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Experiencing Foundational Literacy: A Phenomenological Study Of Preservice Teachers' Preparation To Teach Literacy

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EXPERIENCING FOUNDATIONAL LITERACY: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL
STUDY OF PRESERVICE TEACHERS' PREPARATION TO TEACH LITERACY

by

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A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

of the

University of North Dakota

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

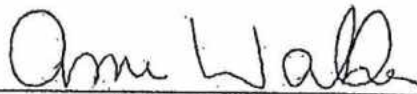
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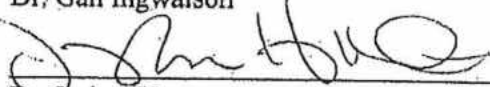
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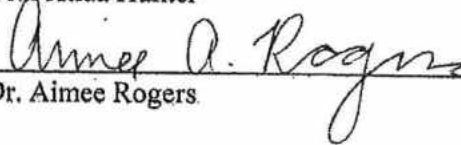
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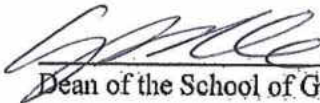


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Allison J. Izzo
November 21, 2019

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In loving memory of my father, Lee, and my grandmother, Paula.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the lived experience of nine elementary preservice teachers who took an early foundational literacy course. This qualitative phenomenological study was conducted at a teacher education program at a mid-sized Midwestern university. The results of this study indicate that the long-term impact the foundational literacy course had on preservice teachers' subsequent literacy methods coursework and student teaching was minimal. Interviews, course reflection papers, and teaching artifacts support the implication that without opportunities for preservice teachers to integrate foundational literacy in their literacy methods courses and to observe teachers explicitly using foundational literacy knowledge in elementary classrooms, preservice teachers may not perceive foundational literacy knowledge as an essential component of effective literacy instruction.

There are three recommendations resulting from this study. Teacher education programs should integrate foundational literacy knowledge into all aspects of literacy education coursework and practical experiences. While a foundational literacy course provides preservice teachers with a strong foundation of what foundational literacy knowledge encompasses, teacher education programs should extend this knowledge by incorporating field experiences that require preservice teachers to apply foundational literacy knowledge to literacy instruction in an elementary classroom. It is recommended that teacher education programs ensure that all literacy coursework and related field

experiences require preservice teachers to explicitly apply foundational literacy knowledge when designing and implementing instruction.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Teaching students to read is one of the most important and complex skills an elementary school teacher needs to master (Hurford et al., 2016). Research indicates that elementary students who do not learn to read by the third grade will continue to be negatively impacted (Rickenbrode & Walsh, 2013). “The majority of these children will remain poor readers through and beyond high school and are less likely than their peers to complete high school or attend college” (Rickenbrode & Walsh, 2013, p. 32). The impact of having poor reading skills may inhibit individuals from being contributing members of society (Hurford et al., 2016). This is why preparing teachers to teach literacy effectively is so critical.

Preparing teachers to teach reading in the elementary classroom is essential (Cunningham, Zibulsky, & Callahan, 2009), but is complex. Preparation goes far beyond methods and strategies for teaching reading. Effective literacy teachers need to understand how children learn to read in order to determine the most effective methods and strategies to use in the classroom (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). Additionally, effective literacy teachers need to understand how the reading and writing processes work, how to assess their students’ individual literacy skills using a wide variety of assessments, and how to use assessment data to determine literacy instructional needs. Teachers need to know how to implement literacy curricula, materials,

methods, and strategies in order to effectively teach reading (Griffith & Lacina, 2017; InTASC, 2011; Joshi et al., 2009). Finally, they must also know when and how to intervene when their students fall behind in reading (Blair, Rupley, & Nichols, 2011). What this means is that teachers who want to teach literacy effectively must acquire an enormous amount of knowledge (Moats, 2009).

What is Foundational Literacy Knowledge?

It has been well established that teachers need a strong understanding of foundational literacy knowledge (Moats, 2009). Teachers with a strong foundational literacy knowledge understand student errors. These teachers are better able to give their students critical feedback, choose the most appropriate examples, and design lesson plans that can effectively target students' needs (Aydin, Demirdogen, Akin, & Uzuntiryaki-Kondakci, 2015; Moats, 2009). Thus, there is a vast amount of information that teachers must know *about reading* in order to effectively *teach reading*; this information is often referred to in educational literature as foundational literacy knowledge. The International Literacy Association's (ILA) 2017 Standards for the preparation of literacy professionals includes seven standards. The first ILA (2017) standard, Foundational Literacy Knowledge, includes: (a) knowledge of reading development (i.e., concepts of print, phonological awareness, phonics, word recognition, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension) and evidence-based reading instructional approaches; (b) knowledge of writing development as well as evidence-based writing instructional approaches; (c) knowledge of the components that are central to language development (i.e., phonetics, phonology, morphology, orthography, semantics, syntax, and text structure) as well as evidence-based instructional approaches; and (d) knowledge of the interrelatedness of the

components of literacy as well as evidence-based instructional approaches that support this development.

The remaining seven ILA standards, listed below, rely on Standard 1 as a foundation.

- Standard 2: Curriculum and Instruction: Candidates use foundational knowledge to critique and implement literacy curricula to meet the needs of all learners and to design, implement, and evaluate evidence-based literacy instruction for all learners.
- Standard 3: Assessment and Evaluation: Candidates understand, select, and use valid, reliable, fair, and appropriate assessment tools to screen, diagnose, and measure student literacy achievement; inform instruction and evaluate interventions; participate in professional learning experiences; explain assessment results and advocate for appropriate literacy practices to relevant stakeholders.
- Standard 4: Diversity and Equity: Candidates demonstrate knowledge of research, relevant theories, pedagogies, essential concepts of diversity and equity; demonstrate and provide opportunities for understanding all forms of diversity as central to students' identities; create classrooms and schools that are inclusive and affirming; advocate for equity at school, district, and community levels.
- Standard 5: Learners and the Literacy Environment: Candidates meet the developmental needs of all learners and collaborate with school personnel to use a variety of print and digital materials to engage and motivate all learners; integrate digital technologies in appropriate, safe, and effective ways; foster a positive climate that supports a literacy-rich learning environment.

- Standard 6: Professional Learning and Leadership: Candidates recognize the importance of, participate in, and facilitate ongoing professional learning as part of career-long leadership roles and responsibilities.
- Standard 7: Practical & Clinical Experiences: Candidates apply theory and best practice in multiple supervised practicum/clinical experiences.

Notice that Standard 2, Curriculum and Instruction, which focuses on the teaching of reading, begins with foundational knowledge: “Candidates use foundational knowledge to critique and implement literacy curricula...” (ILA, 2017, p. 2). This requires that teacher candidates or preservice teachers, both terms used for college students preparing to be teachers, must learn to use foundational literacy knowledge so they can teach literacy effectively. In sum, foundational literacy knowledge encompasses reading and writing development, literacy components, and the interrelatedness of these components. Preservice teachers must be able to use foundational literacy knowledge to inform their evidence-based instructional approaches (ILA, 2017), yet teacher education programs continue to struggle with how best to prepare students with this knowledge.

Teacher Education Literacy Preparation Challenges

Despite several decades of research highlighting the role of foundational literacy knowledge in effective reading instruction, many teacher preparation programs are still providing inadequate foundational literacy knowledge to their preservice teachers (American Federation of Teachers, 1999; Dillon, O’Brien, Sato, & Kelly, 2011; International Literacy Association, 2017; National Reading Panel, 2000). For example, Hurford et al. (2016) conclude, “an alarmingly great many of the colleges of education

provided minimal to no training in the science of reading” (p. 8). Hurford et al. (2016) defines the term science of reading as:

...the corpus of knowledge that includes what science has determined to be relevant to reading, reading acquisition, assessment of poor reading and the interventions available for poor readers...this knowledge includes phonology, phonics, orthography, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, neuro-processing as it relates to reading and its genetic basis, visual, perceptual and memorial processing, the various writing systems, the alphabetic principle, letter-sound correspondences, among other areas. (pp. 1-2)

This is a great concern considering the percentage of elementary students with low reading performance has not changed since 1992 (National Reading Panel, 2010).

The National Center for Teacher Quality estimates that only 37 percent of teacher preparation programs in the nation appear to be teaching the five essential literacy components for reading (i.e., phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension) (National Council on Teacher Quality, 2018). Moreover, studies have found that “teacher educators are not providing the necessary information needed for explicit and systematic instruction, because teacher educators themselves may not be comfortable with these concepts” (NCTQ, 2018, p. 59). For example, a study conducted by Courtland and Leslie (2010) examined the beliefs and practices of three literacy methods instructors who taught an elementary language arts methods course at their university. The researchers found that one out of three participants introduced a literacy strategy by connecting it to literacy theory. Of note, one of the participants began referring to balanced literacy as a theoretical concept when it should have been classified

as a practical literacy strategy. “The other instructors focused on preparing students for literacy teaching by introducing them to a range of practical tools” (Courtland & Leslie, 2010, p. 28) even though they thought they were also preparing them with theory (Courtland & Leslie, 2010). Another problem is that the commonly used literacy textbooks in teacher education courses have been found to be missing essential literacy information (Joshi et al., 2009). For example, Joshi et al. (2009) found that “...very few textbooks covered all the information considered to be the core of the majority of scientifically based reading research...” (p. 460).

Further, Joshi et al. (2009) states:

...phonemic awareness, phonics, and fluency, which are considered to be foundations of reading, were given less attention compared to vocabulary and comprehension... Even though the ultimate goal of reading is comprehension, it is generally accepted that decoding is the foundation for reading and is considered necessary although not sufficient for fluent reading. (p. 460)

What this means is that preservice teachers may not be getting the knowledge that is necessary to be able to effectively teach literacy (Moats, 1994). Hence, all of these factors can impact preservice teachers’ development.

