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How do the perceptions of early childhood teachers towards their early childhood English Language Learners (ELLS) govern their pedagogical practices with the early childhood ELLS in their classrooms?

Kerry Rizzuto

HOW DO THE PERCEPTIONS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHERS TOWARDS THEIR EARLY CHILDHOOD ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS (ELLS) GOVERN THEIR PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES WITH THE EARLY CHILDHOOD ELLS IN THEIR CLASSROOMS?

by
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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband, Peter Rizzuto, and my daughters, Emma Grace and Ava Jane for their endless supply of patience, encouragement, love and support. I love the three of you to the moon, stars, and back.

Abstract

Kerry A. Carley Rizzuto
HOW DO THE PERCEPTIONS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHERS TOWARDS
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ELLS IN THEIR CLASSROOMS?
October 2013
Dr. Beth Wassell, Ed.D
Doctor of Education

The purpose of this parallel mixed-methodology study was to examine, through a
critical lens, how the perceptions of early childhood teachers towards their early
childhood English Language learners (ELLs) govern their pedagogical practices. The
study was conducted in ten ($N = 10$) early childhood classrooms, ranging from grades
pre-K to third grades, in one suburban school with a culturally and linguistically diverse
student population. Quantitative data was gathered through the administration of Pohan
and Aguilar's (2001) *Professional beliefs about diversity* 5-point Likert scale.
Additionally, qualitative data was collected through interviews, classroom observations,
and material artifacts. The same sample of participants ($N = 10$) was used for both
sources of data collection. Results indicated that the majority of teacher participants held
negative perceptions towards the ELL pupils in their classrooms as well as demonstrated
a lack of understanding of culturally responsive pedagogy and theories of second
language acquisition. Implications for in-service teacher professional development in
order to cultivate understandings of the theories of second language acquisition and
culturally responsive pedagogy are discussed.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Cultural and linguistic diversity in the United States public schools has increased a great deal over the past decade. Twenty-one percent of children between the ages of 5 and 17 years old speak a language other than English at home. Fourteen percent of the children speak Spanish, 2.7% speak other Indo-European languages, 2.2% speak Asian and Pacific languages, less than 1% speak other languages (Hyland, 2010). From the 1997-98 school year to the 2008-2009 year, the number of English language learners (ELLs) enrolled in public schools increased from 3.5 million to 5.3 million, or by 51% ,National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition [NCELA], 2010). Estimates of minority enrollment in public schools by the year 2025 are as high as 35% to 50% (NCELA, 2010). In the upcoming decades, more than 40% of children entering United States public schools will speak a first language other than English (Hyland, 2010).

Students from minority groups typically perform lower on standardized tests, drop out of school at higher rates, and experience higher rates of expulsion than Caucasian students (Hyland, 2010). Examination of school characteristics and educational outcomes reveals that ongoing disparities in resources, opportunities to learn, and attainment disadvantage ELL pupils relative to their English as a first language peers (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Currently, teachers who work with ELLs may be well intentioned, but they are limited in their knowledge of cultural diversity and issues affecting students in their classrooms (Walker-Dalhouse, Sanders, & Dalhouse, 2009).

Furthermore, the experiences ELLs will have in school are in large part connected to the perceptions of the teachers they encounter. McSwain (2001) noted, "teachers' self-perceptions of cultural and linguistic competency as they relate to helping children

achieve academic and social potential play a powerful and intricate role in the type of educational services provided to culturally and linguistically diverse children" (p. 54). Additionally, researchers have noted a link between teacher expectation and student achievement (Au, 2011; Clair, 1995; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Jones, 2002; Gándara, Maxwell-Jolly, & Driscoll, 2005; Hyland, 2010; Jones, 2002; Nieto, 2009; Reeves, 2004, 2006). What teachers know and think about their students can have a profound impact on what and how they teach them in the classroom. Nieto (2009) noted that "differential expectations lead to differential treatment, which results in differential outcomes" (p. 5).

Additionally, teacher education programs typically focus on research that links failure and socioeconomic status, failure and cultural difference, and failure and language differences (Delpit, 2006). Deficit assumptions can lead to teachers teaching less instead of more and creating lower expectations for ELLs. Delpit (2006) challenges practicing teachers to "gain knowledge of children's lives outside of school so as to recognize their strengths" (p. 172). She theorizes that children may be gifted in real-life settings; however when they are asked to exhibit knowledge in decontextualized settings, they are looked upon as failures.

Moreover, teacher perceptions and preconceived notions about groups of students can even influence the types of activities that teachers choose for their students, the type of feedback that the students receive, and expectations that shape the interactions that take place between teachers. Further, for the early childhood ELL learners, enduring issues of poverty and limited preschool experiences are considered as important to contributing to their early literacy success as their early school experiences (Bredekamp, 2011). Because of the increasing variation in young children's individual and experiential

backgrounds, there is typically a 5-year range in children's literacy-related skills and functioning in kindergarten and primary grade classrooms (Au, 2011). From a social justice perspective, the achievement gap between the literacy achievement of mainstream students and ELL students challenges teachers to consider the ways in which they think about children as literacy learners and to enact practices that respond to this increasing variation in children's early literacy development.

During the last decade, in response to the No Child Left Behind Act (2001), attention has turned to evidence-based programs and instructional practices. However, it appears that many of these instructional changes have failed to meet the needs of literacy instruction for ELLs (e.g. Allington, 2005; Au, 2011; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Nieto, 2009). Given that the majority of ESL instruction focuses on oral language development and vocabulary acquisition, most ELL students receive the bulk of their reading instruction in English-only mainstream classrooms (Au, 2011). Therefore, there is a strong need to investigate the particular aspects of literacy instruction for early childhood ELL pupils.

Given the apparent disconnect between the literacy instructional practices and success for early childhood ELL pupils (e.g. Allington, 2005; Au, 2011; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Nieto, 2009), I used as a critical theoretical lens to guide my study. Critical theory and more specifically, critical pedagogy, urge educators to examine the link between hegemonic social practices and the methods that schools use in order to maintain the social status quo.

In the next section, I define the essential problem that this dissertation elucidated in order to understand the pedagogical practices that might be contributing to the literacy achievement gap for early childhood ELL students.

Problem Statement

Although there is currently a growing body of literature regarding the preparation of pre-service teachers in order to develop social justice dispositions, less is understood about the perceptions of practicing teachers towards culturally and linguistically diverse students (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 2010). Researchers have recently begun to explore how practicing teachers' perceptions of ELL students is governing their literacy instruction with ELL learners (Au, 2006; Duran, Roseth, & Hoffman, 2009; McWayne, Hahs-Vaughn, Wright, & Cheung, 2012).

This investigation is of critical importance because researchers and educators contend that children's academic futures are established in the school and developmental years between preschool and grade three. This time marks a major transition for young children and has been identified as a critical period for intervening for those considered at-risk for later school difficulties particularly in terms of children's early literacy development (Au, 2011; Bredekamp, 2011; NCLEA, 2010).

Taken together, the evidence supports the need to closely examine the role that practicing teachers' social justice dispositions have on early childhood literacy instruction, which is of particular consequence to those students who are linguistically and culturally different from the mainstream population and who speak English as a second language. Teacher perceptions are important factors to consider, as they contribute to kinds of interactions that occur between teachers and children during literacy instruction, as research has shown that the literacy and language attainments

children experience at the start of early childhood set the stage for their short-and-long term reading success (Adams, 1990; Au, 2011).

Moreover, research suggests that ELLs tend to receive a great deal of instruction emphasizing lower-level skills as opposed to higher level thinking (Au, 2011; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Fitzgerald, 1995). The question educators must address is how all children, especially ELLs, access to higher levels of instruction, especially with texts (Cummins, 2001). Researchers argue that the reason that ELLs are so often exposed to low level texts is that mainstream teachers have negative perceptions and expectations surrounding ELL pupils' literacy abilities (Au, 2011; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Nieto, 2009). To clarify the intention of my study, I have outlined the purpose statement in the section below.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this parallel mixed-method study is to understand, through a critical theory lens, how the perceptions of mainstream early childhood educators towards English language learners (ELLs) in their classrooms govern their pedagogical practices associated with literacy instruction for early childhood ELLs. Critical theory (Anyon, 2009) is an orientation that involves studying human phenomena through an ideological perspective that seeks social justice for oppressed groups, such as underserved and undervalued English Language Learners in our nation's public schools. Employing a critical perspective about early childhood education reminds us that education is a political act, implying that it can be used for both oppressive and liberatory purposes (Freire, 2000). Therefore, to ensure quality educational programs for children who are typically marginalized by society, such as ELLs, a critical perspective requires awareness of the power dynamics involved in the making of education policy (Kozol, 1991).

Employment of critical theory also demands an understanding of how those practices may further the achievement gap, and calls for educators to begin to cultivate social justice dispositions (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Nieto, 2009).

I used a critical theory lens to examine the perceptions of mainstream early childhood teachers' perceptions towards the ELL pupils in their classrooms. In addition, I examined how those perceptions govern the mainstream early childhood teachers' literacy instruction with ELL pupils, and how their espoused beliefs did or did not align with their actual practices. An explanation of critical theory and its framework follow next.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework guides that this study draws on the tenets of both critical theory (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002; Madison, 2005; Popkewitz, 1998) and social justice theory (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002; Mertens, 2005). Critical theory represents a broad school of thought that critiques the nature of power relationships in a culture, and that also seeks through its inquiries to help emancipate members of the culture from the many forms of oppression that operate within it. Kincheloe and McLaren (2002) define researchers who employ critical theory in their work as *criticalists,* "researchers who attempt to use their work as a form of social and cultural criticism" (p. 139).

There are several basic assumptions in critical theory (Carspecken, 1996; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002; Madison, 2008; Mertens, 2005). The first is that certain groups in any society are privileged over others. McLaren (1986) emphasizes the educational inequities experienced by individuals who are not members of the dominant race, gender, or class categories of western societies. The second assumption is that

oppression has many faces. For example, in seeking to understand why a teacher views a

certain student as academically lagging in class, one must consider not only the student's

ethnic identity, but also the student's gender and social class background, as well as other

cultural characteristics. The third tenet is that language is central to the formation of

subjectivity. Therefore, students whose first language is Spanish, for example, will have a

different conscious experience of a classroom lesson or a school athletic event than other

pupils whose first language is English. The formal and informal languages that occurs in

classrooms are examples of how language can be utilized by schools to maintain

hegemony. Carspecken (1996) offers this notion on critical theory, "criticalists find

contemporary society to be unfair, unequal, and both subtly and overtly oppressive for

many people" (p. 7).

     Employment of critical theory perspectives provided a lens to explore the extent

to which mainstream early childhood teachers' perceptions towards early childhood ELL

students resulted in those students developing low levels of literacy achievement. From a

critical theory perspective, the achievement gap between the literacy achievement of

mainstream students and ELL students' challenges teachers to consider the ways in which

they think about children as literacy learners and to enact practices that respond to this

increasing variation in children's early literacy development. According to Britzman

(2003), an essential component of teaching requires that all teachers develop "an

understanding of the meanings they already hold and the consequences for the positions

they inspire" (p. 239).

     Critical theory also shaped my methodological process. To begin, its use

influenced my sampling techniques in that transformative research mandates that the

study should represent purposeful sampling strategies. The use of such samples is based on the rationale that participants chosen purposefully are the best sources of information because they exemplify certain theoretically important characteristics and/or because their life experiences "reflect critical cultural positioning in regard to the phenomena under study" (Mertens, 2009, p. 214).

In addition, classroom observations are a powerful data-collection strategy that is essential to transformative work and is influenced by critical theory. Giroux (1994) maintains that an essential element of critical pedagogy research is to observe how teachers teach and to observe what is being taught. Further, Mertens (20005) suggests that the researcher ponder the following questions, which are in alignment with critical pedagogy, while conducting classroom observations: What patterns of interactions and directions of interactions occur? What variations occur on the basis of race/ethnicity or other observable dimensions of diversity? How do these patterns change during the observation?

When analyzing my data, critical pedagogy influenced my study as it led me to pose questions such as: How does race function as a barrier between the powerful and the marginalized? What is the role of racial prejudice as an exploratory lens for the research findings? When I began to explore and read through my data, and as I composed analytic memos, and developed my codebook, critical theory assisted me in reflecting on issues such as social justice. Charmaz (2006) suggests that researchers who use critical theory to inform their line of inquiry pose the following questions as they reflect on their data: What are the tacit and explicit rules in this organization? What do these rules and practices suggest about social justice?

Critical Pedagogy, Sociocultural Theory, and Literacy

The fundamental commitment of critical educators is to empower the powerless and transform those conditions which perpetuate human injustice and inequity (McLaren, 1986). This purpose is intricately linked to the fulfillment of what Freire (2000) defines as the educator's vocation, which is to be truly humanized social agents in the world. Hence, a major function of critical pedagogy is to critique, expose, and challenge the manner in which schools impact upon the political and cultural life of students. Teachers must recognize how schools unite knowledge and power. Further, critical pedagogy develops questions of audience; voice, power, evaluation and how those forces actively work to construct particular relations between teachers and students. Pedagogy in the critical sense illuminates the relationship among knowledge, authority, and power (Giroux, 1994). In this study, I closely examined literacy practices through a critical lens.

An ideological model of literacy offers a more culturally sensitive view of literacy practices as they may vary from context to context. This model is predicated on the fact that literacy is a social practice, not simply a technical or neutral skill, and that it is always embedded in socially constructed epistemological principles (Street, 1993). In addition, Gee (2011) argues that literacy is always rooted in a particular world-view and that there exists in the dominant society a desire for that view of literacy to dominate and to marginalize others (Street, 1993). Therefore, the way that teachers engage students, especially early learners, is a social act that affects the nature of the literacy being learned (Gee, 2011).

In an effort to name the aforementioned methods that teachers should use to optimally engage early learners, and especially diverse early learners, there are a few commonly used phrases. Various terms had been coined to emphasize the need for a

pedagogy that addresses cultural diversity in the classroom in nuanced ways (Cazden & Legget, 1981). Earlier studies informed by cultural mismatch have examined, for example, the importance of home language, talk patterns, and participant structures in teacher–student interactions among linguistically diverse students (Au & Jordan 1981; Cazden & Leggett 1981). In particular, literacy researchers identify culturally relevant pedagogy and critical pedagogy as connoting practice that is intimately tied to relationships and activities that help teachers shape their literacy instruction so that all learning is accessible for all students in all classrooms (Au, 2011; Giroux, 1994). Further, engaging in critical pedagogy leads teachers to embrace sociocultural perspectives of literacy.

Sociocultural theory. Sociocultural theorists advance that the very terms by which people perceive and describe the world, including language, are social artifacts (Schwandt, 1994). Because reality is seen to be created through processes of social exchange, and positioned in specific times and places, social constructivists are interested in the collective meaning-making among people. The emphasis is on the process of knowledge construction by the social group and the interactions of the group (Spivey, 1997).

Sociocultural perspectives of literacy (Valdes, 1996) suggest that writing, reading, and language are not decontextualized skills, separate from specific contexts, contents, and social-communication purposes. Most current views of literacy share Vygotsky's (1978) theory that all learning is socially and culturally transmitted and advocates a multidimensional dialogue among the text, the content, and the reader. Currently, in literacy education, this is referred to as accessing students' schema (Morrow, 2010).

Central to reading comprehension in early childhood literacy is the idea of eliciting prior knowledge through discourse.

Drawing from Bakhtinian theory (1986), a sociocultural view of literacy encourages a multidimensional dialogue between the text, the reader, and the context (Kim, 2009). Historically, schema theory helps explain how learners use their background knowledge to extend to new stories their understandings about the cultural content form of prior texts. Schema theory is essential for early childhood ELLs. When teachers bring cultural and text knowledge to new books being read, ELLs have a foothold to comprehending a new story. For example, the teacher sets the stage for the classes' understanding of the story by taking a picture walk, highlighting the vocabulary, illustrations, and having a conversation around the theme and/or elements of the story.

A sociocultural view of literacy contends that there are multiple meanings of text that are interpretive and are constructed through the social practices of individuals. A sociocultural view of reading embraces the diversity of teachers and students' cultural and linguistic knowledge to generate multiple meanings of text. This view has definite implications for the way teachers need to engage with students and with ELL pupils in particular.

Hegemonic Schools Practices and ELLs

Another factor that must be examined through a critical theory lens is the discrepancy between mainstream hegemonic schooling practices and the learning needs of ELL students (Gutierrez & Orellana, 2006; Moll & Gonzalez, 1994). This disparity has the effect of making it difficult for students of diverse backgrounds to participate successfully in school literacy learning activities and therefore to attain high levels of literacy achievement in school (Cummins, 2001). Typical schooling is centered on

content oriented to mainstream students and their perspectives and many examples of mainstream bias in curriculum content have been identified by researchers (Au, 2011).

In addition, mainstream schooling is based on social processes oriented to mainstream students. These instructional and social processes include emphasis on whole-class instruction and the use of teacher initiation, student response, and teacher evaluation (IRE). In studies that began in the 1970s, the IRE model was shown to be a barrier to the successful participation in lessons of students of diverse ethnic and linguistic backgrounds (Au, 1983). The difficulty is that IRE requires students to demonstrate that they know the answer to the teacher's question by volunteering and speaking as individuals. The IRE reflects the value attached by the mainstream to competition and individual achievement, and these values are antithetical to those taught at home to many students of diverse cultural practice values.

Moreover, significant social and educational change cannot occur until schools and educators begin to think on a systemic level. At the heart of critical theory, according to Freire (2000), resides the idea that the teachers should aim to become more aware of the problems with educating socially disenfranchised students and also become empowered to formulate solutions. Critical theory provides a framework to help teachers begin to move beyond rhetoric and into making substance instructional and environmental classroom changes.

Au, Bigelow, and Karp (2007) recommend several classroom practices that educators consider for confronting inequities into the social practice of society; grounding instruction in the lives of the children and drawing connections between students' lives and the broader society, teaching critical thinking skills, teaching multiple

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and cultural perspectives, using a variety of cognitively and physically challenging activities so that children learn how to make decisions and collectively solve problems, and teaching children how to be humane and culturally sensitive. As I conducted my interviews, classroom observations, and collected artifacts, I used a critical theory lens to examine whether the practices that Au, Bigelow, and Karp (2007) recommended were reflected in the data. I also used a critical theory lens while I reduced and coded my data, looking for patterns and themes to emerge.

These overarching research questions follow below.

Research Questions

One of critical pedagogy's most important tenets states that the purpose of education should be to develop a more socially just world (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2004). When teachers engage in critical pedagogical practices, they are able to, as Freire and Macedo (1987) posit, use their students' home languages, experiences, and cultures as *funds of knowledge* to teaching literacy skills, rather than viewing ELL students' culture and language as deficits (Moll & Gonzalez, 1994).

The following research questions were designed to gain understanding of the lived experiences of the study participants:

1. What are the perceptions of early childhood teachers about working with English Language Learners (ELLs)?

2. How do these perceptions govern their pedagogical practices associated with literacy instruction for early childhood ELLs?

3. To what extent are the teachers' espoused literacy practices congruent with their demonstrated literacy practices in the classrooms with early childhood ELL pupils?

In order to make the reading of this dissertation more cohesive, I have outlined some of the most essential terminology used throughout the research and therefore, throughout my study. These definitions are found in this next section.

Definition of Key Terms

Throughout the dissertation, I will refer to the following ideas and terms: *English language learners (ELLs)*: Refers to speakers of other languages in the process of learning English, *English as a second language (ESL),* currently the accepted term in the state of New Jersey for English-language programs that teach language skills to speakers from non-English language backgrounds. In other contexts or studies, the terms English as second other language (ESOL) or teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL) are used; however the New Jersey Department of Education uses ESL.

In addition, throughout the study, the term teacher perception is used. Fang (1996) stated perceptions make up an important part of teachers' knowledge. Finally, the last term used is *mainstream*: mainstream teacher is synonymous with regular, content area teacher or traditional, grade-level teacher. Mainstream classroom is also primarily used in the literature to denote to a classroom where English is the only language spoken (Petitt, 2011).

Significance of Study

My study's goal is to achieve social change at levels ranging from the personal to the political (Mertens, 2009) by using a mixed-method design, which gives prevalence to the value-based and action-oriented inquiry traditions (Greene, 2007). Additionally, Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) suggest that mixed methods studies that make use of all available data and that use multiple and diverse sources will lead researchers to deeper and fuller understandings of research questions.

Ultimately, the purpose of this study is an attempt to raise consciousness of early childhood mainstream teachers of ELL students and have the teachers become aware of and begin to integrate culturally responsive pedagogy into their instruction. Culturally responsive teaching (CRT) facilitates and supports the achievement of all students. It requires teachers to create a learning environment where all students are welcomed, supported, and provided with the best opportunities to learn regardless of their cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Gay, 2002). In order for teachers to use CRT effectively, teachers need to be cognizant of the three dimensions of Gay's (2002) framework; first, teachers need to make their instruction rigorous, equitable, and challenging for all students, secondly, teachers need to know and facilitate in the learning process of the various range of students' cultural and linguistic groups, and finally, teachers need to recognize that education and schooling do not occur in a vacuum. The interaction of all three dimensions can help teachers to significantly meet the needs of a diverse student population. Given the latest test scores for ELLs, nationally only 6% were proficient in reading at the beginning of 4th grade (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2010), therefore it is apparent that we must assist mainstream early childhood teachers in how to acquire a sensitivity to the needs, interests, and abilities of early childhood ELL students before the cycle of literacy failure begins (Nieto, 2009).

I hope that this study will inspire other researchers, educators, administrators, and policy-makers to think about the implications for policy, practice, and further research. The next section of the dissertation provides an outline of some of my suggestions for further work in the study of practicing mainstream early childhood teachers' perceptions towards ELL pupils and the implications for early childhood literacy instruction.

Limitations

  It is also important to acknowledge the limitations of the study. First, the study is confined to ten classrooms and the results might be entirely due to the characteristics of the particular teachers and their particular circumstances. They are still grappling with the current influx of ELLs and they have not had any systematic education in neither their formal education to learn how to best instruct linguistically diverse pupils, nor has the school provided any systematic professional development. However, I have utilized a transformative method of inquiry, and as Christ (2009) and Mertens (2005) posit, critical and transformative research is conducted with the intent to improve communities and reduce oppression, not to generalize results from a non-representative sample to a larger population. Conversely, since there are over 5 million ELLs in our nation's public schools, and with a majority of ELLs (40%) in the early childhood grades (U.S. Department of Education, 2010), and given that nationally, only 6% were proficient in reading at the beginning of 4th grade (NCES, 2010), many educators, administrators, and schools of education may consider paying attention to the effects of mainstream early childhood teachers' perceptions and their impact on the literacy instruction of mainstream early childhood ELL pupils.

  Secondly, I have a great deal of partiality on behalf of the ELL students. I began my teaching career over two decades ago in Brooklyn, New York. At that time, I was woefully under prepared to instruct the ELL pupils in my classroom. Although I had graduated from a teacher education program, I had only taken one course in multicultural education, which did not provide me with the necessary background to instruct students who were linguistically diverse. Moreover, the ESL teacher in my school building offered little support and in fact, when I visited her classroom, I was stunned by the materials that

she was using with her students; chart paper that was yellowed with age, antiquated basal readers, et al. The children in Public School 198 spoke a wide range of languages, Spanish, Haitian-Creole, and a variety of patois from the Caribbean Islands. I vividly remember being struck by how obsolete her methods of circling letters and words on phonics workbook pages seemed to me even then, as a newly minted New York City Public School teacher with no experience.

Although I did not share the same cultural or linguistic background as my first grade students, I wanted them to succeed, so I read from journals such as *The Reading Teacher and TESOL Quarterly*, and I followed my instincts. I read aloud to my students often, I found books that I thought would interest them to read with them, and I tried to create a culture in my classroom that I hoped communicated that I cared deeply about each student. Then, I was fortunate to be selected by my building principal to attend a series of intensive training at Columbia's Teachers' College Writing Project with Dr. Lucy Calkins.

Over the course of several months and years working with Dr. Calkins both at Columbia and in my classroom, I learned how to reach all of my students. Back in 1990, the term *differentiation* was not as commonly as used as it is today; however in my work at Teachers' College, I began to look at my ELL pupils as individual students who each needed modifications and accommodations to the literacy curriculum. However, most importantly I looked at my class as children with strengths and rich cultural backgrounds from which I could draw information from and make connections in my literacy instruction. These experiences also informed the impetus for this study.

How I Came to the Research

Throughout my years as an educator in the NYC school system, I served in many different capacities; early childhood teacher, reading teacher, Reading Recovery teacher, early literacy staff developer, and school administrator. In these various roles, I had the vantage point to observe how mainstream early childhood teachers perceptions governed their literacy instruction with ELLs. For the most part, I remained disappointed in how teachers did not seem to know how to differentiate their instruction or how to best instruct early childhood pupils in literacy.

Once I moved to New Jersey over a decade ago and began working in the public schools here, first as a teacher, administrator, and now in my capacity as an instructor in the teacher education department at a university, I remain focused on how the perceptions of mainstream early childhood teachers govern their instruction. While enrolled in my doctoral coursework at Rowan, I had the experience of conducting interviews for a paper for the qualitative research course. During a series of interviews, I experienced teachers articulate racist perceptions about the early childhood ELL pupils in their classrooms. The collection of my experiences became the impetus for this present study.

Consequently, I recognize the need for objectivity and I was rigorous in bracketing my personal emotions through the use of analytic memos and my researcher journal in order to distill out any bias in my field notes, interviews, or observations. Additionally, I strove to be hyper-vigilant with member checks, peer-debriefing, and audit trails (Patton, 2002) in order to make my study's findings as trustworthy as possible.

The final portion of this chapter will provide an overview of this dissertation. In addition I provide the reader with chapter outlines of the six chapters with a brief description of the pertinent information contained in each section.

Overview of the Dissertation

Chapter one. In the first chapter, I have presented my understanding of a current problem in the United States public schools; the achievement gap that exists between ELLs in mainstream early childhood classrooms and their English speaking peers. I link this disparity to the early childhood teachers' perceptions towards the early childhood ELL pupils in their classrooms. This problem is situated within extensive literature that describes the lack of education that pre-service teachers receive, as well as the lack of understanding of how language and more specifically, second language, develops in practicing teachers. Critical theory and social justice theory are interwoven throughout the dissertation and are introduced briefly.

Chapter two. Chapter two provides a comprehensive literature review pertaining to the relationship between mainstream teachers' perceptions towards ELLs in their classrooms. In addition, there is a thorough review of the current best practices for literacy instruction for early childhood ELL pupils. Finally, I provide a synthesis of the literature and why there was a need for my study to be conducted.

Chapter three. The third chapter delineates the methodology utilized in the dissertation. The study was guided by a transformative paradigm and utilized mixed methods that are congruent with Greene's (2007) assertion that this method of inquiry aids in triangulation as it sought convergence, corroboration, and correspondence of results from multiple methods. In addition, I described how triangulation of both the qualitative and quantitative strategies occurred. I also provide information regarding the

criteria for transformative data collection. In addition, I include the principles for integrating both qualitative and quantitative data in order to conduct a crossover track analysis, which involves the ongoing concurrent analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data, with a focus on facilitating data comparison. Finally, criteria for authenticity to be used for evaluation of the study are discussed.

Chapter four. Chapter four provides an overview of the data collection process. It delineates the interviewing process of each of the 10 early childhood teachers with whom I conducted interviews. Each interview lasted approximately 60 minutes and was recorded with informed consent by the participant, which included permission to record the interview. Each interview was conducted in a private room and an interview protocol was followed, which included basic biographical questions/prompts.

This chapter also outlines my classroom observation process. Observations took place within the daily instructional block at the school. I assumed the primary role of quiet observer. Hand-written notes were taken during observations that were transcribed into a computer later and reviewed for content and significance. Additionally, in chapter four I depict how I collected the artifacts that I described in my study. I also present the quantitative findings from Pohan and Aguilar's *Professional beliefs about diversity scale* (2001), which is a psychometrically validated 5-point Likert scaled instrument that measures teachers' beliefs about diversity as well as determines the effect size of the early childhood teachers' beliefs about diversity.

Additionally, in chapter four I present both the qualitative and quantitative results of research question one, *What are the perceptions of mainstream early childhood teachers about working with early childhood ELL pupils*?

Chapter five. Chapter five presents both the qualitative and quantitative data results for research questions two, *How do these perceptions govern their pedagogical practices associated with literacy instruction for early childhood ELLs?* And research question three, *To what extent are the teachers' espoused literacy practices congruent with their demonstrated literacy practices in the classrooms with early childhood ELL pupils?*

Chapter six. In this final discussion chapter, I provide a conclusion to this study. I describe how the research did or did not answer my research questions. I also address the larger issue of the achievement gap that ELLs are still contending with in addition to problems such as poverty, inferior schools, and less-qualified teachers. Lastly, I argue for several changes on two levels: within teacher education programs and within school districts.

Conclusion

Each year in the United States, school systems are concerned with the changing face of public school children, a growing number who are ELLs, who enter schools with many rich traditions and cultures, but also the daunting task of *doing double the work* of learning grade level content while also learning English (Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007). This presents a challenge for many educators who may not know how to close the linguistic and cultural gaps of their students (Nieto, 2009). However, this problem becomes more complex when mainstream early childhood teachers of ELLs have perceptions that govern their literacy instructional practices and those practices are not in alignment with culturally responsive teaching and/or best practices in literacy instruction for ELL students.

