Investigation of the Perceived Needs of Elementary Teachers Whose Classes Contain Students

Learning English

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceived needs of content area elementary level teachers who are instructing students with limited English proficiency in their classes. Teachers at an elementary school in Northeast Tennessee completed a survey, personal interview, and were observed in one class while they instructed a class containing at least one student learning English (El). Data was triangulated and coded to identify common themes around the question, "What are the perceived needs of classroom teachers who have students with limited English proficiency?"

Keywords: English Language Learner, curriculum modification, limited English proficiency.

Chapter 1

Introduction

One of the fastest-growing populations in schools today is students that are English Learners (Els). These students come into the system speaking a native language other than English but are expected to attain proficiency in English as a second language (L2) while being submerged into the cognitive and academic challenges of age-appropriate content areas with mainstream teachers. Students who are Els spend almost 90% of their classroom time with their content area teacher who likely has little to no training or experience in adequately supporting a student learning English as an L2, or a teacher who holds debilitating pedagogical beliefs about them. Previous research has shown that a teacher's beliefs directly impact the decisions that are made in addition to student achievement. (Breen, 2001).

In a study done in 2004, Karabenick and Noda found that the beliefs of content area teachers negatively affected students who are Els' academic achievement and language proficiency. When Els are placed in a mainstream classroom, many factors must be considered, including linguistically, culturally, and developmentally appropriate accommodations and instructional choices. While these needs are prevalent with Els, there are few resources and training opportunities for mainstream teachers to appropriately meet the needs of Els.

According to the Tennessee Department of Education, "Tennessee's EL population is increasing significantly, with 45 percent growth in the EL population from 2011 to 2017." By 2020, it is expected that there will be over 60,000 students who are Els. With that knowledge, it

is only appropriate to question how these students will be served in the school system. In Tennessee, students who are Els are placed in an age-appropriate mainstream classroom. Additionally, they only receive English as a Second Language (ESL) services based on their need. Tennessee has stated that it is, "committed to ensuring that all students, including English learners, have the opportunity for success in rigorous coursework, access to early postsecondary opportunities, and access to highly effective teachers." In saying that, Tennessee is guaranteeing that students who are Els will receive high quality education—regardless of the language barrier. However, the majority of teachers have little to no experience or training in working with students who are Els.

While the focus of many states is on creating positive experiences in the mainstream classroom for the growing number of Els, only 20% of teachers reported feeling able to teach Els adequately according to the National Center for Educational Statistics. Previous research has suggested that content area teachers are not ready for classrooms with students with limited English proficiency because a lack of knowledge in linguistics, cultural diversity, and ESL knowledge (Banks, 2001; Ovando et al., 2003).

This study aims to contribute to the vast gap between content area teacher's training and the needs they have in order to reach the Els in their class. To capture the perceived areas of needed support that mainstream teachers have, a variety of elementary teachers were interviewed, asked to fill out questionnaires, and were observed while teaching classes with Els. Although there is limited research done that specifically addresses the needs of current content area elementary teachers, studies have reported that many teaches deny providing instructional modifications to Els because they do not see it as part of their professional responsibility (Bryan

and Atwater, 2002). If school leaders are able to identify where content area teachers' training and resources are lacking, they will be able to better meet those area needs and in turn, will better serve both teachers and students who are Els.

Statement of the Problem

In any classroom, teachers must be prepared to scaffold and modify their lessons to best reach students who learn in a multitude of ways. However, the classroom dynamics are changing, and schools are seeing a large influx of students who speak little or no English. In this study, the question proposed is: What are the perceived needs of elementary content teachers who have students with limited English proficiency in their class? Therefore, the problem of this study is to investigate the perceived needs of elementary content area teachers who have students who are Els in their classroom.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to investigate the perceived needs of content area elementary teachers who have students learning English as a second language in their classroom.

Significance of the Study

The number of Els in content areas are rising each year, and yet the majority of teachers are not specifically trained to meet the unique needs of that population of students. In a case study done by Lee and Tippins in 2007, the researchers found that a teacher's beliefs, values, knowledge, assumptions, attitudes, and life experiences shape his or her interactions with Els in his or her classroom. The research suggests that a teacher's personal views and experiences are more influential in the classroom than the training or educational support they receive. This

study will investigate the areas that teachers who currently have Els in their classroom identify as areas of need and/or resources they need to successfully reach their students. Specifically, this study will seek to answer the question, "What are the perceived needs of classroom teachers who have students with limited English proficiency?" If schools can equip content area teachers with the resources and support they identify, then their attitudes and behaviors towards Els in their classes will be positive and create a better learning environment for students.