Elementary Teachers Lack Literacy Knowledge

Researchers have also found that many in-service elementary teachers do not possess the literacy knowledge needed to promote their students’ literacy achievement (Cunningham, Zibulsky, & Callahan, 2009; Moats, 1994; Washburn, Joshi, & Cantrell, 2011). Decades ago, Moats (1994) concluded that “teachers are typically undereducated

for the very demanding task of teaching reading and spelling” (p. 82). Current research continues to show that the problem has not improved. As one study showed:

Approximately 53% of pre-service and 60% of in-service elementary teachers, who will be most responsible for assisting students with reading acquisition, were unable to correctly answer half of the questions regarding knowledge of language structure. Only 20% of 722 teachers could segment words into speech sounds; only 30% correctly identified the number of phonemes in half the items; and only 60% positively identified the irregular words in a list of 26 words... (Hurford et al., 2016, p. 4)

Without sufficient foundational literacy knowledge, such as understanding language structure or reading development, teachers may use teaching approaches without realizing if, how, and why they are effective (Tracey & Morrow, 2012). They may deliver instruction that “...is inadvertently confusing to children, such as encouraging students to “sound out” a phonetically irregular word...” (McCombes-Tolis & Spear-Swerling, 2011, p. 362). Without a clear understanding of foundational literacy knowledge teachers will continue to give students inaccurate information, they will be unable to explain literacy concepts appropriately, and they will be unable to organize literacy instruction effectively (Moats, 2009). This is why preparing preservice teachers with foundational literacy knowledge is so important.

Statement of the Problem

While there is plenty of literature on teachers’ lack of foundational knowledge and how important that knowledge is to the effective teaching of reading, as well as the relatively small number of teacher education programs that adequately cover foundational

literacy knowledge, there is little research on how preservice teachers use their foundational literacy knowledge to not only learn additional coursework, but also to use and apply this knowledge during their subsequent methods coursework and student teaching (Percy & Troyan, 2017). There is also little research available on how teacher education programs should structure their literacy coursework to maximize learning of foundational content knowledge. Most research studies have focused on teacher education programs that teach foundational literacy concepts during their methods coursework (Ballock, McQuitty, & McNary, 2018; Gelfuso, 2017; Griffith & Lacina, 2017; Phelps, 2009; Pomerantz & Condie, 2017). There are no known studies exploring the perspectives of preservice teachers who complete a foundational literacy course at the beginning of their teacher preparation program prior to literacy methods course work (Risko et al., 2008).

Purpose of the Study

Prior research has shown that foundational literacy knowledge enhances teachers' classroom practices (Bishop, Brownell, Klingner, Leko, & Galman, 2010); however, minimal research has evaluated the impact of specific literacy coursework on that knowledge development (Risko et al., 2008). This is particularly salient given that numerous critics of teacher education programs claim that these programs are not effectively preparing preservice teachers to teach literacy (Cochran-Smith, 2006).

The purpose of this study was to qualitatively examine the lived experiences of nine elementary preservice teachers who took an early foundational literacy course. The study used a phenomenological approach, as it aimed to understand the essence of

learning foundational literacy knowledge and using foundational literacy knowledge in preservice teachers' later literacy methods coursework and student teaching experiences.

Significance of the Study

Ensuring teachers are prepared with foundational literacy knowledge is critical. When teachers have high levels of foundational literacy knowledge they are rated highly successful by their employers (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005), have been shown to raise their students' achievement levels in literacy, (Darling-Hammond & Branford, 2005), feel more confident in their teaching abilities, (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005), and are more likely to remain in the teaching profession (NCATE, 2010). Considering teacher turnover costs \$2.2 billion annually (NCTAF, 2016), an increased understanding of the ways in which preservice teachers experience acquisition of foundational literacy knowledge during a teacher education program could highlight potential areas for improvement at Prairie University as well as teacher education programs nationwide.

Although studies have demonstrated that teacher education programs need to improve how they enhance preservice teachers' foundational literacy knowledge (Washburn, Joshi, & Cantrell, 2011), and accrediting agencies have highlighted the importance of adequate literacy education, research focused on how to best prepare preservice teachers to teach literacy remains limited (Cochran-Smith et al., 2015; Sailors et al., 2018). In particular, studies are needed to examine how preservice teachers can apply what they have learned in coursework to other areas of training, including methods courses, field experiences, and student teaching (Ball & Forzani, 2009; Purvis, McNeill, & Everatt, 2016). The present study intends to focus on how foundational literacy

knowledge is incorporated into and experienced within beginning teacher preparation programs (Risko et al., 2008).

Research Questions

This qualitative study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How do preservice teachers describe their philosophy of teaching literacy?
2. How did preservice teachers experience the foundational literacy course?
3. How do preservice teachers experience foundational literacy knowledge during their subsequent literacy methods coursework and student teaching?

Context of the Study

The study took place at a university-based teacher education program located in the Midwest that required elementary education majors to take a three-course literacy education sequence. Participants were nine female preservice teachers studying elementary education who took the foundational literacy course, *Understanding Readers and Writers*, during the Spring 2016 semester taught by the researcher. Although the researcher was aware of the literature on preservice teachers' perceptions of effective literacy knowledge that suggested the influence of the instructors' pedagogical approach, (Lin, 2011), the researcher was interested in exploring preservice teachers' perceptions of their experiences with foundational literacy knowledge as they completed additional coursework, gained more field experience, and completed their student teaching (Mallette, Kile, Smith, McKinney, & Readence, 2000). The study employed a phenomenological research design in order to illuminate the voices of preservice teachers from a constructivist and socioconstructivist perspective.

Prairie University's Foundational Literacy Knowledge Course

Prairie University, where this study took place, structures their elementary education program differently than most teacher education programs: instead of superficially integrating foundational literacy into one or two methods courses, Prairie University requires a sequence of three literacy courses. The sequence begins with a three-credit course on foundational literacy knowledge followed by two methods courses—a three-credit course focused on reading and a two-credit course focused on writing, following by a semester of student teaching. Most teacher education programs require reading and writing methods courses similar to these; however, the addition of a separate foundational literacy course prior to the literacy methods coursework is unusual (Hurford et al., 2016; McDonald, Kazemi, & Kavanagh, 2013). The program was structured this way to give candidates a firm grounding in foundational literacy knowledge so that they could understand the science and theory behind the methods they would learn later. The course was also designed to help them reflect on their beliefs and preconceptions about teaching reading at the same time as introducing them to evidence-based practices grounded in linguistics, psychology, and other foundational aspects of literacy.

The foundational literacy course, which is the focus of this dissertation, was titled *Understanding Readers and Writers*. It was generally taken by preservice teachers in their junior year following admission into the Teacher Education program at the University. This class met on campus for one hour and fifteen minutes two times per week for the duration of a sixteen-week academic semester. Preservice teachers were introduced to the theories, principles, and concepts that form the foundation of literacy practices (Kennedy, Alves, & Rodgers, 2015). In addition to time spent attending

lectures, this course included three hours and fifteen minutes of field work. During field work, preservice teachers administered reading assessments to first grade students and writing assessments to fourth grade students at a local elementary school. Preservice teachers then had to write detailed reports describing each child's literacy development using the foundational knowledge they had learned in class.

Topics in the course included:

- the reading and writing processes;
- broad patterns of literacy development as well as the conditions that nurture literacy development;
- the role of phonemic awareness, phonics, comprehension, fluency, and vocabulary in that development;
- different types of literacy assessments and how to use assessment to plan for instruction;
- reflection on one's literacy development and literacy practices as they relate to how they will organize their literacy teaching;
- meeting the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse children, as well as struggling readers;
- using foundational information learned in the course to reflect on and begin to apply it to determine appropriate literacy instruction;
- understanding that students are individuals with differences in their approaches to learning and performance (Understanding Readers and Writers Course Syllabus, 2016, pp. 1-2).

A social constructivist pedagogical framework guided the development of the Understanding Readers and Writers course. As drawn from the works of Piaget (1954), Dewey (1928), and Vygotsky (1978), this view posits that students' learning is influenced by their prior experiences, is socially negotiated, and is culturally influenced (Merriam & Bierema, 2014). Additionally, the social constructivist framework suggests that mental representations for new learning are based on past experiences (i.e., schemata) that are difficult to change (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007). According to this framework, the instructor's role was to design activities that directed students toward mastery of new material and that promoted application of newly gained knowledge. For example, in this course students had the opportunity to apply the knowledge they gained about reading development to the assessment of first graders' emergent literacy skills, and in turn to use the results of this assessment to draw general ideas for future instruction. In another example, preservice teachers completed a case study in which they had the opportunity to apply the foundational knowledge they gained about phonics and children's writing development by analyzing second grade students' spelling words in order to determine the students' level of spelling development.

This course content was consistent with Darling-Hammond and Bransford's (2005) vision of effective elements in a teacher education program, in that it was designed to provide preservice teachers experiences that would challenge their preconceived views about teaching literacy (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007) while simultaneously giving candidates a firm grounding in foundational literacy knowledge before learning methods. At the beginning of the course, the preservice teachers were asked to write a literacy history paper in which they reflected on their own

reading and writing development, their experiences with reading and instruction in school, and how they envisioned teaching reading in the future. At the end of the semester, after studying foundational literacy knowledge, the preservice teachers were asked to re-visit their literacy history paper and discuss how their beliefs about reading and writing had changed due to information learned during the semester.

Researcher's Perceptions of Teaching the Course

Before conducting research, the researcher was a doctoral student and graduate teaching assistant at Prairie University and taught the foundational literacy course during the Spring 2016 semester. My experiences teaching the foundational literacy course prompted my interest in exploring preservice teachers' perceptions towards the course content they were learning. As it was the first literacy course in a three-course sequence, students enrolled wanting or expecting to learn methods of teaching reading and how to design lesson plans. Instead, the course required them to learn foundational literacy knowledge including complex topics such as phonics and the cognitive reading process model, which many students found difficult to understand and did not see how it applied to activities in teaching reading. Students complained about feeling overwhelmed with all they were expected to learn, complained about all the new terminology they were expected to learn, and questioned whether they really needed this information to be elementary teachers. At the end of the semester, when I asked the students to recommend changes that might improve the course for future preservice teachers, typical comments included "fewer readings," "more information on how to teach literacy strategies in fun ways," "more time in the elementary classroom," and "more time learning about strategies we can use in our future classrooms." Although I had repeatedly discussed and

showed videos of how teachers used foundational literacy knowledge in their teaching of literacy, and the students had written reports in which they had to analyze children's literacy development and language knowledge in order to plan instruction, they still would have preferred to learn methods and design reading lessons. In my teaching evaluations, they complained that the course covered too many topics, was too challenging and was the hardest course they had yet taken at the university, and questioned whether the information was applicable to their future teaching.