In the midst of the complexity of these dynamics, ELLs' academic performance is far below that of other students, oftentimes as much as 20 to 30 percent points lower, and usually shows little improvement throughout the years (NCELA, 2010). For many ELLs, the achievement gap begins when they enter school as many ELLs are likely to live in low-income housing, at or below the poverty level, and their parents are unlikely to have a formal education or speak English (Goldenberg, 2008).

Additionally, teacher qualifications, knowledge, skills, as well as perceptions make more difference for student learning than any other single factor (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Clearly, this means if we want to improve student learning, we have to invest in teachers' learning. We have to be sure that teachers understand not only their content area, which is very important, but also understand how students learn. Teachers should know the answers to the following questions: How do different students learn differently? How do students acquire language? How do early childhood ELL students learn to read?

This dissertation serves to identify the need for advocacy on behalf of early childhood ELL pupils in order to promote equity in access to the literacy curriculum. Such equity is essential to increasing the academic achievement for this student population. It is the intent of this study to explore how mainstream early childhood teachers' perceptions and attitudes govern their literacy instruction for ELL pupils in their classroom. Educational advocates at all levels can benefit from this exploration by understanding that early childhood teachers must make their literacy curriculum culturally responsive as well as accessible for all of the children in their classrooms, especially the children who represent linguistic and cultural diversity.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

Five bodies of literature frame this study of mainstream early childhood teachers' perceptions towards ELLs in their classrooms and how those perceptions govern their literacy instruction. The first body of literature is one that addresses research studies that have attempted to describe teacher perceptions towards ELLs in various mainstream classrooms across the United States. The second body of literature examines how colleges and universities prepare pre-service teacher candidates for diverse student populations in U.S. public schools. The third body of literature focuses on current institutional policies that maintain the marginalization of ELL learners in public schools. The fourth body concerns the need for teachers to understand language acquisition and bilingualism, and finally the last body of research deals with best practices in ELL literacy education.

Teachers' Perceptions

As McSwain (2001) points out, "teachers' perceptions of cultural and linguistic competency as they relate to helping children achieve academic and social potential play a very critical role in the type of educational services provided to culturally and linguistically diverse children" (p.54). Unfortunately, many mainstream teachers hold deficit views towards the ELLs in their classrooms (Hyland, 2010).

Teacher perceptions, which are formed by the values they hold, play an important role in student performance (Nieto, 2009; Moore, 1999; Pajares, 1992). Thompson (1992) stated that, "to understand teaching from teachers' perspectives we have to understand the beliefs with which they define their work" (p. 129). According to Peregoy and Boyle (1997), if teachers have unexamined biases towards ELLs in their classrooms, even

teachers who want the best for ELLs might discriminate without realizing it. Conversely, teachers who hold the same expectations for ELLs as other students are able to positively affect school experiences for this chronically vulnerable sub-set of pupils (Pajares, 1992).

Macnab and Payne (2003) pointed out that the cultural and philosophical perceptions are significant to the way in which teachers view their roles as educators. Additionally, Richardson (1996) stated that it is necessary to study the perceptions that teachers hold because teacher perceptions are critical elements that drive classroom actions and influence how teachers approach pedagogical practice. For example, teachers will emphasize different aspects of the curriculum based on their perceptions about which students deserve and who can master particular levels of rigor in instruction (Nieto, 2009). Therefore, the consequences of the perceptions that teachers hold towards ELLs are reflected in their instruction.

Consequently, these choices are often informed by the perception that ELLs would learn English quickly if "they really wanted to" (Pappamiheil, 2007, p. 44). Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco (2001) conducted a study in which they found that mainstream teachers of ELLs often saw immigrants' individual failures as personal faults, something immigrants have brought on themselves, or something that they deserved. These deficit models of thinking are consistent which what Gutierrez and Orellana (2006) refer to as situating the problem within the ELL students themselves.

Gitlin, Buendia, Crosland, and Doumbia (2003) conducted a qualitative study in a western United States middle school in order to study teacher perceptions toward ELL students. Although the school expressed an appreciation of diversity in its vision and mission statement, researchers found that ELL students were institutionally marginalized;

they sat at one lunch table, were assigned to the lowest literacy groups, and were never highlighted in school assemblies. This type of failure to connect schools' mission statements or espoused theories (Argyris & Schön, 1974) to actual practice is quite common across the literature (Jones, 2002 & Penfield, 1987; Nieto, 2009; Reeves, 2006).

In Penfield's (1987) frequently cited study, 167 questionnaires were administered to teachers who had ELLs in their classrooms. None of the teachers reported having had any formal teacher education or professional development training in how to instruct ELLs in their classrooms. Overwhelmingly, the results of the study demonstrated that the teachers felt that it was strictly the ELL teacher's responsibility to teach the ELL students and that they were not interested in receiving any kind of training, instruction, or materials. In addition, the teachers lacked the basic understanding of how a second language is acquired and they did not demonstrate any kind of empathy for any of the ELLs in their classrooms. Penfield cites one respondent as writing, "Once in America, the ESL student should learn in and speak in English, not their native language" (p. 26). In addition, when asked at what point their ELL students should start to speak only in English, one teacher wrote, "after crossing the border" (p. 26). Penfield's recommendation at the conclusion of her study was that mainstream teachers were in urgent need of more training in both the social and academic needs in order to become more responsive to the needs of ELL students.

Clair (1995) conducted a yearlong, multiple case study, in which three mainstream 4th, 5th, and 10th grade teachers were studied. In all three instances, the teachers wanted what Clair deemed *quick fixes* and materials suitable for teaching second-language learners. However, they were decidedly against attending any

professional development sessions to learn how to modify or accommodate their

instruction.

Clair's case study illuminates two essential problems. The first is teachers' desire

for simple solutions in terms of materials and curricular ideas. As Clair pondered, "how

have teachers come to believe that quick fixes will solve complex educational problems?"

(p. 192). The second problem that Clair's case study illustrates is that all three teachers

verbalized that "good teaching is good teaching" and they did not feel the need to

differentiate or accommodate any of their curriculum or instruction for the ELLs in their

classrooms (p.190). All three teachers also rejected the idea of attending any kind of

professional development. They cited that the proverbial *one-shot* professional

development days are typically planned without any input from the teachers and are

usually not based on anything that "we teachers really need or want or asked for" (p.

194). According to Clair, "mainstream teachers need to change their understandings of

second language acquisition but more importantly, mainstream teachers need to change

their beliefs, values, and attitudes towards ESL students" (p. 193).

Pre-service Teacher Education

Most pre-service teacher education programs do not adequately prepare pre-

service teachers for the linguistically-diverse population of students that exist in United

States classrooms (Clair, 1995; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Houser, 2008; Nieto, 2009;

Walker-Dalhouse, Sanders & Dalhouse, 2009). Part of the answer to changing in-service

teacher perceptions may be in teacher education and socialization. According to Nieto

(2009), currently one in nine students in grades K- 12 is an English language learner. Yet,

in spite of their growing numbers, the 43% of teachers who reported having worked with

these students in their classrooms also reported having just four hours of specialized

training in how to differentiate instruction for ELL pupils. Teachers who work with ELL students may be well intentioned, but they are limited in their knowledge of cultural diversity and issues affecting students in their classrooms (Walker-Dalhouse, et al, 2009).

For example, Garcia-Vazquez, Vazquez, Lopez, and Ward (1997) conducted a study in order to gauge teachers' perceptions towards their students' native language maintenance and their engagement in classroom practices that value their use of their native language in classroom literacy events. Through surveys and interviews with K–12 teachers in California public schools, the data showed that the nature of teacher training and personal experiences with languages other than English significantly affect teacher perceptions toward native language maintenance and bilingualism. Teachers who did not receive any course work as undergraduate or graduate students in language acquisition expressed negative or indifferent attitudes towards ELLs and did not see a role for themselves in assisting ELLs to maintain their native languages. This study pointed to the need for all educators to better understand the critical role and functions of native languages in the personal, academic, and social trajectories for ELLs.

Teacher candidates today have had limited experiences or interactions with anyone culturally different from themselves, (Hollins & Guzman, 2005, as cited in Watson, 2011). This incongruent situation has been the constant in public schooling for decades; however the population of the United States is quickly changing, making the situation even more pressing. Nationally, school populations are growing more ethnically, racially, and culturally diverse, rising from 22 % in the 1970s to 39% in 2003 with 64% of those children attending urban schools (Watson, 2011). Moreover, merely including multicultural coursework in teacher education programs is not effective in

developing social justice dispositions in pre-service teachers (Jones, 2002). Recent studies suggest that coursework in multicultural education needs to be linked to early fieldwork in order to ameliorate preconceived notions and/or stereotypes that pre-service teachers may have about children who do not share the same cultural background. Evidence suggests that by linking course content and field experiences, we might develop culturally responsive teacher candidates (Adams, Bondy, & Kuhel, 2005). Houser (2008) posits that teachers-in-training need more exposure to multicultural environments in order to be better prepared for their future teaching assignments. Colleges and universities need to immerse teacher candidates in field placements so that they interact with children in holistic fashions. They might explore options on off-campus sites, through community based initiatives and family support programs. Spending time in early-field placements that might be culturally different is not enough to create social justice dispositions in teacher candidates, nor does it equip them with the skill-set to differentiate their instruction for diverse student populations (Nieto, 2009).

Lee and Oxelson (2006) investigated how teachers trained in ELL and bilingual cross-cultural language and academic development (BCLAD) and teachers not trained in ELL and BCLAD understand the role of native language maintenance in K-12 schooling. Their study found, through a survey of 69 teachers and in-depth interviews with 10 teachers, that teachers with BCLAD or ELL training had very different views on the roles that schools should play in native language maintenance from teachers without BCLAD or ELL training.

BCLAD/ELL-trained teachers reported making native language maintenance an important part of their teaching practice and believed that by supporting native language

maintenance their students would have a strong ethnic identity as well as strong family values. However, teachers without training in BCLAD/ELL believed that the primary job of school was to teach English and believed that native language maintenance was not their job. Many of the non-BCLAD/ELL teachers advocated that multilingual parents speak English at home with their children. Another profound difference was that the non-BCLAD/ELL teachers believed that their students could either learn English or maintain their native language, but not both.

Lee and Oxelson suggested that teacher education programs should address the extent to which pre-service teacher education can shape teacher perceptions and practice and support knowledge of second language acquisitions. Additionally, the authors suggested the creation of strong school and university partnerships to help in-service teachers refine their perceptions and practices working with linguistically diverse student populations. Colleges and universities have begun to see the advantage for both pre-service and practicing teachers in creating school and university partnerships, however, there needs to be a clear and consistent focus on closing the achievement gap between historically marginalized groups of early childhood pupils, particularly beginning in literacy instruction (Darling-Hammond, 2010). In addition, Lee and Oxelson (2006) suggested that future research explore the repositioning of current assessment policies, specifically high-stakes assessments so that they do not hold teachers accountable for students' English language acquisition as content learning.

The Impact of Institutionalized Policies

From a critical theoretical and transformative perspective, researchers must think about the literacy achievement and equity gap in terms of the societal conditions that have created and sustained the gap over time through students' daily interactions and

experiences in school. Current theory and research in English language learning and education suggest that early childhood ELL students' poor literacy achievement generally is not due to their limited English proficiency (Au, 2011; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Morrow, 2010). Rather, from a critical theory and social constructivist lens, it can be argued that ELLs' school failures can be attributed to societal racism (Strickland & Ascher, 1992). The argument is that U.S. society and its system of public education are structured to prevent equality of educational opportunity and outcomes. For example, many researchers theorize that disproportionate numbers of ELL students are labeled as poor readers and placed in the lowest reading-groups in the classroom (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Nieto, 2009).

In addition to the inadequacies of many pre-service teacher education programs, the accountability movement contributes to the de-skilling of teachers (Clair, 1995). The standardized test culture might also perpetuate teachers' desires for quick fixes. According to Darling-Hammond (2010), the need to hold schools and teachers responsible for the perceived crisis in education will continue as long as schools receive state and federal funding. The main tool for accountability is the standardized test. Further, according to Seo and Hoover (2009), the standardized tests are not linked to what is actually taught, and this is especially true for ELL pupils. Clair (1995) maintains that test scores are used to rank, reward, or most often punish students, teachers, and schools. The power of such tests is that they begin to drive the curriculum; therefore if teachers are pressured to produce high test scores for their students, they will begin to teach to the test. Consequently, teaching becomes routinized and there is no need for the co-construction of learning with students and teacher discretion in deciding what and how

to teach is reduced (Clair, 1995). Therefore, the impetus to differentiate instruction and accommodate or make modifications to the curriculum becomes an even less attractive option for teachers.

Sharkey and Layzer (2000) conducted a case study of five ELLs in secondary school. The researchers found that teachers' perceptions and practices affected ELLs' access to academic success and resources in three important ways: ELLs were almost always placed in non-mainstream classes, teachers' expectations of ELLs (e.g. notions of success) were typically very low, and ELLs often elected to return to the ELL room during their study hall because it was the only room in the school in which they felt safe.

When the researchers asked the administration why it was common for ELL pupils to be placed in lower track classes, the principal responded that the practice grew out of the idea that ELL pupils would feel more comfortable in those classes. When asked to describe how ELLs were placed in mainstream classes, the principal stated that there was "no policy regarding the placement of ELLs in lower track classes", but rather that "it's pretty much an individual prescription"; "we always try to place them in a situation [where] they can succeed and with what teacher has a good chemistry with them" (p. 358). In response to the researchers' concerns that the students seemed to be placed in classes with little consideration of their academic aspirations, the administrator stated that she and the counselor did consider students' goals when deciding their course schedules:

"English 12 [is] basically your lowest level kids - they are not planning on going to college - there's nowhere else for them to go really - there's nowhere else to put them so that's why they are in there" (p. 360).

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However, in the classes that that the ELLs were placed, Sharkey and Layzer (2000) found five ELL students who were planning to attend college.

The California teachers in a seminal study by Gándara, Maxwell-Jolly and Driscoll (2005) reported feeling frustrated by the number of ELL students in their classrooms. They reported that they felt that they were unable to accommodate the various range of academic abilities and also stated that they were stymied by the ELL students' various levels of English proficiency; therefore they thought the students would be better served in other instructional settings taught strictly by ESL teachers. The teachers did not feel equipped to teach ELL students at all and did not want the pupils in their classrooms. This was alarming since California has the highest number of ELL students in the country. Moreover, since the passage of Proposition 227 in 1998, which stated that all children in the state's public schools shall acquire English by being taught solely in English, more and more ELL pupils are being enrolled in English-only mainstream classrooms led by teachers who have not been trained or "oriented toward responsibility for English language learners" (Jones, 2002, p. 7). Moreover, the study pointed to the fact that ELL pupils are typically instructed by inferior teachers and kept isolated from native speakers. They were never given time to interact with English speakers that would serve as models of both academic and interpersonal language. This study also found that institutional racism might be an issue in ELL school experience as the non-English speaking students were housed in inferior facilities and subjected to outdated curriculum and invalid assessments. Appropriate pacing calendars for instruction were non-existent and there was an absence of any type of differentiated instruction or knowledge of best pedagogical practices for ELL pupils.

Youngs and Youngs (2001) conducted a study with mainstream teachers of ELL students. These 143 middle school teachers completed a survey in which they cited lack of time as a source of frustration when providing instruction to ELL students. The authors found that teachers with more graduate coursework held higher positive attitudes towards language-diverse pupils than did teachers without such degrees. In addition, their study found that mainstream teachers who had content area training in anthropology or any course work that provides or stimulates a more abstract understanding of the nature of culture itself led teachers to have more positive views of ELLs in their classroom. However, the most important finding was that female teachers who had some pre-service training in ELL methodology and/or multicultural coursework held the most affirmative perceptions towards ELL pupils and also expressed wanting to learn more pedagogical practices to improve their instruction in order to better teach diverse language learners. This finding seems to reinforce Clair's (1995) suggestion regarding the necessity of universities and colleges in preparing pre-service teachers to be equipped to instruct all of the children with whom they will be responsible to teach, and as the U.S. public schools' enrollment numbers are bearing out, many of those pupils will be ELLs.

Rueda and Garcia (1996) conducted a qualitative study to explore the differences in perceptions in relation to practices among three groups of teachers. The 54 teachers formed three groups: bilingual teachers, special education teachers, and "waivered teachers" who had never received any formal bilingual training. The bilingual teachers were found to use constructivist strategies, including positive perceptions towards the students. The other two groups used a skill-and-drill approach to teaching and held "negative perceptions and attitudes" (p. 312) towards the ELL students. In addition, many

of the perceptions and practices documented were "at odds with current views of literacy instruction and assessment" (p. 328). The findings of this study support the need to have education and/or professional training in best practices for ELL education for all in-service and pre-service teachers.

In Kozol's (1991) seminal work *Savage Inequalities*, he described how within ostensibly integrated schools, minority and ELL children are disproportionately assigned to remedial or special education classes that occupy small, cramped corners, and split classrooms, while gifted and talented classrooms that were primarily populated with Caucasian and/or Asian students, occupied the more lovely spaces, which were filled with books and computers and where the curriculum was advanced and in alignment with best practices.

Moreover, according to Darling-Hammond (2010), although test scores and prior educational opportunities provide the rationale for differential placements, race and income play a distinct role. Even after test scores are controlled, "studies have found that race and socioeconomic status determine assignments to honors courses as well as academic programs" (p. 57). Latino students, who scored near the 60th percentile on standardized tests, were less than half as likely as Caucasian and Asian students to be placed in college preparatory classes. Additionally, even those Latino students who scored above the 90th percentile on such tests had only about a $50^{\%}$ chance of being placed in a college preparatory class while their White and Asian peers were virtually assured of such placements (p. 58).

Furthermore, many schools engage in the common practice of segregating students in what is commonly referred to the *ELL ghettos*. It is a sequence of courses for

the ELL students that keep them together for multiple years in classes, which do not allow them to be properly prepared for college. In addition, some school districts have adopted immersion programs. Immersion programs offer sequences of courses in which schools place all of the immigrant students into mainstream content classes with no language support at all, and in many instances, many students fail and drop-out. In other instances, students discover at the end of high school that all of their ESL courses have failed to qualify them for college (Darling-Hammond, 2010).

Schools are more than buildings that house teachers, students, curriculum, and textbooks. They are societal institutions where policies are created and social policies are replicated that shape the social foundations of our society. If educators do not begin to examine the institutionalized policies that are in being put into place, the cycle of failure for ELL students will not be rectified (Nieto, 2009). Fullan (2005) insists that changes in actual practice along with "teaching approaches, perceptions, and in what people do with children in classrooms and with what teachers think about diverse students, along with program changes, are essential if we are actually going to change policy" (p. 46). Furthermore, Cummins (2001) maintains that for the policies concerning ELLs to change, teachers and administrators have to first change their views and perceptions of the "culture of *ELL* as a program" (p. 124).

Understanding Language Acquisition and Bilingualism

In order to best understand how to instruct ELL students, it is important that educators learn how languages, specifically additional languages, are acquired. This lack of knowledge of how individuals acquire a new language is troubling and it appears throughout the literature (e.g. Clair, 1995; Reeves, 2006; Walker, Shafer, & Iiams, 2004). Many teachers assume that when a student can speak English, that the student can

navigate texts and other instructional materials on a similar grade or content level. However, Cummins (2001) has explained that it can take one to three years for students to learn conversational English or what he has termed basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) and up to five to seven years for an individual to learn cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP). Early childhood ELLs can usually use BICS on the playground, in the lunchroom, and in social situations. The language required is not specialized and it is not very demanding cognitively (Peregoy & Boyle, 1997). However, problems arise when teachers and administrator think that a child is proficient in a language when they demonstrate social English. CALP includes listening, speaking, reading, and writing about subject area content material. Students need much more additional time to become proficient with academic English (Cummins, 2001). Academic language acquisition is not just the understanding of content area vocabulary. It includes skills such as comparing, classifying, synthesizing, evaluating, and inferring. Academic language tasks are typically context reduced (Peregoy & Boyle, 1997).

Another perception that teachers hold is that use of a first language at home interferes with the acquisition of English. On the contrary, linguists have discovered that when students are able to use both languages simultaneously, that they are able to make significant linguistic and academic progress in both languages (Bartolome, 2008). These misconceptions are the same mistaken teacher perceptions that Gándara's et al (2005) study illuminated. These misguided notions can actually cause teachers to deliver a watered-down curriculum to ELLs or even misdiagnose ELL students as learning disabled and refer them for special education services.

In Reeves' (2004) qualitative study of secondary teachers' perceptions towards ELL students, she found that the four teachers she observed and interviewed held many misconceptions concerning second language acquisition and looked to their administration for training and guidance for adopting the curriculum and/or grading policy. The absence of both left all four teachers to improvise their own accommodations. Two of the teachers felt that there was no need to modify their instruction because "the students would have to make it out in the real world speaking English so they had better start doing it in school" (p. 60). The other two teachers wound up giving students poor grades even with the realization that those grades were probably not representative of their pupils' true academic abilities, yet they did not have any "other choice according to school policy" (p. 61-62).

Reeves (2006) analyzed 291 surveys from middle school content teachers who taught ELL students in their mainstream classrooms. The survey results indicated that while the teachers rated their levels of preparedness as very poor to instruct second-language learners, they did not want more professional development to learn strategies to modify their curriculum to accommodate diverse language learners. In fact, in an overwhelming majority, the teachers surveyed indicated that while they might consider allowing more time for ELLs to complete assignments, they would not consider making modifications to their assignments. Finally, and perhaps most notably, the survey respondents demonstrated a lack of how a second language is acquired. Most teachers (71.7%) thought that ELL students should be able to acquire English within 2 years of enrolling in U.S. schools.

Both of Reeves' studies point to the lack of advocacy on behalf of ELLs in teachers' classrooms, even when teachers knew that these poor grades would keep students out of academic tracked classes. This is what Nieto (2009) speaks of when she argues for reconsideration that places language diversity "within a multicultural education framework and redefines the benefits of linguistic diversity for all students" (p. 81). All students need authentic ways to participate in the curriculum and should not require the "normalization of students into white English-speaking monolinguals" (Reeves, 2004, p. 62). Moreover, according to Delpit (2006), in order for ELLs to feel comfortable and accepted in mainstream classes, teachers need to recognize that the linguistic form a student brings to school is intimately connected with loved ones, community, and personal identity. To suggest that this form of speaking is incorrect is to suggest that something is wrong with the students and their families.

Early Childhood ELL Students and Literacy Development

Researchers have long held that the early childhood years, birth to age 8, present a critical time for the development of language and emergent literacy skills and understandings that provide the foundation for success with formalized reading instruction in the early primary grades (Adams, 1990; Au, 2011; Bredekamp, 2011; Morrow, 2010). The emergent literacy perspective postulates that children's development in literacy begins at birth and is a life-long process (Morrow, 2010; Teale & Sulzby, 1989). According to Morrow (2010), this is the time period in which children "develop oral language skills, familiarity with print, an understanding of print concepts, and understanding of text structures" (p. 154). A number of early skills and conceptual understandings about print and texts predict later literacy outcomes. These include alphabetic knowledge, phonemic awareness, concepts about print, oral language and

vocabulary, and background knowledge (Adams, 1990; Clay, 1993; National Early

Literacy Panel, 2004).

Statistically, ELL pupils face greater challenges in learning to read adequately

than their native-English speaking peers (Au, 2011; August & Shanahan, 2006; Morrow,

2010; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). We now understand that children encounter a

variety of language and literacy resources, experiences, and degrees of support before

entering school, creating challenges and demands for early childhood teachers to meet the

needs and impact the achievement of a wide range of literacy learners. In order to address

the literacy achievement gap between ELL pupils and mainstream pupils, it is essential

that teachers continue to understand the complexity of the factors that influence early

literacy development in children and the implications these understandings provide for

effective early literacy instructional practices for ELL pupils.

The achievement gap for ELLs is ever widening. Analysis of the academic

performance of ELLs on the 2005 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)

(National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2010) indicated that only 29% of ELLs

in eighth grade scored at or above the basic level in reading compared to 73% of non-

ELLs (NCES, 2010). Such results on national assessments are especially alarming given

that the influence of literacy proficiency on students' academic achievement grows

stronger with each successive grade level, regardless of individual student factors (Au,

2011; Biancarosa & Snow, 2004; Morrow, 2010; NCES, 2010).

Literacy Engagement

Several studies (Guthrie, 2004; Krashen, 2004; Biancarosa & Snow, 2004) have

pointed to the need to have ELLs actively engaged during literacy activities. Literacy

engagements typically incorporate notions of *time on task* (reading and writing

extensively), *affect* (enthusiasm and enjoyment of literacy), *depth of cognitive processing* (strategies to deepen comprehension), and *active pursuit of literacy activities* (amount and diversity of literacy practices in and out of school). Guthrie (2004) found that reading engagement is a stronger predictor of reading achievement than socioeconomic status, and approximately one third of the relationship between reading achievement and socioeconomic status is mediated by reading engagement.

An excellent way to engage all pupils in an early childhood classroom, especially ELL pupils, is through Instructional Conversations (ICS) (Eschevarria, 1995; Goldenberg, 1992). The research for ICS was based on the need to encourage optimal student participation and engagement. Additionally, much of the research points to the fact that teachers need to build equitable patterns of interactions between pupils and facilitate the way each students' prior knowledge is used when dealing with central ideas from the story being read. Teachers can carefully establish small groups of students to best support engagement amongst peers.

Culturally Responsive Teaching and Literacy

Another optimal way to maximize student engagement for early childhood ELLs has its origins in the tenets of culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2002). Gay has put forth that culturally responsive teaching utilizes "the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them" (p. 112). Gay advocates that teachers learn to teach ethnically diverse students through multiculturalized methods. Further, she suggests that an operational way of approaching this method in early childhood classrooms might be to use cooperative learning groups, peer-coaching, music, and movement as well as frequently changing tasks and format. It

is interesting to note that these methods also have tremendous value for all early childhood students who, by definition, benefit from kinesthetic movement, interpersonal learning, musical experiences, and small group activities (Morrow, 2010; Piaget, 1977).

Perhaps the simplest yet most effective way that all mainstream early childhood teachers can engage ELLs in their classrooms is reading culturally relevant stories in order to stimulate opportunities for students to integrate prior cultural knowledge with their native language literacy skills along with their English language acquisition. Kim (2009) conducted a 15-month case study with two second grade ELL students in an urban elementary school in the U.S. Southwest. Kim's research centered on using culturally relevant pedagogy (Gay, 2002) coupled with sociocultural theories of language acquisition (Valdes, 1996). Kim theorized that if the classroom teacher accessed the students' schematic background or prior knowledge using culturally relevant pedagogy and situated the learning in a sociocultural accepting literacy environment, the ELL students would be highly engaged and therefore be more likely to take *academic risks* (Morrow, 2010). In classrooms where children are comfortable taking academic risks, they feel emotionally safe in their attempts at new learning, safe in the knowledge that all of their attempts will be supported, even celebrated.

Kim described using culturally relevant texts with the early childhood ELLs in order to determine if schema theory and reading culturally relevant stories (which resembled those from the readers' ethnic backgrounds and/or experiences) would facilitate the ELLs ability to engage with stories and transact with texts (Rosenblatt, 1978). Indeed, Kim did find that reading culturally relevant stories stimulated the ELLs to integrate prior cultural knowledge as well as their native-language literacy skills into

their English language literacy acquisition. Knowing the content of the stories seemed to empower and comfort the beginning ELL students, and they "transacted well with the texts, despite their limited English proficiencies" (p. 9). In addition, and perhaps most importantly, it was noted that familiarity with the story's context gave the ELLs a very strong advantage "in that it improved self-confidence, self-esteem, and feelings of safety in the environment. Being familiar with the story content also supported engagement in the literacy event" (p. 10).

Best Practices in Literacy Instruction for ELLs

Goldenberg (2008) served as a member on the National Research Council's Committee for the Prevention of Early Reading Difficulties in Young Children and conducted his own research on instructional frameworks and strategies for ELLs. His findings support the fact that many of the best practices for ELL early childhood learners are very similar to what research has mandated good literacy instruction should look like for all young learners, a balanced approach that includes shared reading, guided reading, phonemic awareness, and reading fluency (Morrow, 2010; National Early Literacy Panel, 2008; Teale, 2009). These focal points should be delivered within consistent and well-designed routines, with plenty of opportunities for students to engage in authentic practice in reading and writing.

However, some ELL learners may need some accommodations of the curriculum and/or modifications of assignments. Goldenberg (2008) has indicated that ELL pupils may need extended explanations with redundant information such as gestures, pictures, and other visual cues; extra attention to identifying and clarifying key and difficult vocabulary, texts or stories that have a degree of content familiarity; and a focus on consolidating text knowledge by having the teacher, other students, and the ELL students

themselves paraphrase and summarize parts of the story. In addition, early childhood ELL pupils may need or benefit from extended time and practice with reading and writing activities as well as extended linguistic interactions with their peers and/or teacher (Goldenberg, 1992). If instruction is clear, focused, and systematic, when language requirements are relatively low, as in learning phonological skills, letter-sound combinations, and decoding, ELLs can make progress close to that of mainstream students.