Limitations

This study was limited by the following factors:

1. All of the participants came from the same school and thus the results are not observable in other schools and school systems.

2. The survey used to assess the teachers' perceived areas of need was created by the researcher and not tested for reliability or validity.

3. The data collection for this study was done over the fall semester of the school year. Data collected may differ from data collected at the end of the school year as teacher's perceived needs may change over time.

Definitions

1. Students who are English learners (Els): students who are unable to communicate fluently or learn effectively in English, who often come from non-English-speaking homes and backgrounds, and who typically require specialized or modified instruction in both the English language and in their academic courses.

2. English as a Second Language (ESL): the teaching of English to people who speak a different language and who live in a country where English is the main language spoken.

3. Second Language (L2): a language learned by a person after his or her native language, especially as a resident of an area where it is in general use.

4. Native Language: the language that a person acquires in early childhood because it is spoken in the family and/or it is the language of the region where the child lives.

5. WIDA Screener: an English language proficiency assessment given to new students in Grades 1–12 to help educators identify whether they are English learners (ELLs). It is a flexible, on-demand assessment that can be administered at any time during the school year.

6. Language proficiency: a measurement of how well an individual has mastered a language. It is usually measured in terms of receptive and expressive language skills, syntax, vocabulary, semantics, and other areas that demonstrate language abilities, and includes four main domains: reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

7. Bilingual: A person who speaks two language fluently.

Overview of the Study

This research consists of five chapters: Chapter One includes the introduction, the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the significance of the study, the limitations, definitions of important terms, and an overview of the study. Chapter Two examines a review of the literature related to the study. Chapter Three contains all of the research methods that are used in the study. Chapter Four provides the findings of the study, and Chapter Five contains a

short review of the study, a summary of the findings, a discussion of the findings, conclusions, and recommendations for future study.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

Introduction

"English as a Second Language" and "English Language Learners" are two popular phrases in education that have come to the forefront of discussions over the past 20 years. The level of diversity in school systems around the United States has grown drastically, causing a need for a modified curriculum and increasing the needs of mainstream classroom teachers as they seek to effectively instruct all students in their classroom. This review of literature will contain an investigation of the population of English learners in the classroom, policies regarding ESL services, implications of ESL requirements for the state of Tennessee, the types of instruction for English learners, teacher preparation for mainstream teachers, and issues with the current way of preparing teachers to instruct Els in the mainstream classroom.

English Learners in the Classroom

The population of the United States has grown drastically more diverse in the past twenty years, as 30 million immigrants have settled within its borders seeking a better future for themselves and their children. English learners (Els) are a growing part of the K–12 student population. Between the 2009–10 and 2014–15 school years, the percentage of EL students

increased in more than half of the states, with increases of over 40 percent in five states. Each year, states must assess the English proficiency of each of these students based on the "Every Student Succeeds Act" also known as ESSA. Additionally, they are required by the same law to provide appropriate accommodations on state assessments and develop systems that include long-term goals for Els while measuring their progress. In the ESSA report for the 2014-15 school year, Spanish was the most common language spoken by Els at home; however, some states showed a significant variation. As considerations are made to effectively meet the needs of Els, school districts and states must consider how to support students whose home language is a less commonly spoken language (U.S. Department of Education, 2014).

In the United States, nearly 5 million students are classified as English learners throughout primary and secondary schools. While some have immigrated to the United States from different countries, the large majority were born in America and come from families who speak a language other than English in their homes. Though all of these students are labeled as Els, their personal needs vary greatly based on what their language learning experiences have been. Regardless of their unique circumstances, Els across the country are given similar services based on the policies of their state. Els do not exist solely in ESL programs or bilingual schools. Instead, Els can be found in every conceivable setting. They attend schools in high population areas as well as rural counties, public schools and private, extremely diverse communities and areas with very little diversity. All of this variation means that schools take different approaches to helping their Els develop the language, academic, and cultural skills to succeed. (Ford 2012).

The education and curriculum/scaffolding of Els are becoming more of a concern in many schools as they see the number of Els in their community growing. However, it is

important to note that this expanding population is quite diverse. Els enter the mainstream

setting with a wide range of English proficiency, over 400 languages represented among them,

and depending on where they come from there can be wide discrepancies in Els educational

background, cultural views on school, socioeconomic status, and trauma history (Echevarria,

Vogt, & Short, 2008).   While considering all these factors, mainstream content area teachers

must find a way to combine theory and practice to effectively meet the needs of all Els and make

academic decisions that will impact student learning (Williams, 2001). Many different

approaches can be successful when implemented well (SERVE, 2004). Teachers must be aware

that there is no one-size-fits-all educational model that can be applied to every El situation.