Because the course content appeared to contrast with what the candidates believed was important to their future teaching, I wondered whether requiring the foundational literacy course early in a teacher education program—at least one semester before a literacy methods course and at least two semesters before student teaching—was an effective sequencing for the course. Along with this, while the preservice teachers demonstrated knowledge of foundational literacy by the end of the course, and while their stated beliefs about effective literacy teaching at the end of the course were grounded in the science of reading, I wondered if and how the preservice teachers would use this information in their subsequent methods courses and in their student teaching.

Definitions of Key Terms

Common terms used in this study are defined as follows:

Cooperating Teacher: A preservice teacher's assigned elementary classroom teacher during student teaching.

Field Experiences: "A variety of early and ongoing field-based opportunities in which candidates may observe, assist, tutor, instruct, and /or conduct research" (IRA Standards, 2000).

Foundational Literacy Knowledge: "...the detailed knowledge of language, text, and reading development to make sense of curriculum materials, to understand student work, and to represent reading tasks and materials in ways that can foster students' learning" (Phelps, 2009, pp. 138-139) needed to teach literacy effectively (Bos, Mather, Dickson, Podhajski, & Chard, 2001; Cunningham, Zibulsky, & Callahan, 2009; Friesen & Butera, 2012; Joshi et al., 2009; Mather et al., 2001; McCombes-Tolis & Spear-Swerling, 2011; McCutchen et al., 2002; Phelps, 2009; Purvis, McNeill, & Everatt, 2016; Washburn, Joshi, & Cantrell, 2011).

Mentor Teacher: A preservice teacher's assigned elementary classroom teacher during methods coursework.

Preservice Teacher: Individuals enrolled in initial teacher preparation training (IRA, 2000).

Teacher Candidates: Individuals enrolled in initial teacher preparation training (IRA, 2000).

Teacher Education Program: Program at the baccalaureate level that prepares preservice teachers for their first teaching licenses (IRA, 2000).

University-Based Teacher Education Program: A teacher education program housed within a college or university (CAEP, 2018).

Chapter Summary

This chapter provided background information necessary to understand the research problem, the formulation of the research questions, and the purpose and significance of the study. A review of literature relevant to this study is included in Chapter II of this document. Chapter III explains the research methods that were used in

this study. An explanation of the study's qualitative research methodology, which includes a constructionist approach as well as the methods, researcher's role, participants, data collection, and data analysis will be discussed. Chapter IV of this document will discuss the research findings. Lastly, Chapter V will include the study's discussion, implications, and recommendations.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this chapter is to situate this study within the existing literature as it relates to how preservice teachers learn and later apply foundational literacy knowledge throughout their teacher education program. This chapter consists of seven sections. Chapter II begins with a discussion of the constructivist and social constructivist framework that informed the research on the perceptions and experiences of foundational literacy knowledge among preservice teachers in teacher education. Section Two discusses the apprenticeship of observation. Section Three explains how preservice teachers can experience cognitive disequilibrium when learning foundational literacy knowledge. Section Four describes how cognitive motivation theory can impact preservice teachers' learning. Section Five describes the role of context and setting when it comes to the factors that affect appropriation of foundational literacy knowledge. Section Six provides insight into the importance of structuring teacher education programs with an emphasis on cognitive restructuring. Section Seven provides a summary of the ways teacher education programs can be structured by optimizing practice-based approaches with a focus on core practices. Lastly, Chapter II concludes with a summary of the gaps in literature.

Constructivist Framework

According to constructivism, learning is described as a meaning-constructed process in which learners are actively involved in their own learning experiences (Biggs, 1996; Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007). From a constructivist view, learning involves the individual learner using their past and present knowledge to make sense out of their own understanding. According to Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist view, learning occurs when the learner is interacting with others through discussion and activities related to their shared learning experience (Merriam et al., 2007). Merriam et al. (2007) define social constructivism as learning "...that is socially mediated through a culture's symbols and language, which are constructed in interaction with others in the culture" (p. 292). There are several aspects of constructivism and social constructivism that guide this study. These include: the apprenticeship of observation, the importance of cognitive disequilibrium, cognitive motivation theory, and the role of context in knowledge appropriation.

Apprenticeship of Observation

One aspect of constructivism important to this study is Lortie's apprenticeship of observation (1975), which theorizes that preservice teachers "learn about teaching from having been students in school" (Smagorinsky & Barnes, 2014, p. 29). Most preservice teachers enter a teacher education program with 13 years of personal experience in K-12 classrooms through which they constructed their own beliefs about school, education, and teaching.

Pajares (1992) states that:

These beliefs about teaching are well established by the time students get to college...They include ideas about what it takes to be an effective teacher and

how students ought to behave, and, though usually unarticulated and simplified, they [preservice teachers] are brought into teacher preparation programs. (p. 322)

Preservice teachers have a tendency to “accept their own schooling experiences as prototypical and generalizable to the teaching profession” (Fajet, Bello, Leftwich, Mesler, & Shaver, 2005, p. 718). If they liked an activity in their reading class, they envision themselves using the same activity in their own classroom, without any understanding of whether the activity was actually effective in promoting literacy development for all students. As Wang and Odell (2003) state, “Preservice teachers’ beliefs are personal, closely related to their experiences as students, and function as filters for the knowledge and skills they believe are necessary to effective teaching” (p. 149). As such, there are various challenges to teaching preservice teachers because of the prior beliefs and experiences they bring with them into their teacher education coursework.

Preservice Teachers’ Constructed Beliefs are often Overly Simplistic

Preservice teachers have simple and optimistic views about teaching. Preservice teachers’ beliefs are often overly simplistic. One of these beliefs is that the teachers’ role is to simply transmit knowledge to their students “like an audience viewing a play” (Smagorinsky & Barnes, 2014, p. 29). The problem with this perspective is that, while preservice teachers may perceive the teacher’s role to be a performance, they are not able to observe all of the implicit knowledge that the teacher brings into the classroom. As such, preservice teachers may easily assume that what they need to know about teaching can be observed. Smagorinsky and Barnes (2014) state “learning about teaching in this manner is intuitive and imitative – learned implicitly through osmosis – rather than

through explicit and analytical instruction in teaching methods that are presumably different than those learned through uncritical observation” (p. 30).

Since preservice teachers tend to view teaching as a simple task and have not analyzed all that a teacher needs to know, they are often overly optimistic about their own ability to teach.

Pajares (1992) suggests that:

Most preservice teachers have an unrealistic optimism and a self-serving bias that account for their believing that the attributes most important for successful teaching are the ones they perceive as their own. They believe that problems faced by classroom teachers will not be faced by them, and the vast majority predicts they will be better teachers than their peers. Entering teacher candidates view teaching as a process of transmitting knowledge and of dispensing information. They also emphasize and overvalue affective variables and undervalue cognitive/academic variables. Some of their beliefs have been called insidious, even dysfunctional. (p. 323)

Another belief that preservice teachers have developed is that teaching consists largely of building positive relationships with children and engaging children in fun learning activities. A study conducted by Fajet, Bello, Leftwich, and Mesler (2005) demonstrated that preservice teachers in a beginning education course believed that teaching is primarily an affective task that focuses on interpersonal relationships, rather than one that requires skill and knowledge. This study highlighted how preservice teachers often underestimate the complexity of teaching, which may cause preservice

teachers to think that a strong knowledge base is not necessary to become a competent teacher.

Another study, conducted by Mowrer-Reynolds (2008), examined preservice teachers' perceptions of exemplary teachers. This mixed-methods study of 62 preservice teachers showed that personality characteristics such as enthusiasm were identified as invaluable qualities for future teachers to have. Similarly, O'Neill and Geoghegan (2011) demonstrated that, of 67 first-year preservice teachers, the majority believed they already had sufficient knowledge to teach literacy despite being early in their training.

Researchers have also suggested that many preservice teachers might not adopt certain instructional practices because they were not used when they were in school (Barnyak & Paquette, 2010). In the apprenticeship of observation, preservice teachers may not have observed exemplary literacy teaching. They may not have been able to observe all the decisions that teachers make about instruction. As a result, preservice teachers' beliefs about teaching will impact what knowledge they will learn during their teacher education program.

Foundational Literacy Knowledge Can Create Cognitive Disequilibrium

In teacher education programs, when preservice teachers are presented with new knowledge that challenges their constructed perceptions of what it means to be a teacher, dissonance can occur. Pajares (1992) describes preservice teachers as "insiders in a strange land" (p. 323). While preservice teachers may believe they have inside information about schools and teaching gained from years of observation as a student, when they are asked to critique and analyze curriculum and methods for the first time in teacher education programs, they find themselves looking at teaching from a new

perspective. This can create many challenges for preservice teachers. “For insiders, changing conceptions is taxing and potentially threatening. These students have commitments to prior beliefs and efforts to accommodate new information and adjust existing beliefs can be nearly impossible” (Pajares, 1992, p. 323).

Constructivism argues that when presented with new information, the preservice teachers will attempt to learn the content if they perceive that the new content is something different from what they had previously thought. However, this new content has a possibility of being, “...ignored or denied or rationalised rather than re-interpreted or deeply analysed” (Desforges, 1995, p. 390). If the learner is serious about learning this new content, then:

...this must lead to disequilibrium but this, in turn, is no simple key to restructuring: disequilibrium might provoke flight or simple assimilation. The disequilibrium might be too frightening to countenance. Alternatively, it might be trivialized. Even when disequilibrium is taken seriously, it can only lead to restructuring if a conception alternative to the original schema is available or constructed. (Desforges, 1995, p. 390)

Preservice teachers’ beliefs are personal and difficult to change. When preservice teachers are required to take coursework that contradicts their previously held beliefs, this can impact how they feel about the knowledge.