However, once the foundation for literacy learning has been established, and reading requires increasingly higher levels of language skills, such as those needed to comprehend complex academic text, the gaps between ELLs and mainstream students starts to become increasingly larger. This is when developing adequate background knowledge before reading is critical for ELLs' literacy development. It is crucial that all young literacy learners have opportunities to relate their prior experiences to their new learning (Vygotsky, 1978). Teachers' scaffolding story knowledge surrounding literacy lessons as well as their conversations with ELL students are exceedingly vital for their oral language development as well as their reading achievement (Morrow, 2010).

Moreover, teachers should use instructional modifications to help ELLs acquire literacy skills. ELLs do not benefit from instruction in English to the same extent as mainstream students because ELLs are limited in their English proficiency. Reading comprehension requires not only the skills of reading, accurate and fluent word recognition, understanding how words form texts that carry meaning, and how to derive meanings from these texts, but also fundamental language proficiency; knowledge of

vocabulary, syntax, and conventions of use that are the essences of knowing a language (Cummins, 2001).

Learners who do not know a language, or do not know it well enough, must devote part of their attention to learning and understanding the language itself in which the content is taught. As a result, when the instructional level in the classroom is raised, ELLs may need certain instructional modifications or adaptations for instruction to be meaningful (Teale, 2009). ELLs need to be taught literacy skills explicitly. Though many students benefit from explicit instruction, ELLs generally require it because they have the double challenge of learning to speak and understand English. Explicit instruction means a clearly stated objective, clear input, modeling, repeated practice before students work independently, and the consolidation of learning at the end of the lesson (Au, 2011).

In addition, incorporating participatory, learning-centered approaches have proven to challenge ELLs cognitively and linguistically. ELL pupils benefit from and enjoy the kinds of verbal interactions that create opportunities for student talk, particularly increasingly elaborated talk. Instead of listening passively, ELL students need to practice and use language.

However, teachers must use care to structure interactions between teacher and students or between student peers appropriately, depending upon students' language and skill levels. They may be open-ended, in which conversation and responses are elaborated in the students' own words. For example, in a small group, the teacher may ask students to express ideas on a topic saying, "Tell your partner about…" or "Share in your group about…" Interactions may occur that either stimulates use of language in an authentic

way or encourages students to use a specific linguistic structure, such as completing the phrase, "I predict that" (Teale, 2009).

Tying It All Together

All teachers must be prepared to instruct ELL pupils. Mainstream classroom teachers are certain to encounter increasing numbers of ELLS in their classrooms. ELL pupils comprised 10.5% of the total public school student enrollment in 2005 and ELLs are the fastest growing student population in public schools (Hyland, 2010) with the enrollment of ELLs increasing at nearly seven times the rate of total student enrollment (NCELA, 2010). Therefore, to be prepared to meet students' needs in the 21st century, every teacher must be able to provide culturally responsive literacy instruction that meets the needs of a diverse population of school children for all pupils in their classrooms.

As the research has shown, many teachers are not adequately prepared to work with linguistically diverse student populations (Au, 2006, 2011; Clair, 1995; Cummins, 2001; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Hyland, 2010; Jones, 2002; Gándara, Rumberger, Maxwell-Jolly, & Callahan 2003; Nieto, 2009; Reeves, 2006). Further, research points to the fact that many mainstream teachers do not believe that ELLs belong in general education classes and should instead receive their literacy instruction in self-contained or *pull-out* programs (Gándara, Maxwell-Jolly, & Driscoll, 2005; Sharkey & Lazar, 2000). Additionally, institutional policies exist which create policies that keep ELL pupils disproportionately placed in lower-tracked classes and isolated from mainstream curriculum (Au, 2011; Clair, 1995; Cochran-Smith, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Gándara, Maxwell-Jolly & Driscoll, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Morrow, 2010; Nieto, 2009; Strickland & Ascher, 1992). Moreover, there is also a growing body of research on best practices for early childhood ELL literacy instruction that closely mirrors good

instruction for all early youngsters, albeit with some culturally responsive teaching

modifications and/or accommodations (Adams, 1990; Au, 2011; Guthrie, 2004;

Goldenberg, 1998; Morrow, 2010).

The sum total of the research suggests that issues of diversity and equity in early

literacy development will impact an increasing number of practicing teachers and the

type of literacy instruction that these teachers provide ELLs in their classrooms (NCELA,

2010). Therefore, it is critical to understand teachers' attitudes and perceptions as well as

gaps in their knowledge regarding early childhood ELLs as literacy learners.

Need for Further Research

The preponderance of research on teachers' perceptions towards ELL students has

focused almost exclusively on middle and secondary level pupils. As a result, there is a

gap in the research and literature where early childhood teachers and early childhood

ELL pupils should be represented. Consequently, I focused my study on early childhood

teachers and the ELL children in their mainstream classrooms. The results of my research

will make contributions to policy, practice, and research for all ELL students and

teachers. Most importantly, in evaluating the contributions of critical theory to education,

researchers (e.g. Darling-Hammond, 2010; Gay, 2002 & Cummins, 1984; Nieto, 2009)

suggested that too much emphasis has been placed on the language of critique and too

little on the language of possibility for linguistically and culturally diverse students.

Ellsworth (1977, cited in Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009) describes teaching as an

endeavor "that is ultimately impossible - We can be certain that there is more to our

students than we have to capacity to perceive, and we can be certain that their perceptions

of us differ profoundly from who we think we are" (p. 213). It is my hope that this study

will help mainstream early childhood teachers of ELLs become mindful that there are

worlds within each student in their classrooms, and to look upon each of their students as

children who are full of possibilities.

Chapter 3

Methods

The purpose of this parallel mixed-method study was to understand, through a critical theory lens, how the perceptions of early childhood educators towards English Language Learners (ELLs) in their classrooms govern their pedagogical practices associated with literacy instruction. Critical theory is an orientation that involves studying human phenomena through an ideological perspective that seeks social justice for oppressed groups, such as underserved and undervalued ELL pupils in U.S. public schools (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002). Employing a critical perspective about early childhood education reminds us that education is a political act, implying that it can be used for both oppressive and liberatory purposes (Freire, 2000). Therefore, to ensure quality educational programs for children who are typically marginalized by society, such as ELLs, a critical perspective requires awareness of the power dynamics involved in the making of education policy (Kozol, 1991). Employment of critical theory and critical pedagogy also demands an understanding of how those practices may further the achievement gap, and calls for educators to begin to cultivate social justice dispositions (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Nieto, 2009).

The research questions that guide this study were grounded in the notions of critical theory and critical pedagogy.

Research Questions

The following research questions were designed to gain understanding of the lived experiences of the study participants:

1. What are the perceptions of mainstream early childhood teachers about working with English Language Learners (ELLs)?

2. How do these perceptions govern pedagogical practices associated with literacy instruction for early childhood ELLs?

3. To what extent are the teachers' espoused literacy practices congruent with their demonstrated literacy practices in the classrooms with early childhood ELL pupils?

This chapter provides an overview of the transformative mixed methods strategy of inquiry that I utilized in my study, including a description of the qualitative and quantitative instruments that were utilized to collect data.

A Mixed Methods Design

I used a transformative parallel mixed methods design for this dissertation. Patton (2002) writes that mixed methods research allows for "a rich variety of methodological combinations that can be employed to illuminate research and inquiry questions" (p. 248). Greene (2007) suggests that when using mixed methods as a strategy of inquiry, "the mixing should be responsibly and artfully crafted in ways that maximize the clarity and persuasiveness of the inquiry story being told" (p. 187). This thought held particular resonance for me as I wanted the implications for future policy, practice, and research to be the highlight of my work, rather than the research methodology. Greene (2007) also postulated that mixed methods can assist researchers in interrogating and engaging the political and the value dimensions of social inquiry, which is an idea that is squarely in alignment with both my transformative worldview and critical lens framework.

The rationale for this design was to capitalize on the benefits of both sources of data collection. Qualitative data was needed to deeply understand the factors affecting teachers' perceptions. Factors such as prejudice are problematic to quantify and best captured through observed actions (e.g. in what teachers say and do). A quantitative

instrument was utilized for this study in order to measure mainstream early childhood teachers' perceptions about diversity as well as to determine the effect size of the teachers' perceptions towards ELL pupils in their classrooms.

Qualitative Data

The goal of qualitative research typically is to obtain insights into particular educational, social, and familial processes and practices that exist within a specific location (Patton, 2002). Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated that one of the features of qualitative research is to define "how people negotiate meaning" (p. 62). In an attempt to gain multifaceted insights, qualitative researchers attempt to extract meaning from their data. That is, qualitative researchers study phenomena in their natural settings and strive to make sense of, them with respect to the meanings people bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). For the qualitative strand, I conducted interviews with nine ($n = 9$) early childhood teachers of ELLs in their classrooms and one ($n = 1$) Spanish world language teacher in her classroom. In addition, I conducted three observations of each of the ten ($N = 10$ or 100%) teachers' classrooms and collected material artifacts such as lesson plans, teachers' letters home to families, and any other types of home-school communications that I was able to gather.

Quantitative Data

The goal of quantitative research is to generalize results from a study to other populations of individuals (Patton, 2002). In quantitative studies, practical significance represents the educational value of the results (Gay & Airasian, 2003). In other words, the practical utility of a result can be improved by reporting practical significance. The most common way of assessing the practical significance of a finding is via the effect size (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2006). Additionally, the usefulness of a study's result(s) is

provided by an effect size. As Gay and Airasian (2003) posit, "without intending any necessary implication of causality, it is convenient to use the phrase effect size to mean the degree to which the phenomenon is present in the population" (p. 190).

To collect the quantitative data, I utilized Pohan and Augliar's (2001) *Beliefs about diversity scale,* which is a 5- point Likert scaled instrument that measures teachers' beliefs about diversity as well as determines the effect size of the early childhood teachers' beliefs about diversity; e.g. how many teachers would like the ELLs to be in a separate ELL-only classroom? How many teachers differentiate their instruction for ELL children? How many teachers do not differentiate their instruction? Moreover, the instrument was used to make possible initial conjecture about specific teachers' perceptions regarding ELLs in their mainstream classrooms and serve as a means of guiding the formation of professional development plans in schools to address specific areas of resistance, bias, or "closedness to diversity" (Pohan & Aguilar, p. 177). This instrument, which has been psychometrically validated (Cronbach's alpha = .87), was distributed to all ten ($N = 10$) of the participants in March 2013 during a faculty meeting. The participants had two full days to anonymously complete and return the survey to an identified mailbox in the main office.

Using Mixed Methods

In order to conduct a parallel mixed analysis, the following three conditions should hold: (a) both sets of data analyses (e.g. quantitative and qualitative data analyses) should occur separately, (b) neither type of analysis builds on the other during the data analysis stage, and (c) the results from each type of analysis are neither compared nor consolidated until *both* sets of data analyses have been completed (Greene, 2007). Of all of the mixed analysis techniques, parallel mixed analyses involves the least amount of

mixing because integration does not occur until the data interpretation stage of the mixed methods research process, if at all. Nevertheless, parallel mixed analyses can still be utilized to enhance the interpretation of statistically significant relationships. However, I did not attempt to determine causality in this study; rather, I was interested in exploring how the perceptions of early childhood teachers of ELLs govern their pedagogical literacy practices towards ELLs.

In order to integrate my data, I followed what Greene (2007) described as a parallel track analysis in which analysis of the different data sets "proceeds separately through the steps of the data reduction and transformation until the point of data comparison and integration" (p. 156). Next, I completed a crossover track analysis, which involved the ongoing concurrent analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data, with a focus on facilitating data comparison. In order to analyze my crossover track analysis, I wrote case summaries of the qualitative data, which entailed the creation of relevant data description and reduction. Additionally, I created graphs for the quantitative strand and descriptive themes, descriptive sums, and vignettes for the qualitative strand. Secondly, the most critical points in both strands were described in narrative forms. Finally, both sets of information were carefully compared for instances of "convergence, complementarily, and discordance" (Greene, 2007, p. 157).

Context for the Study

Setting

All interviews, observations, and artifact collection took place at the River Elementary School[1] (a pseudonym), a K-8 school, which is located in what was once known as a thriving beach community. Its current population is 4,298 residents (New

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[1] All names used in this study are pseudonyms.

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Jersey Census, 2010). For the past several years, approximately 550 Caucasian residents have been leaving the community on a yearly basis and 428 Latino residents have been moving in (New Jersey Census, 2010). The school serves a community of both English speaking Caucasian (47%) and Spanish speaking families (53%), with 81% of the families receiving free and/or reduced lunch (New Jersey School Report Card, 2011). Until five years ago, the school and surrounding area was comprised predominantly of working-class suburban Caucasian families. The school serves students from pre-k through grade 8 and currently has an enrollment of 289 pupils. There are two classes at each grade level, with approximately 20 children in each classroom. There are 28 teachers, one teacher teaches Spanish as a world language and one teacher is designated as the ESL teacher. The ESL program is a pull-out program, in which the ESL teacher comes to class and removes the ELL children for instruction outside of the classroom. There is no shared planning time for the classroom teachers to meet with the ESL teacher. The only staff member in the school, including all other support staff, e.g. office staff, custodial staff that speaks Spanish, is the Spanish as a world language teacher. There are 13.4% of students who are in special education classes. It is interesting to note that 8.9% of those children are also classified as ELL, which is a disproportionately high number of ELLs represented in special education (New Jersey School Report Card, 2011).

On the last *New Jersey Report Card*, the results of the standardized tests for 3rd graders for the NJASK test for literacy were are follows: 47.1% of pupil scored partial proficient and 44.1% of pupils scored proficien*t.* The remaining 8% of the pupils scored at the advanced level. However, ELLs comprised 61% of the 47.1% of the students who scored partially proficient. Only 38.9% of ELLs were included in the number of students

scoring at the proficient (or passing) level. Due to this statistic, this school is in danger with the State's Department of Education for not making adequate yearly progress (AYP) for meeting the needs of ELL pupils.

This school was chosen as the research site because it is emblematic of many public schools in the northeastern part of the United States that are experiencing a high number of ELL students and families moving into neighborhoods and schools. As Charmaz (2006) put forth, an appropriate sample is composed of participants who best represent or have knowledge of the research issues. According to Superintendent Neil Walker (pseudonym), "Many of the teachers are having a hard time adjusting to teaching the ELLs in their classrooms and I do not see any differentiation of instruction being provided for them" (Personal communication, December 2, 2012).

Participants

Collins, Onwuegbuize, and Jiao (2009) also advise using an appropriate sampling design in order to increase theoretical validity. The use of theoretical sampling is used due to a conscious decision to obtain data from individuals based on a rationale that the participants chosen are the best sources of information (Mertens, 2009). Additionally, Patton (2002) put forth that researchers obtain theoretical saturation when new information from the interview participants "will not contribute anything more to your theory and there is no more to be learned" (p. 20). For this study, I used a purposeful sample design for both the qualitative and quantitative samples participants (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). As Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2006) suggest, the size of any study's sample should be decided by the research design. For the qualitative strand, I conducted interviews with nine ($n = 9$) early childhood teachers of ELLs in their

classrooms and one ($n = 1$) Spanish world language teacher. See Table 3.1 for an overview for the demographics of all the study participants.

Critical and transformative data research is generally conducted with intent to improve communities or reduce oppression, not to generalize results from a non-representative sample to a larger population (Christ, 2009). Additionally, and most importantly, Mertens (2009) discusses the need for purposeful sampling within the transformative paradigm. Mertens prompts researchers to ask themselves, "How can participants be identified and invited to participate in a truly welcoming manner? What kinds of supports are necessary to provide an appropriate venue for people to share their experiences with the goal to improve teaching and learning?" (p. 201). Moreover purposeful sampling can increase the range of data and maximize the possibilities of uncovering multiple realities (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Table 3.1

Demographics of Study Participants

Teacher	Grade Level	Ethnicity	Language(s) Spoken	Type of Degree	Years Teaching
A	Pre-K	Caucasian	English	BA Early Childhood Education / Speech Pathology	31
B	K	Caucasian	English	BA Elementary Education / Special Education	12
C	K	Caucasian	English	BA Elementary Education	39
D	1st	Caucasian	English	BA Elementary Education	33
E	1st	Latina	English / Spanish	BA Spanish Cultural Studies	4
F	2nd	Caucasian	English	BA Secondary English	25
G	2nd	Caucasian	English	BA Elementary Education	10
H	3rd	Caucasian	English	BA Elementary Education	8
I	3rd	Caucasian	English	BA Elementary Education	7
J	World Language	Latina	English / Spanish	BA Spanish Education	7

Qualitative Data Collection

Semi-structured Interviews

For my qualitative strand, I utilized semi-structured interviews, conducted class observations, and collected material culture. I chose to use observations because as Patton (2002) posits, they help us understand fully the complexities of many situations and help researchers to observe the participants directly as they engage in their phenomenon of interest. Additionally, according to Van Manen (1990) and Creswell (2007), interviews should be used for exploring the lived experience of participants. Seidman (2006) also reminds us that while researchers can recognize the limits on our understandings of others, we can still strive to comprehend their lived experiences and that at the root of in-depth interviewing is "an interest in understanding the experiences of other people and the meaning they make of that experience" (p. 9).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted over the span of three weeks at the River Elementary School (pseudonym). Ten individuals ($N = 10$) agreed to be interviewed by me. Each interview lasted approximately 60 minutes and was recorded with informed consent by the participant, which included permission to record the interview. Each interview was conducted in a private room and an interview protocol was followed, which included basic biographical questions and prompts.

In order to explore the domain of *living with children* (Van Manen, 1990), and more specifically, teaching literacy to ELL pupils, I developed an interview protocol (see Appendix A) in order to determine the lived experiences of early childhood teachers of ELL pupils. I composed the questions for the study in order to attempt to answer my overarching research questions (see Table 3.2). In Table 3.2, research question is referred to as RQ, while IQ denotes interview question.

Table 3.2

Research Questions and Correlation with Survey Instrument

Professional Beliefs about Diversity Scale (Pohan & Aguilar, 2001)

Research Question	Correlating Survey Prompt
RQ1. What are the perceptions of mainstream early childhood teachers about working with English language learners (ELLs)?	SP 1 - Teachers should not be expected to adjust their preferred mode of instruction to accommodate the needs of all students.
	SP 2 - The traditional classroom has been set up to support the middle class lifestyle.
	SP 15 - Historically, education has been mono-cultural, reflecting only one reality and has been biased toward the dominant group.
	SP 16 - Whenever possible, second language learners should receive instruction in their first language until they are proficient enough to learn via English instruction.
	SP 17 - Teachers often expect less from students from lower socioeconomic class.
	SP 18 - Multicultural education is most beneficial for students of color.
	SP 22 - Students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds typically have fewer educational opportunities than their middle-class peers.
	SP 23 - Students should not be allowed to speak a language other than English while at school.
RQ2. How do the perceptions of early childhood teachers govern their pedagogical practices with ELL pupils?	SP 1 - Teachers should not be expected to adjust their preferred mode of instruction to accommodate the needs of all students.
	SP 2 - The traditional classroom has been set up to support the middle class lifestyle.
	SP 13 - Generally, teachers should group students by ability levels.
	SP 17 - Teachers often expect less from students from lower socioeconomic class.
	SP 18 - Multicultural education is most beneficial for students of color.
RQ3. How are teacher's espoused beliefs congruent with their	SP 1 - Teachers should not be expected to adjust their preferred mode of instruction to accommodate the needs of all students.
	SP 13 - Generally, teachers should group students by ability levels.

demonstrated practice?	SP 16 - Whenever possible, second language learners should receive instruction in their first language until they are proficient enough to learn via English instruction.
	SP 18 - Multicultural education is most beneficial for students of color.
	SP 20 - Large numbers of students of color are improperly placed in special education classes by school personnel
	SP 23 - Students should not be allowed to speak a language other than English while at school.

Observations

Observation is a fundamental and highly important method in all qualitative inquiry (Patton, 2002). According to Marshall and Rossman (1999), observations entail the systematic noting and recording of events, behaviors, and artifacts (objects) in the social setting chosen for the study. The observational record is frequently referred to as *field notes*—detailed, non-judgmental, concrete descriptions of what has been observed. Through observation, the researcher documents and describes complex actions and interactions.

Patton (2002) posits that classroom observations are used to discover "complex interactions in natural social settings" (p. 235). He reminds us that researchers should use all of their senses; observations about movement and tone of voice become crucial sources of data and insights. Immersion in the setting permits the researcher to hear, see, and begin to experience reality as the participants do. Ideally, the researcher spends a substantial amount of time in the study setting learning about daily life there. This immersion offered me the opportunity to learn directly from my own experiences.

I conducted three observations for each teacher participant, each lasting one hour during literacy instruction, in order to focus on interactions between teacher and students.

Remaining cognizant of critical pedagogy, I was particularly mindful of the interactions between teachers and students, paying careful attention to how the teachers posed questions regarding students' backgrounds, whether they incorporated all children's cultures, and whether they used stories and texts that reflected the cultures of all of the children in their classrooms in order to engage all of the children in literacy tasks.

Observations took place within the daily instructional block at as I observed verbal as well as non-verbal communications between the teachers and the students during literacy instruction. During these periods, I assumed the primary role of quiet observer. Hand-written notes were taken during observations, which were later transcribed onto a computer and reviewed for content and significance.

Researcher Journal

The notes that I wrote in my journal served as reflections on what worked (or did not work) in gaining access to the research site, to the participants, and in gathering data (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). My journal served as a place where I bracketed my personal responses, observed personal insights, and I recorded objective data. I found that I did use some of my personal reflections as they were integral to the emerging analysis of my data, because they provided me with new vantage points and with opportunities to make "the strange familiar and the familiar strange" (Glesne, 2005, p. 105).

Further, Marshall and Rossman (1999) emphasize the importance of knowing yourself in terms of making time to notice how one perceives, makes meaning, frames issues, and makes choices to speak or not to speak. The authors refer to this as the researcher's "inner arc" (p. 335). Marshall and Rossman (1999) also recommend that researchers pay attention to assumptions, patterns, themes, and phrases that seem to hold "multiple meanings" (p. 336). Heeding Marshall's recommendations assisted me with my

data analysis and interpretation as the "act of writing and reflecting becomes a cyclical engagement thought the research process as ideas emerge and evolve" (p. 336). I wrote in my journal after each data collection episode in order to capture data that supported me in answering my research questions and until I reached data saturation (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Artifacts

Charmaz (2006) informs us that documents may also be sampled with a view to refining ideas and identifying conceptual boundaries. In this vein, I collected lesson plans, correspondence to parents, and samples of students' work. Mertens (2005) asserts that the material culture that written documentation provides the researcher can be both valuable and telling sources of how a marginalized group is perpetually diminished by a more powerful and dominant group. For example, the lesson plans assisted me to determine which teachers were utilizing culturally responsive instruction and incorporating reading engagement by using stories and texts that reflected the heritage or language that was representative of the ELL pupils (Gay, 2002; Guthrie, 2004).

<div align="center">

Quantitative Data Collection

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The Professional Beliefs About Diversity Scale

The twenty-five item *Professional beliefs about diversity* scale is comprised of items measuring diversity with respect to race, ethnicity, and linguistic diversity. The educational contexts (e.g. practices, instructional approaches) include instruction, staffing, segregation, integration, ability tracking, staffing, integration, and multicultural versus mono-cultural education. The scale uses a 5-point Likert format ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The authors point out that several items on the scale are worded negatively to avoid a response set. These items are then reverse keyed to

establish scale scores. The alpha coefficient for the instrument was .87. I correlated the survey prompts from the survey with my overarching research questions that framed this study (see Table 3.2).Next, I discuss how I analyzed, interpreted, and mixed the qualitative and quantitative data sets in order to interpret the research findings.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Qualitative Data Analysis

The purpose of analysis is to bring meaning, structure, and order to data (Patton, 2002). Interpretation requires acute awareness of the data, concentration, and openness to subtle undercurrents of social life (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). When a researcher is faced with a huge amount of impressions, documents, transcribed interviews, and field notes, the qualitative researcher is faced with difficult task of making sense of what has been learned (Patton, 2002). Van Manen (1990) noted that the researcher must translate what has been learned into a body of textual work that communicates these understandings to the reader. He referred to this process as the *tales of the field*. The purpose of this process is to present the reader with the vignettes identified throughout the analytical process, the important themes, recurring language, and patterns of beliefs linking people and settings together (Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002).

From the onset, according to Patton (2002), the data generated by qualitative research is voluminous and the process of sitting down and making sense out of the pages of interviews, observations, and field notes can be "overwhelming" (p. 297). In order to begin with a sense of coherence, Patton (2002) suggests beginning data analysis by reviewing the data and ensuring that it is properly labeled with a notation system that will make retrieval manageable, in addition to protecting the data by photocopying. He notes,

"Field notes and interviews should be treated as the valuable material they are. Protect them" (p. 441).

First, I prepared the data for analysis and interpretation, which involved "explaining the findings, answering why questions, attaching significance to particular results, and putting patterns into analytic frameworks" (Patton, 2002, p. 438). Before I began to look to answer my research questions, I organized and reported my descriptive findings. For example, in order to organize participants' responses to similar semi-structured protocols, Patton (2002) suggests the creation of a cross-analysis interview analysis for each question. Patton posited, "An interview guide, if it has been carefully conceived, actually constitutes a descriptive analytical framework for analysis" (p. 440). Therefore, I used my interview guide (see Appendix A) as a resource for sorting through the results of my qualitative data; I aligned certain sections in the guide to the correlating research question (see Table 3.2).

Data Transcription

Mertens (2009) writes that transcribing research data is interactive and engages the reader in the process of deep listening. It also ensured that early on, that I was aware of my impact on the data collection gathering process and that I had an opportunity to connect with my data in a grounded manner that " provided for the possibility of enhancing the trustworthiness and validity of the data gathering techniques" (p. 347). Mertens urges researchers to be aware of their own impact on the data gathering process and ensure self-awareness of researcher bias during data transcription, as this allowed me to interact with the data in a "intensive and intimate way" (p. 347). In order to align my data transcribing process with Mertens' (2009) recommendations, I transcribed all of my recorded interviews and then had them member-checked by the interview participants, in

order for the participants to have an opportunity to assess their accuracy and make changes if necessary.

Patterns, Themes, and Content Analysis

As Patton (2002) posits, core meanings of qualitative research can be found through content analysis. Inductive analysis involves discovering patterns, themes, and categories in the data. Findings emerge out of the data, as the researcher engages with the data, especially when developing a codebook during open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Mertens (2009) and Patton (2002) suggest that researchers begin open coding by using inductive analysis, which involves inventorying transcripts, classroom observations, artifacts, and the researcher journal in order to define key words and phrases that appear in the data.

In developing codes and categories, a qualitative researcher has to first grapple with the challenge of convergence, which is where interpretation occurs as a result of the interaction between the researcher, the theory, the participants, and the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This is done by looking for *recurring regularities* in the data which reveal patterns that can be sorted into categories. Next, categories are judged by two categories*: internal homogeneity*, which entails deciding the extent to which the data that belongs in each category cohere in a meaningful way and *external heterogeneity,* which involves determining to what extent the differences among the categories are clear. Essentially, the researcher must decide if data sets are determined to fit together in any meaningful way or if data sets have "differences that are bold and clear" (p. 153).

I achieved internal homogeneity by carefully reducing the data into three separate categories that aligned with each of my research questions. Next, I had an outside auditor review my findings to ensure that I had achieved external heterogeneity, in order to

confirm that the data I had ascribed to each category and research question cohered in significant ways and that the differences between my categories were clear.

Inductive Analysis

Patton (2002) describes the processes of inductive analysis as discovering patterns, themes, and categories in one's data. I wrote thematic memos as I read through and reduced my data. I used the memos as a place to reflect upon the ideas expressed by the participants. Thematic memos are useful as building blocks in data analysis and interpretation as the researcher examines how a story of events, behaviors, or sentiments seems to have meanings, and I used these building blocks in my analysis (Patton, 2002). With thematic memos, I arranged and re-arranged the ways my theory and related literature helped to answer my research questions and lent meaning to my emerging data (Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

In order to connect the data to specific research questions, Patton (2002) recommends correlating qualitative and quantitative data. I accomplished this by mixing the data, and looking for quotes, codes, and themes from my qualitative data to support the items, variables and scales from my quantitative strand. Once I correlated the data, I combined data sets to achieve data consolidation and to create new data sets (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2006). The questions in my parallel mixed methods design were written in order to "investigate little-understood phenomena as well as to generate hypotheses for further research" (p. 310).

Coding the Data

Data from interviews, observations, material culture, and my researcher's journal were coded through a series of iterations bound by the research questions. Data from the transcribed interviews were first analyzed to draw out statements or vignettes that best

illuminated the participants values, attitudes, and beliefs (Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002; Ryan & Bernard, 2003). I also used constant comparison analysis because it assisted me in my cross-over track analysis. This type of analysis involves the ongoing concurrent analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data, with a focus on facilitating data comparison.

