learning. They described gaining confidence in their second practicum and deeper sense of trust, which in turn helped them to engage in more meaningful teaching experiences. This finding confirms Wenger's (1998) point that *identity shapes practice*. For these participants their sense of confidence helped them to improve in their practice. Further, as their confidence sharpened they became more aware in their learning and teaching, this confidence transferred to their practice within the classroom. This finding confirms that there is a constitutive relationship between identity and practice, where change on one affects the other (Kanno & Stuart, 2011).

It is evident that mentorship is an essential component to shaping teachers' emerging sense of identity. Kaufman (2000) highlights the benefits of collaborative efforts between preservice teachers and other professionals in her study. Similarly in this study, the participants benefitted from the mentorship as their confidence and sense of efficacy improved their practice. They perceived good mentorship relationships as opportunity for framing professional identities. Moreover, they hoped to build professional relationships to help steer them into becoming effective teachers. Lave and Wenger (1991) argue that it is through the active participation that meaningful and constructive learning occurs. Evidently, as the participants engaged in more lesson planning and instruction in the second practicum and built deeper and meaningful relationship with their mentors, their level of confidence and sense of trust improved.

Consequently, it was not only the actual doing or involvement in activities, but actual engagements with other experts that helped in shaping these preservice teachers' identities. Furthermore, all three participants eventually came to understand the importance of quality mentorship in helping to shape their professional identities. The strong mentorship also helped to

build their sense of trust, confidence, and efficacy in learning.

### **Conclusion 3: Culture Matters in Instruction**

A third conclusion from this study relates to the importance of recognizing that cultural relevant pedagogy (CRP) is critical in shaping teachers' understanding of literacy. Furthermore, the decision to engage in cultural relevant pedagogy is informed by teachers' beliefs or perspectives about how students learn (Harmon, 2012; Ladson- Billings, 1995; Milner IV, 2011). Thus, teachers with a mindset for engaging in cultural relevant pedagogy are intentional about changing the ways they think about student learning, about their own teaching, and about the impact of their teaching on students' lives. To that end, CRP teachers prepare students not only to maintain *academic success*, but to build *cultural competence* and *critical consciousness* about society (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

**Academic Success.** Ladson-Billings (1995) identifies *academic success*, which is necessary for students' attainment both inside and outside the classroom, as critical to cultural relevant pedagogy. As I looked more closely at the shifts in the teachers' conceptions of literacy and in their teaching identity, I was able to better understand how their learning and interpretation of theory shaped their mindset on students' academic success.

The results of the study reveals that the participants understand the importance of adopting multiple perspectives in their literacy instruction for academic success. As the participants engaged in more coursework and practice, their perspectives on literacy shifted to include more socio-cultural aspects for students' academic success. The participants began promoting the importance of their students' language as critical to student success as well as identifying students as experts. This became evident as the participants encouraged students' use

of their primary language, both for social use, and also to support their academic learning. Language is a primal mediator of culture and learning (Vygotsky, 1986). Furthermore, language is connected to students' family, history, and communities (Delpit, 2006) and are funds of knowledge (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005) for building academic success.

By the end of the study, the participants' literacy conceptions were revised where the roles of teachers and students shifted to accommodate students who became teachers of their own understandings and experiences, while teachers became learners of their students' new learning (Luke, 2012). Thus it was in this study, the participants' methods of teaching required students to provide evidence to support their responses in literacy and the participants challenged students to explain their line of thinking. The participants embraced the importance of strategic instruction to ensure academic success and succor high level of expectations. This level of high expectations on the participants' part was consistent with participants in other studies (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Milner IV, 2010). In Milner IV's (2010) study, he shared how one teacher, Mr. Hall found creative ways to require academic excellence from his students. Mr. Hall knew that basketball was important to many of his boys. For one student, Paul, Mr. Hall intentionally fortified his out-of-school relationship with him by going to Paul's games, which ultimately bolster participation, interest, and engagement within the class. Overtime, Paul's academics improved. Mr. Hall's mindset of academic success was through building relationships with his students. Therefore, while the ways of ensuring academic success were different for these teachers, both Milner IV's (2010) and this study's finding show that academic success was a critical component in instruction.