Research suggests that preservice teachers are resistant to learning new content presented via coursework (Barnyak & Paquette, 2010; Hyslop-Margison & Strobel, 2008), possibly due to misalignment with their beliefs regarding what is important to learn. In terms of foundational literacy, if preservice teachers have a simplistic view of

teaching literacy and are then presented with foundational literacy knowledge and having to learn the theoretical concepts of how children learn to read, they may accept this information or learn it superficially. Alternatively if they find it too challenging or irrelevant to their own literacy beliefs, they may reject the information all together.

Additionally, if a preservice teacher believes that foundational literacy knowledge does not have practical use in terms of their own theory of literacy, then this knowledge “...could be ignored, rejected, excluded as irrelevant, held in abeyance, re-interpreted in terms of extant theory or used to make minor or peripheral changes to the theory” (Desforges, 1995, p. 340). This is especially challenging given that preservice teachers often overestimate how much they think they know related to teaching, particularly with regard to literacy (Fajet, Bello, Leftwich, Mesler, & Shaver, 2005; Moats, 2009). Moats (2009) highlights this point by stating, “The abstract and complex nature of language, in conjunction with the efficiency with which literate adults access the meaning of printed words, makes it easy to overlook the sophistication of linguistic concepts necessary for reading development” (p. 388).

As preservice teachers begin to take literacy coursework, they soon realize that teaching entails more than what they had previously thought. Due to this dissonance between their beliefs and the content that is presented to them during coursework, preservice teachers must decide if and to what extent they will learn this content.

Cognitive Motivation Theory and Learning Literacy Knowledge

As previously explained, preservice teachers’ beliefs can affect what they learn and subsequently apply in their future classrooms (Fives & Buehl, 2014; Pajares, 1992). The study of preservice teachers’ beliefs and how these beliefs inform future literacy

practices is rooted in cognitive motivation theory, which argues that thoughts, beliefs, and attitudes drive human motivation (Fives & Buehl, 2014; Pajares, 1992). According to this perspective, preservice teachers are more likely to engage with new information if they perceive it as important, if they believe they are capable of learning the new information, if they believe that the mental effort that is required to complete the task will be minimal, and if they believe they have the tools and strategies to complete the task (Ambrose, Bridges, DiPietro, Lovett, & Norman, 2010; Fives & Buehl, 2014; Pajares, 1992). Thus, preservice teachers' motivation can influence how engaged they are in coursework, how they acquire knowledge, and how they develop personal attitudes and values towards knowledge.

Researchers have suggested that preservice teachers may not view foundational coursework as important due to a conflict between their personal goals and values and the goals of the course (Ambrose et al., 2010). Preservice teachers typically have a simplistic understanding of what reading entails (Mather, Bos, & Babur, 2001). Since acquiring foundational literacy knowledge is a time-consuming task, preservice teachers can become overwhelmed when introduced to this knowledge in coursework (Moats, 1994). When presented to preservice teachers in a foundational literacy course, they may become overwhelmed with the complexity of reading that they never realized existed before. As a result, this may impact their motivation to put in the time that is needed to learn the new terminology, to understand the individual components of reading, and to conceptually understand how they all relate to each other, especially if they do not believe the foundational literacy knowledge is important to begin with.

An example of the complexity of this knowledge is shown in the model below (Figure 1). Based on what the International Reading Association (2005) has identified as components of foundational literacy knowledge, McKenna and Stahl (2015) developed a cognitive model of reading that shows the inter-relatedness of all the foundational components that are necessary for understanding text.

According to McKenna and Stahl (2015):

Reading comprehension, the purpose of reading depends on (1) automatic recognition of the words in the text, (2) comprehension of the language in the text, and (3) the ability to use the strategies needed to achieve one's purpose in reading the text. A child will have difficulties with comprehension if he or she has difficulty with any of these three components. (p. 8)

More specifically, automatic word recognition requires that a reader have phonological awareness, print concepts, decoding and sight word knowledge, and fluency skills.

Language comprehension is influenced by vocabulary knowledge, background knowledge, and knowledge of text and sentence structures. Finally, strategic knowledge, or being metacognitively aware (Vacca et al., 2015) is comprised of readers understanding the general purposes for reading, specific purposes for reading, and knowledge of reading strategies that are necessary for comprehension (McKenna & Stahl, 2015).

What this means is that if preservice teachers do not believe foundational literacy knowledge is important, they may be less inclined to learn this knowledge. Therefore, preservice teachers' prior beliefs as well as motivating factors can impact what and how knowledge is learned during literacy coursework. Research indicates that preservice

teachers are more eager to learn practical knowledge that they believe can be acquired from field experiences (Montecinos et al., 2011).

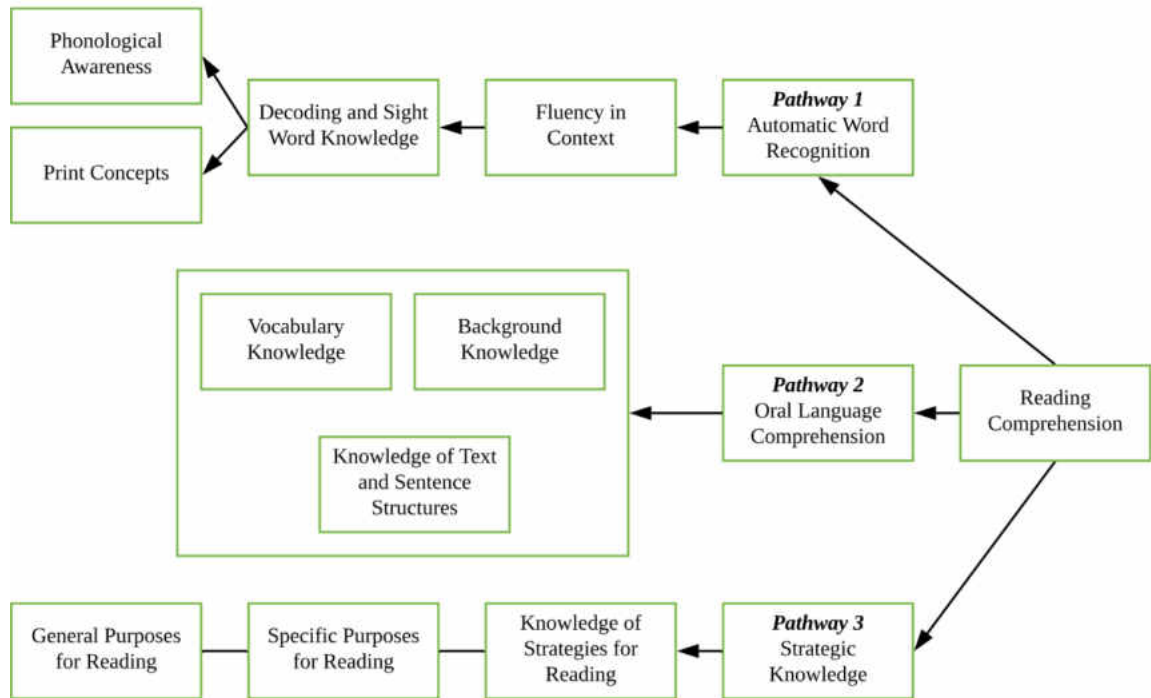


Figure 1. The Cognitive Model. (McKenna & Stahl, 2015, p. 8)

Practical Experiences Valued Over Literacy Knowledge

Research has shown that preservice teachers value field-experiences over their foundational coursework (Montecinos et al., 2011). For example, Fives and Buehl (2008) examined 443 teachers' beliefs about teaching knowledge. Findings from their study revealed, "...knowledge of theory was considered the least important by the majority of teachers in the sample" (p. 446). Fives and Buehl (2008) questioned why teachers did not find theory important, stating "...we do not know whether teachers find theory uninteresting, unimportant to their identity as teachers, not useful to their teaching practice, or that the cost of understanding theory is too great for the possible rewards" (p. 446). In a mixed-methods study, Bishop and colleagues (2010) found that teachers were

frustrated with having to learn about reading using textbooks. Although they did not reject having to learn theory, they hoped that they would have encountered more practical training.

Preservice teachers, who through apprenticeship of observation already feel they possess the knowledge needed for teaching, are eager to jump straight into the classroom. “They believe that there is not much they can learn in preservice teacher education, except for during their student teaching experiences and that learning to teach can only be accomplished through experience” (Richardson, 1996, p. 114). Therefore, preservice teachers will be less likely to spend the time that is needed to learn the content during their teacher education program if they do not believe this literacy knowledge is valuable.

Perceptions of Foundational Knowledge Changes with Experience

It is important to note that even if preservice teachers do not perceive coursework to be valuable at the time they are enrolled in the course, their perceived value of literacy knowledge may increase once they have developed additional knowledge and experience (Ambrose et al., 2010). In a study conducted by Leko and Brownell (2011), they found that their participants “...all spoke about how learning phonics during their beginning reading methods course seemed unimportant and demeaning until they had to draw on this knowledge [during student teaching] to instruct struggling readers” (p. 247).

Grossman et al. (2000) followed 10 beginning teachers from their last year of teacher education into their first three years of classroom teaching. Grossman et al. (2000) found that participants began to draw from their literacy knowledge during their second year of full-time teaching. Moats (1994), in a study of a graduate-level foundational literacy course, found that:

Teachers who completed the course were emphatic in their endorsement of the usefulness of the information in their teaching. Eighty-five to 93% of each class agreed that the information would be either highly successful or essential in their teaching...one man commented that they should have learned the content before they started to teach, and 91% reported that such a course should be required for all teachers who are charged with teaching reading, writing or language. (p. 97)

What these studies suggest is that even though preservice teachers may not value the knowledge at the time, these beliefs may change with experience.