As Charmaz (2006) has stated, data analysis involves comparing newly gathered data with previously collected data and the constant comparative method serves to test concepts and themes within the data. Additionally, constant comparison is a central feature of theoretical saturation and entails sampling, data collection, and analysis proceeding concurrently (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

I based my data coding on the values process strategy as specified by Saldaña (2009). First, I printed out all of my raw data (interviews, observations, field notes). While reading the notes line by line, I highlighted text examples that appeared to indicate the teachers' values, attitudes, or beliefs about ELL students and how those perceptions governed the teachers' literacy instruction for their ELL students. I added, modified, or deleted the names of categories on the list during this process. I repeated this process several times, until the temporary coding of these notes was satisfactory and I believed that I had achieved data saturation (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Through the coding process, I sought to identify categories within sets of data, in order to find relationships within categories and to identify core concepts that described those relationships. After I constantly compared categories during the coding process, I recorded hunches, ideas, and related questions in analytic memos (Mertens, 2005; Patton, 2002). My analytic memos helped me refine and organize any related questions that

developed as I compared incident to incident and concept to concept in my evolving theory. As I sorted my memos during the second level of axial coding, core categories began to formulate. This prompted me to compose longer and more detailed analytic memos.

As I continued to reduce my data, I looked for chunks of words or narrative vignettes from my interviews, observations, material artifacts, field notes, and journal that best described the participants' values, attitudes, and beliefs. I continued these processes until categories were refined and areas of true commonality and divergence were identified. Additionally, I looked for patterns in the data and as themes emerged, I continued to search for theoretical saturation. When additional data and further analysis failed to uncover any new thematic concepts, and I was confident that I had achieved data saturation, I ended the coding process.

Having identified relevant categories, I related the categories to my research questions. The relationships of main categories represented concepts that emerged from the data. Lastly, I identified all of the relationships of all categories and conceptualized the findings as I related them to themes which emerged from the data. Most of my data was ascribed to three domains of codes; values (V), attitudes (A), and beliefs (B). I used three iterations of data analysis to reduce the data looking for concepts, patterns, and themes to emerge (Saldaña, 2009). Finally, I collapsed all three codes (values, attitudes, and beliefs) into one code, (P) perceptions (Saldaña, 2009).

Quantitative Data Analysis

Professional beliefs about diversity. First, I read through the completed diversity scale surveys in order to conduct descriptive analysis and check for trends and distributions. I began by ensuring that all of my surveys were neat, clean, and easy to

score. Next, I checked that they were scored correctly. After I cleaned and visually

inspected the data, I used the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, version 19.0,

(SPSS), to check for trends and distributions. Finally, the survey data was analyzed.

The next section describes how I mixed both strands of the qualitative and

quantitative data strands of data.

Mixed Methods Data Analysis

Greene (2007) discusses a parallel track analysis in which analysis of the different

data sets "proceeds separately through the steps of the data reduction and transformation

until the point of data comparison and integration" (p. 156). Next, a crossover track

analysis was done which involves the ongoing concurrent analysis of both qualitative and

quantitative data, with a focus on facilitating data comparison. As I looked to make

inferences as I analyzed my parallel mixed methods research design, "the meta-inferences

will relate to whether the follow-up quantitative strand provide a more generalized

understanding of the research question than the qualitative database alone" (Creswell &

Plano Clark, 2011, p. 238). Although each data source led to its own separate inference,

meta-inferences were drawn "across the quantitative and qualitative strands" (Creswell &

Plano Clark, 2011, p. 213). However, as I continued to make inferences and draw

conclusions across strands, I remained mindful to bracket my experiences as I made

inferences in both the qualitative and quantitative data (Mertens, 2005; Patton, 2002).

Quantitative Findings

This section includes a brief description of the quantitative methodology used in

order to study the relationship between the perceptions of early childhood teachers'

regarding the ELL pupils in their classrooms. A description of the demographics of the

participants, the *Professional beliefs about diversity scale,* and the findings from the survey are provided.

Quantitative Survey Participants

The participants for this qualitative section of the study were the same ten mainstream early childhood teachers who agreed to and signed informed consent forms in March 2013. The quantitative sample was the same for both the qualitative and quantitative strands of the study (see Table 3.1 for demographic information on all participants).

Quantitative Survey Instrument

Pohan and Aguilar's (2001) *Professional beliefs about diversity scale* was utilized (see Appendix C) to gain additional information about working with diverse children. This survey instrument uses a 5- point Likert scale to measure teachers' beliefs about diversity as well as to determine the effect size of teachers' beliefs about diversity; e.g. Some of the prompts that the survey asks the participants to respond to are: All students should be encouraged to become fluent in another language, Whenever possible, second language learners should receive instruction in their first language until they proficient enough to learn via English instruction, and students should not be expected to speak a language other than English while in school. Moreover, the instrument was used to make possible initial conjecture about specific teachers' attitudes towards ELLs in their mainstream classrooms and to serve as a means of guiding the formation of professional development plans in schools to address specific areas of resistance, bias, or "closedness to diversity" [the inability to differentiate or accommodate instruction for culturally or linguistically diverse students] (Pohan & Aguilar, p. 177). Several prompts were negatively worded in order to avoid creating a response set (the tendency for

participants to answer the same regardless of the prompt), and the participant responses

for these were reverse coded. This instrument, which has been psychometrically validated

(Cronbach's alpha = .87), was distributed to all teachers in the study ($N = 10$ or 100%).

Survey Data Analysis Procedures

The quantitative survey data was uploaded into SPSS for analysis. All responses

related to beliefs about diversity in the classroom were analyzed via frequency

distributions. The 25-item, 5-point, closed Likert scale survey instrument was analyzed

descriptively. Therefore, mean, minimum values, maximum values, and standard

deviations were computed for each survey item. The survey was distributed at a faculty

meeting and the participants were allowed to fill it out and their leisure, and to return it to

a box in the main office of the research site over a period of two days in March of 2013.

Data Analysis

Subtleties in teachers' affects towards students in the classroom such as racism

and prejudice are challenging to quantify and best captured through observed actions (e.g.

in what teachers say and do) (Patton, 2002). However, a quantitative instrument was

utilized for this mixed methods study in order to measure mainstream early childhood

teachers' beliefs about diversity. Quantitative data from the *Professional beliefs about*

diversity survey were analyzed as follows: Within the survey, individual prompts were

grouped with other prompts that answered each particular research question (see Table

4.2) which formed combined item responses. Using these combined item responses,

descriptive statistics were then calculated for each research question, both for the sample

of ten participants combined, and for each participant individually.

As the process drew to a close, I determined if the quantitative results

complemented and bore out findings and themes similar to the qualitative study, in order

to make the results generalizable as well as transferable (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). In the final analysis, as Yin (2003) asserts, mixed methods research can provide us with research outcomes that come together and are more compelling than one method standing alone, which can only facilitate my study on behalf of ELL children and their families.

Limitations

There were several limitations in the distribution of this survey instrument. The sample size was extremely small ($N = 10$). The participants were not randomly selected and in addition, participants were selected from the same school site. Further, all of the participants were female. Due to the aforementioned factors, all were subject to respondent bias as well as the Hawthorne effect, in which research participants know that they are being studied and therefore act and respond in a way to please the researcher (Sonnenfeld, 1985).

In the final section of this chapter, I address the issue of rigor in mixed-methods research, with a particular emphasis on transferability, credibility, confirmability, and transformative authenticity.

Ensuring Rigor in the Study

The strategy of inquiry that I used for this study was a parallel mixed methods research study based on the transformative paradigm. In this study, there was an inherent triangulation factor included in the research design e.g. I utilized both a qualitative strand and a quantitative strand. As Greene (2007) asserts, mixed methods as a strategy of inquiry lends itself to triangulation because multiple strategy research leads to convergence or corroboration of quantitative and qualitative data in studies where both strands of data are employed.

However, essential to achieving rigor in my research, I also ensured that I achieved data saturation, which as Strauss and Corbin (1990) point out, occurs when so much data has been collected that it is very unlikely that additional documents will provide any new information. Additionally, Strauss and Corbin (1990) acknowledge that "saturating data ensures replication in categories; replication verifies, and ensures comprehension and completeness" (p. 176). Hence, I achieved saturation once I realized that I was not obtaining any new insights nor I was I identifying any new themes in the data.

Further, triangulation in qualitative and mixed methods typically refers to the use of multiple data sources to support the strength of interpretations and conclusions in qualitative research. Richardson and Pierre (2005) suggest that a better metaphor for the concept for triangulation in transformative research is crystallization; Mertens (2009) suggested the metaphor of a prism. The crystal and the prism metaphors suggest multifaceted sources of data that are "brought together to bear on the interpretation of findings" (Mertens, 2005, p. 429). Moreover, I triangulated my data by comparing the results of my interviews with member checks (Mertens, 2005; Patton, 2002). Accordingly, I shared my interview transcriptions with my participants in order to have the participants verify that my records accurately represented their views and opinions. I also had an unbiased peer review my observations, transcriptions, and researcher journal in order to conduct a peer debriefing of my findings, conclusions, and analysis in order to verify that my findings were dependable and confirmable (Mertens, 2005; Patton, 2002).

Credibility

Mertens (2009) refers to credibility in the transformative paradigm of mixed methods research as being equivalent to validity in quantitative research; credibility asks

if there is a "correspondence between the way respondents actually perceive social constructs and the way researchers portray their viewpoints" (p. 310). A hallmark of credibility is prolonged and persistent engagement in the field. Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed that part of the criteria in establishing rigor in qualitative research include the deep and close involvement of researchers in the community that they are studying. However, they caution that sufficient objective distance needs to be created in order to allow for accurately recorded observations. In addition, the inquiry process must establish dependability. This is accomplished by an ongoing confirmability audit, thereby demonstrating that the interpretation of the data is not "a figment of the researcher's imagination" (Patton, 2002, p. 556).

Confirmability

Confirmability can be achieved by conducting both peer and member checks. Member checks are done by sharing interview transcripts, analytical memos, and drafts with research participants to make sure that I am representing them correctly in my report. In addition, external audits of my data were conducted by a disinterested peer who copiously examined my research process, all of my documentation and reviewed my findings, analysis and conclusions (Mertens, 2005; Patton, 2002). Cho and Trent (2006) discuss this concept of "validity in qualitative research as an interactive process between the researcher, the researched, and the collected data that is aimed at achieving a higher level of accuracy by means of revisiting facts, feeling, experiences, and beliefs" (p. 324). All of my interviews and classroom observations were member checked by the teacher participants.

Transferability

Transferability is essential to the triangulation of data (Patton, 2002). Lincoln and Guba (1985) have held that one of the goals for qualitative research is to create vivid, thick, and rich descriptions with images of time, place, context, and culture. The descriptions of the teacher participants will allow readers of this study to understand the complexity of the research participants and settings and allow them to draw comparisons from my study to other places, people, and situations.

My goal with this study was to have an impact on marginalized groups of early childhood ELL students in our public schools. This is crucial because I want the potential readers of this study to perhaps recognize the need to shift their focus from a deficit belief system of early childhood ELL pupils in their classrooms and adjust their literacy instruction to a more culturally responsive form of instruction.

In discussing transformational validity, Cho and Trent (2006) discuss the need for the full dynamics of the research process to be examined and critiqued. Likewise, Mertens (2009) argues that the processes and the end result of the inquiry are the most important (e.g. empowerment of marginalized students) and therefore researcher reflexivity becomes of central importance to the discussion of rigor. Reflexivity captures the meaning of the reactions that naturally occur because an "outsider has entered and is interacting within a research setting, as well as the capacity to reflect on those reactions" (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 50).

Further, Glesne (2005) suggests that researchers display reflexivity by conducting an inquiry into and having a discussion of one's biases and perspectives with a disinterested peer. Additionally, Glesne (2005) elaborates that the researcher use the researcher journal in order to ask questions of self along the way and record the

reflections in the journal e.g. "You ask questions of others about the research process and listen carefully to what they say…In a sense, you conduct two research projects: one into your topic and the other into the self" (p. 126). Patton (2002) provides a diagram titled *Reflective Questions: Triangulated Inquiry.* It suggests kinds of questions that the researcher should ask of self, of participants, and potential readers. The diagram supports the fact that each individual is situated in a sociocultural context and provides screens for differing perspectives (p. 66). A question that I posed to myself as I engaged in reflexivity was: What values and experiences shape my perspectives and my research decisions?

In addition, as I analyzed and interpreted my data, I reflected upon the following questions as I interpreted the data through a critical lens; what do I choose to include and what do I choose to omit and why? What became the important analytical themes? What is it about who I am that makes these themes important? Patton (2002) also suggested that researchers ponder questions in relation to the interview participants: How do they know what they know? What shapes and has shaped their worldview?

Transformative Authenticity

Finally, transformative criteria for quality in qualitative research are situated in concerns for social justice and human rights (Mertens, 2009). Scholars in the field are concerned with criteria that are commensurate with this position. Cho and Trent (2006) describe this as transformational validity, emphasizing the need for the researcher to engage in deep self-reflection in order to understand the social conditions and implications for bringing change to the setting. Another important implication for transformative criteria of validity is the extent to which resultant changes are prompted by the research findings (Mertens, 2005). According to Cho and Trent (2006) this change

can best be gauged by how the participants are able to differently perceive and impact the world in which they live and teach.

Closing Summary

The transformative parallel mixed methods design was based on the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods in a study that has a goal of social change at levels ranging from the personal to the political (Mertens, 2009). The design gives prevalence to the value-based and action-oriented inquiry traditions (Greene, 2007). Additionally, Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) suggest that mixed methods studies make use of all available data and by using multiple and diverse sources will lead researchers to deeper and fuller understandings of research questions.

Additionally, there is a significant body of research (Nieto, 2009; Reeves, 2006; Gándara, Rumberger, Maxwell-Jolly, & Callahan, 2003; Harklau, 2000; Jones, 2002 & Penfield, 1987) that supports the notion that teachers' perceptions influence their classroom behaviors. The instructional choices that the teachers make for ELL students based on those perceptions are also supported in the literature (Gándara, Maxwell-Jolly, & Driscoll, 2005; Reeves, 2006; Sharkey & Lazar, 2000).

Consequently, a transformative parallel mixed methods design assisted me in interpreting my research questions as I used my critical theoretical framework to shape my strategy of inquiry, and more specifically, when analyzing my data, critical theory influenced my study as it led me to ponder questions such as: How does race functions as a barrier between the powerful and the marginalized? What is the role of racial prejudice as an exploratory lens for the research findings? When I began to explore and read through my data, write analytic memos, and develop my codebook, I reflected on issues of social justice. Charmaz (2006) suggests that researchers who use critical theory to

inform their line of inquiry pose the following questions as they reflect on their data: What are the tacit and explicit rules? What do the rules and routine practices suggest about social justice? I believe that as I reflected on these questions as I read through my data, these questions helped to shape my understandings of the answers to my research questions.

Chapter 4

Early Childhood Teachers Perceptions About ELLs in Mainstream Classrooms

Introduction and Overview of Methods

The purpose of this parallel mixed-methods study was to learn about the perceptions of mainstream early childhood teachers about working with ELLs. In this chapter, both qualitative data and quantitative data were analyzed to describe mainstream childhood teachers' perceptions about working with ELLs in their classrooms and to assess their professional beliefs about diversity. In particular, the research question that guides this chapter is: (1) What are the perceptions of mainstreams early childhood teachers about working with English Language Learners (ELLs)? This chapter will summarize both quantitative and qualitative findings.

For the qualitative strand of this study, I conducted interviews with nine ($n = 9$) early childhood mainstream teachers of ELLs in their classrooms and 1 ($n = 1$) Spanish world language teacher. See Table 4.1 for an overview of all participant demographics. In addition, I conducted three observations of each of the ten teachers' classrooms and collected material artifacts such as lesson plans, teachers' letters home to families, and other documents that reflected any communication between the classrooms and families of the students.

The quantitative survey instrument, Pohan and Aguilar's (2001) *Professional beliefs about diversity*, a survey that utilizes a 25-item, 5-point Likert scale questionnaire, was administered to the ten ($N = 10$ or 100%) participants.

Table 4.1
Demographics of all Study Participants

Teacher	Grade Level	Ethnicity	Language(s) Spoken	Type of Degree	Years Teaching
A	Pre-K	Caucasian	English	BA Early Childhood Education / Speech Pathology	31
B	K	Caucasian	English	BA Elementary Education / Special Education	12
C	K	Caucasian	English	BA Elementary Education	39
D	1st	Caucasian	English	BA Elementary Education	33
E	1st	Latina	English / Spanish	BA Spanish Cultural Studies	4
F	2nd	Caucasian	English	BA Secondary English	25
G	2nd	Caucasian	English	BA Elementary Education	10
H	3rd	Caucasian	English	BA Elementary Education	8
I	3rd	Caucasian	English	BA Elementary Education	7
J	World Language	Latina	English / Spanish	BA Spanish Education	7

Qualitative Findings: Teachers' Perceptions About Their ELL Students

The qualitative data revealed three findings pertaining to the participants' perceptions about the ELL students in their early childhood mainstream classrooms. First, the majority of teachers at the River Elementary School lacked two important funds of professional knowledge essential to early childhood teaching: an understanding of how to differentiate instruction for ELL students and perhaps more importantly, empathy for their ELL pupils. Second, the majority of classrooms (n = 6 or 60%) had an English-only rule that all ELL children had to adhere to or face consequences and many times those consequences were punitive, both academically and emotionally. Third, the participants demonstrated misperceptions and a lack of awareness surrounding their need for an increased pedagogical knowledge base in how to accommodate their instruction for ELL pupils.

Lack of Understanding and Empathy

All learning, especially in the areas of literacy and language, which occurs in early childhood classrooms, is predicated on some essential elements: positive modeling and feedback of oral language, warmth and encouragement of youngsters' initial attempts, particularly when attempting challenging learning, and receiving positive feedback and supportive yet constructive criticism in order to scaffold the learning of literacy and second language experiences from the teacher (Bredekamp, 2011). However, teachers' negative perceptions of the ELL students in their classrooms, has been shown to adversely the quality of their instruction.

For example, Ms. F, a second grade teacher, provided the least amount of support for the ELL students, in her instruction. During classroom observations she would refer to the 14 Spanish-speaking children in her class as a single entity of ESL children,

without differentiating between the pupils. For example, she said, "ESL children, did any of you bring a snack today? You can't always expect me to bring it for you - if you aren't good today, no snack" (Ms. F, classroom observation notes, 5/6/13).

Classroom observations also indicated a lack of empathy the kind of empathy which, Bredekamp (2011) posits is crucial towards the creation of a warm and nurturing classroom environment, especially in early childhood (Bredekamp, 2011). For example, when an ELL student appealed to her for assistance with an academic activity she told him, "This is the end of second grade. You are supposed to solve your own problems here, and in English" (Ms. F, classroom observation notes, 4/29/13).

Another example exhibiting this approach occurred when an ELL child attempted to tell her that her notebook was full and therefore she could not complete an assignment, Ms. F told the child, "Well whose fault is that? Not mine! I told your grandma days ago that you needed a new notebook. I am not buying it for you!" (Ms. F, classroom observation notes, 4/29/13). The support offered to other students, particularly those who were native English-speakers, had different characteristics. For example, there was a similar instance when another child needed a new pencil and Ms. F simply handed her one and told him, "Tell your mom to replace it whenever she can" (Ms. F, classroom observation notes, 4/30/13).

During the time that I spent observing in this classroom I witnessed students copying from the board or completing workbook pages, which are tasks that lack cognitive engagement (Au, 2011; Bredekamp, 2011; Morrow, 2010). In general, many of these instructional practices affected all students. For example, Ms. F would typically

turn her back to the children while giving directions. Such practices can result in less effective instruction, particularly for those students who are acquiring a new language.

Teachers' Perceptions About How Second Languages are Acquired

The qualitative results showed that the majority of teachers ($n = 6$ or 60%) had an English-only speaking rule that all ELL children had to adhere to at all times while in the classrooms; if the children spoke in their native language(s). When Ms. F was asked to think about some of the ways that the language backgrounds of her ELL pupils might contribute to the culture of her classroom, she stated:

> Okay. In the classroom we call it an English-speaking zone. We encourage them to use the English that they know, because the more they practice, we feel the more that they will be making progress - right within the classroom we call that English-speaking zone only. What they do on the playground and the cafeteria, that's different, but in the classroom, homeroom, English only (Ms. F, interview transcription, 4/30/13).

In Ms. F's explanations of her language use policies, she appears to grasp the difference between basic interpersonal skills (BICS) and cognitive academic language processing skills (CALP) (Cummins, 1994) e.g. "What they do on the playground and the cafeteria, that's different" (Ms. F, interview transcription, 4/30/13). Cummins posits that it can take one to three years for students to learn conversational English or what he has termed basic interpersonal skills and up to five to seven years for an individual to learn cognitive academic language proficiency. Early childhood ELLs can usually use BICS on the playground, in the lunchroom, and in social situations. The language required is not specialized and it is not very demanding cognitively (Peregoy & Boyle, 1997). However, Ms. F's interpretation of the spirit of this linguistic concept does not seem to inform or

promote her instruction. Rather, it reflects the hegemonic practices that serve to keep

ELL students disenfranchised from mainstream schooling practices (Gutierrez &

Orellana, 2006; Moll & Gonzalez, 1994). However, for the children who were enrolled in

Ms. F's second grade classroom, Ms. F's statements and observed actions demonstrated

that her perceptions of her ELL students as being limited in aptitude resulted in weak

instructional practices.

Even though research and best practices in literacy and language acquisition

posits that early childhood teachers should allow children to speak in their native

language until they can gain proficiency in the language of instruction (Au, 2011;

Cummins, 2001; Goldenberg, 2008), other teachers shared Ms. F's idea that the ELL

pupils should refrain from speaking their native language while at school. For example,

Ms. G, stated:

> In general, sometimes it is difficult when they're speaking in Spanish because you
>
> don't know what they are saying and what they are really discussing. I prefer for
>
> them to speak in English. Sometimes, they are just sitting in a group and they're
>
> excluding other people, it gets awkward for the rest of us. Who knows what they
>
> can be planning? (Ms. G, interview transcription, 4/30/13).

This type of perceived *us versus them* ["it gets awkward for the rest of us"] attitude

symbolizes what critical theorists refer to as the tendency of mainstream teachers to

perceive culturally and linguistically diverse students as being *other* rather than a part of

the whole of the class (Giroux, 1994). The type of thinking that Ms. G demonstrated is

also consistent with what Mertens (2005) describes as, "the narrow focus of language and

culture as barriers that has only hindered a wider theoretical understanding of the

problems but served to create a deficit view of minority children in schools" (p. 17). Ms. G's perceptions regarding her ELL students' use of their native language in classroom were antithetical to her students' learning English.

Ms. I, a third grade teacher, reflected the same deficit model thinking (Delpit, 2006) in response to incorporating ELL students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds into her classroom and instruction. Her response showed that she perceived that the use of ELLs' native language as exclusionary to her and to the other students in the classroom. Ms. I's comments identify what she perceived as the most pressing issues regarding cultural and linguistic diversity within the school:

> I definitely can see a divide between the students who are bilingual or the students who don't understand the language or even their own language. I think it's so hard to teach them and I think it pushes some of the other kids away from speaking to them (Ms. I, interview transcription, 4/29/13).

These perceptions seem to permeate even in the earliest grades. For example, Ms. C, a kindergarten teacher, indicated that she feels as if the new generations of ELL pupils are somehow now more emboldened because they use their native language in her classroom (Ms. C, interview transcription, 4/30/13). Her thought processes reflect the type of hegemonic relationships that, according to critical theorists, so often occur between mainstream teachers and the culturally and linguistically diverse students in public schools (Giroux, 1994; Freire, 1987; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002). Moreover, Ms. C's disallowing of native language use by ELL students demonstrates how teachers can wield their power against the more oppressed students in their classroom by adopting a dismissive attitude towards ELL students (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002). Her answer

indicated that she believes that her ELL pupils are not literate in either Spanish or English:

> I have seen a change through the years and now these children are very comfortable speaking their language and sometimes I have to stop it and say, "English only." It's so hard though to teach them, because they have no skills in either language, so they're lost (Ms. C, interview transcription, 4/30/13).

Places of acceptance. There were, however, teachers who accepted and encouraged bilingualism in their classrooms. Ms. B, another kindergarten teacher and a monolingual English speaker, permitted and encouraged her ELL pupils to speak Spanish in her classroom. Ms. B lacked specific training in working with ELL pupils; however, she identified positive viewpoints about ELL students. Moreover, Ms. B expressed high expectations for all students in her classroom, native English speakers and ELL children alike. This viewpoint is crucial for student achievement, because as Au (2011) and Nieto (2009) have noted, teacher expectations and student achievement are closely linked, especially when mainstream teachers instruct culturally and linguistically diverse students. Ms. B articulated that she sees potential for all her pupils. Moreover, not only did she allow her students to speak Spanish, she encouraged the bilingual students in her class to translate for the others who were still struggling to learn English, which research has pointed out is a best practice in providing support for bilingual students' learning (Cummins, 2001). She stated:

> I have high expectations for every child in my classroom, because if there is nothing wrong with them, they can grasp it. I think once they get a grasp of it, like, I have one little girl who didn't speak a word of English and now she is

writing in English and she is speaking in English. She's translating for her friends (Ms. B, interview transcription, 4/30/13).

Ms. A, the prekindergarten teacher, adopted a more neutral stance. For instance, while she did not seem to fully incorporate a culturally responsive pedagogy model into her instruction, she demonstrated an attitude that reflected the culture of caring model, as proposed by Noddings (2005). For example, Ms. A embraced all of her pupils with hugs, and provided positive affirmations such as, "I believe Juan can do it if we give him time" (Ms. A, classroom observation notes, 5/1/13). Classroom observations confirmed that Ms. A demonstrated a warm and nurturing attitude towards her students and did not distinguish between native English speakers and ELL pupils (Ms. A, field notes, 4/26/13). However, while Ms. A did not have an English-only rule in her classroom, she did not differentiate her lessons in order to assist the ELL students to access unknown words or to encourage Spanish-speaking pupils to translate for their peers. If a child spoke Spanish to another child during free-play, she simply ignored it. She explained:

> I don't really think about them in terms of their language or as ELL students. I recognize that they have different deficits then the other children but if they need to use a word here or there in Spanish, it's ok - I mean they will all catch up eventually - I feel bad about their mothers that they don't seem to really want to come in and join in like the rest of us - I try my best but if they don't understand there is not a lot that I can do. In here I don't really differentiate; I just teach everyone and try and make sure that all of the children are happy (Ms. A, classroom observation notes, 5/1/13).

Ms. E, a first grade teacher and a bilingual *Teach for America* recruit, indicated her dissatisfaction with the ESL program in the school. Her statements indicated that she thought children were placed in the program by virtue of having a Latino-sounding last name rather than being viewed as students with discreet and varying instructional needs and individual English language proficiency:

Everyone in my class has different names. But in this school, you have a Spanish last name, boom, you are ESL. They don't see you as a child with different needs, I have students who are in the ESL program who should not be in there - they are even my high readers - some checklist, three questions, okay, now you are ESL - and they don't test out until sixth grade and they are still in the ESL program for no reason - just cause they have a last name that isn't Smith (Ms. E, interview transcription, 5/1/13).

Ms. J, the Spanish world language teacher identified teachers' perceptions regarding their ELL pupils as problematic, particularly those teachers who adopted an English-only policy. Additionally, she described the impact of teachers' views of the ELL children's parents as damaging:

I hear the Caucasian teachers in this school, they say all the time to the kids "This is an English-only zone" - it makes me so crazy. I read the research. I know what's what. I hear that they say, "These parents aren't involved." They are involved. They come, they participate. They know who makes them feel welcome (Ms. J, interview transcription, 5/1/13).

Ms. J articulated the views that many of the monolingual teachers in the study, as well as the rest of the school, had shared with her about the ELL students and their

families. These viewpoints are problematic because researchers attribute teachers holding deficit perceptions about ELL learners and their families as a causal factor that drives weak instructional practices and beliefs that negatively affects the children, such as ELL pupils, that need the most support (Moll & Gonzalez, 1994).

Misperceptions About the Need for Professional Development

Many of the teacher participants did not perceive that they were in need of any specialized pedagogical training in how to differentiate instruction for early childhood ELL pupils. Typically, when teachers lack an understanding of second language acquisition (SLA), they tend to keep their ELL pupils as an intact group for all of their instruction (Au, 2011; Darling-Hammond, 2010). However, this misperception can be damaging to early childhood ELL pupils academically and affectively (Gándara et al, 2005). The tendency to view instruction for ELL pupils as equivalent to that of any other native-English speaking student is actually thought to be a matter of "good teaching is good teaching" or a one size fits all approach to pedagogy (Au, 2011; Goldenberg, 2008).

For more than a decade, educational researchers have reiterated the need to provide in-service teachers with professional development in best practices for instructing ELL students (Gándara, Maxwell-Jolly, & Driscoll, 2005; Harklau, 2000; Penfield, 1987; Youngs & Youngs, 1997). However, teachers' resistance and denial surrounding their need for an increased pedagogical knowledge base in how to accommodate their instruction for ELL pupils has long been a stumbling block in providing successful professional development. Many teachers in this study are emblematic of those teachers that the research has highlighted.

For example, Ms. I, a third grade teacher, was unable to identify any areas of growth that would enable her to more effectively instruct the ELL pupils in her classroom, such as on-site professional development. She stated:

We have an ESL program here, but it's not enough. We have Wilson reading [a remedial reading program]. I think that the ELLs should all go out to like a Wilson-type ESL pull out every day for reading in addition to regular ESL. That would help. Having them out of the classroom for a longer block of time so I can teach the other kids to read, you know, the ones who speak English (Ms. E, interview transcription, 5/1/13).