Educators must be willing and able to create program components and supports that will best

meet the needs of the students in their classroom (Olsen, 2006). Echevarria, Vogt, and Short

(2008) also add that no simple solution is clear given the variability in students' backgrounds.

To meet these needs, fundamental shifts must occur in staff development, program and

curriculum design, resources and materials being implemented, and instructional assessment

practices (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2008).

According to a comprehensive synthesis of research on literacy attainment released by

the National Literacy Panel on Language Minority Children in 2006, the same literacy strategies

and resources used in mainstream classrooms to instruct English fluent students were not

adequate in meeting the needs of Els (August & Shanahan, 2006). In 2002, the National Center

for Education Statistics found that although a majority of teachers either currently have or in the

previous years had Els, only 12.5 percent of the educators had participated in more than eight

hours of training or professional development that specifically provided guidance, resources, and education on how to effectively meet the needs of Els.

Policy Regarding ESL Services

While politicians have created a furor regarding the proposed and completed changes to immigration laws, very little has been done to draw attention to the unique educational needs of these children (Batalova, Burrors, & Zong 2019). In general, education policy and regulation is considered a responsibility of the state and local government. However, the federal government also plays an important role. National laws, court rulings, and policy guidance help ensure that English Learners (Els) and students with an immigrant-background have equal access to a meaningful education. States and local school districts must take these broad policies and put into practice programs, guidelines, and curriculum that protect all students' rights to free, public primary and secondary schools (Sugarman, 2013). Strategies to teach English as a second language to students have varied throughout history and even today there is not a general consensus on how teachers can most effectively meet the needs of students who are English learners. While federal law mandates that students receive ESL services, each state dictates what those services look like.

This review will also focus on the popularity and practicalities of the pull-out model commonly implemented by ESL teachers when the ground-breaking 1974 Lau vs. Nichols Supreme Court Decision resulted in the first legally-mandated adaptations for students who learned a language other than English in their home. According to Young (1996) the ruling meant that public schools were required to deliver an appropriate and comprehensible education

for students with English as their second language. Young asserts that students had not only a need, but the legal right to access the same curriculum as English-speaking students, and it was the role of the ESL teacher to teach the ESL students the language and background knowledge for them to do so. As expressed on the St. Paul school's website, (Retrieved January 24, 2010 from http://www.ell.spps.org) the following statement sums up the United States Supreme Court's stance on this topic. The U.S. Supreme Court ruling 414 U.S. 563 states:

> There is no equality of treatment merely by providing students with the same facilities, textbooks, and curriculum, for students who do not understand English are effectively foreclosed from any meaningful education. Basic English skills are the heart of what these schools teach. Imposition of a requirement that, before a child can effectively participate in the education program, he must have already acquired those basic skills is to make a mockery of public education. We know that those who do not understand English are certain to find their classroom experiences wholly incomprehensible and in no way meaningful.

Problems loom for Tennessee students who are Els that are placed in a mainstream age-appropriate classroom and are given either push in or pull out support from an ESL teacher. Frustrations abound as many teachers are not trained to meet the specific needs of language learners. The Tennessee Department of Education conducted a longitudinal study in 2007 to analyze the distribution of their highly effective teachers across school districts. The study showed that over a 14-year span, students in high poverty and high minority schools are more likely to be taught by the state's least effective teachers (TN Department of Education, 2007). As these teachers are assessed, it is important to recognize what levels of instruction they are

required to provide for Els. The four main types of English only instruction will be discussed in the next section.

English Only Instruction

English-only models are fairly straightforward to define in terms of language goals and use and are prevalent in Tennessee. These programs generally focus solely on English language development, and few use students' native languages in any systematic way. English-only instruction is the default approach to El instruction in most states. Therefore, English-only El programs are open to students at any grade level who score below proficient on English language proficiency assessments. Beyond these basics, however, identifying and defining English-only program models becomes more complicated (Tran, 2015).

There are four types of English only program models including pull out, classroom ESL, push in, and co-teaching. Students who receive pull out services meet with a specialist like an ESL teacher in a small group setting outside of the general education class to work on specific skills and designed activities. Classroom ESL is a common model in secondary school where students are assigned to a class period designated as ESL and taught by an ESL teacher. During push in services, students are met by a specialist in the general education classroom to help individual or small groups of El students with activities planned by the general education teacher. Lastly, co-teaching services have a specialist and a general education teacher work together to plan and implement daily lessons. Classes may enroll Els only or integrate Els and non-Els. (Burgess, 2011)

There are some situations that straddle the line between pull out and push in models. For example, in many elementary classrooms, a segment of English language arts instruction is organized in centers, during which students break into small groups and rotate through a series of activities. Typically, within a single room, some centers are led by a teacher, others involve independent group or pair work, and some have students working alone. Schools may take advantage of this time to have Els work with an ESL specialist. Another example is when schools call El instruction "push in" because ESL teachers work with small groups of Els inside the general education classroom rather than in a separate room, even though they are working separately from the non-El students; in terms of the interaction between Els and non-Els, these situations much more closely fit the "pull out" label.