In sum, preservice teachers' beliefs about teaching are personal. These personal beliefs include what teaching entails, what knowledge they will acquire, and how this knowledge should be used in practice. In addition to preservice teachers' personal beliefs, when preservice teachers are presented with literacy course work that may be different than what they had originally believed they needed to learn, they may experience cognitive disequilibrium. Thus, whether or not preservice teachers learn this knowledge will depend on several motivation factors. As preservice teachers take additional coursework during their teacher education program, their beliefs about teaching literacy will not only be impacted by their individual experiences, but they will also be impacted by the other contexts in which they will learn – such as during their subsequent literacy coursework, field experiences, and student teaching (Grossman et al., 2000).

The Role of Context in Foundational Literacy Knowledge Appropriation

An aspect of social constructivism important in exploring preservice teachers' experiences with foundational literacy knowledge during their teacher education program

is the context or the setting in which the learning occurs (Grossman et al., 2000; Leko & Brownell, 2011; Merriam et al., 2007). Grossman, Smagorinsky, and Valencia (1999) state:

Teacher education is comprised of a number of distinct activity settings, including: university coursework, and the specific classes that make up the curriculum; field experiences, including initial observations as well as full-time student teaching; supervision; and the overall program, including the ways in which students are admitted and organized and the ways in which all participants relate to one another. (p. 11)

According to Vygotsky's social constructivist theory, knowledge is predominantly developed through two distinct settings— through individual experiences and through interactions with other people (Hyslop-Margison & Strobel, 2008). Thus, as preservice teachers progress through a teacher education program, their beliefs about teaching will be continually impacted by these different settings. According to Grossman et al. (2000), “Aspects of the school and district context, including curriculum materials and professional developmental opportunities, can support or thwart continued learning and fuller appropriation of ideas and practices for teaching writing” (p. 660). In other words, the context in which learning takes place can impact the extent to which knowledge is learned as well as applied in practice.

An important challenge in teaching foundational literacy knowledge is that preservice teachers may learn foundational literacy knowledge during coursework but then not see it applied in future coursework, field experiences, or student teaching (Grossman et al., 2000). Or they may observe teachers during field experiences and in

student teaching using teaching methods that are contradictory to what they learned about foundational literacy knowledge in their course work (Grossman et al., 2000). Vacca et al. (2015) state, “preservice teachers may find incongruities between what is taught in education courses and what they observe in the field. These incongruities create conceptual conflict” (p. 15). According to Wang and Odell’s (2003) study “even preservice teachers who profess ambitious ideas about knowledge, learning, and teaching, find it difficult to resist the influences of existing school cultures and of practices modeled by cooperating teachers” (p. 150). What this means is that these learning contexts play a role in whether or not preservice teachers will be able to apply their literacy knowledge. Therefore, it is imperative that teacher education programs are structured in ways that will support preservice teachers’ appropriation of literacy knowledge.

Cognitive Restructuring in Literacy Education Programs

Due to the impact different learning contexts can have on what literacy knowledge is learned and applied during teacher education programs, researchers have attempted to identify how teacher education programs should be structured (Ball & Forzani, 2009; Brownell et al., 2014; Forzani, 2014; Gelfuso, 2017; Percy & Troyan, 2017; Wilson, Floden, & Ferrini-Mundy, 2002). One way is by ensuring that the goals and structure of each learning setting encountered through teacher education are carefully aligned in order for preservice teacher learning to occur (Jimenez-Silva, Olson, & Hernandez, 2012).

For example, Desforges (1995) believes that the goals of teacher education programs must be focused on student learning, with important attention paid to “private

mentation” (p. 395), or the knowledge that is in the mind of teachers in general.

Desforges (1995) argues that less attention needs to be paid to “...procedures and products...” (p. 396) or the belief that learning to teach involves imitation. Rather, Desforges (1995) believes that teaching must be focused on “...the deliberate intention to learn to teach in pursuit of children’s understanding” (p. 396). Thus, the factors that affect whether or not learning will occur, he believes, will depend on: (1) the structure of the setting, (2) the belief systems of those who are in those settings, (3) the opportunity to learn the knowledge, and (4) the opportunity to apply the knowledge (Desforges, 1995).

In terms of preservice teachers changing their beliefs about foundational literacy knowledge, one finding is that changing preservice teachers’ beliefs is a gradual process that requires time beyond a one-semester course (Moats, 1994). As Pajares (1992) states, “Accommodating new information and developing new beliefs are gradual enterprises of taking initial steps, accepting and rejecting certain ideas, modifying existing belief systems, and finally adopting new beliefs” (p. 323). As such, the International Literacy Association (2017) argues that teacher education programs should “address literacy at every level of study, during coursework and during practice, and provide preservice teachers with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to teach the 21st Century Skills needed in order for all students to become effective readers and writers” (p. 4).

Besides needing time to learn the knowledge, another important aspect of cognitive restructuring is providing the necessary time for teacher educators to monitor preservice teachers’ beliefs about foundational literacy knowledge. As Pajares writes, “The beliefs teachers hold influence their perceptions and judgments, which in turn affect their behavior in the classroom, [...] understanding the belief structures of teachers and

teacher candidates is essential to improving their professional preparation and teaching practices” (Pajares, 1992, p. 307). Along with this, examining preservice teachers’ perceptions can help teacher education programs self-evaluate. For example, Fajet and colleagues (2005) argue that:

Examining pre-service teachers’ perceptions about teaching is important for evaluating how teacher preparation programs can be structured in order to best align prospective teachers’ strongly held beliefs with the pedagogical practices that they will need to learn for their subsequent teaching careers. (p. 718)

Thus, it is important to understand not only how programs can be designed to promote preservice teachers’ learning, but it is also important to monitor preservice teachers’ beliefs so that they are graduating with beliefs that are consistent with best practices (Ball, Thames, & Phelps, 2008).

Optimal Structuring in Teacher Education Programs

Though the research is limited, there are some studies that have begun to address how to better structure teacher education programs (Ball & Forzani, 2009; Brownell et al., 2014; Forzani, 2014; Gelfuso, 2017; Peercy & Troyan, 2017; Wilson, Floden, & Ferrini-Mundy, 2002). One way is to ensure preservice teachers get plenty of opportunities to learn and practice applying foundational literacy knowledge during field experiences (Hurford et al., 2016). Hurford et al. (2016) recommend that the field experience be designed to include how to assess and give evidence-based instruction to assist struggling readers (Hurford et al., 2016). What makes these experiences unique is that Hurford et al. (2016) stresses the importance of providing preservice teachers with

immediate constructive feedback on their application of foundational literacy knowledge in practice.

Teacher education programs are also incorporating a practice-based or core teaching approach to their curricula (Forzani, 2014). Researchers have defined a practice-based approach as, "...identifying the work teachers do—the *core teaching practices* that support student learning—then decomposing those practices to specify the 'special knowledge, skills, and orientations' needed for enactment" (Ballock, McQuitty, & McNary, 2018, p. 57). McDonald, Kazemi, and Kavanagh (2013) envision a way to use core practices in a cycle to engage learning (Figure 2):

This cycle intends to offer guided assistance to candidates to learn particular practices by introducing them to the practices as they come to life in meaningful units of instruction, preparing them to actually enact those practices, requiring them to enact those practices with real students in real classrooms, and then returning to their enactment through analysis. Depending on the goals and purposes of the teacher educator, it is possible to start this learning cycle in any of its four quadrants. (p. 382)

By using core practices, teacher educators can help preservice teachers to effectively support their students' needs (McDonald et al., 2013). Thus, core practices are an attempt to help preservice teachers learn the literacy practices that have been shown to be most effective, and to also help them embed theoretical knowledge into those practices (Forzani, 2014).



Figure 2. Core Practices Cycle. (McDonald, Kazemi, & Kavanagh, 2013, p. 382)

Attempts to integrate core practices into preservice teacher literacy coursework have been made by several literacy researchers. Ballock, McQuitty, and McNary’s (2018) study included 45 elementary education preservice teachers at one Mid-Atlantic state university; the purpose of their study was to “...explore what preservice teachers need to learn effectively to read and respond to student writing” (p. 60). Findings from their study showed that, “...reading and responding draws upon teachers’ pedagogical content knowledge. More specifically, it draws on both knowledge of content and students and knowledge of content and teaching” (Ballock, McQuitty, & McNary, 2018, p. 56). Ballock, McQuitty, and McNary (2018) found, “...that analyzing children’s writing is one way to bridge preservice teachers’ content knowledge about writing...Preservice teachers can analyze children’s writing with respect to research and theory on children’s writing development and with respect to exemplars...” (p. 66).

Ballock et al. (2018) recommend that future research explore how teachers analyze students' reading and how they respond to them using different genres and at different grade levels.

For example, Eckert (2008) used a miscue analysis in her literacy methods course in order to show her students how theoretical knowledge is used to inform practical decisions. She found that "...designing miscue analysis projects based on Goodman's research helps students identify cognitive activities inherent in reading and interpretation..." (p. 116). Therefore, conducting a miscue analysis with elementary students and then having preservice teachers analyze their reading miscues could be another core practice.

In addition, "The tutoring program in the Al Otaiba and Lake (2007) study was designed for preservice teachers to incorporate their foundational literacy knowledge of language structure directly in their tutoring lesson plans" (Washburn, Joshi, & Cantrell, 2011, p. 40). Along with this, if preservice teachers are not able to work with students directly, utilization of case-studies has been shown to be an effective way to link theory and practice (Eckert, 2008; Hennissen, Beckers, & Moerkerke, 2017). All of these are ways that provide opportunities for preservice teachers to practice applying their theoretical knowledge using core practices.