Overall, the non-Spanish speaking teachers ($n = 8$ or 80%) expressed that their ability to speak Spanish or have a Spanish-speaking instructional aide would strengthen their ability to meet the ELL students' needs. This type of response also emerged for professional development aimed at assisting them with their instruction for their ELL pupils, for example the idea that their years spent teaching in the classroom precluded any need for sustained professional development. Ms. D posited, "I have been teaching for decades - it is not me, it's the kids and their parents and their lack of literacy - good teaching is good teaching, I don't need to change how I teach for these kids. I don't need any more professional development" (Ms. D, interview transcription, 4/29/13). Only one monolingual teacher, Ms. F, a second grade teacher, openly expressed the need for ongoing and sustained professional development. In this manner, Ms. F was similar to the participants in Karabenick and Noda's (2004) study, who recognized their instructional deficits and required instructional mastery in order to best meet the needs of their ELL students.

Six of the eight *(n = 6 or 60%)* non-Spanish speaking teachers in the study reflected perceptions similar to those teachers in the study by Gándara et al (2005) who were ambivalent about receiving professional development and were more interested in their students receiving additional services from the ESL teacher. In this study, teachers primarily identified ELL students' low literacy levels as a problem outside of their control. Seven *(n = 7 or 70%)* of the teacher participants requested additional pull-out programs and more time with the ESL teacher.

Moreover, the language that the participants spoke appeared to influence the teacher participants' perceptions about working with ELLs. For example, Ms. E, a first grade Spanish speaking teacher was interested in improving her instructional skills while she also identified the need for her colleagues to engage in professional development for her to work with ELL learners; Ms. E, a Spanish-speaking *Teach for America* first grade teacher, noted she was planning on attending, "more graduate studies in bilingual education and reading instruction this summer in order to improve my teaching" (Ms. E, interview transcription, 5/1/13). Ms. J, the Spanish world language teacher, the only other Latina teacher in the school, said that she would like to have someone come into the school and explain the importance of encouraging the children to speak in their native language:

> I think for a lot of children in this school, where they're not allowed to speak in their native language that is hurting them. Many of these teachers express to me this is an English-only zone and that is counterintuitive to how children learn language. These teachers need the professional development. I see it with my Spanish – listen how I see it. I have a girl from Dubai. She is learning Spanish

like it was a sponge. Her first language is Arabic, then she speaks English, and she's speaking Spanish - it's been proven if you have a language, you'll acquire a second one much easier (Ms. J, interview transcription, 5/1/13).

In addition, she viewed students' native-language use as asset and drew upon cultural differences in her teaching as strength to enrich all of her students' learning.

Places of acceptance and support. Although many of the teacher participants' perceptions of the ELL students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds were depreciatory, there were some teacher participants who did allow their ELL students to speak their native-language(s) in their classrooms: the two Latina teachers who were also both fluent in Spanish, Ms. B, who was one of the kindergarten teachers, and Ms. A, the pre-kindergarten teacher who seemed ambivalent about native language use in her classroom, but nonetheless did allow it.

Ms. B, one of the two kindergarten teachers, provided even more support for her pupils if they were struggling to understand a concept in English. Ms. B expressed her belief that when Spanish-speaking children speak their language the culture of the class was enriched. She stated:

I think it contributes. It's a nice contribution. I did *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* this morning and there are two that really didn't know the word strawberry, so they translate and add to the conversation. If I know the word [in Spanish], then I give them the word. I think it adds to the lesson (Ms. B, interview transcription, 4/30/13).

Classroom observations of Ms. B confirmed that she would routinely ask the bilingual children to translate for the children who were still learning to speak English.

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Her lesson plans reflected that she did not dilute her curriculum; however, she routinely asked her Spanish-speaking students to assist her in explaining directions for the ELL pupils who needed the translations. Another important distinction between Ms. B and the other monolingual teachers is that she expressed high expectations for all of her pupils:

> I really wish that they did not have to leave as a group for ESL. First of all, I think that they would be better off with me, all of them, and I don't think that all of them even need it anymore. I would say only three or four of my ELL students need that kind of attention. I would really prefer someone to come in and help me with my other students so that I could work more closely with the ones that need me (Ms. B, interview transcription, 4/30/13).

Although Ms. B lacked overt knowledge of Cummins' (1994) theory of cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP), which posits that it takes most dual language learners five to seven years to use in order to cognitively master a new language and synthesize its use in academic tasks, she encouraged children who needed to speak Spanish, to speak it.

In summary, research question one regarding the perceptions of mainstream early childhood teachers about working with ELLs, generated three qualitative findings. The first finding indicated that the majority of the teachers lacked two important funds of professional knowledge essential to early childhood teaching: an understanding of how to differentiate instruction for ELL students and perhaps more importantly, empathy for each child in their classrooms, specifically ELL pupils. Secondly, the majority of classrooms ($n = 6$ or 60%) had an English-only rule that all ELL children had to adhere to or face consequences. Finally, the participants demonstrated misperceptions and denial

surrounding their need for an increased pedagogical knowledge base in how to accommodate their instruction for ELL pupils.

Quantitative Findings Surrounding Teachers' Perceptions about the ELL Pupils in Their Mainstream Early Childhood Classrooms

Overview of Survey Data Analysis

Subtleties in teachers' affects towards students in the classroom are challenging to quantify and best captured through observed actions (e.g. in what teachers say and do) (Patton, 2002). However, a quantitative instrument was utilized in order to measure mainstream early childhood teachers' beliefs and perceptions about diversity. In this analysis, individual survey prompts were grouped with other prompts that answered each particular research question (see Table 4.2), which formed combined item responses. Using these combined item responses, descriptive statistics were then calculated for research question one, both for the sample of ten *(N = 10)* participants combined and for each participant individually.

Table 4. 2
RQs and Correlation with Survey Instrument
Professional Beliefs about Diversity Scale (Pohan & Aguilar, 2001)

Research Question	Correlating Survey Prompt
RQ1. What are the beliefs of mainstream early childhood teachers about working with English language learners (ELLs)?	SP 1 - Teachers should not be expected to adjust their preferred mode of instruction to accommodate the needs of all students.
	SP 2 - The traditional classroom has been set up to support the middle class lifestyle.
	SP 6 - All students should be encouraged to become fluent in a second language.
	SP 15 - Historically, education has been mono-cultural, reflecting only one reality and has been biased toward the dominant group.
	SP 16 - Whenever possible, second language learners should receive instruction in their first language until they

are proficient enough to learn via English instruction.

SP 17 - Teachers often expect less from students from lower socioeconomic class.

SP 18 - Multicultural education is most beneficial for students of color.

SP 22 - Students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds typically have fewer educational opportunities than their middle-class peers.

SP 23 - Students should not be allowed to speak a language other than English while at school.

Descriptive statistics were also calculated for the entire sample of each survey prompt, for each individual survey prompt (median and mode), and for the entire set of 25 survey prompts for each individual participant (mean and standard deviation). No inferential statistical tests were conducted, due to the small sample sizes of any subgroups of the total sample of ten (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

For research question one, which addresses the perceptions of mainstream early childhood teachers about the ELL pupils in their mainstream classrooms, descriptive statistics for the entire sample of ten are summarized (See Table 4.3). The minimum of 1 and maximum of 5 for the range of responses for research question one shows that the entire range of possible responses was used by the respondents: some respondents strongly disagreed while others strongly agreed.

Table 4.3
Descriptive Statistics for Research Question 1

Research Question	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	St. Deviation	Median	Range
RQ 1	10	1	5	3.77	1.3	4	4

The means and standard deviations are all relatively similar and clustered around the neutral response for research question number one, *What are the teachers' perceptions about the ELL pupils in their mainstream early childhood classrooms?*

Histograms of the responses by research question, shown in Figure (4.1), indicate that for each research question the responses are skewed towards strongly agree, which may indicate respondent bias to agree with the question.

Figure 4.1 - Results From the Professional Beliefs About Diversity Survey for Research Question 1
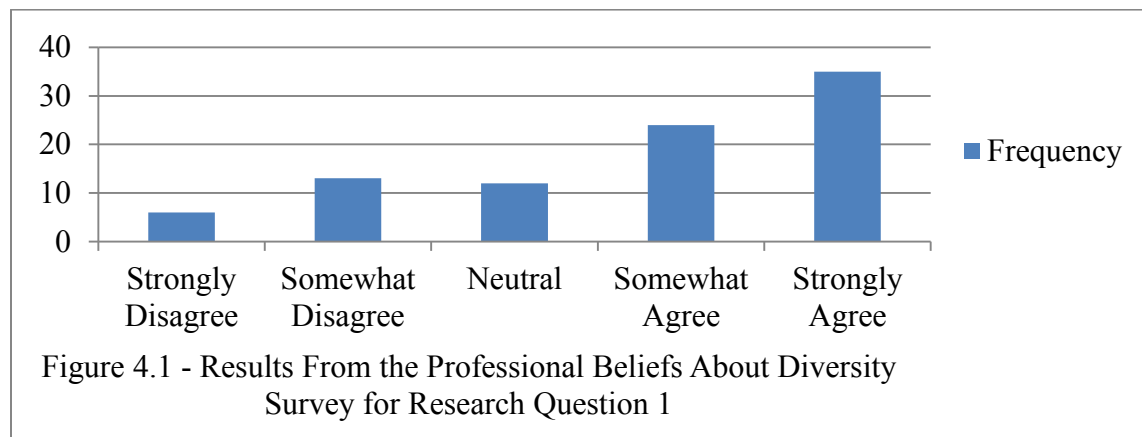
Overview of Survey Results

Table 4.4 shows the median and mode response for each individual survey prompt for the entire sample or ten. Pohan and Aguilar's (2001) *Professional beliefs about diversity* survey instrument was utilized to make possible initial conjecture about teachers' perceptions about the ELLs in their mainstream classrooms. Specific survey prompts were correlated with research question one in order to gauge the teacher participants' perceptions about working with ELLs in their mainstream early childhood classrooms. See Table 4.3 for the survey prompts.

Table 4.4

Median and Mode Response for each Survey Prompt [2]

	Survey Prompt	Valid N	Median	Mode
1	Teachers should not be expected to adjust their preferred mode of instruction to accommodate the needs of all students.	10	5	5
2	The traditional classroom has been set up to support the middle-class lifestyle.	10	3.5	2,4
3	Gays and lesbians should not be allowed to teach in public schools.	10	5	5
4	Students and teachers would benefit from having a basic understanding of different religions.	10	4	5,4
5	Money spent to educate the severely disabled would be better spent on gifted programs for gifted students.	10	4.5	5
6	All students should be encouraged to become fluent in a second language.	10	5	5
7	Only schools serving students of color need a racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse staff and faculty.	10	5	5
8	The attention girls receive in school is comparable to the attention boys receive.	10	3	3,4
9	Tests, particularly standardized tests, have frequently been used as a basis for segregating students.	10	3.5	2,5
10	People of color are adequately represented in most textbooks today.	10	2.5	1
11	Students with physical limitations should be placed in the regular classroom whenever possible.	10	5	5
12	Males are given more opportunities in math and science than females.	10	3	3
13	Generally, teachers should group students by ability levels.	10	2.5	2,3
14	Students living in racially isolated neighborhoods can benefit socially from participating in racially integrated classrooms.	10	4	5
15	Historically, education has been mono-cultural, reflecting only one reality and has been biased toward the dominant group.	10	3	3
16	Whenever, possible, second language learners should receive instruction in their first language until they are proficient enough to learn via English instruction.	10	4	4

[2] *Note.* When multiple modes are present they are each listed with a comma-delimiter.

17	Teachers often expect less from students from lower socioeconomic class.	10	2.5	1,5
18	Multicultural education is most beneficial for students of color.	10	5	5
19	More women are needed in administrative positions in schools.	10	3	3
20	Large numbers of students of color are improperly placed in special education classes by school personnel.	10	2.5	1
21	In order to be effective with all students, teachers should have experience working with students from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds.	10	4	4,5
22	Students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds typically have fewer educational opportunities than their middle-class peers.	10	4	4
23	Students should not be allowed to speak a language other than English while in school.	10	4	3,4,5
24	It is important to consider religious diversity in setting public school policy.	10	3.5	4
25	Multicultural education is less important than reading, writing, arithmetic, and computer literacy.	10	4	3,5

Perceptions Regarding Diverse Students in Mainstream Classrooms

The survey prompts that measured the teacher participants' perceptions of diverse

students in mainstream classrooms generated contradictory findings. The mean and mode

of survey prompt one (Teachers should not be expected to adjust their preferred mode of

instruction to accommodate the needs of all students) were both 5, which indicated that

the majority of teachers agreed with the survey prompt. The mean of survey prompt two

(The traditional classroom has been set up to support the middle class life style), was 3.5,

indicating a neutral consensus among the teacher participants to that prompt. However,

survey prompt 17 (Teachers often expect less from students from lower socioeconomic

classes) had a mean of 2.5 and was bimodal with the modes of 1 and 5 occurring most

frequently. This indicated that many participants either strongly agreed or disagreed that

teachers have lower expectations for students who represent cultural and linguistic diversity.

Perceptions Regarding Second Language Use

The results for the survey prompts that measured the teacher participants' perceptions regarding second language use in schools generated contradictory results. For instance, survey prompt number survey prompt six (All students should be encouraged to become fluent in a second language) had a mean and mode of 5, which indicated a strongly consistent view among the participants in agreement with the attitude represented by that survey item. The results for survey prompt 16 (Whenever possible, second language learners should receive instruction in their first language until they are proficient enough to learn via English instruction) generated a mean and mode of 4, which indicated that most teacher participants had a consistent view in agreement with the sentiment expressed in that survey item. However, both the mean and mode for survey prompt 23 (Students should not be allowed to speak a language other than English while in school) was 4 and was tri modal, with the modes of 3, 4, and 5 occurring most frequently, which indicated that the participants had attitudes ranging from neutrality, agreeing, to strongly agreeing with the attitude represented in that survey prompt, thereby contradicting their responses to survey prompt sixteen.

Perceptions Regarding the Importance of Multicultural Education

Overall, the teacher participants in this study did not identify the need to incorporate multicultural education in their classrooms, as indicated by their survey responses. For example, survey prompt 18 (Multicultural education is most beneficial for students of color), had a mean and mode of 5, which indicated a strongly consistent view among the participants that multicultural education is most necessary for diverse student

groups. Survey prompt 15 (Historically, education has been mono cultural, reflecting only one reality and has been biased toward the dominant group), generated both a mean and mode of 3, which indicated that the majority of teacher participants responded neutrally to the attitude represented by that particular survey prompt. The mean for survey prompt 25 (Multicultural education is less important than reading, writing, arithmetic, and computer literacy) was 4, which indicated that most of the participants agreed that multicultural education was not as important as other curricular areas.

Table 4.5 shows the mean and standard deviations for each individual's response across the 25 questions in the survey.

Table 4.5
Mean and Standard Deviation of each participant (N = 10)

Participant	Mean	Standard Deviation
1	4.6	1.1
2	4.1	1
3	3.2	1.4
4	3.5	1.2
5	3.8	1.0
6	2.8	1.3
7	3.1	1.3
8	3.8	1
9	2.6	1.2
10	4.8	1

According to Pohan and Aguilar (2001), low scores reflect intolerance for diversity and high scores reflect openness to diversity. Midrange scores reflect a general tolerance or uncertainty towards some of the issues included in the measure (p. 166). Participant six and participant nine had the lowest response means of 2.8 and 2.6, respectively, and participant one and participant ten had the highest response means of 4.64 and 4.8, respectively.

Of note is that the lowest score of 2.6 is a fairly neutral response. The respondents' answers to the survey prompts alone would not lead one to consider the group to be demonstrating intolerance for diversity. In fact, the scores skew towards averages that would seem, on the surface, to indicate a general openness to diversity. This overall result from the quantitative analysis, which points to an openness to diversity, appears to be incongruent with the qualitative data. Moreover, two of the responses from participants one and ten fell at the very high end of the openness spectrum, while there were no participants who responded in a way that indicated intolerance.

Discussion of Quantitative Results

The quantitative data revealed three findings pertaining to the participants' professional beliefs about diversity, particularly regarding teachers' perceptions surrounding the ELL pupils in their mainstream early childhood classrooms. First, the data revealed that the majority of teacher participants agreed with survey prompt number one (Teachers should not be expected to adjust their preferred mode of instruction to accommodate the needs of all students). Second, the data revealed that the majority of teacher participants ($n = 6$ or 60%) agreed with survey prompt six (All students should be encouraged to become fluent in a second language). Third, the data revealed that the results for survey prompt 16 (Whenever possible, second language learners should receive instruction in their first instruction until they are proficient enough to learn via English instruction) generated a mean and mode of 4, which indicated that most teacher participants agreed with the ideals of bilingual education. In addition, the results of survey prompt 23 (Students should not be allowed to speak a language other than English while in school) was tri modal with modes of 3, 4 and 5 occurring most frequently, which

indicated that there was no clear consensus amongst the participants in regard to this survey prompt.

Overall, the responses to the survey prompts for research question one fell into the category of strongly agree, which indicated that most of the participants were open to diversity within their classrooms. Due to the sample size, statistically, the most likely cause is respondent bias; as there were such a limited number of participants, they were more than likely trying to answer the survey questions in accordance to what is being researched (Sonnenfeld, 1985).

Looking Across Qualitative and Quantitative Data Sources

The rationale for this parallel mixed-methods design was to capitalize on the benefits of both types of data collection. Therefore, in this section, I compare the findings that emerged from the qualitative data and the quantitative data. The quantitative instrument generated contradictory data concerning the teacher participants' perceptions about the ELL pupils' use of their native language(s) in their mainstream early childhood classrooms. For example, there was overwhelmingly strong agreement with survey prompt six among all ten participants (All students should be encouraged to become fluent in a second language). The majority of teachers agreed with prompt six, yet the qualitative results demonstrated that six ($n = 6$ or 60%) of the participants required that all students speak only English in their classrooms. For example, Ms. I, a third grade teacher said, "I definitely can see a divide between the students who are bilingual or the students who don't understand the language or even their own language. I think it's so hard to teach them and I think it pushes some of the other kids away from speaking to them" (Ms. I, interview transcription, 4/29/13). The qualitative results supported the quantitative results of survey prompt 23 (Students should not be allowed to speak a

language other than English while in school), which generated a mean of 4, indicating that most of the participants did not believe students' home language should be used in school.

Another survey prompt that demonstrated that the participants held negative perceptions towards the ELL pupils in their mainstream classrooms was survey prompt 18 (Multicultural education is most beneficial for students of color). Half of the teacher participants agreed that multicultural education was only necessary for diverse student groups. However, multicultural education is part of the New Jersey Professional State Standards for Teachers (NJPSTS). Standard number three states that all "teachers shall understand the practice of culturally responsive teaching as well as teach all students about life in a diverse society" (NJDOE, p. 11, 2013). Therefore, half ($n = 5$ or 50%) of participants in the study were uninformed about standard three of their professional standards. The implication of that survey response suggests that half ($n = 5$ or 50%) of the participants were not aware of the basic tenets of multicultural education or culturally responsive teaching.

Moreover, the scores from survey prompt one are consistent with the results of the qualitative data, as interview and observation data revealed that six ($n = 6$ or 60%) participants held unfavorable perceptions that were not favorable towards the ELL students in their early childhood classrooms.

Conclusion

According to Delpit (2006) teachers should consider, "supporting the language that students bring to school, provide them input from an additional language, and give them the opportunity to use the new language in a non-threatening, real communicative contexts" (p. 327). The results of research question one generated findings which,

illuminated the teacher participants' negative perceptions regarding ELL students, specifically regarding the use of their native language. Additionally, the majority of classrooms ($n = 6$ or 60%) had an English-only rule to which, all ELL children had to adhere. Moreover, the participants demonstrated misperceptions surrounding their need for an increased pedagogical knowledge base in how to accommodate their instruction for ELL pupils. The majority of teacher participants in this study ($n = 7$ or 70%) held misperceptions about the necessity to differentiate their teaching for their early childhood ELLs. According to Freire (1982), teachers must be able to create, adopt, and modify teaching strategies that simultaneously respect and challenge learners from diverse cultural groups using a variety of instructional methods and teaching environments.

When teachers overlook the native languages that their pupils speak, they are implicitly suggesting that something is wrong with their students and their families (Delpit, 2006). Therefore, when the teachers dismissed the native language that the ELL pupils brought with them to their classrooms, they missed the opportunity to allow their students to express themselves authentically. Therefore, including a more multicultural curriculum may change some of the impact of teachers' low perceptions of their ELL students.

Moreover, the quantitative data generated by research question one indicated that only five ($n = 5$ or 50%) of the teacher participants found that multicultural education was necessary for all students; the other half of the participants ($n = 5$ or 50%) responded that only students of color needed to be taught about and through a multicultural education approach.

Chapter 5

Teachers' Perceptions and Literacy Practices with ELL Pupils

Introduction

In this chapter, qualitative and quantitative data were analyzed in order to address research questions two and three: (2) How do the participant teachers' perceptions govern their pedagogical practices associated with literacy instruction for early childhood ELLs? (3) To what extent are the teachers' espoused literacy practices congruent with their demonstrated literacy practices with early childhood ELL pupils? This chapter summarizes both the qualitative and quantitative findings.

Teachers' Perceptions about ELL Students' Ability to Engage in Literacy Learning

The qualitative data revealed three findings pertaining to the participants' perceptions about the literacy development of their early childhood ELL students. First, the majority of teachers at the River Elementary School relinquished responsibility for the literacy instruction for their ELL pupils or if they did teach literacy to the ELL students, they presented the students with an insubstantial curriculum. Second, the teachers perceived ELL children as having a dearth of experiences to access in order to make new learning connections in their literacy instruction. Third, the teachers identified the blame for their lack of ability to instruct students in literacy within the ELL pupils and their families as a factor that resided within the students and the families themselves.

Abandoning Responsibility for Teaching ELL Students

The majority of teacher participants in the study ($n = 6$ or 60%) relinquished the responsibility for the literacy instruction for their ELL pupils or if they did teach literacy to the ELL students, they presented students with a diluted curriculum. As Ladson-Billings and Gomez (2001) have posited, at times, early childhood teachers compensate

for their lack of initial success with culturally and linguistically diverse students by instructionally ignoring them in their classrooms. By spending the bulk of their time with the more successful students, teachers can convince themselves that the students who are failures are not their responsibility. For example, in my study, with the exception of Ms. B, the kindergarten teacher who built experiences for ELLs, Ms. E, a first grade teacher, who was a bilingual Spanish speaker, and Ms. J, the Spanish world language teacher, who is also a bilingual Spanish speaker, the remaining classroom teachers failed to capitalize on the opportunities to incorporate quality early literacy instruction to their ELL students or provided them a diluted curriculum. Instances include, teachers' extensive use of workbook pages with little connected text, and teachers who formed isolated groups of ELL pupils. Moreover, there were no instructional conditions established for students to be placed in the ELL literacy groups. The only evident criterion that were utilized for a student to be placed in a literacy group with their fellow ELL learners was that the student had an ELL classification or a Spanish last name (Ms. G field notes, 4/28/13; Ms. F field notes, 4/28/13).

An example of the diluted curriculum that the teacher participants provided for the ELL pupils in their classrooms was found in Ms. D's first grade classroom. Ms. D described the diverse languages that her ELL students spoke as a barrier to her teaching, and also categorized parents of ELL students as either non-English speaking or not interested in learning English. She stated:

> There are so many jobs and opportunities in Spanish now; the parents don't even
> care about learning English. These kids just come to school lacking in everything
> because their parents are illiterate. So it is hard for me to focus on comprehension.

I just focus on sight words. They just can't comprehend because they are illiterate even in Spanish. I just use little books with pictures for them (Ms. D, interview transcription, 4/29/13).

Ms. D's steady use of sight word memorization tasks exemplifies the low-level tasks that researchers cite as the type of literacy activities that mainstream teachers typically provide their ELL pupils with, instead of the more academically rich critical thinking activities that their native-English speaking peers receive (Au, 2011; Snow & Griffin, 1998). Ms. C appeared to offer her ELL pupils a weak literacy program lacking in any rich literacy experiences for her ELL pupils as indicated through her classroom observations and interviews (field notes 4/28/13; interview transcription, 4/30/13). She articulated that children arrived at school with a limited basis for which she could teach her ELL pupils. She stated:

I just have to use a lot of pictures. Our ELL students, we do have an ELL component to our reading and theirs is mostly pictures books with very little text. There is no need [to differentiate]. They don't have enough of a basis in Spanish. They need so much. I have to start with shapes, color, but there are English-speaking students who need me too. I can't just worry about the ELLs, and they get the ESL teacher too (Ms. C, interview transcription, 4/30/13).

Ms. C's perception of her ELL pupils was that they were so lacking in language skills, including their native Spanish skills, that she could not offer them the same rich and complex literacy instruction that she provided to her native-English speakers (Ms. C, field observation notes, 4/30/13, 5/3/13). She continues, "the ESL teacher is trained in how to deal with them. I don't know how I am supposed to know how to teach them,

especially to read" (Ms. C, field observation notes, 5/3/13). This relinquishment of responsibility and assigning of students to the ESL teacher is consistent with the teacher participants from the studies done by Harklau (2000) and Penfield (1987).

Ms. G, a second grade teacher, also described her literacy practices with her ELL students as the type of teaching that did not promote rich literacy learning. She believed that her second grade ELL pupils were capable of recognizing a book, so she erroneously used the concept of grouping, which is an instructional technique that, when utilized appropriately, helps teachers differentiate instruction in direct response to demonstrated students' needs (Bredekamp, 2011). However, Ms. G used the concept in order to keep the ELL students together and permanently separated from the rest of the class, because she believed that the ELL students lacked basic knowledge to make authentic literacy connections in higher level reading activities. As a way to target to these deficits, she placed the ELL students in a group to share what she referred to as "common confusions" (Ms. G, interview transcription, 4/30/13). She stated:

> I like to put them all in the same group, so they feel better, more comfortable because they are not the only one who doesn't understand. They are all kind of like, "Oh, oh, okay. What is that? Is that a book?" They kind of all know that they don't know together (Ms. G, interview transcription, 4/30/13).

Ms. G's expressed inability to teach ELL students was the result of her lack of knowledge concerning culturally responsive instruction (Gay, 2002). However, it is also emblematic of the experiences that ELL students so often face in classrooms, especially in literacy instruction (Au, 2011; August & Shanahan, 2006). Moreover, she expressed little confidence in her ability to deliver quality instruction to ELL learners. She stated

that she is "not even sure myself how to teach them to read - that is why they go to ESL" (Ms. G, interview transcription, 4/30/13).

Failure to Build Upon Students' Prior Experiences

In addition, the majority of teacher participants viewed their ELL students as having a lack of experiences to access in order to make new learning connections in their instruction. An essential link to learning new knowledge is to link it to prior learning and experiences. As individuals read, they engage in the constant use of prior knowledge, where new ideas help to make connections, update or expand upon understandings or change their views all together. This collection of prior knowledge is commonly referred to as schemata (Tracey & Morrow, 2012). As they read and learn, students use their existing schemata for language and content to assist with new reading and learning experience (Tracey & Morrow, 2012). A number of the teacher participants created reading and writing lessons that were constructed on basic concepts such as letters, colors, and wordless picture books (Ms. G, field notes, 4/28/13; Ms. I, field notes, 5/1/13).

Although Ms. G described creating prior knowledge for her ELL students, classroom observations confirmed that she used a diluted literacy curriculum of overly simplistic books that were not on-instructional level for the ELL students. This was confirmed by the administration of Developmental Reading Assessments (Beaver & Carter, 2012) by both the researcher and the reading specialist in the research site (field notes, 5/1/13). The books that Ms. G used with ELL students were those that lacked rich descriptive language and contained predictable and inauthentic language. Ms. G described the books she typically used with ELL students:

I just try and increase their vocabulary. Providing background knowledge,

because a lot of those students don't have exposure to other experiences. It's like

giving them that background knowledge, I think that's huge. I am always trying to

encourage them to read at home with someone, but some families, they don't even

know their own language at home, the parents, to even help or assist them (Ms. G,

interview transcription, 4/30/13).

However, the only teacher who utilized the component of the reading series that

was expressly designed for ELL students [*Storytown Elementary Reading Series,*

Harcourt-Brace, (2011)] was Ms. E, the bilingual, first grade *Teach for America* recruit.

She described her literacy practices, which included methods that best practices dictate as

especially crucial when instructing early childhood ELL learners (Au, 2011; Bredekamp,

2011; Morrow, 2010). Ms. E expressed the need to tap into prior knowledge or create it

for her pupils when a certain lesson called for specific background knowledge. She

stated:

I really think that the ELL component of our reading series has a lot of great

things in it for the kids who didn't speak English or were just learning English.

There was a lot of phonemic awareness, a lot of oral language. That kind of stuff.

But you still have to build up the background knowledge, in all parts of the

curriculum, especially reading and help them understand the concept of the story,

there is no way to go by the textbook and expect kids to turn out the way we want

them to - if I know that they don't have the experiences, say for a butterfly or

whatever, we just go outside, go for a walk, do a lot of talking, that's what all of

the kids need. (Ms. E, interview transcription, 5/1/13).