While there are multiple types of ESL services offered to Els, the majority of learners are placed in mainstream classrooms. This means that students with potentially very little English proficiency are expected to participate in some way in age-level appropriate curriculum and content. However, teachers are not specifically trained to modify and accommodate the learning needs of language learners.

<div align="center">Teacher Preparation to Teach English Learners</div>

While the No Child Left Behind Act requires highly qualified teachers in every core academic subject, it does not require elementary content teachers to have any educational background in ESL methodology or second language acquisition theory (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2010). These authors also report, "Despite the rapidly growing numbers of these students, only four states at the time of this writing have policies that require all teachers in pre-service

programs to have an understanding of how to teach Els effectively: Arizona, California, Florida, and New York (p10)." While that information speaks to pre-service programs, it is important to note that the situation at the inservice level also leaves a gaping hole in training and resources for teachers who have Els.

A survey done by the National Center for Education Statistics found that 41 percent of the 3 million public school teachers reported teaching students with limited English proficiency, but only 12.5 percent had eight or more hours of training in the past three years. This clearly shows that while Els need a modified and scaffolded curriculum, teachers are not being adequately trained--whether during their pre-service learning or through inservice while they are in the field. It makes sense, then, to ponder if a teacher's experience will impact their practice and make up for the lack of appropriate education. In Herbert Marsh's research (2007), he, with a bit of humor, asks, "Do teachers, like good wine, improve with age?" This type of research began to be collected over 50 years ago through the Equality of Educational Opportunity Study of 1966, also known as the Coleman Report (Coleman, et al., 1966). For this study, data were collected on both teachers and students. First, teacher inputs like education levels and years of teaching experience as well as student scores on standardized tests were collected. Researchers then sought to find a link between the two--teacher input and student output. However, the correlation was very weak and multiple studies have followed, attempting to connect teacher input with student output. There is still only a slight correlation that has been proven.

Marsh (2007) conducted a methodological/substantive study on the long-term stability of ratings of the same teachers during their teaching career. He applied a multiple-level growth modeling approach by allowing students to complete evaluations of the educator's effectiveness

(SETs). SETs are a valid and accepted outcome measure to assess classroom teachers (Marsh 2007).   In his 1997 study, Marsh evaluated 195 teachers for 13 years and sought to understand whether teacher effectiveness increased, decreased, or stayed the same as their experience increased. Ten years later, March concluded in his 2007 report that there was no statistically significant improvement in teaching effectiveness as the teacher gained experience. Regardless, Marsh did find that teachers who were effective based on student output routinely scored positive SET ratings while teachers who were not as effective received lower SET scores.

Another aspect of teaching performance that can be identified and researched is the impact a teacher's perspective has on Els in the classroom. Lee and Tippins (2007) performed a case study that focused on one Early Childhood teacher and identified how her beliefs, values, knowledge, assumptions, attitudes, and life experiences shaped her interactions with Els in her classroom. This research suggests that a teacher's personal views and experiences are more influential in the classroom than the training or educational support they receive. The study examined the ways the educator effectively engaged with culturally and linguistically diverse students. The limitations of this study appear in the small sample of data that was collected—the utilization of only one teacher's input.

Pass, Riccomini, and Switzer (2004) also investigated the correlation between novice teachers and veteran teachers through a naturalistic and empirical methodology research study. They sought to understand whether years of experience impacted the teacher's classroom. As with Lee and Tippins study, this research had a small sample size as the researcher focused on two teachers--one novice who was in his first year of teaching and one with 24 years of teaching experience (Pass, Riccomini, & Switzer, 2004). The results also found that there was no

statistical difference between the two teachers in their ability to improve student scores. It is important to note that all of these studies focus on typical students in the classroom and do not account specifically for Els.

Issues with the Current Way of Educating and Supporting Teachers with Els in their Classroom

Els enter the mainstream classroom with goals of English development but are most often allowed to work outside of the typical grading system. Because of this, there is no way to regularly check a student's progression. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, in 2002, around 50% of U.S. public schools reported having ELLs while only around 20% of teachers reported believing that they were ready to teach them (Polat, 2009). Those numbers continue to grow steadily as the years progress. Meanwhile, many studies have reported that content area teachers are not ready for classrooms with Els (Echevarria et all., 2008, Youngs & Youngs 2002). This general unease comes from a lack of knowledge in linguistic and cultural diversity and a limited or non-existent ESL background knowledge (Banks, 2001, Ovando et al., 2003). Carrasquillo and Rodriquez (2002) argued in their study that many content area teachers simply are unaware of the implications of diversity for learning.