**Cultural Competence.** Ladson-Billings (1995) identifies cultural competence as critical to cultural relevant pedagogy. Milner IV (2011) believes it is essential for teachers to gain cultural



competence to engage in effective instruction. The findings in this study reveal that as the participants' understandings in literacy shifted throughout the study, the participants ended up possessing deeper dedication to CRP and were more passionate about not only promoting students' language, but also incorporating students' culture in their instruction (Esposito & Swain, 2009; Ladson- Billings, 1995). As the evidence shows, their heightened commitment to CRP was as a result of coursework and practicum. So it was as the participants' understandings about theories on culture such as socio-constructivism evolved, they willingly incorporated students' culture in their instruction. Moreover, it seems as the participants' understanding of literacy shifted throughout the study, their teaching identity also shifted. This was evident in the level of confidence they expressed towards understanding how to teach literacy to various learning styles and reading levels. Researchers (Clarke, 2008; Danielewicz, 2001; Milner IV, 2010) posit that teachers identities are continuously been developed as they are becoming teachers. Furthermore, the construction of teachers' identity is never final (Danielewicz, 2001).

The participants in their new understandings of literacy identified the significance of building relevance in their instruction as a catalyst for garnering students' motivation. The participants independently incorporated students' culture alongside the mandated instruction to help their students develop deeper understanding in new learning as well as to encourage continued learning in the classroom (Gay, 2002). As the participants' conceptions of literacy shifted, they embraced the criticality of students' reading and writing being aligned with students' personal readings in their everyday lives. To that end, the participants utilized students' culture and other relevant resource to support student academic success (Ladson-Billings, 1995). This was also a way of connecting students' out-of school and in-school experiences.

The findings suggest that the participants sought to maintain students' cultural pride and integrity (Esposito & Swain, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 1995). This finding is similar to Valenzuela's (1999) study where one teacher, Ms. Aranda at Seguin High School in Texas, calculatedly engaged in cultural relevant pedagogy despite the negative culture towards maintaining students' cultural and linguistic identities at the school. Most of the other teachers thought it best for Hispanic students to adopt the dominant culture and utilize English to build academic success. However, Ms. Aranda, in an effort to ensure academic excellence as well as to have students maintain their cultural heritage, encouraged her students to use their bilingualism in their writing. Teachers who opt to discourage students' use of their primary language within the classroom robs them of the most critical marker of their culture and of their identities. Furthermore, they are engaging in *subtractive schooling*, as coined by Valenzuela (1999), which describes how teachers rob students of their cultural identity in school.

**Critical Consciousness.** Ladson-Billing (1995) identifies *critical consciousness* as pertinent in shaping cultural relevant pedagogy. The results show that as the participants' confidence and understandings in literacy shifted, they became committed to examining social issues that impacted their students' lives and learning in the classroom. The participants also engaged in critical pedagogy as they discussed issues of social justice during their instruction. This included bringing students' attention to current events of injustices as well as pointing students to the issues of power and circumstances which create divides within society. Most importantly, the evidence shows the participants shaped their students to engage in critical consciousness by identifying problems in society and ways to not only voice their opinions about them, but learn how to solve the problems. Shaping students to learn about themselves as well as others in society is essential to CRP (Milner IV, 2011). Ladson-Billings (1995) states critical

consciousness is not only about individual investment, but is also about preparing students and teachers alike to participate in citizenship in order to critically analyze social inequities. This finding is similar to Esposito and Swain's (2009) study where the participants described how they incorporated CRP in their instruction by highlighting issues related to social justice and power. It is also evident that teachers who possess a deep commitment to including students' culture and social issues in the classroom are more likely to advocate for their students. As the participants' conception of literacy and their teaching identity shifted, they willingly encouraged their students to be agents of change (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Additionally, the participants themselves advocated for their students to ensure appropriate academic placements in school.