Ms. E recognized that some of her students may not have had all of the prior experiences that they might have needed in order to help them access higher order comprehension and critical thinking for a specific story or book. Therefore, she actively built those experiences with her students by creating experiences through nature walks or by having conversations with them (Morrow, 2010).

Situating the Blame within the ELL Pupils' Families

The majority of teacher participants in the study blamed the ELL pupils and their families for their inability to instruct students in literacy. Educators agree that effective teaching requires subject mastery and pedagogical skills (Au, 1996; Bredekamp, 2011; Morrow, 2010; National Early Literacy Panel, 2008). However, when teachers find themselves unprepared to teach the mainstream ELL pupils in their classrooms, they place them blame within the ELL pupils themselves or the ELL pupils' families (Gutierrez & Orellana, 2006). For example, Ms. I, a third grade teacher, expressed frustration with her inability to effectively teach reading to her ELL pupils. She stated:

> Teaching them reading is tough. Not feeling it in reading. I don't like teaching ELLs to read. Science, definitely. I am the science teacher when it comes to ELLs. I think that's universal. I think nature's universal. I think everyone can understand—so science would probably be the easiest – it is too hard to teach those ELL kids to read – I just like to send them out , leave them to the ESL teacher and the computer programs, let them help them out with that (Ms. I, interview transcription, 5/3/13).

In another instance, classroom observations reveal a lack of preparedness and knowledge base to teach ELL students. She used the opportunity to leave the literacy instruction to the ESL teacher and a technology program. Ms. I described how she

employed a computer program to supplant her direct instruction rather than working with the ELL pupils directly. She stated:

We do have a computer program called *Imagine Learning*. The ELL students go do that. It is helpful when they leave to go do that or when they go with the ESL teacher. There is a component with our reading program for the ESLs, it is basically just slower moving so that is something I do. They just all move so slow, they come to me below grade level and I know that they will leave me below level as well (Ms. I, interview transcription, 5/3/13).

Another teacher, Ms. G, who taught second grade, also exhibited a reluctance to teach literacy to her ELL pupils. She explained that her approach to teaching literacy to her ELL pupils was to place them all in one group for the entire school year (Ms. G, interview transcription, 4/30/13). Essentially, Ms. G used this permanent grouping instructional strategy because she did not see any need to differentiate her instruction, nor did she perceive her ELL pupils as having any schematic background knowledge in order to access new literacy learning. Ms. G stated:

I just put them in a little reading group they are all on the same page, just to let them see what stories look like, give them some exposure to books, they really need that little reading group - there isn't too much you can do, these kids don't have a lot to draw upon. They have no experiences, they don't go anywhere. Their parents don't take them anywhere, they don't understand anything. Our Spanish kids don't bring a lot to the party; they don't have a lot of experiences. They are from poorer backgrounds, they don't travel, and they don't get out of town much,

because of their parents' language barriers (Ms. G, interview transcription, 4/30/13).

Ms. G believed that she needed to place all dual-language learners in one homogenous group because, "They all speak Spanish" (Ms. G, interview transcription, 4/30/13). Moreover, she did relegated responsibility for assessing Spanish-speaking individually on their reading or writing skills, because, "That is what the ESL teachers should do" (Ms. G, interview transcription, 4/30/13).

Espoused Beliefs and Actual Practices: Bringing Culture into the Classroom

The qualitative data generated two findings about the teachers' espoused beliefs versus their actual observed teaching practices. First, the teacher participants claimed to make connections to the children's cultures, but did not do so in their actual classroom instruction. Second, two ($n = 2$ or 20%) of the teacher participants possessed some declarative knowledge regarding different theories of second language acquisition. Yet, they rejected these theories because they were not congruent with their teaching practices and theories-in-action (Argyris & Schön, 1974).

The tensions between espoused beliefs, and teachers' actual practices, or theories-in-action (Argyris & Schön, 1974) can affect the choices that teachers make in their classrooms, which have profound effects on their students (Pajares, 1992; Rueda & Garcia, 1996). In this case, the difference between what the participant teachers said they believe about culturally and linguistically diverse students and how they actually crafted their instruction was markedly different.

The first research question in this chapter generated three findings: teachers relinquished responsibility for teaching literacy to their ELL pupils, teachers viewed ELL children as having a dearth of experiences to access in order to make new learning

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connections in their literacy instruction, and the teachers situated the blame for their lack of ability to instruct students in literacy within the ELL pupils and their families. These findings were connected to teachers' actual practices. In the following section, I will describe how these practices were enacted in the classrooms that I observed.

Talking the Talk, but Not Walking the Walk

Many of the teacher participants claimed that they brought the culture of their ELL pupils into their classrooms. However, the majority of teachers, (*n* = 6 or 60%), did not perceive that there were able to use the same pedagogical practices with their ELL pupils as with the native-English speaking students in their classrooms. At times, on the surface, schools and teachers seem to welcome ELL students, when in actuality, all too often diverse students are left on the margins of many classrooms and schools (Harklau, 2000). However, this was incongruent with the actual findings from classroom observations. For instance, it is quite common for early childhood teachers to decorate their classrooms with colorful signs and motivational posters that indicated: *"We are all an important part of 1st grade"* and that *"It takes many different colors to make up a rainbow"* (Ms. D, field observation notes, 4/30/13). This was the case with Ms. D's first grade classroom. Additionally, Ms. D described how she "sometimes brings her children's home language into her lessons at times" (Ms. D, interview transcription, 4/30/13). Yet, during classroom observations, Ms. D was never observed encouraging any of the ELL pupils to use their native language in order to facilitate their comprehension during literacy activities or any other instructional activity (Ms. D, field observation notes, 4/28/13 – 5/3/13).

Additionally, there were several occasions when the students' home culture could have been infused into the literacy curriculum; for instance, when the *Cinco de Mayo*

celebration was featured in a *Weekly Reader* assignment (Ms. D, classroom observation notes, 5/1/13). Yet, Ms. D was not observed asking the children if they celebrate *Cinco de Mayo* at home. Moreover, when reviewing Ms. D's lesson plan book, no evidence of Spanish language or culture was located (Ms. D, field observation notes, 4/30/13). In Ms. D's file box where school-parent communications were stored, I noted that none of the personal letters, announcements, or updates from Ms. D was translated into Spanish except any correspondence that originated from the administration. (Ms. D, field observation notes, 4/30/13). Ms. D commented on the lack of translation:

> Well, we try, but I feel like we're defeating the purpose if we send things home in Spanish because we are kind of telling them, "You don't have to learn English. We'll send everything home for you in Spanish," which the school does. It's a very fine line because you want to keep them informed, but yet, you are sort of enabling them to not have to learn the language (Ms. D, interview transcription, 4/30/13).

Ms. D stated that she "brings her children's home language into her lessons at times" (Ms. D, interview transcription, 4/30/13), yet classroom observations demonstrated the absence of any evidence of culturally responsive instruction (Ms. D, field notes, 4/30/13; Ms. D, field notes, 5/1/13; Ms., D, observation notes, 5/3/13). Gitlin, Buendìa, Crosland, and Doumbia (2003) refer to classrooms such as Ms. D's as situations where ELL students are, "simultaneously caught in institutional practices that welcome and unwelcome them through espoused beliefs and actual practices" (p. 91).

Further, when prompted to describe how she brings in the culture of her students into the curriculum, Ms. D stated:

At holiday time we talk about Las Posadas. We talk about Hanukkah. We talk

about Kwanzaa. I also will say to the children around the holidays, "What would

you do in Mexico?" I do try, but I have to think of the other children, and they are

not all Mexican, I can't make the other children feel badly if they are not included

(Ms. D, interview transcription, 4/30/13).

Ms. D's attempts to add the culture of her ELL students in to her classroom

curriculum seemed to be perfunctory; given that over half (*n* = 9 or 60%) of her class was

of Mexican heritage, there was a wealth of cultural practices that she might have

potentially infused into her instruction, for example, connecting the *Weekly Reader*

assignment about Cinco de Mayo to their prior experiences (Ms. D, classroom

observation notes, 5/1/13).

Contradictions in Understanding Second Language Acquisition

Two (*n* = 2 or 20%) of the participants possessed some knowledge regarding

different theories of second language acquisition. Yet, they rejected the theories because

they were not congruent with their teaching practices and theories-in-action (Argyris &

Schön, 1974). An issue that educators and researchers continue to grapple with is one of

teachers' perceptions and misperceptions of second language acquisition (SLA) (Au,

2011; Nieto, 2009). Quite often, when teachers misuse or confuse SLA theory, it can

produce counterintuitive educational results for early childhood ELL students. For

example, Ms. C, a kindergarten teacher, made a statement that illuminated the fact that

her perceptions were not congruent with her practices, which reflects the general

understanding of Cummins (1994) theory of cognitive academic language processing

when she said, "Once I heard it takes five to seven years to learn English to use in

academics" (Ms. C, interview transcription, 4/30/13), however, she noted, "but I don't agree" (Ms. C, interview transcription, 4/30/13). Ms. C. stated:

> We need to expect that they learn English and that the parents are not afraid for their children to learn English. I think that needs to be an expectation. The moms are all very afraid the children with lose their home language. You try to explain. I am a very open to others and diversity-type person. The dads get it but the moms don't. When you try and explain that when you are learning how to read - all of our readers are in English and the children need to speak only English, and I do think that they should be. I know it takes a while to learn English. Once I heard it took 5 to 7 years but I don't agree. If they want to live here in this country they have to learn English right away. We have to have a universal textbook language and they want to live here they should leave these little Mexican neighborhoods they create, learn English, and try and make some sort of an effort to learn about culture, our culture, so they can learn to read (Ms. C, interview transcription, 4/30/13).

Therefore, whereas her comments demonstrated an understanding of Cummins' (1994) theory of cognitive academic language proficiency, her instruction did not reflect the tenets of cognitive academic language processing. She also perceived the ELL pupils and their families as lacking in experiences; therefore, Ms. C's ability to properly differentiate her instruction for diverse learners; instead she situated the blame within the ELL students and their families. Further, her comments served to highlight the disparity between teachers' intellectual knowledge and how they (or if they) applied that knowledge in their classrooms. Hamann (2002) posits that the conflicts between what

teachers know about ELL leaners and how they actually teach ELL learners tend to occur at the "interface between culture, policy, and power" (p. 67). Further, Fang (1996) argues that teachers will ultimately teach in accordance with their theoretical perceptions and that "a teacher's implicit theory about the nature of knowledge acquisition affects teaching behaviors and, ultimately, their students' learning" (p. 50).

Moreover, Dewey (1910) defined reflective thinking as, "The active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it, and the further conditions to which it tends" (p. 6). Therefore, much more attention needs to be paid to the worldviews of in-service teachers of ELL children in mainstream classrooms, with an emphasis on engaging them in reflective thinking in order to have them connect their espoused beliefs to their actual instructional practices, with an emphasis on the educational ramifications of their instructional practices for the diverse learners in their classrooms. This connection between espoused beliefs and actual practices needs to be made concrete to teachers if public schools are to ultimately amplify the intellectual, academic, and linguistic possibilities for ELL children (Fang, 1996; Gitlin, Buendia, Crosland, & Doumbia, 2003).

In conclusion, research question two regarding how mainstream early childhood teachers' perceptions govern their literacy instruction with early childhood pupils generated three findings from the qualitative data. First, the majority of teachers, ($n = 6$ or 60%), did not perceive that there were able to use the same pedagogical practices with their ELL pupils as the native-English speaking students in their classrooms. Therefore, teachers either relinquished the teaching of literacy to ELL pupils to the ESL teacher or delivered a superficial curriculum to the ELL pupils. Second, they viewed ELL students

as lacking in experiences to access in order to make new learning connections in their literacy instruction. Third, the teachers situated the blame for their lack of ability to instruct students in literacy within the ELL pupils and their families.

Additionally, the data from research question three generated two findings about the teachers' espoused beliefs versus their actual observed teaching practices. First, the teacher participants' offered obligatory statements about making connections to the children's native cultures, without following through in their actual classroom instruction. Second, two (n =2 or 20%) of the participants possessed some declarative knowledge regarding different theories of second language acquisition. Yet, they rejected them because they were not congruent with their teaching practices and theories-in-action (Argyris & Schön, 1974). In order to more fully understand how the teacher participants' perceptions about the ELL students in their early childhood classrooms governed their literacy instruction and how that instruction did or did not align with critical pedagogy, the following section contains the quantitative survey results, which measured the participants' scores on Pohan and Aguilar's (2001) *Professional beliefs about diversity.*

Quantitative Results Surrounding Pedagogical Practices with ELL Pupils

Overview of Survey Data Analysis

Subtleties in teachers' affects towards students in the classroom such as prejudice are challenging to quantify and best captured through observed actions (e.g. in what teachers say and do) (Patton, 2002). However, a quantitative instrument, the *Professional beliefs about diversity survey*, was utilized for this mixed methods study in order to measure mainstream early childhood teachers' beliefs about diversity. In the analysis, individual survey prompts were grouped with other prompts that answered each particular research question (see Table 5.2), which formed combined item responses.

Using these combined item responses, descriptive statistics were then calculated for each research question, both for the sample of ten participants combined, and for each participant individually.

Descriptive statistics were also calculated for the entire sample of each survey prompt, for each individual survey prompt (median/mode), and for the entire set of 25 survey prompts for each individual participant (mean/standard deviation). No inferential statistics were conducted due to the small sample size of any subgroups of the total sample of ten (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

For each research question, descriptive statistics for the entire sample of ten are summarized (See Table 5.1). The minimum of 1 and maximum of 5 for the range of responses for each research question shows that the entire range of possible responses was used by the respondents: some respondents strongly disagree while others strongly agree.

Table 5.1

Descriptive Statistics for Research Questions 2 and 3

Research Question	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	St. Deviation	Median	Range
RQ 2	10	1	5	3.6	1.37	4	4
RQ 3	10	1	5	3.8	1.79	4	4

The means and standard deviations were all relatively similar and clustered around the neutral response for research question two: *How do teachers' perceptions govern their pedagogical practices associated with literacy instruction for early childhood ELLs?* This also held true for research question three: *How are teacher's espoused beliefs congruent with their demonstrated practice?*

Histograms of the responses by research question, (Figures 5.1 and 5.2), showed that for research question two and research question three, the responses were all skewed towards strongly agree, which may indicate respondent bias to agree with the question.

Figure 5.1 - Results From the Professional Beliefs About Diversity Survey for Research Question 2

Figure 5.2 - Results From the Professional Beliefs About Diversity Survey for Research Question 3
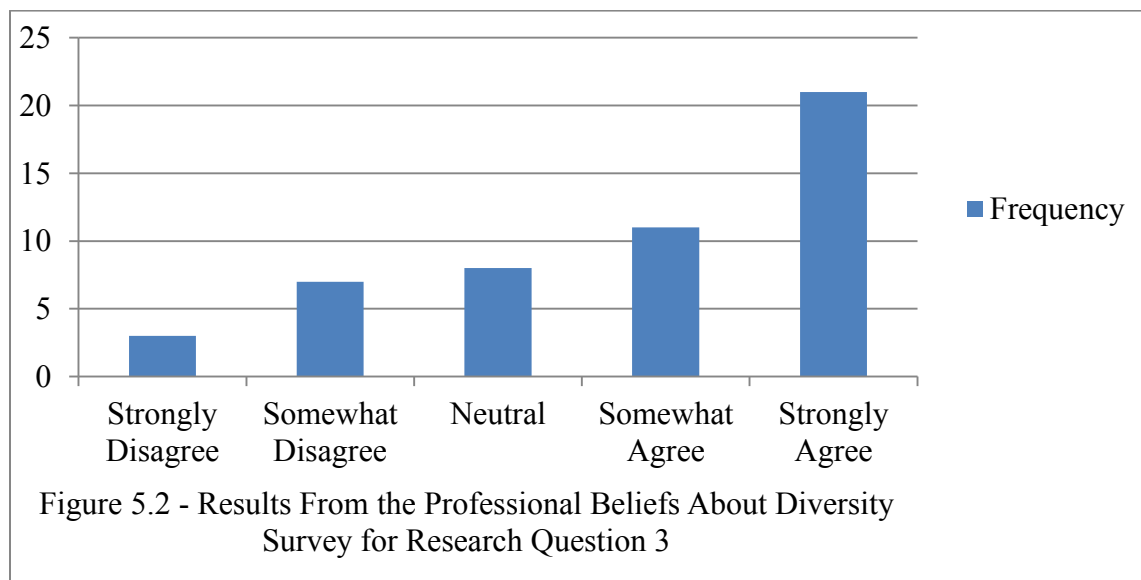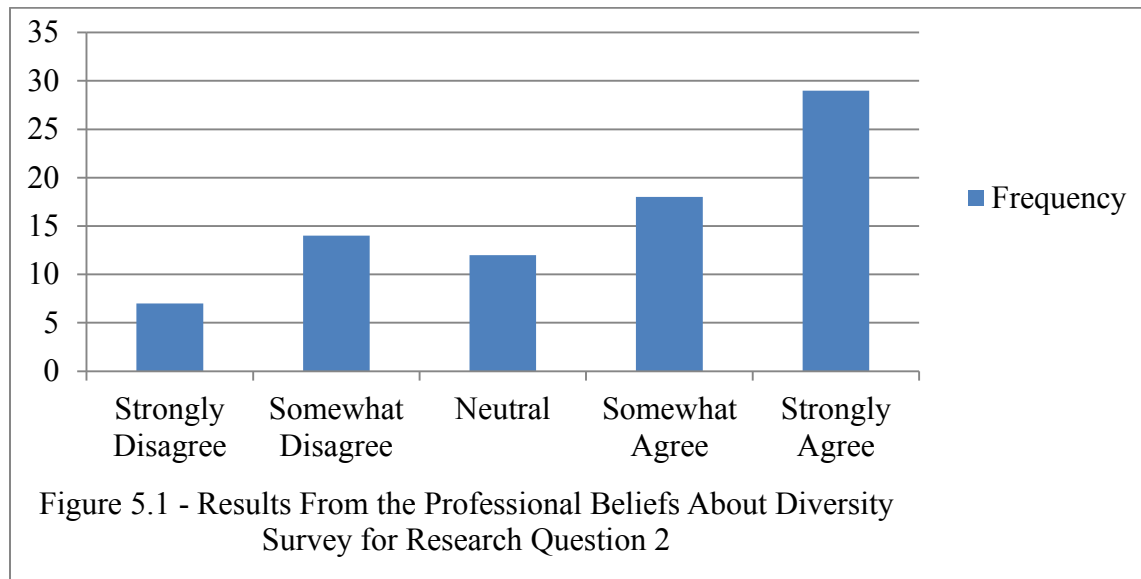
Overview of Survey Results

Table 5.2 shows the specific survey prompts and how they were correlated with research question two and research question three.

Table 5.2

RQs and Correlation with Survey Instrument

Professional Beliefs about Diversity Scale (Pohan & Aguilar, 2001)

Research Question	Correlating Survey Prompt
RQ2. How do these perceptions govern teachers' pedagogical practices with ELL pupils?	SP 1 - Teachers should not be expected to adjust their preferred mode of instruction to accommodate the needs of all students.
	SP 2 - The traditional classroom has been set up to support the middle class lifestyle.
	SP 13 - Generally, teachers should group students by ability levels.
	SP 17 - Teachers often expect less from students from lower socioeconomic class.
	SP 18 - Multicultural education is most beneficial for students of color.
RQ3. How are teachers' espoused beliefs congruent with their demonstrated practice?	SP 1 - Teachers should not be expected to adjust their preferred mode of instruction to accommodate the needs of all students.
	SP 13 - Generally, teachers should group students by ability levels.
	SP 16 - Whenever possible, second language learners should receive instruction in their first language until they are proficient enough to learn via English instruction.
	SP 23 - Students should not be allowed to speak a language other than English while at school.

How Perceptions Govern Pedagogical Practices

The survey prompts that measured how the teacher participants' perceptions governed their pedagogical practices generated contradictory findings. The means and mode of survey prompt one (Teachers should not be expected to adjust their preferred mode of instruction to accommodate the needs of all students) were both 5, which indicated that the majority of teachers agreed with the survey prompt. The mean of survey prompt two (The traditional classroom has been set up to support the middle class life style), was 3.5, indicating a neutral consensus among the teacher participants to that

prompt. However, survey prompt 13 (Generally, teachers should group students by ability level) generated a mean of 2.5 and was bimodal, with the modes of 2 and 3 occurring most frequently. This indicated that the participants were tending towards disagreement to neutrality regarding grouping students by ability level or homogenous grouping. Therefore, most of the participants felt that they should not have to adjust their preferred mode of instruction to accommodate the needs of all students, which has particular relevance to the literacy learning needs of early childhood ELLs.

Finally, survey prompt 17 (Teachers often expect less from students from lower socioeconomic class), generated a mean of 2.5, and was bimodal, with the most frequently occurring responses of 1 and 5. This indicated that most participants either strongly agreed or disagreed with the attitude represented in this prompt.

Native-Language Use and Pedagogical Implications

The survey prompts that measured the teacher participants' perceptions regarding ELL students' native-language use and how these perceptions governed their pedagogical practices generated incongruent results. The results for survey prompt 16 (Whenever possible, second language learners should receive instruction in their first instruction until they are proficient enough to learn via English instruction) generated a mean and mode of 4, which indicated that most teacher participants had a consistent view in agreement with the ideals of bilingualism. However, survey prompt 17 (Teachers often expect less from students from lower socioeconomic classes) had a mean of 2.5 and was bimodal with the modes of 1 and 5 occurring most frequently, which indicated that the participants were divided in their ideas regarding teacher expectations of students from historically marginalized groups of society. Moreover, the mean for survey prompt 23 (Students should not be allowed to speak a language other than English while in school) was 4,

which indicated that the participants agreed with the notion that ELL students should only speak English while in school, thereby contradicting their responses to survey prompt 16, in which the participants agreed with the tenets of bilingualism.

Congruency Between Espoused Beliefs and Practices

The survey prompts that measured the congruency between teacher participants' espoused beliefs and demonstrated practices generated contradictory findings. For example, the results of survey prompt one (Teachers should not be expected to adjust their preferred mode of instruction to accommodate the needs of all students) had a mean and mode of 5, which indicated that the majority of teachers agreed with the survey prompt. However, survey prompt 13 (Generally, teachers should group students by ability level) generated a mean of 2.5 and was bimodal, with the modes of 2 and 3 occurring most frequently. This indicated that the participants were tending towards neutrality regarding teachers using homogenous grouping as an instructional practice.

Contradictions in Allowing Home Languages Spoken in Classrooms

The teacher participants demonstrated incongruous responses to the survey prompts that measured their professional beliefs about diversity as it pertained to students' use of their native languages in their classrooms. For example, the results for survey prompt 16 (Whenever possible, second language learners should receive instruction in their first language until they are proficient enough to learn via English instruction) generated a mean and mode of 4, which indicated that most teacher participants had a consistent view in agreement with ideals of bilingualism. However, both the mean and mode for survey prompt 23 (Students should not be allowed to speak a language other than English while in school) was 4 and was tri modal, with the modes of 3, 4, and 5 occurring most frequently. This indicated that the teacher participants agreed

with the idea of ELL students being limited to speaking only English while in school, which contradicted their responses to survey prompt 16, in which they agreed with the tenets of bilingualism.

Table 5.3 shows the median and mode response for each individual survey prompt for the entire sample of ten.

Table 5.3

Median and Mode Response for each Survey Prompt [3]

	Survey Prompt	Valid N	Median	Mode
1	Teachers should not be expected to adjust their preferred mode of instruction to accommodate the needs of all students.	10	5	5
2	The traditional classroom has been set up to support the middle-class lifestyle.	10	3.5	2,4
3	Gays and lesbians should not be allowed to teach in public schools.	10	5	5
4	Students and teachers would benefit from having a basic understanding of different religions.	10	4	5,4
5	Money spent to educate the severely disabled would be better spent on gifted programs for gifted students.	10	4.5	5
6	All students should be encouraged to become fluent in a second language.	10	5	5
7	Only schools serving students of color need a racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse staff and faculty.	10	5	5
8	The attention girls receive in school is comparable to the attention boys receive.	10	3	3,4
9	Tests, particularly standardized tests, have frequently been used as a basis for segregating students.	10	3.5	2,5
10	People of color are adequately represented in most textbooks today.	10	2.5	1
11	Students with physical limitations should be placed in the regular classroom whenever possible.	10	5	5
12	Males are given more opportunities in math and science than females.	10	3	3

[3] When multiple modes are present they are each listed with a comma-delimiter.

13	Generally, teachers should group students by ability levels.	10	2.5	2,3
14	Students living in racially isolated neighborhoods can benefit socially from participating in racially integrated classrooms.	10	4	5
15	Historically, education has been mono-cultural, reflecting only one reality and has been biased toward the dominant group.	10	3	3
16	Whenever, possible, second language learners should receive instruction in their first language until they are proficient enough to learn via English instruction.	10	5	5
17	Teachers often expect less from students from lower socioeconomic class.	10	2.5	1,5
18	Multicultural education is most beneficial for students of color.	10	5	5
19	More women are needed in administrative positions in schools.	10	3	3
20	Large numbers of students of color are improperly placed in special education classes by school personnel.	10	2.5	1
21	In order to be effective with all students, teachers should have experience working with students from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds.	10	4	4,5
22	Students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds typically have fewer educational opportunities than their middle-class peers.	10	4	4
23	Students should not be allowed to speak a language other than English while in school.	10	4	3,4,5
24	It is important to consider religious diversity in setting public school policy.	10	3.5	4
25	Multicultural education is less important than reading, writing, arithmetic, and computer literacy.	10	4	3,5

Discussion of the Quantitative Findings

The quantitative data revealed two major findings pertaining to the participants' professional beliefs about diversity, particularly in relation to their how their perceptions governed pedagogical literacy practices and the extent to which their espoused beliefs were congruent with their demonstrated practices.

First, the data revealed that the survey prompts that measured how the teacher participants' perceptions of their ELL pupils governed their literacy pedagogical practices generated conflicting results. For example, the mean and mode of survey prompt one (Teachers should not be expected to adjust their preferred mode of instruction to accommodate the needs of all students) were both 5, which indicated that the majority of teachers agreed with the survey prompt. Secondly, the data also pointed to the fact that the majority of teacher participants had negative perceptions about allowing ELL pupils to use their native language during academic instruction, as evidenced by the responses to survey prompt 23 (Students should not be allowed to speak a language other than English while at school) which produced a mean of 4, which indicated that most participant agreed with the idea expressed in that prompt.

The results of research question number three, which measured the teacher participants' espoused theories in relation to their actual pedagogical generated one quantitative result. First, the quantitative results indicated that most of the teacher participants held inconsistent beliefs concerning their espoused instructional beliefs versus their actual instructional practices. Contradictions existed between the ways in which the teacher participants responded to the survey prompts that measured their professional beliefs about diversity as it pertained to students' use of their native language in their classrooms. For instance, the teacher participants generated a mean of 4 to survey prompt number 16, which measured the attitudes towards bilingual education, which indicated a favorable attitude towards bilingual education amongst the participants. However, their response to survey prompt number 23 (Students should only speak

English while in school) also generated a mean of 4, which is contradictory to the ideals of bilingualism.

Overall, the responses to the survey prompts for research questions two and three fell into the category of strongly agree, which indicated that most of the participants were open to diversity within pedagogical practices and aware of the impact of diversity on their professional belief systems. Due to the sample size, statistically, the most likely cause is respondent bias; as there were such a limited number of participants, they were more than likely trying to answer the survey questions in accordance to what is being researched (Sonnenfeld, 1985).

Patterns Across Qualitative and Quantitative Data Sources

The rationale for this parallel mixed-methods design was to capitalize on the benefits of both sources of data collection. Therefore, in this section, I compare the qualitative data and the quantitative data. The different but complementary data come together in order to portray how the teacher participants' perceptions of their ELL pupils governed their literacy practices as well as elucidate how the participants' espoused theories aligned with their actual teaching practices.

Survey prompt 16 (Whenever possible, second language learners should receive instruction in their first language until they are proficient enough to learn via English instruction), had a mean and mode of 4, indicating that most participants had stronger feelings in agreement with that prompt. This result may point to the fact that it is an espoused belief [in this case, the difference between what the participant teachers say they believe about culturally and linguistically diverse students and how they actually crafted their instruction] and not a theory-in-action, or one that contradicted the participants' actual teaching practices. This finding was supported by the qualitative data

collected, which revealed that two (n = 2 or 20%) of the participants possess some knowledge regarding different theories of second language acquisition. Yet, they rejected them because they were incongruent with their teaching practices and theories-in-action.

Another survey prompt that demonstrated a difference between teachers' espoused beliefs and their actual teaching practices was survey prompt 17 (Teachers often expect less from students from lower socioeconomic classes). That prompt was bimodal, with the modes of 1 and 5 occurring most frequently and a mean of 2.5, which indicated that the participants both very strongly agreed and disagreed. The qualitative data revealed that the majority of teachers, (n = 6 or 60%), did not perceive that they were able to instruct ELL pupils with the same instructional practices as the native-English speaking students in their classrooms. Additionally, the teachers positioned the blame for their lack of ability to instruct students in literacy within the ELL pupils and their families.