Although incorporating field experiences and core practices into teacher education programs may help to optimize preservice teachers' learning and application of foundational literacy knowledge, this will not be enough to prepare preservice teachers to teach reading effectively (Barr, Watts-Taffe, Yokota, Ventura, & Caputi, 2000). Preservice teachers need more time to learn and apply foundational literacy knowledge

during all aspects of their program, especially during student teaching (Moats, 1994). Desforges (1995) believes that teacher education programs must provide conducive settings that allow for preservice teachers to apply their knowledge. He writes, “Studies of knowledge application suggest that expert knowledge is more tightly bound to particular contexts than schema theories imply” (p. 393). Preservice teachers also need more opportunities to challenge their preconceived beliefs about foundational literacy knowledge in conducive settings (Pajares, 1992). As such, teacher education programs need to examine better ways to restructure their programs so foundational literacy knowledge can be better applied in all settings.

Gaps in the Literature

Although researchers have identified the knowledge and skills needed to effectively teach literacy (ILA, 2017), the ways in which teacher preparation programs are helping preservice teachers develop this knowledge and these skills has been less examined (Cochran-Smith et al., 2015). In their systematic review, Risko and colleagues (2008) specified that, “...there is an ongoing need to study more completely the programmatic features of 4-year teacher education programs...” (p. 322).

To address this point, Ball, Thames, and Phelps (2008) called for research to: ...study whether and how different approaches to teacher development have different effects on particular aspects of teachers’ pedagogical content knowledge... a clearer sense of the categories of content knowledge for teaching might inform the design of support materials for teachers as well as teacher education and professional development. Indeed, it might clarify a curriculum for

content preparation of teachers that is fundamentally tied to professional practice and to the knowledge and skill demanded by the work. (p. 405)

Thus, the current study can help to fill this gap that was identified by Ball, Thames, and Phelps (2008) by exploring how a teacher education program at one university attempted to introduce foundational literacy knowledge early in a teacher education program.

Exploring how preservice teachers experienced foundational literacy knowledge in this study may help to clarify a curriculum for teacher education.

A great deal of research has focused on the strategies teacher preparation programs have implemented to facilitate preservice teachers' knowledge development. These studies have evaluated preservice teachers after they have completed a one semester course (Asselin, 2000; Lin, 2011; Griffith & Lacina, 2017; Jimenez-Silva, Olson, & Hernandez, 2012; Mallette, Kyle, Smith, McKinney, & Readence, 2000; Stürmer, Könings, & Seidel, 2012), or two methods courses (Nocon & Robinson, 2014), and have included graduate students (Allen, 2009; Colwell & Anderson, 2016; Lin, 2011) and practicing teachers (Bishop, Brownell, Klingner, Leko, & Galman, 2010; McCutchen et al., 2002) as participants. For example, Stürmer, Könings, and Seidel (2012) demonstrated that coursework can affect preservice teachers' acquisition of declarative knowledge and professional vision. However, this study did not explore if participants transferred this knowledge to practical situations, such as student teaching, which the present study does explore. Another study by Grisham (2000), investigated the effect of constructivist literacy coursework on the belief systems and teaching practices of 12 preservice teachers over the course of three years. Using a constructivist theoretical framework, Grisham (2000) conducted interviews, observations, and teacher storylines to

understand preservice teachers' attitudes about their teacher preparation program's philosophy. Grisham's (2000) study found that preservice teachers' theoretical beliefs about reading were changed.

While prior studies have yielded important results, there are also shortcomings. For example, though Grisham (2000) utilized a longitudinal design, the author did not specify the type of coursework or fieldwork experiences that may have impacted preservice teachers' theoretical knowledge (Risko et al., 2008). The present study, on the other hand, explores the type of literacy coursework and literacy experiences that preservice teachers perceived may have impacted their foundational literacy knowledge experience. The current study also addresses one of the recommendations made by Risko et al.'s (2008) review of 82 teacher preparation programs for reading instruction. Specifically, they recommended that future studies explore the impact of early teacher education coursework and experiences.

A study by Nocon and Robinson (2014) tracked the development of preservice teachers' conceptual knowledge, which consisted of social justice, political equity, and formative assessment knowledge. Over two semesters, Nocon and Robinson (2014) evaluated course and program assignments and scored them based on seven levels of conceptual knowledge appropriation. Nocon and Robinson's (2014) study found that the manifestos were a valuable way of documenting preservice teachers' conceptual understanding. Additionally, although Nocon and Robinson (2014) did track the conceptual development of preservice teachers over two semesters, they only used manifestos that were heterogeneous in form and were submitted at different time-points during the semester as their data source. The present study, however, tracked the

development of preservice teachers' foundational literacy knowledge at the beginning and end of their teacher education program. Since the researcher was also the instructor of the course, the end-of-course artifact that was used to triangulate the data was homogenous in form and submitted at the same time during the semester.

This review of literature, which details the extensive research on preservice teachers' beliefs and how that impacts their learning in teacher education programs, reveals several gaps that this research study will attempt to address. While there is research showing preservice teachers tend to view foundational literacy knowledge as less important than practical teaching knowledge, there is little research on how their beliefs evolve throughout their coursework and student teaching. Similarly, the impact learning foundational literacy knowledge has on preservice teachers at the end of their teacher education program remains unknown. Finally, much of the available literature takes a quantitative approach to examining graduates' perspectives of learning foundational knowledge, rather than a qualitative approach. By exploring how preservice teachers experience foundational literacy knowledge during their teacher education program, this qualitative phenomenological approach can help to address these identified gaps in the literature.

Chapter Summary

Current research on preservice teacher learning suggests that preservice teachers' beliefs can impact what knowledge they learn and apply during their teacher preparation program (Pajares, 1992). As such, researchers have identified the importance of ensuring that preservice teachers' beliefs are challenged in order for learning to occur (Desforges, 1995). Although research on the importance of examining preservice teachers' beliefs

during coursework is essential (Pajares, 1992), how teacher education programs can best structure their coursework and field experiences to ensure preservice teachers are provided with optimal learning opportunities to use and apply their foundational literacy knowledge continues to be an area of need (Risko et al., 2008).

Chapter III includes an explanation of the study's qualitative research methodology, which includes a constructionist approach. The methods, researcher's role, participants, data collection, and data analysis will also be discussed in Chapter III.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the qualitative approach that was used for this study. The primary purpose of this phenomenological study was to examine the lived experience of nine elementary preservice teachers who took an early foundational literacy course. Specifically, this study aimed to explore the impact of providing foundational literacy knowledge early in a teacher education program, prior to literacy methods coursework and student teaching, on preservice teachers' beliefs about effective literacy instruction. Since a phenomenological research methodology is specifically designed to help researchers understand participants' individual and shared experiences, this methodology was deemed the most appropriate to answer the research questions (Padilla-Díaz, 2015). Given that foundational literacy knowledge is an integral part of effective literacy teaching, and research has shown that preservice teachers may question the importance of this knowledge, a phenomenological study can shed light on preservice teachers' perceptions of their experiences with foundational literacy knowledge (Moustakas, 1994).

The study was designed to answer the following questions:

1. How do preservice teachers describe their philosophy of teaching literacy?
2. How did preservice teachers experience the foundational literacy course?

3. How do preservice teachers experience foundational literacy knowledge during their subsequent literacy methods coursework and student teaching?

Epistemology

The epistemological framework used within this study is consistent with a constructionist view of knowledge (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). According to Crotty (1998), constructionism says that, "...all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context" (p. 42). In addition to this, because this knowledge is viewed as contextually bound and socially constructed (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012) the researcher's goal is to understand these different meanings from the participants' perspective. According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2012), in order for this to occur, a researcher must:

...become involved in the reality of the participants and interact with them in meaningful ways; focus on the specific contexts in which people live and work to understand particular cultural and historical settings; recognize and acknowledge that their own background shapes their interpretation, and they thus "position" themselves in the research to acknowledge their own cultural, social, and historical experiences; pose research questions and generate or inductively develop meaning from the data collected in the field. (p. 29)

Since the aim of this research study is to understand participants' perceptions of their experiences using and applying foundational literacy knowledge, a constructionist world view would be most appropriate.

Qualitative Research Methodology

Utilizing a qualitative research methodology is appropriate when the “researchers are interested in how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences” (Merriam, 2009, p. 14). A quantitative research methodology is appropriate when the aim of the research is to test for theories and the relationship between variables (Creswell, 2014). Since the goal of the research is to examine the experiences of the participants from their personal views, a qualitative research study was chosen.

Phenomenology

Hermeneutical and transcendental are the two approaches within phenomenology (Hall, Chai, & Albrecht, 2016). While the hermeneutical approach “...relies on the researcher’s interpretations of what the lived experience means” (Hall et al., 2016, p. 137), a transcendental approach “...focuses on the participants’ given descriptions to generate an essence of the lived experience” (p. 137). For this study, the researcher utilized a transcendental phenomenological approach. According to Moustakas (1994):

...a transcendental phenomenological approach engages in disciplined and systematic efforts to set aside prejudgments regarding the phenomenon being investigated (known as the Epoché process) in order to launch the study as far as possible free of preconceptions, beliefs, and knowledge of the phenomenon from prior experience and professional studies—to be completely open, receptive, and

naïve in listening to and hearing research participants describe their experience of the phenomenon being investigated... (p. 22)

Additionally, a transcendental phenomenological approach means "...allowing the meaning of the identified phenomenon to emerge using the perspectives of the study participants" (Young & Goering, 2018, p. 4). Hence, a transcendental research design was used in order to better understand the perceptions and experiences of preservice teachers' experiences with foundational literacy knowledge during their teacher preparation program.

Setting

The present study was conducted at Prairie University. This study focused on the perceptions of recent elementary education graduates of the teacher education program, all of whom who took a foundational literacy course entitled Understanding Readers and Writers during the Spring 2016 semester.

The Teacher Education Program

The Teacher Education Program at the University is housed within the College of Education and Human Development. The Teacher Education Program is grounded in a constructivist pedagogical framework. The primary aim of the program is to ensure that preservice teachers gain the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes to become effective educators. In addition, according to the University's Teacher Education Handbook (2013):

The elementary education program prepares teachers for grades 1-6 and consists of the following components: general education courses, a specialty area or minor, introductory courses, methods courses, and student teaching...A 20-credit

specialty area or minor is required for all elementary education students. This may be in another area of education, such as early childhood or special education, or it may be an area supporting the content taught in elementary schools, such as English or Science. (p. 8)

Several of these courses include a field experience component, and each course requires different amounts of time in the classroom. At the completion of their coursework, preservice teachers teach for a minimum of one full semester, or 16-weeks, which is considered their student teaching placement.