### **Summary**

It is safe to conclude that as the participants' perspectives of literacy shifted and they became more confident in their understanding about the importance of teaching students in culturally competent ways, they encouraged their students to value their own and others' cultures and languages, as well as to advocate for themselves and others around them (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Moreover, by adopting a platform that embraces students' culture, language, and affirms students' expertise, it demonstrated their desire to sustain students' cultural integrity (Ladson-Billings, 1995). This conclusion augments answers for both research questions. The preservice teachers' beliefs and understanding of literacy was revised as they navigated the ESOL program. While their previous experiences helped shape their stance towards cultural relevance in teaching, the coursework and practicum further solidified their development and conceptions about literacy instruction for English learners.

## **Implications for Research, Policy, and Teaching**

### **Research**

As stated in chapter one, this research adds to research on language teachers' thoughts and practice. Specifically, the research sought to learn how ESOL preservice teachers' understandings of literacy changed and were revised, and how their experiences in the program contributed to shaping their identity as they entered student teaching. Future research may focus on a longer-term study. Researchers may extend the time to include student teaching in teacher education program, as well as the first year as in-service ESOL teachers to capture teachers' understanding and growth in their own classrooms. By so doing, researchers could ascertain answers for the following questions: Are the ESOL teachers able to differentiate in literacy for all learning styles and abilities? How do ESOL teachers' sense of efficacy in teaching literacy translates into their execution of literacy instruction in the classroom? These findings would provide further understanding of how ESOL preservice teachers are applying their learning from teacher education in the classroom.

Other questions still remain about the role of mentoring in ESOL preservice teacher development. How do mentor teachers at practicum sights view their roles in preservice teachers' training and specifically ESOL preservice teachers' preparation? Do mentor teachers feel properly trained to provide mentoring for preservice teachers and specifically ESOL preservice teachers? These questions remain unanswered and further research would help in providing answers that would benefit preservice teachers' and teacher development.

An obvious implication for research is spending more time doing observations while preservice teachers are in practicum. That is, seek innovative ways of observing them teaching during practicum as often as possible. Spending more time would also accommodate capturing

ESOL preservice teachers' ability to differentiate for small and whole group literacy instruction. By so doing, it provides more opportunity for preservice teachers to reflect on their teaching and determine where they range on the efficacy scale for teaching all groups of students.

### **Policies Related to Program Development**

Based on this study's findings and conclusions, it is imperative for teacher educators to consider including preservice teachers in helping to design policies that will impact their own lives. By doing so, preservice teachers will be able to shed more light on issues that they deem as critical to their learning and understanding as they navigate teacher education. One area of consideration may be in technology integration. As evidenced in this study, some of the preservice teachers hoped for more technology training before leaving teacher education in order to be better equipped to enhance students' learning. Preservice teachers pursuing a certification program in the 21<sup>st</sup> century need to be fully armed to work with students in K-12 using varied modalities. Furthermore, providing preservice teachers with sufficient tools to teach will fortify their confidence and efficacy to teach. It behooves teacher educators to endorse requirements to include increased number of credit hours of technology training for instructional purpose. Additionally, program developers should understand the importance of including cultural relevant pedagogy in teacher training programs, since teacher education programs are increasingly preparing teachers to work with students from large immigrant or refugee populations.

More needs to be done in teacher education in setting guidelines for the role of mentor teachers in receiving preservice teacher assignments. Rowley (1999) suggests that setting clear guidelines, citing specific descriptions of roles and responsibilities are hallmarks of a good mentorship program. Further, it would be beneficial for teacher education to provide some

training within schools for mentor teachers on ways that they can better mentor preservice teachers. Mentoring should not only be for new inductees or new teachers, but also for preservice teachers embarking on student teaching. Yost (2002) suggest that teacher education should be intentional about providing innovative ways to improve educators' sense of teaching efficacy. Mentoring is an essential tool for shaping teacher efficacy (Yost, 2002). It is within teacher education that preservice teachers are socialized into teaching. It is also the first forum where preservice teachers typically start feeling as part of a *community of practice* (Wenger, 1998) and in turn develop a sense of confidence and belonging. To that end, it is critical for teacher educators to provide a conducive atmosphere for preservice teachers and mentors to develop meaningful learning experiences. Preservice teachers with a strong sense of preparedness will likely remain in teaching longer.