Overall, the means and standard deviations were all relatively similar and clustered around the neutral response for research questions two and three: (2) How do these beliefs and attitudes govern their pedagogical practices associated with literacy instruction for early childhood ELLs? (3) To what extent are the teachers' espoused literacy practices congruent with their demonstrated literacy practices in the classrooms with early childhood ELL pupils? Histograms of the responses by research question, (Figures 5.1 and 5.2) show that for both research questions two and three, the responses were skewed towards strongly agree, which may indicate respondent bias to agree with the questions.

Moreover, research question two regarding how mainstream early childhood teachers' perceptions govern their literacy instruction with early childhood pupils, generated three findings from the qualitative data. The majority of teachers, ($n = 6$ or 60%), did not perceive that there were able to use the same pedagogical practices with their ELL pupils as the native-English speaking students in their classrooms. The teachers either relinquished the teaching of literacy to ELL pupils or delivered a superficial curriculum to the ELL pupils because they viewed ELL children as lacking in experiences to access in order to make new learning connections in their literacy instruction. Additionally, the teachers situated the blame for their lack of ability to instruct students in literacy within the ELL pupils and their families. Furthermore, research question two demonstrated that the majority of participants' ($n = 6$ or 60%) steady use of sight word memorization tasks exemplified the low-level tasks that researchers cite as the type of literacy activity that mainstream teachers typically provide their ELL pupils with, instead of the more academically rich critical thinking activities that their native-English speaking peers receive (Au, 2011; Snow & Griffin, 1998).

Research question number three generated findings which illuminated the fact that participants offered obligatory statements about making connections to the children's native cultures, without following through in their actual classroom instruction. Research question three also revealed that two ($n = 2$ or 20%) of the participants possessed some knowledge regarding different theories of second language acquisition.

When comparing the qualitative and quantitative data to explore the relationship between early childhood teachers' espoused beliefs and actual instructional practices, many ($n = 6$ or 60%) of the participants said that they thought multicultural education

was just as important as other areas of the curriculum, as evidenced by survey prompt 23 (Multicultural education is as important as reading, writing, arithmetic, and computer literacy). However, this contradicts what was directly observed in their classrooms. Only four ($n = 4$ or 40%) of the participants were directly observed using the doctrines of culturally responsive pedagogy in their literacy instruction, such as grouping children heterogeneously, using various ways to explain new vocabulary words, including music and movement, and most importantly, allowing ELL students to speak in their native languages.

Conclusion

Several researchers have found that mainstream teachers of ELL pupils have adopted implicit theories concerning ELL pupils in their classrooms (e.g. Clair, 1995; Gándara, Maxwell-Jolly, & Driscoll, 2005; Harklau, 2000; Reeves, 2006). Researchers have also established that teachers across U.S. public schools have largely developed negative theories as well perceptions regarding the mainstream ELL pupils in their classrooms (Clair, 1995; Gándara, Maxwell-Jolly, & Driscoll, 2005; Harklau, 2000; Karabenick & Noda, 2004; Penfield, 1987; Reeves, 2004, 2006). These implicit theories, if not properly unpacked, explored, and rectified, will continue to affect and govern how mainstream early childhood teachers instruct the ELL pupils in their class. As Freire (1982) posited, if we think of teaching and learning as reciprocal processes, then teachers might consider becoming actively engaged in learning through their interactions with students. Moreover, teachers can talk about the value of cultural diversity, however, their words can sound hollow, and if they do not demonstrate through their actions and behaviors that they truly value diversity, students very often can tell (Nieto, 2002).

A lack of differentiation of ELL pupils as individuals was also seen in the teacher participants' literacy instruction. Research question number two revealed that the majority of teachers ($n = 6$ or 60%) routinely kept their ELL pupils in one homogenous reading group, solely based on their status as dual-language learners, instead of looking at each child as individual literacy learners. English language learners should be encouraged to read at their appropriate levels and have ample opportunities to hear rich, visually stimulating books read aloud, instead of being kept in static groups, like Ms. G, who kept all of her ELL pupils in one reading group, "so they [the ELL students] can all know that they don't know together" (Ms. G, interview transcription, 4/29/13).

Additionally, most of the teacher participants ($n = 6$ or 60%) viewed their ELL pupils as lacking in prior experiences, that they simply ignored the cultural knowledge and information that their diverse learners possessed, which contributed to the students' literacy learning. Instead, the teachers provided the ELL pupils with literacy instruction that was created on rudimentary concepts such as letters, colors, and wordless picture books (Ms. G, field notes, 4/28/13; Ms. I, field notes, 5/1/13). Researchers, especially early childhood educators, have long established the need to access or create prior knowledge for students prior to engaging them in any new learning experiences (Au, 2011; Morrow, 2010; National Early Literacy Panel, 2008; Teale, 2009). Ms. A, the prekindergarten teacher lacked the knowledge of second language acquisition and culturally responsive teaching, and appeared to create what Noddings (2005) refers to as a culture of caring; yet, her instruction lacked academic rigor, which failed to capitalize on the opportunities of children's literacy learning (Katz, 1999).

Further, the findings for research question reflected the research conducted by Gitlin, Buendia, Crosland, and Doumbia(2003). In their study, before the ELL students entered the classrooms, the policies and practices of the school both welcomed them by "projecting an image of fair treatment for all students, and unwelcomed them, by positioning them as a problem for the dominant White, middle-class group" (p.109). On the surface, the teachers in the study by Gitlin, et al (2003) appeared to embrace the cultures of the ELL and immigrant children; however, in reality, they were found, through interviews and observations, to actually resent the ELL pupils in their classrooms as "draining on their resources and time" (p. 114). This finding appears to reflect the perceptions in this current study. For example, Ms. I referred to herself as being, "an early childhood expert who is very open to diversity" (Ms. I, interview transcription, 5/3/13), who then went on to express, "I cannot teach reading to the ELLs in my class" (Ms. I, interview transcription, 5/3/13).

In conclusion, teachers' perceptions towards their early childhood teachers ELL towards their early childhood ELL pupils in their mainstream classrooms directly affects the quality of their instruction. Teachers might consider reflecting on how their belief systems govern their literacy practices, because an awareness of how their espoused theories can be a strong starting point for developing critical consciousness and improving their classroom instruction. For, as Harklau (2000) states, the "actions of teachers of ELLs not only serve to teach language but also serve to shape students' attitudes toward schooling and their very sense of self" (p. 64).

Chapter 6

Achievement of Research Aims

Introduction

The purpose of this parallel mixed-method study was to investigate, through a critical theory lens, how the perceptions of mainstream early childhood educators towards English language learners (ELLs) in their classrooms govern their pedagogical practices associated with literacy instruction for early childhood ELLs. The following research questions were designed to gain understanding of the lived experiences of the study participants:

1. What are the perceptions of mainstream early childhood teachers about working with English Language Learners (ELLs)?

2. How do these perceptions govern their pedagogical practices associated with literacy instruction for early childhood ELLs?

3. To what extent are the teachers' espoused literacy practices congruent with their demonstrated literacy practices in the classrooms with early childhood ELL pupils?

Ultimately, this study explored the connections and perhaps, tensions, between language, culture, theory, and practice in early childhood teachers' classrooms during their interactions with ELL pupils. The teachers and their students taught me that to really achieve authentically situated, culturally responsive pedagogy, educators must begin to first reflect upon how their perceptions shape their literacy instruction, and explore how their espoused literacy practices are or are not congruent with their actual day to day literacy practices in the classrooms with early childhood ELL pupils. In a few cases, teachers' survey responses and interviews indicated that they were more aware of and

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accepting of the ELL pupils funds of knowledge (Moll & Gonzalez, 1994) and were

eager to draw upon their pupils' cultural backgrounds and native languages. Yet, in many

instances, ($n = 7$ or 70%) classroom observations proved this to be untrue, showing that

the theories-in-action of the teachers were not congruent with their espoused theories

(Arygris & Schön, 1974). In this case, the difference between what the participant

teachers said they believed about culturally and linguistically diverse students and how

they actually crafted their instruction was markedly different. For example, several

teachers, who had espoused that they were tolerant of students speaking Spanish in their

classrooms, were observed telling children to "stop speaking in Spanish - you know the

rules. This is an English-only zone" (Field notes, 4/20/13- 5/28/13). In the next section, I

will discuss how the teachers' perceptions regarding students' use of their native

language affected their pedagogical practices with their ELL students.

Teachers' Perceptions about Working with ELLs

The data collected in connection with research question one, *What are the*

perceptions of mainstream early childhood teachers about working with English

Language Learners (ELLs)?, generated findings which illuminated some of the teacher

participants' negative perceptions regarding ELL students, specifically concerning the

use of their native language. Moreover, these participants demonstrated misperceptions

surrounding their need for an increased pedagogical knowledge base in how to

accommodate their instruction for ELL pupils. In addition, the majority of teacher

participants in this study ($n = 7$ or 70%) had misperceptions about the necessity to

differentiate their teaching for their early childhood ELLs.

The quantitative data revealed that the teacher participants held negative beliefs

about diversity, specifically concerning allowing ELL students to use their native

language in class, as indicated by their survey responses. Although the teachers indicated a positive attitude towards bilingual education, their survey responses indicated very strongly that their students should only speak English while in their classrooms, which is counter to the tenets of bilingualism. Moreover, the participants stated that multiculturalism was just as important as other curricular areas such as literacy, mathematics, and technology. However, this was incongruent with what was observed in their classrooms. The qualitative results showed that the majority of teachers lacked two important funds of professional knowledge essential to early childhood teaching: an understanding of how to differentiate instruction for ELL students, which includes allowing ELL pupils to speak in their native language, and perhaps more importantly, empathy for each child in their classrooms, specifically ELL pupils.

Teachers' Pedagogical Practices with ELLs

The results of research question number two, *How do these perceptions govern their pedagogical practices associated with literacy instruction for early childhood ELLs?*, generated three findings, which indicated that the majority of teacher participants in the study relinquished responsibility for the literacy instruction for their ELL pupils or if they did teach literacy to the ELL students, they presented students with a diluted curriculum. First, the majority of teachers, ($n = 6$ or 60%), did not perceive that they were able to use the same pedagogical practices with their ELL pupils as the native-English speaking students in their classrooms. Therefore, teachers either delegated the teaching of literacy to ELL pupils to the ESL teacher or delivered a superficial curriculum to the ELL pupils. Second, they viewed ELL students as lacking in experiences to access in order to make new learning connections in their literacy instruction. Third, the teachers situated

the blame for their lack of ability to instruct students in literacy within the ELL pupils and their families.

The quantitative data findings revealed that the participants' responded neutrally to the survey prompts designed to gauge their professional beliefs regarding critical pedagogy, particularly in relation to how their perceptions governed pedagogical literacy practices. In response to research question two, the data revealed that the teacher participants' responses tended towards impartiality on prompts designed to elicit their responses towards the need to differentiate or accommodate their literacy instruction for their ELL pupils. Yet, this was incongruent with the data illuminated by classroom observations, which revealed that the participants' had no interest in using heterogeneous grouping or including ELL pupils in their literacy instruction alongside their native-speaking peers.

Espoused Beliefs Versus Actual Teaching Practices

Research question number three, *To what extent are the teachers' espoused literacy practices congruent with their demonstrated literacy practices in the classrooms with early childhood ELL pupils?,* generated two findings about the teachers' espoused beliefs versus their actual observed teaching practices. First, the teacher participants believed that they made connections to the children's native cultures, however, many times, they did not follow through in their actual classroom instruction. Second, a few of the participants possessed some knowledge regarding different theories of second language acquisition. Yet, they rejected them because they were incongruent with their teaching practices and theories-in-action (Argyris & Schön, 1974).

The quantitative data revealed a contradiction between the teacher participants' reported professional beliefs about diversity regarding students' use of their native

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language in their classrooms. Although the teachers indicated a favorable attitude towards bilingual education, they also overwhelmingly felt that students should only speak English while in school, which is contradictory to the ideals of bilingualism. In addition, the respondents stated that multicultural education was as important as other academic areas such as reading, writing, arithmetic, and computer literacy. However, this contradicted was directly observed in their classrooms. Only four ($n = 4$ or 40%) of the participants were directly observed using the doctrines of culturally responsive pedagogy in their literacy instruction, such as grouping children heterogeneously, using various ways to explain new vocabulary words, including music and movement, and most importantly, allowing ELL children to speak in their native language (Field notes, 4/21/13 – 5/22/13).

Significance of This Study

This study contributes to the body of research on teachers' perceptions about the ELL students in their mainstream classrooms by focusing specifically on how early childhood teachers' perceptions govern their literacy instructional practices with their ELL students. Most educational research has focused on middle and secondary level teachers of ELL students, however, little is known about early childhood teachers' perceptions regarding ELL students in mainstream classrooms (Collier & Thomas, 2004; NCELA, 2010). In particular, this study utilized a critical theory lens in order to explore if the participants' espoused beliefs about their ELL pupils were congruent with their actual teaching practices. While this study attempts to contribute to an unexplored area, there is a great deal of future work to be done in this capacity, particularly in the areas of early childhood teachers' perceptions about the ELL students in their classrooms, how

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those perceptions govern their literacy practices, and how their espoused practices are or are not congruent with their actual teaching practices.

Teachers' Perceptions

It is important that researchers and educators critically consider the perceptions that mainstream early childhood teachers may hold about the early childhood ELL pupils in their classrooms. As the United States school systems grow each year, educators are concerned with the changing faces of public school children, a growing number who are ELLs, who enter schools with many rich traditions and cultures, but also the daunting task of *doing double the work* of learning grade level content while also learning English (Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007). Prior studies (e.g. Au, 2011; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Hyland, 2010; Nieto, 2009) have demonstrated that the ever-increasing amount of ELL pupils in our public schools presents a challenge for many educators who may not know how to close the linguistic and cultural gaps between themselves and their students. However, this problem becomes more complex when the instructional practices of early childhood teachers are not in alignment with culturally responsive teaching or the best practices in literacy instruction for ELL students, (Au, 2006; Clair, 1995; Cummins, 2001; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Hyland, 2010; Jones, 2002; Gándara, Maxwell-Jolly, & Driscoll, 2005; Nieto, 2009; Reeves, 2006), which was also the case in this study.

Understanding Second Language Acquisition

The findings from this study supported the need for teachers to acquire a broad understanding of second language acquisition. For example, the only teachers who allowed the children to speak their native Spanish language in the classrooms were the two teacher participants who self-identified as Latina, and who were also both fluent in Spanish, one kindergarten teacher, Ms. B, and Ms. A, the pre-kindergarten teacher who

seemed ambivalent about native language use in her classroom. However, the majority of teachers in the study enforced ($n = 6$ or 60%) an English-only rule in their classrooms.

Au (2011) has argued that it is imperative for teachers to be equipped with linguistic knowledge so that they can better prepare their instruction for linguistically and culturally diverse students. Goldenberg (1992) has suggested that critical theorists, educators, and linguistics begin to reconceptualize classrooms as spaces in which language and literacy skills develop through situated social practices. In addition, Nieto (2002) proposed that teachers acquire specific knowledge about the process of learning language; encourage the use of the students' language and culture as a resource for other learning; and foster native literacy by encouraging collaborative grouping with students who share their native language by providing them with classroom time and space.

Moreover, Cummins (2001) posits that when working from a critical pedagogy orientation, teachers should consider reflecting critically on social issues and come to understand the inseparable nature of language and meaning. Cummins (2001) recommends that it is necessary for teachers to possess the attitudes and beliefs that allow them to value the educational and personal experiences students bring with them to school, as well as understand the process of language acquisition in order to provide effective language and literacy instruction. Cummins (1994) also stressed the fact that all teachers of ELL pupils must continue to support students' first languages and seek collaborative relationships with parents and community leaders. He postulated, "Considerable research data suggests that for dominated minorities, the extent to which students' language and culture are incorporated into the school program constitutes a predictor of academic success" (p. 107).

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Areas for Professional Development

Language as power. Most of the non-Spanish speaking teachers in my study demonstrated attitudes similar to those teachers in Gándara, Maxwell-Jolly, and Driscoll's (2005) study, who were ambivalent about receiving professional development and were more interested in acquiring services from the ESL teacher for their students, rather than directly teaching ELL students themselves. In Gándara et al's (2005) study, the teacher participants primarily felt that the problem with ELL students' low literacy levels was an issue outside of their control and therefore the teachers requested additional pull-out programs and more time with the ESL teacher. However, in my study, only one monolingual teacher, Ms. F, a second grade teacher, openly expressed the need for ongoing and sustained professional development. In this manner, Ms. F was similar to the participants in Karabenick and Noda's (2004) research, who recognized their instructional deficits and requested more training in order to achieve instructional mastery so that they might meet the needs of their ELL students.

As Nieto (2009) posits, "The field of multicultural education was slow to embrace linguistic diversity as a central focus of its work and until recently, most conceptualizations of multicultural education did not consider the significance of language in teaching and learning" (p. 112). Researchers (Au, 2011; Cummins, 2001; Nieto, 2009) agree that educators must begin to view language diversity as a resource rather than as a deficit and redefine the benefits of linguistic diversity for all students. An important implication of this understanding is that language diversity needs to be viewed using the lens of educational equity. However, the issue is not simply a question of language difference, but rather of a power difference (Au, 2011; Freire, 2000; Nieto, 2009). As such, language diversity is a key part of a multicultural framework.

The link between teacher expertise and ELL students' learning. What teachers know and do affects all of the fundamental tasks of their teaching. What teachers understand about the essential elements of the curriculum and their students shapes what they select to teach and more importantly, how they teach it to their students. Teachers' skill in assessing their students' progress also depends on how deeply they understand and interpret student talk and written work (Darling-Hammond & Ball, 1998). Nothing can fully compensate for the weakness of a teacher who lacks the knowledge and skill needed to help ELL students master the early childhood literacy curriculum (Au, 2011; Bredekamp, 2011; Morrow, 2010).

Measures of teachers' education, certification, knowledge, and experience have been the litmus test of teacher expertise in large-scale data sets (Ferguson, 1991). Ferguson (1991) found that teacher expertise (as measured by teacher education, licensing examination scores, and experience) accounted for more variation in student achievement than any other factor and that every additional dollar spent on more highly qualified teachers netted greater increases in student achievement than did other less instructionally focused resources. An additional contribution to student achievement in the early elementary grades was made by lower pupil-teacher ratios. In combination, well prepared early childhood teachers working in personalized environments contributed as much to student outcomes as socioeconomic factors.

Moreover, the National Association of Educational Progress (NAEP, 2010) has documented that teachers' qualifications link directly to student reading achievement; students of fully certified teachers and of teachers with higher levels of education do better. Moreover, these teachers are more likely to have had professional coursework that

enables them to use the methods that best practices have held result in higher achievement for all students in their classes (Darling-Hammond & Ball, 1998). Furthermore, teachers who spend more time studying teaching are more effective overall, and strikingly so in developing higher-order thinking skills, especially in meeting the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students. Teacher education and on-going professional development does matter, particularly for teachers of ELL learners (Au, 2011; Darling-Hammond, 2010: Nieto, 2009). Darling-Hammond (2010) hypothesizes that attention should be placed on closing the other gaps in education, rather than just focusing on the achievement gap. For example, Darling-Hammond (2010) defines the other gaps that shape the lack of achievement for culturally and linguistically diverse learners as the lack of appropriate teacher professional development, and the fact that teacher training plays a huge part in maintaining inadequate educational practices that have remained consistently in place for ELL learners.

The importance of knowing how language is learned. The dramatic increase in the number of language minority students in our country in the past three decades means that every classroom has already or soon will be affected by the need to learn how to best instruct ELL pupils. The responsibility for educating language minority students can no longer fall only on those teachers who have been trained specifically to provide bilingual or ESL services; the responsibility needs to be shared by all teachers in all schools. However, most teachers have had little training in how language is acquired.

For instance, in the quantitative strand of this study, half of the participants indicated that they did not think that multicultural education is necessary for students who are not part of a diverse sub-group in society. However, the implications of that

result are these teacher participants were not cognizant of the basic tenets of multicultural education or culturally responsive teaching.

The importance of knowing about how to teach diverse learners. Many of the teacher participants in this study thought the ELL pupils in their classrooms should be served by the ESL teacher, and therefore relinquished responsibility for providing the ELL pupils with literacy instruction. It is imperative, especially as U.S. public schools continue to see an increase in culturally and linguistically diverse students, that all teachers know how to accommodate their instruction for every child in their classrooms. According to Au (1996, 2011), when students and teachers engage in meaningful interactions in which students' ideas are sought and valued, and incorporated into the culture and curriculum of the class, the ELL students will become verbal and respond to questions. Moreover, in classrooms which support ELL students' interaction with peers and in which teachers make use of the collective knowledge of the class, ELL students' language skills are enhanced (Au, 2006, 2011; Goldenberg, 2008). These classrooms are inherently low-risk, and they build upon what students bring into the classrooms, in addition to creating spaces for the emergence of new ideas, which are based on the students' interactions with one another (Cummins, 2001).

For example, Goldenberg's (1992) research offers insights into the role of *instructional conversations* in ELL pupils' learning. In this type of classroom discourse, the teacher and students interact with each other in a collaborative, joint meaning-making process, by creating a context in which ELLs can discuss common topics such as school experiences. Goldenberg (1992) found that ELLs who participated in instructional conversations talked more in class and were able to express more. Instructional

conversations are markedly different than the common dialogue pattern found in mainstream classrooms, Initiation-Response-Evaluation, in which the teacher engages one student at a time on purely content related questions. By utilizing instructional conversations: teacher can focus on a theme, activate, build on important schemata, use direct teaching, ask questions with fewer known answers, have a higher level of teacher responsiveness to students' contributions, and use more student-led interactions. These techniques have shown to improve the quality of instruction for ELL learners (Au, 2006; Cummins, 1994; Goldenberg, 1992; Nieto, 2002).

Au (2011) wrote that she frequently gets asked why good teaching is not enough for all children in every setting. Au (2011) indicated that Gay (2000) addressed that point when she wrote that the quality of teaching and learning are culturally determined and are not the same for all children in all groups. For example, in some cultural groups, a good teacher is one who directs children in a firm and direct manner and asks known-answer questions. However, in other groups, a good teacher is one who poses questions indirectly and invites children to respond to open-ended questions (Gay, 2000).

Therefore, it is important for mainstream early childhood teachers of culturally and linguistically children to use a variety of instructional practices (Au, 2011; Bredekamp, 2011; Gay, 2002). As Au, (2006) posits, an important consideration in multiethnic classrooms is how teachers can incorporate both worldviews, the mainstream and the diverse, especially to promote higher level thinking with text during literacy instruction. Au (2006) recommends that mainstream early childhood teachers use a variety of groupings so that all children can participate in literacy instruction comfortably, at least part of the day. This simple suggestion may help early childhood

teachers of ELL pupils who feel that they have no other choices but to relinquish the responsibility for teaching literacy of their ELL pupils to the ESL teacher or to provide an diluted curriculum to her linguistically diverse students.

Culturally Responsive Teaching

Culturally responsive teaching is a powerful method for implementing the practical and instructional aspects of the doctrines of critical pedagogy's potential for practice and pedagogy. Gay (2002) has written that teachers who incorporate culturally responsive teaching into their instruction create lessons that are "relevant, rigorous, and revolutionary" (p. 136). In addition, Au (2011) has stated that teachers who follow the tenets of critical pedagogy and culturally responsive teaching in their classrooms learn from their students and their communities, creating instruction that is powerful, meaningful, and most importantly, effective.

In this study, most of the teacher participants lacked the knowledge of both know and why to incorporate culturally responsive teaching in their teaching. This school would benefit from an effort to build such awareness in its staff as more than half the student population represents cultural and linguistic diversity.

Nieto (2002) points out that if teachers are to be successful in teaching ELL students they must first change their attitudes toward the students, their languages and cultures, and the communities of the students. This is consistent with what Valdes (1996) theorized, which is that the most "effective way to influence teachers' expectations about ELL students is to help them gain knowledge of the different cultures, values, and beliefs of those students in the classroom" (p. 93).

Culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 2006) provides a framework for teachers to teach reading in a way that will meet ELLs' cultural and social needs and to

better support the students' participation in literacy events. Ladson-Billings (2006) noted that the concept of cultural relevance moves beyond language to include other aspects of student and school culture. Ladson-Billings (2006) and Gay (2002) defined culturally responsive pedagogy's priority as a framework for teachers to follow so that their students can become academically successful without being forced overtly or covertly to give up their language or culture. In addition, the critical theory nature of this theory pushes educators and researchers to "ask larger questions about school and society to work to expose inequity and social justice" (Ladson-Billings, 2006, p. 111). Thus, culturally relevant teaching "uses students' culture in order to maintain it" (p. 117) and recognizes that language is one of the fundamental signs of our humanity. It is the palette from which people color their lives and culture (Nieto, 2009).

In this study, two (*n* = 2 or 20%) of the participants self-identified as Latina. These two participants were both tenacious about creating culturally responsive teaching; they did not ascribe to the one size fits all mode of instruction. These teacher participants differentiated their instruction through multiple modalities of instruction following the tenets of culturally responsive teaching for every child in their two respective classrooms. For instance, Ms. J described an elaborate lesson that she had created for the one Egyptian student in her classroom. She had done extensive research on this particular students' culture, she invited the students' parents to the classroom to gather information about the family and their background, and had created a very warm and welcoming environment for her student (Ms. J, interview transcription notes, 5/1/13). Both teacher participants described that they were so resolute about including the tenets of culturally responsive pedagogy in their instruction because they had "experiences in which I know

what it is like to be the one who is different in the classroom" (Ms. J, interview transcription, 5/1/13). Ms. E shared that she was often viewed as, "less than in many of my graduate courses, even now, even to this day, when people hear my accent, they think that I am stupid" (Ms. E, interview transcription notes, 5/1/13). Therefore, Ms. E had shared similar experiences as her pupils; she had been reduced to a pejorative cultural stereotype and dismissed as unequal to her native English speakers.

ELLs and Early Literacy Development

The majority of teacher participants in the study relinquished the responsibility for the literacy instruction for their ELL pupils or if they did teach literacy to the ELL students, they presented students with a diluted curriculum. This finding from the study is common across the literature. As Ladson Billings and Gomez (2001) have posited, at times early childhood teachers compensate for their lack of initial success with culturally and linguistically diverse students by instructionally ignoring them in their classrooms. By spending the bulk of their time with the more successful students, teachers can convince themselves that the students who are failures are not their responsibility.

Moreover, ELL children are massively over-represented among the "functionally illiterate" in our country (NCELA, 2010). Yet, public discourse often absolves schools and society from responsibility for ELLs' under-achievement and attributes their academic failure to ELL students' own deficiencies, lack of effort, or deficiencies of their families (Cummins, 1994; Delgado-Gaitan, 1990, 1993). Additionally, ELL children living in poor socioeconomic conditions often face sustained isolation from the school culture, which can lead to miscommunications between parents and school (Delgado-Gaitan, 1990, 1993). Children bring to school a range of different experiences and expectations of literacy interactions. These experiences and expectations are firmly

rooted in the culture of the home and may be inconsistent with the experiences and

expectations of literacy that they encounter in schools (Au, 2011). Many of the

participants in this study demonstrated that they viewed ELL children as having a lack of

experiences to access in or to make new connections in their literacy instructions.

Therefore, many of the teacher participants provided the ELL pupils in their classrooms

with a low-level of literacy curriculum.

Cummins (1994) suggests that approaches to literacy instruction that focus on the

rudimentary skills of just reading and writing are unlikely to be successful. He elaborated

by defining between functional, cultural, and critical literacies. Functional literacy

implies a level of reading and writing that enables people to function adequately in

society. Cultural literacy emphasizes the need for shared experiences within a supportive

classroom community that values all learners' backgrounds. Critical literacy focuses on

the potential of written language as a means and a tool that encourages teachers to

analyze the division of power and resources in their school and in their larger society and

to transform structures that are discriminatory. Literacy interactions either reinforce or

challenge structures of power in school and society (Cummins, 1994).

Therefore, these literacy exchanges in early childhood classrooms between

mainstream teachers and ELL pupils either reinforce the coercive relations of power in

school and society or teachers can choose to use literacy as a tool to teach students to

empower themselves (Au, 2011; Cummins, 1994; Nieto, 2009). Teacher participants in

my study, who did not value the native Spanish language that their ELL children spoke,

were replicating and promoting the collaborative relations of power in the wider society.

In these micro-interactions, many minority group students are rendered voiceless in very

much the same way that their communities have been disempowered through their micro-interactions with societal institutions (Cummins, 1994).

Moreover, Freire's (2000) pedagogical methodology involves a radical transformation of the teacher-student relationship. In most traditional educational paradigms, the teacher holds all of the knowledge, and deposits information into students, who function as mere receptacles. Freire (2000) introduced a more critical model of the educational relationship, which recognized the role of the student's life experiences in making sense of the surrounding social reality. The student's understandings and experiences not only become part of the educational dialogue between student and teacher (since all learning, according to Freire, is based on conversations) but also become the concrete bases for the teaching of literacy skills. The student's life becomes part of the curriculum, and the student learns to read not meaningless phrases without any social context, but phrases with a bearing on everyday life experiences. Therefore, the student is learning to read the world in addition to the word (Freire & Macedo, 1987).

When teaching utilizing this method, teachers are also adopting culturally responsive pedagogy that honors students' various cultural and linguistic backgrounds by integrating the various learning styles into their classrooms. Teachers demonstrate to students that there is more than one way to interpret a statement, event, or action. By being allowed to learn in different ways or to share viewpoints and perspectives in a given situation based on their own cultural and social experiences, students become active participants in their literacy learning (Nieto, 2009).