In a quantitative study done by Nihat Polat in 2009, pre- and in-service teachers were surveyed and asked about their beliefs of their readiness and self-competency. Three beliefs questionnaires were administered to 83 in-service and 88 pre-service teachers. These multivariate analyses suggest several significant differences between the two categories of teachers in their self-competency beliefs as well as their readiness to teach Els in their classroom. Polat went one step further and gathered information from these teachers that

provided recommendations to improve teacher education to better serve Els in the mainstream classroom.

Several studies support the idea that additional training for content area teachers produces higher success rates in students as well as a great competency from teachers in their ability to support the unique needs of Els in their class (Dong 2002, Polat 2009). Additionally, some background factors have been proven to play a role in teacher attitudes and beliefs regarding Els in their classroom. Byrnes (1997) found that formal training and a graduate degree positively impacted teacher attitude towards Els. In the same way, Youngs and Youngs (2001) found that language and multicultural education courses, formal ESL training, travel abroad experience and exposure to the El population were associated with positive attitudes towards Els.

The proposed study will add to the existing knowledge base by providing insight into the perceived needs of content teachers in elementary classes so that the needs can be addressed and students learning English can be better served. While there is an adequate amount of research that has been done on the growing El population, teacher perceptions, and student outcomes, very little has specifically addressed what support can assist current teachers in more effectively meeting the needs of students in their classrooms.

Conclusion

Classrooms around America are becoming more diverse each year while teachers continue to be trained in the same way—ignoring the glaring need for differentiating and modifying curriculum to meet the unique educational needs of students learning English. The research has shown that there is a clear shift in classroom dynamics, with an ever-increasing

number of Els in the mainstream class. Additionally, state and federal policies provide

guidelines for how Els should be educated, as they are required to be in a classroom with

similarly aged peers. Undertrained educators with limited resources and students with high

levels of need combine to create frustration in the classroom. This research will fill the gap in

academic research to investigate what classroom teachers—who had little to no formal training

in meeting the educational needs of Els—identify as areas of need in their classrooms.

Chapter 3: Methodology and Procedures

Introduction

English Language Learners are the fastest-growing population of students in America.

The purpose of this study is to gain insight as to the perceived needs of content area teachers who

have students with limited English proficiency in their classes. Based on the literature review,

there is plenty of evidence proving that teachers have additional needs when planning and

implementing instruction for students who are linguistically and culturally diverse. This study

will further investigate those claims. This chapter contains five sections: population, sample,

data collection instruments, procedure, and research questions.

Population

The research in this study was completed in a Northeast Tennessee elementary school

within the city public school system. The elementary school is located in a city, which according

to the 2010 census had a population of 48,205. The approximate number of students within the

school district was 7,446 with a breakdown of 17.2% of students who fall into the categories of

Black, Hispanic, and Native American. 37.1% of students are economically disadvantaged, and

16.7% of students are identified as having a disability. Around 1% of the student body are considered to be English learners. According to growth standards based on WIDA ACCESS testing, the English proficiency rate for the 2018-2019 school year was 34.9%. This is significantly lower than the state average of 49.8%.

Sample

There were approximately 448 teachers in the district with 26 teachers in the school that were surveyed. The sample included five classroom teachers in the elementary school (three 5th grade teachers, one 2nd grade teacher, and one kindergarten teacher). Participants were specifically identified by the ESL teacher at the school as teachers who currently have at least one ELL in their class. All participants in the study were Caucasian with a ratio of 4 females to 1 male.

Data Collection Instruments

The data collection instruments used for this study consisted of a teacher survey, one on one interviews with open-ended questions, and an observation of each teacher in their classrooms. The survey focused on resources teachers currently use to reach the needs of ELLs they instruct. All participants completed the survey electronically through email correspondence. The five teachers were also asked to participate in an interview that consisted of ten open-ended questions geared towards ascertaining the level of preparedness teachers felt when scaffolding instruction for students with limited English proficiency. Finally, the researcher observed each teacher in their classroom while they instructed a class with at least one

ELL in it to identify what resources were being utilized as well as the curriculum modifications that were seen.