### **Teaching**

Typically, teachers in K-12 are charged to consider the variance in students' learning styles and to learn how to differentiate their instruction to meet all students' needs. But what about preservice teachers entering teacher education? Is there consideration for the variability and individuality of preservice teacher candidates? Preservice teachers enter teacher education program with different beliefs and experiences. They may also have different expectations for being in the program. Teacher education seems very rigid in its approach to teaching and not much accommodations is given for the variability among preservice teachers.

In considering the variance, teacher education needs to consider the learning styles of all preservice teachers. By being intentional about preparing preservice teachers with training to teach small as well as whole group settings, it will help build confidence in preservice teachers as they enter the classroom. For some preservice teachers, the fast pace of the program may leave

them behind or leave them apprehensive about their learning, their ability, and confidence.

Therefore, teacher education should consider differentiated instruction by possibly going deeper instead of wider with covering all its objectives. This might mean spending more time on fewer number of topics. It also means providing more opportunities for immediate feedback on students' learning in the field and during coursework about their performance. It is also critical for teacher educators to find gentle ways to support preservice teachers' learning and understanding of theory, thus encouraging an open and welcoming environment. Koetting and Combs (2002) suggest that this is necessary for a dialogic relationship. It behooves teacher education to also provide a forum where teachers can share their concerns or clear up any misconceptions they may have about their learning. By doing so, it will strengthen their confidence and sense of agency as well as help to fortify their teaching identities before student teaching and having their own classroom.

Burke, Fiene, Young and Meyer (2008) also stress that by putting an emphasis on teaching preservice teachers the *why* behind the reading methodology that they are learning about, then their learning focus will be more multifaceted. That is, researchers feel if preservice teachers come to understand more of why particular skills are taught, inadvertently their pedagogy will improve, creating more student centered reading instruction. Further, by placing greater emphasis on the rationale for learning specific theories, it will likely reduce anxiety and temper preservice teachers' expectations about teacher education program, the pace, coursework, and practicum experiences.

Teachers in the classroom should consider how CRP informs their lessons. However, the reality is that this expectation cannot be realized unless teachers receive appropriate training on CRP (Gay, 2002). As such, more workshops and professional development in K-12 school

districts should aim to prepare teachers with the training, tools, and necessary resources to help foster culturally relevant teaching in their classrooms.

### **Limitations**

The decision to choose a qualitative case study for the research was to have a more robust research that did not just quantify the preservice teachers' thoughts or actions, but rather qualify the reasoning behind their thoughts and actions. Yin (2009) praise case study as a research method ideal for a comprehensive analysis of data and for corroborating data. Case studies are also ideal for answering research questions on how and why such as the case in this study on how the participants' identities were developed while in the program. Through interviews, observations, and collection of documents, I secured a glimpse of three ESOL preservice teachers' teaching lives. However, by no means was I able to garner a thorough picture of their teaching lives. Case studies do have some limitations. For one, Yin (2009) alludes to case study not being as rigorous and may result in inconsistencies. Also, the mere nature of case study does not lend itself to scientific generalization. Additionally, the purposive sampling and selection of participants may lend itself to participants not being as forthcoming as they should be during interviews. It is also possible that participants acted in stoic ways when they were being observed since they were cognizant of being observed and may not have reflected a true portrayal of their identities. Despite the limitations, the nature of being able to observe and engage in interviews for corroborations point to the useful nature of case studies.