Understanding Readers and Writers Course. The participants in this study took a course on foundational literacy knowledge during the Spring 2016 semester. The following section briefly outlines the content of the course in which the participants were enrolled. While the purpose of the study was not necessarily to examine the course, the content to which the participants were exposed at the beginning of their program required them to learn foundational literacy knowledge. The course, Understanding Readers and Writers, was the first of the three required literacy courses. Most preservice teachers began taking the course during their junior year. The purpose of the course was:

...to learn the foundational literacy concepts of literacy development and to equip preservice teachers with this knowledge in order to teach reading and writing to children in ways that are consistent with how language works and with how individual learners acquire it. (Understanding Readers and Writers Course Syllabus, Spring 2016, p. 1)

There were three required texts for the course, *Assessment for Reading Instruction* (McKenna & Stahl, 2015), *Miscue Analysis Made Easy* (Wilde, 2015), and *Phonics*,

Phonemic Awareness, and Word Analysis for Teachers (Leu & Kinzer, 2012). The course content addressed the following areas: (1) phonological and phonemic awareness, (2) print concepts, (3) strategic knowledge, (4) decoding, sight words, and automatic word recognition, (5) vocabulary development, (6) affective factors and teacher beliefs, (7) emergent literacy assessments, (8) cueing systems, (9) the emergent reading and writing process, (10) assessments, (11) dyslexia, (12) the writing process, (13) miscue analysis, (14) spelling, (15) fluency, (16) reading comprehension, (17) and factors that promote literacy development.

Lastly, coursework activities included discussions, group activities, three supervised field-based experiences at a local elementary school, and online discussions. Field experiences provided authentic opportunities for preservice teachers to practice administering literacy assessments to elementary-aged students. There were five major assignments for this course, which are described below in Table 1.

Participants

Purposeful sampling methods were used to identify potential participants. “Purposeful sampling is appropriate when the goal is to enroll specific individuals with unique characteristics. Such participants are able to provide rich data, or data that are detailed and varied enough that they provide a full and revealing picture of what is going on” (Maxwell, 2013, p. 126).

Once the researcher received approval from the Institutional Review Board, on March 19, 2018, the researcher emailed 43 preservice teachers who completed the

Table 1.
Course Assignments for Readers and Writers Course Adapted from Understanding Readers and Writers Spring 2016 Course Syllabus

Assignment	Description
Literacy History Paper	The purpose of this paper was for preservice teachers to share their literacy experiences, and the meaning they identified behind those experiences. Preservice teachers were asked to reflect on who they currently are as a reader and writer, and how their education and experiences with reading and writing has shaped them.
Emergent Literacy Assessment	After reading and discussing emergent literacy development and assessment, preservice teachers assessed the emergent literacy skills of one or two first grade students at a local elementary school. Based on this information, preservice teachers wrote an in-depth assessment report that highlighted the literacy strengths and areas that needed to be developed. Preservice teachers then described possible instructional activities designed to target those areas of instructional need.
Reader Assessment Report	Preservice teachers assessed first grade students' reading abilities by listening to students read aloud in order to identify the cueing systems they were using, and the cueing systems they were not using. In addition, preservice teachers conducted a retelling and fluency assessment. Based on these data, preservice teachers developed an in-depth assessment report that highlighted the students' strengths and areas of needs. After, they described possible instructional activities that were designed to target those areas of instructional need.
Writer Assessment Report	Preservice teachers analyzed the writing development of 4th grade students at a local elementary school. They guided their students through the writing process and collected a writing sample at the end. After, preservice teachers analyzed these writing samples in order to address questions relating to the child's writing skills, development, and instructional needs.
End of Course Artifact & Reflection Paper	The purpose of this assignment was for preservice teachers to use the information they learned in the course to design an artifact of their choice that they believed best represented their learning of the course content. Their artifact could take any of the following forms: video, diary entries, visual display, drawing, collage, or portfolio to help them capsule their learning. Accompanying the artifact, preservice teachers included a written reflection that addressed how their artifact reflected the course goals, how their thinking of readers and writers may have changed from the beginning of the course, and how they might approach literacy instruction in their future classrooms.

Understanding Readers and Writers course during the Spring 2016 semester. Eighteen preservice teachers were enrolled in the first section of this course, and twenty-five were enrolled in the second. This recruitment email, which can be found in Appendix A, explained the study, outlined the minimal risks involved, and clarified that participants could withdraw from the study at any time without repercussions. The email additionally provided instructions regarding how to get in contact with the researcher if they were interested in participating in the study. After waiting two months without successful recruitment results, the researcher, with the guidance of her advisor, decided to add a minor monetary compensation. After the researcher received approval from the Institutional Review Board that reflected this amended incentive, the researcher emailed her possible participants again to notify them of this change.

Following this change, 11 participants replied to the researcher demonstrating their interest in participating. The researcher sent those who showed interest the consent form via email. The consent form included information regarding the study purpose and the details of participation (i.e., completion of a demographic questionnaire, completion of two interviews which could range from 60 to 90 minutes each, granting permission for the researcher to use their end-of-course reflection paper, and agreeing to provide the researcher with subsequent materials such as lesson plans and reflections). Individuals who indicated willingness to participate in the study indicated this by returning the e-signed consent form to the researcher. A copy of the consent form can be found in Appendix B.

After the researcher received the signed e-consent form electronically, she emailed interested participants a demographics questionnaire to ensure eligibility that

took less than 15 minutes to complete. This questionnaire queried information such as: participant name, gender, major, minor, semester they student taught, location in which they student taught, school where they student taught, and the assigned grade-level they student taught. This information was collected from 11 participants prior to starting the interview process (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). Once this demographic information was returned to the researcher via email, purposeful sampling techniques were used to identify nine participants who signed and returned the consent form to the researcher and met the following four inclusion criteria: (1) completed the Understanding Readers and Writers course during the Spring 2016 semester as taught by the researcher; (2) majored in elementary education; (3) student taught during the Fall 2017 or Spring 2018 semester; (4) had the opportunity to teach literacy instruction during their methods coursework and student teaching experiences.

These inclusion criteria were selected to ensure that the included participants would have shared experiences regarding the phenomenon under study (Padilla-Díaz, 2015). When selecting participants, the researcher aimed for representativeness of gender, ethnicity, educational minor, student teaching location, and student teaching grade-level (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). During the selection process potential participants were de-identified to ensure that names did not affect the researcher's choices. There are no available guidelines to identify the precise number of participants needed to conduct qualitative research; however, Creswell (2014) recommends sample sizes ranging from three to ten participants and Merriam (2009) explains that the number of people, documents, and sites required for qualitative investigation depends on:

...the questions being asked, the data being gathered, the analysis in progress, the resources you have to support the study. What is needed is an adequate number of participants, sites, or activities to answer the question posed at the beginning of the study. (p. 80)

The researcher used these guidelines to aim for a sample size of six to ten participants.

All participants were female, White, and had graduated from the teacher education program at the University where the study took place and majored in Elementary Education. Participants ranged in age from 22-25, with a mean age of 23 years, and student taught in grades ranging from 1st to 5th. Seven out of nine participants student taught in suburban elementary schools and two participants taught in rural elementary schools. The participants student taught in three different states. The locations of these elementary schools are not included to protect the participants' identities. The following nine pseudonyms were used to protect the anonymity of the participants, Amber, Betty, Chrissy, Diane, Erica, Fran, Gabby, Helen, and Ingrid.

Although all participants were elementary education majors and all participants took the three required literacy courses, those who minored in literacy or early childhood took extra coursework. In addition, participants' experience with literacy after they graduated depended on their teaching position at the time of the follow-up interview. It is also important to note that even though all participants were placed in an elementary school for their student teaching experiences, three of the nine participants taught mostly math and science. Nonetheless, these participants shared experiences related to the focus of this study. Overall, the participants who held teaching jobs at the time of interview completion were in approximately their fourth week of classroom teaching. Table 2

details the age, race, gender, major, minor, literacy courses taken as an undergraduate, semester and year they student taught, grade-level they student taught, type of school in which they student taught, current teaching position, and number of weeks teaching in the current teaching position prior to the study's follow-up interview.

Data Collection

Open and semi-structured interviews are specifically recommended for phenomenology research designs (Padilla-Díaz, 2015; Roulston, 2010). According to Roulston (2010), the purpose of phenomenological interviews is to:

...generate detailed and in-depth descriptions of human experiences as well as the participants' responses to the phenomenon of investigation are crucial...researchers want to understand the participants' feelings, perceptions, and understandings, open questions are particularly useful in providing a format for interviewees to answer in their own words. (p. 17)

Along with this, it is essential for the researcher to identify participants who have "...both experienced, and are able to talk about the particular lived experience under examination" (Roulston, 2010, p. 17). According to Roulston (2010):

Interviewers may also conduct multiple interviews with each participant...In phenomenological interviews, the interview takes a neutral but interested stance, and the relationship between interviewer and interviewee is sometimes described as pedagogical, in that the interviewer's role is to be a student of the interviewee, learning as much about the topic of inquiry as possible through sensitive questioning. (p. 17)