Espoused Beliefs Versus Actual Teaching Practices

In this study, only a few of the participants were directly observed using the doctrines of culturally responsive pedagogy in their literacy instruction, such as grouping

children heterogeneously, using various ways to explain new vocabulary words, including music and movement, and most importantly, allowing ELL children to speak in their native language (Field notes transcriptions, 4/21/13 – 5/22/13). However, survey results indicated that participants felt that multicultural education was as important as other academic areas. This was contradictory to what was directly observed in their classrooms.

Researchers cite one of the predominant reasons for this educational incongruence as teachers' depreciatory perceptions regarding the ELL pupils in their classrooms, which negatively impact how they approach their literacy instruction with their ELL students (Au, 2011; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Nieto, 2009). Teachers' negative beliefs regarding their ELL students in turn affect classroom interactions between the ELL students and the teachers, which ultimately adversely affects student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Furthermore, teachers' beliefs about ELLs' abilities to perform literacy tasks affects how they instruct ELL pupils in their classrooms (Au, 2011; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Nieto, 2009).

Moreover, there is widespread concern among early childhood professionals regarding the effects of developmentally inappropriate instructional practices on young children (Bredekamp, 2011; Morrow, 2010). It is important to try and find out if early childhood teachers have adopted inappropriate practices and if they actually value these practices or if they "adopted them under duress" (Charlesworth, 1989, p. 23) due to lack of support, proper instructional materials, and professional training. Spodek (1988) called our attention to the need to better understand the role of teachers' implicit theories in guiding instruction. According to Spodek (1988), implicit theories are the ideas about

instruction that teachers develop from their personal experience based on their practice teaching in their own classrooms. These implicit theories differ from the explicit theories that are taught in education and child development courses and are disseminated in professional meetings and in research.

Filling Research Gaps

A report of the American Educational Research Association (AERA) on research and teacher education has highlighted the lack of research on in-service teachers who are currently instructing ELLs (Darling-Hammond & Brandsford, 2005). In addition, the bulk of research on teachers' perceptions of ELL pupils in their classrooms has been conducted almost exclusively with middle and secondary teachers. Given that educators widely agree that the early childhood years are a critical time for both academic and social/emotional growth, it is an enormous disservice to the field of education and to teachers, schools, and communities if we fail to address early childhood teachers' perceptions towards the ELL pupils in their classrooms (Bredekamp, 2011; Morrow, 2010). This study contributes by documenting the need for in-service mainstream early childhood teachers of ELL pupils to be engaged in meaningful and sustained professional development in order to effectively teach the early childhood ELL learners. Some specific areas of need that this study has highlighted are: the need to understand how second language is acquired, the importance of teaching through culturally responsive pedagogy, and finally, the study called attention to the need to better understand the role of teachers' implicit theories in guiding instruction, particularly when early childhood teachers are crafting literacy instruction for their ELL pupils.

Recommendations for Future Research

There are a number of recommendations that will expand upon the implications of this study. First, the impact of this parallel mixed-methods study could be made more comprehensive by increasing the sample size of teacher participants. Increasing the participant size of this study would be beneficial; according to the research there is increasing evidence that professional development in schools is associated with higher levels of ELL student literacy achievement (Au, 2011; Darling-Hammond & Ball, 1 Nieto, 2002, 2009). However, additional and more rigorous research can help to determine which professional development activities promote measurable gains in children's literacy achievement.

Future research might include examining the impact of professional development programs for teachers regarding on how early childhood learners acquire language(s). It is recommended that such sessions include second language acquisition theory and research-based instructional practices for teaching second languages and the knowledge that early childhood students' first and second languages will develop at more effective rates when students are allowed to use their native language in teachers' classrooms.

Additionally, school-wide professional development programs might benefit from including precise and prescriptive plans for their implementation in order to ensure that all early childhood teachers are aware of the tenets of culturally responsive teaching (Au, 2011; Gay, 2002). Culturally responsive practice occurs when teachers make their instruction rigorous, equitable, and challenging for all students.

The achievement gap for ELLs is ever widening. Analysis of the academic performance of ELLs on the 2005 National Assessment of Educational Progress indicates that only 29% of ELLs in eighth grade scored at or above the basic level in reading

compared to 73% of non-ELLs (NCELA, 2010). Such results on national assessments are especially alarming given that the influence of literacy proficiency on students' academic achievement grows stronger with each successive grade level, regardless of individual student factors (Au, 2011; Biancarosa & Snow, 2004; Morrow, 2010; NCELA, 2010).

Moreover, best practices in early literacy instruction suggests that mainstream early childhood teachers of ELL pupils should design their lessons so that their instruction has the same central element in every session; to make rich language comprehensible (Bredekamp, 2011; Morrow, 2010; Snow & Griffin, 1998). Goldenberg (1992) explained that when teaching ELL students, teachers might include accompanying oral explanations of literacy instruction and teacher read-alouds with visual explanation, gestures, and dramatizations to illustrate key concepts and vocabulary in their literacy instruction. Teachers might also find ways to activate and build students' background knowledge through the use of visuals, demonstrations, and graphic organizers. ELL students should be encouraged to read at their appropriate levels and have ample opportunities to hear rich, visually stimulating read-alouds, instead of being kept in static groups, like Ms. G, who kept all of her ELL pupils in one reading group, "so they [the ELL students] can all know that they don't know together" (Ms. G, interview transcription notes, 4/29/13). It is important to make early childhood ELL students feel as if they are a part of the classroom culture, and a good beginning is to invite them into the class discussions.

As Argyris and Schön (1974) postulated, espoused theories are the principles that individuals articulate that they believe in. Early childhood teachers typically embrace mantras such as: *I believe all children can learn* and *I treat every child in my classroom*

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exactly the same, and in actuality might not be inviting ELL pupils into class conversations, which is counter to their theories-in-use (Bredekamp, 2011; Morrow, 2010). Researchers have indicated that mainstream teachers often held negative attitudes about ELL students, and were often resentful of the time that it took to teach ELL pupils in their classrooms (Au, 2011; Clair, 1995; Cummins, 2001; Moll & Gonzalez, 1994; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Nieto, 2009; Reeves, 2004, 2006). However, with the arrival of the National Common Core State Standards, it will become more incumbent on each state and each local district to enact policies and practices to ensure that each early childhood student receives an academically rigorous and effective education. As Shor (1992) posits, to be for critical literacy is to take a stand on the kind of just society and democratic education we want. Many teachers, like Ms. E, the first grade *Teach for America* recruit and Ms. J, the Spanish World Language Teacher, strive against fitting students into the status quo. Many researchers share the democratic goals of critical literacy. To take part in this educational work will mean to endeavor to *teach literacy from below,* an approach to teaching literacy to all children, which questions the way things are and asks teachers to imagine alternatives, so that the word and the world (Freire & Macedo, 1987) may come together and create a space for social justice.

Implications

      Implications for policy. An examination of policies that affect ELL pupils can have monumental impact on the political and educational forefronts. Educational policies that are counter-intuitive to the tenets of social justice are often created with hidden agendas to keep culturally and linguistically marginalized groups of students disenfranchised and too often educators view policy as almost something divine and permanent, and not subject to examination or challenge. Even more upsetting is when

policymakers hide behind a call for empirical data as a method to exclude factors that expose the truth of poverty and social injustice (Bartolome, 2008). Most policymakers expect teachers to blindly implement educational policies without question. However, experts such as Kozol (1991) maintain that teachers should regularly engage in critical analysis of educational policies.

In order to critically examine currently educational policy, it is necessary to first identify hegemonic educational ideologies that inform educational policies (Bartolome, 2008). Cummins (2001) argues that current English-only policies are underwritten by views that are based on hegemonic and monolingual language ideology. These views are based on the highly questionable belief that cultural-linguistic groups are deficient. States such as California, Arizona, and Massachusetts have ushered in non-English language policies. Bartolome (2008) refers to these policies as racist and the squelching of language diversity in schools as a problem that is "largely a consequence of immigration" (p. 378).

However, with the advent of the national Common Core State Standards (CCSS), policy makers, administrators, and educators have to contend with formulating new and effective methods and instruction for the instruction of ELLs into the curriculum and assessments. In fact, the language of the common core state standards read:

> ELLs are a heterogeneous group with differences in ethnic background, first language, socioeconomic status, quality of prior schooling, and levels of English language proficiency. Effectively educating these students requires diagnosing each student instructionally, adjusting instruction, and closely monitoring student progress (U.S. Department of Education, 2012).

Therefore, schools in the states that have adopted them are now responsible to adhere to the common core state standards. ELLs' ability to access the CCSS and achievement on the CCSS-based assessments is predicated on their ability to acquire literacy and academic language. Currently, 46 states have adopted the CCSS, including New Jersey. Consequently, new policies for teaching and assessing ELL students must be created. I am hopeful that this study initiates part of this vital conversation amongst educators and policy-makers.

Schools of teacher education would benefit from adopting new policies in their curricula, particularly for the education of early childhood pre-service teachers, since over the past fifteen years ELL student enrollment in our country has nearly doubled (The Working Group on ELL Policy, 2010) and more than half of ELLs are in elementary school and 40% are between ages three and eight (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). Schools of teacher education programs might consider requiring that early childhood pre-service candidates participate in carefully crafted supervised practicums and field immersion programs so that they experience teaching a range of diverse children with various backgrounds, including ELLs (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). Currently, according to the U.S. Department of Education (2010), only one in five teacher-preparation programs in the U.S. includes a full course on teaching ELLs while a majority of programs will include at least one course on teaching students with learning disabilities. However, ELLs will soon outnumber students with disabilities nationally (The Working Group on ELL Policy 2010). This study has illuminated the need for shifts in policy to take place on federal, state, and local levels that will ensure that ELL pupils are educationally accounted for.

Implications for practice. Teachers who are currently struggling to find ways to teach ELL students in their classroom should be encouraged to look at successful practices, particularly culturally responsive practices. For example, teachers might provide academic language support through engaging ELLs in appropriate language environments for young children that include conversation, acceptance, experience, and children's literature (Bredekamp, 2011). Teachers might learn to understand that overcorrecting and judging emergent language can discourage children from making further attempts at communication (Adams, 1990). Early childhood teachers are often masters at scaffolding firsthand experiences for children, thus promoting language experiences through continual communications with teachers and peers and through play experiences with peers. These conversations and experiences are further supported through the use of children's literature (Bredekamp, 2011; Morrow, 2010). These same principles apply to ELLs. However, special accommodations must be made to provide an appropriate learning environment. Given that many ELLs often need modifications well after they enter mainstream education, it is not equal, fair, or developmentally appropriate for teachers to utilize the same instructional strategies for all children in their classrooms (Cummins, 2001).

Moreover, general guidelines for culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2002) can help teachers create learning communities that value cultural and linguistic diversity, while simultaneously holding high expectations for student achievement. An early childhood teacher with culturally relevant literacy pedagogy helps students to: make connections between the texts being read and the students' own lives, work collaboratively in small learning communities to teach one another, and learn to respect

diversity as well as individual differences (Ladson-Billings, 2006). Both the qualitative and quantitative data of this study illuminated the need for teachers who work with ELL children to be well versed in the guidelines of culturally responsive teaching.

Implications for research. There is a need to continue to research the perceptions of early childhood mainstream classroom teachers towards early childhood ELLs and how those perceptions manifest in their literacy instruction. The preponderance of research on teachers' perceptions towards ELL students has focused almost exclusively on middle and secondary level pupils. As a result, there is a gap in the research and literature where early childhood teachers and early childhood ELL pupils should be represented.

Implications For Professional Development

Professional development that counts. In this study, none of the teacher participants reported receiving any formal training in how to differentiate their instruction for ELL pupils in their classrooms. Moreover, research points to the fact that teachers' perceptions along with their prior experiences affect what they learn (Fullan 2005; Guskey, 2000). Additionally, teachers' personal and professional histories have been found to play an important role in what they learn from professional development experiences (Au, 2006, 2011; Darling-Hammond & Ball, 1998; Goldenberg, 1998).

Furthermore, meaningful professional development could benefit teachers by emphasizing that learning to teach children requires knowledge of children, their ideas, and their ways of thinking, and that this knowledge is crucial to teaching for understanding. Understanding students is essential for making connections, particularly between mainstream teachers and ELL pupils (Au, 2006, 2011; Goldenberg, 1992). Learning how to hear what students say requires more than acuity; it requires seeing the

world through another's eyes and perspective, not an easy task especially when the teachers' and students' worlds are different, sometimes disparate (Darling-Hammond & Ball, 1998). However, knowing how to link students' learning and instructional goals depends on insight into learners; what interests them, what they bring to learning, and how they learn (Nieto, 2009). Gay (2002) postulates that these understandings and these methods of teaching can be learned through professional development. Even if mainstream early childhood teachers' implicit theories cannot be changed, they can learn about the tenets of culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2002).

In order to design professional development that will make effective and sustainable changes so that teachers will begin to incorporate culturally responsive pedagogy in their classrooms, administrators need to consult models of best practices in staff development. Gay and Howard (2000) have proposed a two-staged multicultural teacher education model to prepare a relatively in-depth cultural awareness for both pre-service and in-service teachers, in order to assist them in meeting the needs of ELL students. The first stage develops teachers' knowledge of ELL students' ethnic and cultural diversity. The second stage centers on translating this knowledge indo pedagogical practices, including the training of multicultural pedagogical competencies. Emphasis is placed on cultural sensitivity, linguistic diversity, and teaching strategies for diverse learners are interwoven throughout the program (Gay & Howard, 2000).

Moreover, according to Fullan (2005) and Guskey (2000) effective professional development for in-service teachers should build upon the participants' foundation of skills, knowledge and expertise as well as engage the participants as learners. Too often, teachers conceptualize professional development as a series of pre-ordained topics and

dates chosen by the school administration, which has little relevance to the teachers' day-to-day needs. However, if professional development is to be effective for classroom teachers, they must have a voice in choosing the topic(s) and become actively engaged in the process. In many ways, building effective professional development is similar to building an effective lesson for students in a classroom. A constructivist approach stresses that teachers be provided time to practice, constructive feedback, follow-up and feedback, all of which, would ideally be built into the program. The typical *one-shot* professional development day is virtually doomed to fail before it even starts. If educators want to enact meaningful change for both teachers and ELL students, they must measure changes in teacher knowledge and skills and provide teachers time to self-assess and reflect as well (Fullan, 2005).

Personal Implications for Research

Conducting this study has ignited a passion for research on behalf of early childhood ELL pupils and all students who represent cultural and linguistic diversity in our public schools. I plan on continuing and extending the premise of this study in the hopes of being the agent of change and the voice of marginalized children both here in New Jersey, as well as across the U.S.

In an effort to better understand the quantitative aspect of this study, I made several connections with colleagues in the mathematics and statistics department at the university where I teach. One of the instructors became interested in the survey instrument that I used for the study, Pohan and Aguilar's (2001) *Professional beliefs about diversity*. We have discussed the possibility of conducting a longitudinal mixed-method study, using a much larger sample of participants. I hope that by increasing the scope of my research, I will be able to have a larger impact and shed a greater light on the

need for professional development for in-service teachers of ELL pupils on both culturally responsive pedagogy and the role of second language acquisition in their instruction.

In addition, I see a connection between how schools of education prepare pre-service teachers to instruct ELL students. Conducting my research has reaffirmed my desire to advocate for the need for as well as conduct research on pre-service educators' development of social justice dispositions as they prepare to teach in 21st Century public schools.

Personal Implications for Policy

In my role as a faculty member in an institution of teacher education, I see the need to advocate to include more diverse settings early and often in pre-service teacher education programs. Schools of teacher education might benefit from requiring pre-service candidates to participate in carefully crafted supervised practicums and field immersion programs so that they experience teaching children with a wide range of diverse backgrounds. Merely including multicultural coursework in teacher education programs is not effective in developing social justice dispositions in pre-service teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Recent studies suggest that multicultural coursework needs to be linked to early fieldwork in order to ameliorate preconceived notions and/or stereotypes that pre-service teachers may have about children who do not share the same cultural background. Evidence suggests that by linking course content and field experiences, we might develop culturally responsive teacher candidates (Ah-Lee & Herner-Patnode, 2010).

Adams, Bondy, and Kuhel (2005) found that combining field immersion programs with guided reflection embedded in course content, along with careful

scaffolding with faculty members, held the most promising outcomes for teacher candidates. Through the combination of field work and 'unpacking' of experiences in the classroom with the course instructor, the researchers found that the pre-service teacher candidates were able to examine their own preconceived notions about poverty and stereotypes about culturally and linguistically diverse children. Perhaps if the teacher participants in this study had experienced coursework in which they were able to interact with diverse groups of children in their pre-service education, they may have been able to demonstrate more culturally responsive instruction with their ELL pupils in their current practice.

Personal Implications for Practice

The net result of this study is that I became more reflective in my own teaching: I was and am inspired by reading Haberman's (1991) thoughts on the pedagogy of poverty. I can use his words to help my pre-service teacher candidates conceptualize the basic tenets of culturally responsive instruction, "Whenever students are actively involved, it is likely that good teaching is going on – and further, whenever students are involved in heterogeneous groups, it is likely that good teaching is going on" (p. 292). The more I read and re-read Haberman's (1991) words, the more I found the genius in their simplicity.

I am planning on implementing a concept that Ladson-Billings and Gomez (2001) outlined in an article concerning developing Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) for teachers who grapple with teaching diverse student groups in impoverished elementary schools. In order to challenge early childhood teachers preconceived notions about children who were deemed as doomed for failure due to their poor academic track records and impoverished backgrounds, Ladson-Billings and Gomez (2001) asked

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teachers to focus on finding strengths, even it was just one strength for each child. Initially, this was a difficult task for teachers, as they are accustomed to giving up on children who seem to be academically unreachable. However, after participating in this early childhood PLC, teachers learned to become tenacious and to build on children's strengths. This was a valuable lesson for teachers who may be tempted to abandon instruction for their hard-to-teach ELL students.

The idea of focusing on children's strengths held resonance for me in work with professional development schools. Too often, teachers want magic-bullet solutions for their most challenging students. I saw how important it is to challenge teachers to find strengths in children and build upon those strengths in order to change their thinking around their practices. Too often, as my study and other research have pointed out, teachers want to relinquish responsibility for the students that they find difficult to instruct (Au, 2006, 2011; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Nieto, 2009). However, I realize that it is imperative that classroom teachers begin taking primary responsibility for the literacy instruction for their ELL pupils.

Using a Different Lens

I also plan to further examine the data I collected for this dissertation through a case-study strategy of inquiry. I am fascinated with the notion of following two pre-service candidates through their field experiences, student teaching, and through their first year of teaching, in order to see how their perceptions of early childhood ELL pupils develop and what experiences might shape their perceptions. In addition, I am interested to see what type of course-work might affect their ability to develop social justice dispositions, for instance through placements in early field experiences that allow them to

interact with children who represent cultural and linguistic diverse students and their families.

I will also interrogate my data to see if there might be other questions that I might develop in order to more fully examine the relationship between the school and the ELL students' homes. The home and school are two contributing sources of a child's literacy development. Evidence suggests that family and teacher practices are more crucial than other factors such as race, parent education, family size, and marital status in determining a child's academic success and parents' involvement in a child's education (Delgado-Gaitan, 1993). When students' home literacy practices are related to school-based literacy practices, a learning environment is created that best supports children's early literacy development (Bredekamp, 2011).

Additionally, in the future, I would like to investigate the impact of teachers' perceptions on student literacy achievement and the ways in which we might assess children's literacy achievement in the early grades.

Action as Transformation

Critical theory suggests that teachers should try to understand that schools are a part of the social world that their students live in, and that teachers should understand the connectedness of their roles in the communities that their students inhabit (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002). However, in most educational systems, contradictions and gaps often exist between what schools propose that they do for students, especially for the diverse student populations, and what they actually accomplish (Freire, 1987; Giroux, 1984). In this study, it became evident through the data collection that some of the teacher participants needed assistance in developing both reflective practice and raising their

level of critical consciousness in relation to how they perceived ELL pupils and their families.

For example, many of the teachers in this study made negative assumptions about the regarding the ELL pupils' ability to learn, and in the case of the ELL pupils' parents, some of the teacher participants also made many unfounded accusations concerning the ELL families' lack of formal education and interest in their children's education. However, Freire (2000) posits that when teachers can be shown how to develop critical consciousness, the process can also signify their awakening of the critical awareness of "power relations within an historical context in order to intervene against oppressive, dehumanizing forces and transform one's reality" (p. 111). This process is facilitated through praxis and critical action. Schor (1992) defines critical consciousness:

> The desocialized thinking called critical consciousness refers to the way we see ourselves in relation to knowledge and power in society, to the way we use and study language, and to the way we act in school and daily life to reproduce or to transform the current conditions (p. 129).

The teacher-participants in my study demonstrated the need to view themselves in the context of both the role they play in the school and also how that role is part of the larger society, which is responsible for the conditions in which culturally and linguistically diverse children are continually forced within the margins of society; the dismissive and prejudicial manner in which many of the teacher participants perceived the ELL students and their families is part of the larger societal machinations that keep diverse and impoverished children achieving on-par with their native-speaking peers (Giroux, 1994).

Moreover, this particular research-site school already has some of the essential human resources to begin to develop communities of critical friends. For example, the faculty has two bilingual Spanish speakers on its staff: Ms. E, the first grade *Teach for America* recruit, and Ms. J, the Spanish World Language teacher. Ms. J, in particular, is both a trusted member of the early childhood teacher cohort, and a self-proclaimed advocate for the ELL children and Spanish-speaking population of the school. Additionally, Ms. J shares the same heritage of most of the ELL children and she has already changed the composition of the Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) by individually inviting parents in Spanish and English. Ms. J could serve as an invaluable resource and as a catalyst for developing critical consciousness for the teachers at the research site school.

Nieto (2002) describes how teachers need spaces in which to develop a community of critical friends, that is, teachers who are capable of developing respectful but analytical relationships with their peers. Most teachers work in isolation, isolation builds barriers, and these barriers allow ELLs to become the sole responsibility of the mainstream and ESL teachers in separate, disconnected spaces. However, Nieto (2002) suggests that when schools develop places where teachers share information in safe places, these spaces have the potential to open up teachers' classrooms, and, more importantly, their perspectives. Critical communities can create venues for teachers to receive and synthesize information about ELL students' cultural and instructional needs. As Nieto postulated, "developing a community of critical friends is one way of facing difficult issues, and is one more step in the journey of transformation" (p. 211).

In summation, all teachers might benefit from learning how to teach organically and within the framework of culturally responsive pedagogy. Freire (1982) used generative words and themes in his teaching, words that invoked meaning and feeling among his students. In teacher education, this is often referred to as the *Language Experience Approach*. Ashton Warner (1965) wrote of her use of organic vocabulary, "Pleasant words won't do. Respectable words won't do. They must be words tied up, organically born form the dynamic life itself. They must be words that are already part of the child's being" (p. 33). Children's learning should be centered in their own experiences, language, and culture. However, the innate problem with this organic and culturally responsive method is that class oppression dominates how culturally and linguistically diverse children's experiences, languages, and cultures are viewed in public schools, many times in discordance with both the teachers' perceptions and the texts of the dominant curricula and textbooks.

Nieto (2002) posits, "Teachers who work collaboratively with their peers, students, and families in a spirit of solidarity will be better able to change schools to become more equitable and caring places for students of linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds" (p. 281). Even personal transformation is best accomplished as a collective journey that leads to change in more than just one classroom. The goal of transformative research is situated in concerns for social justice and human rights (Mertens, 2009). Hopefully, this study will be the impetus for more researchers to take up the cause of early childhood ELL pupils in public schools and help achieve transformative change in many classrooms across the country.

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Appendix A

Interview Protocol

IQ 1 – How many years have you been teaching?

IQ 2 – How many years at each grade level?

IQ 3 – How long have you been teaching in this school?

IQ 4 – How many ELL students do you have in your classroom?

IQ 5 – What do you think about students speaking their home language in school?

IQ 6 – What do you think are the most pressing issues regarding cultural and linguistic diversity in our school?

IQ 7 – What are your learning expectations for the ELL students in your classroom?

IQ 8 – How much of your assistance and/or instructional time do the ELL students in your classroom require in your classroom?

IQ 9 – How much assistance do you provide the families of ELLs?

IQ 10 – What instructional needs arise most when you work with ELL students in your class?

IQ 11 – How do the language backgrounds of your ELL students contribute to the culture of your classroom?

IQ 12 – What areas of expertise do you wish you had to best meet the literacy instructional needs of your ELL students?

Appendix B

Survey Prompts from Pohan and Aguilar's (2001) Professional beliefs about diversity survey

SP1. Teachers should not be expected to adjust their preferred mode of instruction to accommodate the needs of all students.

SP2. The traditional classroom has been set up to support the middle-class lifestyle.

SP3. Gays and lesbians should not be allowed to teach in public schools.

SP4. Students and teachers would benefit from having a basic understanding of different religions.

SP5. Money spent to educate the severely disabled would be better spent on gifted programs for gifted students.

SP6. All students should be encouraged to become fluent in a second language.

SP7. Only schools serving students of color need a racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse staff and faculty.

SP8. The attention girls receive in school is comparable to the attention boys receive.

SP9. Tests, particularly standardized tests, have frequently been used as a basis for segregating students.

SP10. People of color are adequately represented in most textbooks today.

SP11. Students with physical limitations should be placed in the regular classroom whenever possible.

SP12. Males are given more opportunities in math and science than females.

SP13. Generally, teachers should group students by ability levels.

SP14. Students living in racially isolated neighborhoods can benefit socially from participating in racially integrated classrooms.

SP15. Historically, education has been monocultural, reflecting only one reality and has been biased toward the dominant group.

SP16. Whenever, possible, second language learners should receive instruction in their first language until they are proficient enough to learn via English instruction.

SP17. Teachers often expect less from students from lower socioeconomic class.

SP18. Multicultural education is most beneficial for students of color.

SP19. More women are needed in administrative positions in schools.

SP20. Large numbers of students of color are improperly placed in special education classes by school personnel.

SP21. In order to be effective with all students, teachers should have experience working with students from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds.

SP22. Students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds typically have fewer educational opportunities than their middle-class peers.

SP23. Students should not be allowed to speak a language other than English while in school.

SP24. It is important to consider religious diversity in setting public school policy.

SP25. Multicultural education is less important than reading, writing, arithmetic, and computer literacy.

Teacher Survey

Pohan and Aguilar's (2001) *Professional beliefs about diversity survey*

Teacher Survey

Select one response for each of the 25 statements below.

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neutral	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Teachers should not be expected to adjust their preferred mode of instruction to accommodate the needs of all students.	❶	❷	❸	❹	❺
The traditional classroom has been set up to support the middle-class lifestyle.	❶	❷	❸	❹	❺
Gays and lesbians should not be allowed to teach in public schools.	❶	❷	❸	❹	❺
Students and teachers would benefit from having a basic understanding of different religions.	❶	❷	❸	❹	❺
Money spent to educate the severely disabled would be better spent on gifted programs for gifted students.	❶	❷	❸	❹	❺
All students should be encouraged to become fluent in a second language.	❶	❷	❸	❹	❺
Only schools serving students of color need a racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse staff and faculty.	❶	❷	❸	❹	❺
The attention girls receive in school is comparable to the attention boys receive.	❶	❷	❸	❹	❺
Tests, particularly standardized tests, have frequently been used as a basis for	❶	❷	❸	❹	❺

segregating students.

People of color are adequately represented in most textbooks today.	❶	❷	❸	❹	❺

People of color are adequately represented in most textbooks today. ❶ ❷ ❸ ❹ ❺

Students with physical limitations should be placed in the regular classroom whenever possible. ❶ ❷ ❸ ❹ ❺

Males are given more opportunities in math and science than females. ❶ ❷ ❸ ❹ ❺

Generally, teachers should group students by ability levels. ❶ ❷ ❸ ❹ ❺

Students living in racially isolated neighborhoods can benefit socially from participating in racially integrated classrooms. ❶ ❷ ❸ ❹ ❺

Historically, education has been monocultural, reflecting only one reality and has been biased toward the dominant group. ❶ ❷ ❸ ❹ ❺

Whenever, possible, second language learners should receive instruction in their first language until they are proficient enough to learn via English instruction. ❶ ❷ ❸ ❹ ❺

Teachers often expect less from students from lower socioeconomic class. ❶ ❷ ❸ ❹ ❺

Multicultural education is most beneficial for students of color. ❶ ❷ ❸ ❹ ❺

More women are needed in administrative positions in schools. ❶ ❷ ❸ ❹ ❺

Large numbers of students of color are improperly placed in special education classes by school personnel. ❶ ❷ ❸ ❹ ❺

In order to be effective with all students, teachers should have experience

working with students from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds.

Students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds typically have fewer educational opportunities than their middle-class peers.

❶   ❷   ❸   ❹   ❺

Students should not be allowed to speak a language other than English while in school.

❶   ❷   ❸   ❹   ❺

It is important to consider religious diversity in setting public school policy.

❶   ❷   ❸   ❹   ❺

Multicultural education is less important than reading, writing, arithmetic, and computer literacy.

❶   ❷   ❸   ❹   ❺