Procedures

Approval was first obtained by Milligan IRB. After obtaining approval from Milligan, approval was requested and granted by Kingsport City Schools and Milligan IRB was updated. After all of the permissions were collected, the study was implemented. The researcher met with each of the classroom teachers to explain what would be expected of them if they chose to participate. Participants began by completing an Informed Consent document, then they were emailed a copy of the Survey Questions created by the researcher. The seven questions were opened ended and allowed participants to discuss their experience working with ELLs, resources they utilize, and areas they feel they still need support regarding instructing ELLs. After completing the survey, each teacher sat down with the researcher for a one on one interview. During this time, the researcher asked the ten Interview Questions that focused on supports in the classroom as well as training the teacher had that were specifically helpful when modifying curriculum for students with limited English proficiency. Finally, the researcher spent one class period observing the teacher while they taught a class with at least one El in it. Once all data was collected, the results were analyzed.

Research Question

The research question being studied in this project is, "What are the perceived needs of classroom teachers who have students with limited English proficiency?" Data collected will be analyzed using the inductive reasoning method to develop themes. These themes will allow for

further development of the research question in smaller sections like curriculum support,

language/interpretive supports, and additional support from ESL staff within the school system.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to investigate the perceived needs of content area elementary

teachers who have students learning English as a second language in their classroom. This study

was conducted in an elementary school in Northeast Tennessee with five elementary school

teachers. Data for this study was collected using teacher interviews, open-ended surveys, and

classroom observations. Teachers were asked questions about their experiences having students

who are linguistically diverse in their classroom and the areas they perceive as needs regarding

instructing those students who have limited English proficiency. This chapter describes the

collection of the data, research questions, and also relays the data analysis information.

Data Collection

Data for this study were collected from five elementary school teachers in an elementary

school in Northeast Tennessee. All teachers in the study were Caucasian, with 4 females and 1

male responding. Three of the respondents were 5th grade teachers, one taught 2nd grade, and one

taught kindergarten. The demographics of this sample are displayed in Table 1. The participants

in this research study were interviewed independently, asked to complete a questionnaire with

open-ended questions, and were observed in their classrooms while instructing a class that

contained at least one ELL. The researcher completed each interview, recording the sessions and

compiled responses for coding. Additionally, each teacher filled out the survey and returned the

completed response to the researcher. During classroom observations, the researcher took field notes, specifically observing resources and curriculum that were used by the teacher during their instruction for the ELL. After all data was collected, the researcher used an inductive analysis approach to analyze responses for themes that are strongly linked to multiple sources of data. Frequent phrases and words were categorized using tables in an Excel spreadsheet, and mind maps were utilized to find commonalities.

Table 1

Demographic Profile of Participants

Group	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	1	20%
Female	4	80%
Total	5	100%
Grade Level		
5th Grade	3	60%
2nd Grade	1	20%
Kindergarten	1	20%
Total	5	100%
Ethnicity		
Caucasian	5	100%
Total	5	100%

Research Question and Related Hypothesis

This study was guided by one research question, and data collected was analyzed in a precise, consistent, and exhaustive manner through recording, systematizing, and coding, theming, decontextualizing, and recontextualizing the data. Data collection triangulation occurred as data was gathered through interviews, questionnaires, and classroom observations.

Research Question Findings. The Research Question in this study asked: What are the perceived needs of classroom teachers who have students with limited English proficiency? The related hypothesis is: "There are perceived needs of classroom teachers who have students with limited English proficiency." In order to address this research question, the following instruments were used:

a. Personal Interview

b. Open-ended questionnaire

c. Classroom Observations

Responses to Instrument 1 (Personal Interview). There was a total of five teachers who were interviewed using this instrument. Teacher responses are presented in Table 2. Three themes emerged from the teachers' responses: training, curriculum resources, and clarity in expectations. The themes of training and resources had the most responses (five) and clarity in expectations had the fewest responses (three).

Table 2. *Teacher Responses to Personal Interview Questions*

Themes/Areas of Need	Number of Responses	Key Words and Phrases

Training	5	• No training for working with ELLs • Wish there was Professional Development specifically for ELLs* • College classes didn't prepare me*
Curriculum Resources	5	• My ELL is working well below grade level and I don't have resources • It takes over an hour to modify each lesson for my ELL • Google is my greatest resource* • I use Teachers Pay Teachers*
Clarity of Expectations	3	• I don't know what to expect from my student. • I am unsure of what my ESL teacher wants my student doing during our regular classes. • Figuring out what to expect from my ELL has been extremely frustrating*

Note. *Indicates a response that was given by multiple participants.

Responses to Instrument 2 (Open Ended Questionnaire). Teacher responses are presented in Table 3. There was a total of five teachers who responded to the questionnaire. Four themes emerged from the teachers' responses: currently used resources, requested training topics, emotions regarding ELLs, and useful strategies. All teachers in the study responded to the questionnaire and their answers were analyzed, thus there was an equal number of responses (five) for each theme.