Another limitation of the study was not being able to engage in two sets of observations as I originally hoped for while the participants were engaged in their practicums. The participants shared that they did not have teaching assignments at their first practicum negating the need to observe them at that time. Having both observations of teaching would have given a



more comprehensive picture of their growth. However, it was beneficial to incorporate the six weeks of observations during the summer when they initially entered the program, which helped capture the participants' growth. Midway through the research, I also wished that the study was three semesters including student teaching. I envisioned the extended time would have added more valuable data.

Additionally, the transcription of interviews, analysis, and completion of report was very time consuming due to there being only one researcher. Being the sole researcher, a certain amount of bias is possible based on the interpretative nature of the study through a single lens. Further, based on my taking of five ESL classes as part of satisfying the PhD goal, made me privy to some of the principles and tenets of ESOL teaching and learning. As a result, certain level of bias was inevitable and unintentional in the interpretation of the study. However, I stress that the interpretation of the data is strictly supported by the participants' stories, as evidenced through the reporting using their own words, as well as seeking elaboration and explanation as much as possible. The countless revisits and reviewing of the data and member checking with the participants have also further added authenticity and trustworthiness to the study's findings. There is also issue of the limited number of participants in this study, which does not allow for generalization. A larger pool of participants would have possibly further strengthened the findings or highlighted other issues that are critical to ESOL preservice teachers learning and teaching. Although there is no generalization of the study, it can be replicated in other ESOL teacher education programs to ascertain preservice teachers' understanding of literacy for working with English learners.

### **Final Thoughts**

I was impressed with the participants in this study for various reasons. For one, each was anxious to share their story from the start of the study. The variance in their experiences, beliefs,

and backgrounds added to making this a richer study. Also, the honesty that the participants possessed in sharing their views made for a more reliable study.

In peeling the layers away more, it is apparent that the participants are champions for fighting real issues that students face. Advocating for students' language and ensuring that they receive equal resources as other dominant groups show a platform invested towards equity. The introspective approach to their learning in teacher education, during practicum and in their reflections demonstrates the critical stance in their teaching identity. This research study also provided a forum for the participants to share their story and operated as a platform for them to voice their views. Through the interviews, the participants were also able to engage in dialogism between researcher and themselves to further build understanding and enlightenment on teaching. The participants were also able to look more critically at their understanding and perspectives of literacy. At the time of this reporting all three ESOL preservice teachers had successfully begun their teaching careers in K-12 public school classrooms.

The study also helped me to gain a clearer understanding of some of the angsts that are eminent in teacher development and preparation, thereby further equipping me to better serve preservice and in-service teachers in the future.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A

#### First Interview Questions

1. Talk about your early experiences of reading. Do you think these experiences have shaped your current perceptions, attitudes towards reading?  
(From Hedgcock & Ferris, 2009).
2. Talk about your experience learning and reading a second language. Explain how these experiences have been different from learning reading in your primary language.  
(From Hedgcock & Ferris, 2009)
3. What have been your experiences with English Learners?
4. Why did you decide on teaching and specifically focusing on English Learners?
5. What did you do professionally before pursuing teaching? Did you have any teaching or tutoring experiences?
6. Describe your beliefs about how you think English Learners learn.
7. What does literacy means to you?
8. Describe your idea of what literacy should look like for English Learners. What should it include and why?
9. Are you “aware of the changing literacy practices in relation to changing textual and media technologies?” (Ajayi, 2010).
10. Talk about your expectations for being in the program. That is, what are you hoping to attain and how best do you feel the program will prepare you for student teaching in the spring?



11. Describe your philosophy of reading and writing and what you deem as important reading and writing practices for instruction.