Table 3. *Teachers' Responses to Open Ended Questionnaire*

Themes	Number of Responses	Key Words and Phrases
Currently Used Resources	5	• Google Translate* • Teachers Pay Teachers* • Peer support • ESL teacher/Language Assistant • Picture Cards/Visual Schedule*

Requested Training Topics	5	● Behavior Management with students who have LEP*
		● Language Development Expectations/Milestones
		● Practical Ideas for Curriculum Modifications*
Emotions Regarding ELLs	5	● Frustration
		● Overwhelmed
		● Proud/Excited
Useful Strategies	5	● Setting clear expectations and being firm
		● Google Translate*
		● Visual timer*
		● Peer partner during transitions*
		● Curriculum from younger grades for ELA

Note. *Indicates a response that was given by multiple participants

Responses to Instrument 3 (Classroom Observations). A total of five teachers were observed in their classrooms. Observations are presented in Table 4. There was a total of five teacher observations for this instrument. Two themes emerged from the observations: resources used and curriculum for ELLs. The theme resources used had the most responses (five) and curriculum for ELLs had the fewest responses (four).

Table 4. *Classroom Observations*

Themes	Number of Responses	Observations
Resources Used	5	● Direct Instruction from teacher or language aide*
		● ABC Mouse, Duolingo, Epic, or other online learning*
		● Visual timers and schedules*
		● Peer Support*

| Curriculum for ELLs | 4 | ● Modified Worksheets/Assignments*
● RTI curriculum (Fountas and Pinnell) *
● No Curriculum* |

Note. *Indicates an observation that was seen in multiple classrooms

Chapter 5: Findings, Recommendations, and Implications

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceived needs of elementary teachers of content areas who have students with limited English proficiency in their classes. The review of literature supported this research as it found teachers who currently have students who are linguistically and culturally diverse in their classes have not had adequate training in meeting the unique needs of those students. This chapter contains a summary of the findings, conclusion, and recommendations and implications from the study.

Summary of Findings

The main goal of this study was to answer the question, "What are the perceived needs of classroom teachers who have students with limited English proficiency?" Several trends transpired from the three instruments used to collect data for this research. The data collection instruments were teacher surveys, interviews, and observations.

Three themes emerged from the results of the teacher interviews. The first theme focused on the identified need for additional training for teachers regarding Els. From the results gathered from the teacher interviews, it was apparent that teachers felt as though they needed additional training to best meet the needs of diverse learners in their classrooms. There was a definite need for additional training in both pre-teacher programming as well as professional

development content. This is important as it identifies areas that can become a focus for the

training and professional development of teachers and was the most discussed perceived need of

the teachers surveyed.

The second theme focused on the need for more specified curriculum and resources in the

classroom that can be used with Els. Throughout the teacher interviews, the fact that teachers

spent hours on curriculum modifications was evident. Additionally, many of the teachers

recognized that the ELLs in their class were working well below grade level. This posed

additional struggles when students enter an age-appropriate classroom—which research has

shown is best practice—but they have significant educational needs when it comes to age-level

content. For instruction to be effective, additional resources and modified curriculum needs to

be available for content area teachers.

The third theme focused on the need teachers have in gaining clarity of expectations

regarding Els in their classroom. Teachers expressed misunderstandings of what the

expectations were for the students in their class—especially students who had very limited levels

of English proficiency. This trend showed a difference in

Four critical themes emerged from the teacher surveys. The four themes extrapolated

common beliefs about ELLs in the classroom as well as shared needs in training and resources.

The first theme identified in the teacher surveys was currently used resources. This trend

showed that there are multiple resources that teachers utilize in their classrooms for their students

learning English. To begin, teachers reported using Google and Teachers Pay Teachers as the

two places they used most often to get ideas for curriculum modification and resources for the

ELLs in their classes. Also, the use of picture cards and visuals in the classroom was a common theme seen among the five teachers interviewed. However, when asked to further discuss these visual resources, all teachers pointed to either Teachers Pay Teachers, their ESL teacher, or a peer as the place they received the visuals from.

The next theme that was identified from the teacher interviews was a set of training topics that teachers recognized as important to their everyday success in the classroom. The lack of a common language caused teachers to have questions about behavior management and curriculum modification. Furthermore, teachers requested more information on the process of language acquisition—including the expectations and milestones for language development. In knowing these, teachers felt they would be able to set better educational goals for the ELLs in their classes. This theme connected closely with the next theme identified through the teacher interviews—emotions regarding ELLs in the classroom. Teachers expressed frustration in the lack of resources and curriculum for their students. With that being said, teachers emphasized their excitement and pride in the progress their students were making and the connections they were able to form, regardless of English language proficiency.

The final theme seen in the teacher interview data was useful strategies. Based on teacher statements, the utilization of Google Translate with students with limited to no English proficiency was incredibly useful. This was a strategy that was used primarily at the beginning of a school year or during the first few weeks a student was at the school. However, this strategy lost its effectiveness over time. Teachers also stated that establishing a routine, setting clear expectations, and using visual timers for transitions were all effective in behavior management.

The observation portion of this study revealed two significant themes. At this point in the study, the researcher noticed that curriculum and resources were two of the main areas of need that had been identified by teachers with ELLs in their classrooms. With this knowledge, the researcher entered the classrooms to observe what resources were being used and what the curriculum looked like for ELLs. The first theme—resources used—showed teachers and language aides using direct instruction as a primary source of teaching. Additionally, multiple teachers utilized online content like ABC Mouse, Duolingo, and Epic with their students.

In the second theme drawn from the classroom observations, the researcher found that there was no specific curriculum outside of the age-appropriate content area curriculum being utilized. Assignments and classwork were modified and often completed with the assistance of either a language assistant or a peer partner.

Conclusions

This study resulted in a confirmation that teachers have multiple perceived needs regarding adequate instruction of students with limited English proficiency in their classes. However, the results did not show which additional resources would benefit teachers most as they instruct ELLs in their classroom. The trends from this study show that teachers identify multiple needs concerning students with limited English proficiency in the content area classroom.

Recommendations

1. Future research should include a larger sample size from various school settings to gain a better picture of what the perceived needs of teachers regarding ELLs in their classrooms are throughout the educational system

2. Future research should use a student's level of proficiency to specify what needs are identified at different levels of a student's journey to English proficiency.

3. Future studies should be done to ascertain if students' grades are affected positively when teachers are given additional training and resources to specifically address the needs of ELLs in their classroom.

Implications

1. An emphasis needs to be placed on providing all teachers with adequate and appropriate resources to best instruct the whole classroom—including students who are linguistically diverse.

2. All teachers should be aware of the specific learning needs of students with limited English proficiency and advocate for resources that will help them be successful in the classroom if they are not provided.

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Appendices

Date: February 18, 2020

From: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Milligan College

Re: *Investigation of the Perceived Needs of Elementary Teachers whose Class Contains Students Learning English*

Submission type: Initial Submission

Dear Rebecca,

On behalf of the Milligan College Institutional Review Board (IRB), we are writing to inform you that your study *Investigation of the Perceived Needs of Elementary Teachers whose Class Contains Students Learning English* has been approved as expedited. This approval also indicates that you have fulfilled the IRB requirements for Milligan College.

All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission, meaning that you will follow the research plan you have outlined here, use approved materials, and follow college policies.

Take special note of the following important aspects of your approval:

- Any changes made to your study require approval from the IRB Committee before they can be implemented as part of your study. Contact the IRB Committee at IRB@milligan.edu with your questions and/or proposed modifications.
- If there are any unanticipated problems or complaints from participants during your data collection, you must notify the Milligan College IRB Office within 24 hours of the data collection problem or complaint.

The Milligan College IRB Committee is pleased to congratulate you on the approval of your research proposal. Best wishes as you conduct your research! If you have any questions about your IRB Approval, please contact the IRB Office and copy your faculty advisor if appropriate on the communication.

Regards,

Tawnda Clay

The IRB Committee

Survey Questions

What resources do you use the most when working with ELLs? Where did you get the resources from?

Where do you get information about ELLs and how to meet their needs?

What would you find most useful to learn about in a PD training geared towards ELLs in the classroom?

How would you describe your overall experience working with ELLs in your classroom?

Are there any resources you think would allow you to better reach the needs of ELLs in your classroom? If yes, please explain.

What strategies have been helpful and beneficial when working with ELLs in the classroom?

Is there anything else you would want someone to know about the needs classroom teachers have when considering the specific needs of ELLs in the classroom?

Interview Questions:

1. Please describe your experience working with students who are linguistically diverse in your classroom

2. When you were first given an EL in your classroom, what kinds of support were you given? Looking back, what do you wish you had known?

3. What are some of the struggles you have experienced working with ELLs?

4. What resources do you currently utilize when working with ELs in your class?

5. What does curriculum modification look like in regards to your ELs?

6. What areas do you struggle in when trying to meet the needs of ELs in your class?

7. Have you ever had training--during college or professional development--that provided information on ELs in the classroom? If so, please describe what you learned.

8. Would you be interested in PD related to ELLs? WHat areas would you like to know more?

9. What resources do you wish you had when thinking about the ELs in your class?

10. Is there anything else you would like to share?