## **APPENDIX B**

### Second Interview Questions

1. How would you describe your attitude towards literacy such as reading and writing in K-12? Has your attitude to literacy changes since high school? Explain.
2. What was your experience with literacy such as reading and writing in K-12?
3. How has your literacy learning and past teachers helped influence your understanding of literacy?
4. What is your understanding of the meaning of literacy in the 21 century? What should it include?
5. What are your beliefs about the teacher's role in learning and in literacy instruction?
6. Describe what you feel are the best literacy approaches with working with English Learners in the 21<sup>st</sup> C.
7. Explain your future decisions, goals, rationale, expectations and plans for your practicum experiences in the fall. What is your initial grade level preference and why?
8. How are the resources and literacy events and practices of the program informing your lesson planning and teaching of literacy?
9. If you were preparing to teach an L2 reading class what information would be helpful to have about the students before planning the syllabus, selecting texts, and preparing lessons? Why?  
(From Hedgcock & Ferris, 2009).
10. What role should students and teachers play in a literacy class?

11. What role should technology and media play in literacy instruction for English Learners?

Why?

12. Describe your ideal literacy class for English Learners. What theories are you using to inform your reasoning?

## APPENDIX C

### Third Interview Questions

1. Describe how your experience at this first practicum experience has been.
2. Have your projected goals and expectations for the practicum been a reality?
3. How are the resources, theories, literacy events, and practices of the program informing your lesson planning and teaching of literacy?
4. What have been some different types of literacy events and practices you have observed?  
Describe the specific activities you observed.
5. How did you feel about the different types of literacy events you observe? Were they meaningful for the students? Do you feel knowledgeable about new literacies?
6. Tell me about one specific literacy lesson that was a success for you as you worked with ELs.
7. Tell me about one specific literacy lesson that was not a success and tell why. How could you have fixed the lesson to make it more meaningful for your English Learners?
8. Talk about the different use of digital and media sources being used in the literacy block.  
Have these been meaningful for the students and in shaping your literacy understanding?  
Explain.

9. Describe your current understanding of literacy and its relevance for English Learners. How has your understanding of literacy shifted as a result of your practicum experience and being in the teacher education program?
10. How has reflecting on your lessons helped to improve your literacy instruction and understanding?
11. Have you found particular instructional models to be more helpful than others for teaching literacy to English Learners? What strategies are beneficial to your students? Explain.
12. Are you more comfortable with teaching reading or writing?

## **APPENDIX D**

### Fourth Interview Questions

1. Describe your practicum experience at this level. How does it compare to your previous practicum experience?
2. Tell me about any literacy events or practices that you have had a chance to observe or teach. Was technology, digital sources and media a part of the lesson? Explain.
3. What are some specific literacy events or practices that you feel have informed your understanding of literacy instruction and new literacy with ELs?
4. How prepared do you feel about teaching literacy to English Learners? Give specifics.
5. Do you believe English Learners learn the same way as non-ELs? Explain.
6. Do you feel ready to teach reading and writing with English Learners during student teaching?
7. What do you feel will be your greatest challenges with literacy instruction while working with English Learners? Explain.

8. What components of your literacy instruction do you feel will be rewarding for you during student teaching? Why do you feel this way?
9. What would you have liked to learn more about in your theory and method classes about literacy instruction?
10. How has your practicum experiences shaped your understanding of literacy instruction?
11. How do you feel the program can better support preservice teachers learning and teaching of literacy and multi-literacy when working with English Learners?
12. How do you feel you have grown professionally since being in this teaching program?

## **Appendix E**

**Fairway State University**

**Department of XXXX**

**Initial Questionnaire**

**Language Teacher Development: A Study of ESOL Pre-service Teachers' Identities,  
Efficacy and Conceptions of Literacy**

**Directions: Please read the following questions and write two to three sentences  
explaining your answers.**

1. **What is your reason for becoming a teacher?**

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2. **Is English your native language? What other languages do you speak besides English?**

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- 
- 3. Describe any experience you may have with working with English Language Learners locally or internationally.**

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- 
- 4. Explain your philosophy about how students learn a second language.**

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- 
- 5. Describe your experience or history with learning a second language.**

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- 
- 6. Explain your experience with literacy and learning to read and write at home and at school in K-12.**

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- 
- 7. Describe your beliefs about reading and writing and how best students learn literacy.**
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**8. Do you feel comfortable with reading and writing? Give details.**

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