Table 2

Description of Study Participants

Participant ^a	Age	Race	Gender	Major/Minor	Extra Literacy Courses ^b	Student Semester/ Year	Teaching Experience Grade Level	Type of School	Current Teaching Position/ Weeks teaching prior to second interview
Amber	22	White	Female	Elementary/ Literacy	1-5	Spring 2018	4th	Suburb	5th Grade/ ~4 weeks
Betty	25	White	Female	Elementary/Psychology	---	Fall 2017	2nd	Suburb	5th grade/ ~4 weeks
Chrissy	22	White	Female	Elementary/ Special Education and Early Childhood	1	Spring 2018	.	Suburb	Special Education Teacher/ ~4 weeks
Diane	23	White	Female	Elementary/ Special Education	---	Fall 2017	5th	Suburb	K-2nd Grade Paraprofessional/ ~4 weeks
Erica	23	White	Female	Elementary/ Spanish	---	Fall 2017	4th	Suburb	2nd Grade/ ~4 weeks
Gabby	22	White	Female	Elementary/ Special Education	---	Spring 2018	5th	Suburb	5th Grade/ ~4 weeks
Helen	23	White	Female	Elementary/ Science	---	Fall 2017	3rd	Suburb	Special Education Paraprofessional/ Since January 2017
Ingrid	23	White	Female	Elementary/ Special Education	---	Fall 2017	3rd	Rural	Long-Term Substitute for 3rd Grade for 2017 school year
Fran	23	White	Female	Elementary/ Early Childhood w/Reading Endorsement	1-6	Fall 2017	2nd	Rural	3rd Grade/~4 weeks

Note. ^aPseudonyms. ^bAll participants took the following literacy courses: TL335 Understanding Readers and Writers; TL410 Teaching Reading and Writing in the Elementary School; TL417 Writing and Language Arts Methods. Extra literacy courses some participants took: 1) TL313 Language Development & Emerging Literacy; 2) TL415 Language and Literacy Development of ELLs; 3) TL411 Primary Reading and Language Arts; 4) TL413 Assessing & Correcting Reading Difficulties; 5) TL414 Corrective Reading Practicum; 6) TL311 Observing and Assessing the Child.

As such, the researcher conducted two 60-90 minute semi-structured interviews with each participant. The first-round interviews aimed to establish their personal experiences related to literacy in general in order to establish the overall context of the experience (Bevan, 2014), and to gather information related to participants' experiences with foundational literacy knowledge during methods coursework and student teaching as well as their beliefs about effective literacy instruction. The goal of the first-round interview was for the researcher, "...to listen carefully, follow up on participant's responses without interrupting the story flow to gain specific details of the participant's experience, and generally exercise reservation in contributing to the talk..." (Padilla-Díaz, 2015, p. 17).

The second-round interview was designed to capture more details of participants' experiences (Bevan, 2014). The researcher asked participants to think about what factors or influences may have caused them to have the experiences they had (Bevan, 2014). Along with this, the second-round interview served as a way to verify the information that was obtained from the first-round interview, allow the participants to provide further detail or elaborate on the information that was discussed during the first-round interview, and allow the participants to comment on the researcher's interpretation of what was discussed in the first-round interview (Padilla-Díaz, 2015). The participants also used their supplemental materials, which included a sample of a literacy lesson they taught during their literacy methods coursework and/or during their student teaching experience, to help describe their experiences teaching literacy. Each interview was conducted by telephone during a time and day that was convenient for each of the participants.

The researcher began scheduling interviews in June 2018. Participants were reminded via email one to two days prior to their scheduled first-round interview, as suggested by Roberts (2010). A brief outline of core concepts that were presented to them during the foundational literacy course was also attached to the reminder email. This outline was intended to serve as an overview of the topics that were addressed during the course. Participants were informed that this was an optional reference, and that they were not required to review or study this information prior to their first-round or second-round interview. As a significant amount of time had passed between completion of the foundational literacy course and study participation, the researcher felt that this would aid participants in attaining a rich description of the phenomena being questioned (Creswell, 2014). This reminder email and the list of topics that was attached can be found in Appendix C. All first-round phone interviews were completed in July 2018. Second-round interviews took place between August and September 2018. The researcher again sent participants a reminder email that was identical to the one sent before the first interview and presented in Appendix C one or two days prior to their second-round interview, as suggested by Roberts (2010).

First-Round Interviews

The researcher utilized Bevan's (2014) method of phenomenological interviewing. The information presented in Table 3 below was utilized by the researcher to assist with different questioning and structure techniques designed for phenomenological studies. This structure was utilized for first-round and second-round interviews.

Table 3
Adapted Bevan's (2014) Structure for Phenomenological Interviewing

Phenomenological Attitude	Researcher Approach	Interview Structure	Method	Sample Question
Phenomenological Reduction (Epoché)	Acceptance of Natural Attitudes of Participants	Contextualization (Eliciting the Lifeworld in Natural Attitude)	Descriptive/Narrative Context Questions	“Tell me about your experience teaching guided reading? “Tell me how you came to know your student was struggling while reading?”
Phenomenological Reduction (Epoché)	Reflexive Critical Dialogue with Self	Apprehending the Phenomenon (Modes of Appearing in Natural Attitude)	Descriptive and Structural Questions of Modes of Appearing	“Tell me about your typical day teaching reading”; or “Tell me what you do to get ready for teaching literacy.”
Phenomenological Reduction (Epoché)	Active Listening	Clarifying the Phenomenon (Meaning Through Imaginative Variation)	Imaginative Variation: Varying of Structure Questions	“Describe how teaching your lesson would change if your cooperating teacher was not observing.”

During the first-round interviews the researcher encouraged participants to talk freely about their personal backgrounds, previous coursework, experiences while taking the foundational literacy course, and experiences in methods coursework and student teaching after taking the foundational literacy course. The researcher used active listening skills thoughtfully and carefully throughout the entire interview process. Descriptive questions were asked about the places, events, actions, and activities that were involved in participants' experiences (Bevan, 2014).

This interview structure was utilized by the researcher to "...enable phenomenal clarity that produces a sound basis for interpreting experiences grounded in the original material" (Bevan, 2014, p. 143). Structural questions, or questions incorporating context, were also included (Bevan, 2014). Furthermore, the researcher asked multiple questions to better uncover the many ways participants could describe a given experience. For example, if participants used analogies, chronologies, or significant events to answer questions, the researcher asked for clarification. Imaginative variation techniques were also used during the interview process by asking participants how they believed their experiences would have changed if the context had been different (Bevan, 2014). Such questions enhanced credibility, dependability, and trustworthiness of participant responses (Bevan, 2014), as they required participants to explain variations to their stories, which in turn enabled the researcher to analyze their experiences in context-specific-ways. Interview questions were clarified as needed, and participants were encouraged to share information pertinent to their experiences in addition to providing responses to the researcher's questions (Bevan, 2014).

Interviews were audiotaped with the participants' consent. During the interviews the researcher took handwritten notes of words and phrases that she believed were important (Roulston, 2013). When appropriate, the researcher used language consistent with the participants' responses in subsequent questions. The researcher abstained from making assumptions about participants' intended meanings, but rather used follow-up prompts as suggested by Vagle (2013), such as "tell me more about that," and "I have an understanding of that phrase you just used, but can you tell me what it means to you?" (p. 80).

At the end of the interview, the researcher thanked participants for their time and explained that interviews would be transcribed, and that a copy of their transcript would be emailed to them so they would have an opportunity to provide feedback. This was done to verify that the transcription accurately reflected the statements that were made during the interviews, and to provide a method for member-checking. One participant replied to the researcher requesting to clarify her transcript. The researcher and this participant discussed this before her second-round interview. The researcher then resent the transcript back to the participant to ensure all grammatical errors were fixed. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed by the researcher. All identifying information was coded and kept in a confidential place in the researcher's home. All audio recordings and associated data were kept in the researcher's home in a locked filing cabinet and were destroyed upon completion of the study. The semi-structured interview guide used during the first-round interviews, which was developed by the researcher with assistance from her advisor, can be found in Appendix D.

Second-Round Interviews

Prior to scheduling the second-round interview, all participants were sent a transcript of the first-round interview to review. This member-check allowed participants to verify the accuracy of the first-round interview and provided an opportunity for them to add detail to and/or clarify what they said in the first-round interview. All other participants agreed to the contents of the first-round transcripts. Additionally, second-round transcripts were also sent to participants for their feedback. The researcher did not receive any comments from participants regarding their second-round interview transcripts. Along with this, two participants were randomly selected to provide a member check of the emerging findings and interpretations (Maxwell, 2013). All participants agreed to the contents of the emerging findings and interpretations. The semi-structured interview guide that the researcher used during the second-round interviews can be found in Appendix D.

Participants completed a second-round interview after data from the first round of interviews were transcribed, coded, and verified. The themes that emerged from the first-round interviews helped to inform questions for the second-round interview. As stated, second-round interviews provided participants with an opportunity to elaborate on their statements from the first-round interview (Kvale, 1996; Vagle, 2013).

According to Maxwell (2013), “Your research questions will often need to evolve over the course of your study” (p. 85). As such, the researcher’s first-round semi-structured interview questions were designed to be broad enough as there was the expectation that as the research process unfolded, the questions would need to become more focused. The researcher designed the research questions utilizing a social constructivist lens, which was designed to explore preservice teachers’ perceptions and

experiences using foundational literacy knowledge during their teacher preparation program. Despite the research supporting the importance of preservice teachers having a deep understanding of foundational literacy knowledge to inform their literacy practices (ILA, 2017), how best to integrate foundational literacy knowledge into teacher preparation programs remains unclear (Cochran-Smith et al., 2015). As a result, the first-round interviews were intended to provide participants opportunities to share their overall literacy experiences addressing each of the research questions with minimal prompting from the researcher. The follow-up interview was intended to address participants' literacy philosophy, experiences taking the foundational literacy course, and their experiences with foundational literacy knowledge during their subsequent literacy coursework and student teaching experiences (Wertz et al., 2011). The researcher asked participants to provide more clarification from the first-round interviews to ensure that the researcher was not making any assumptions pertaining to their first-round interview responses. Follow-up questions tended to vary depending on each participant's responses.

During the follow-up interviews, questions were open-ended to generate further discussion, and progressed from broad to specific (Roulston, 2010). Along with this, probes and follow-up questions were asked as they were needed in order to promote elaboration and clarification. The researcher conducted all interviews, and after each interview transcripts were generated and sent to participants for their review.

Supplemental Materials

Following the first-round interviews participants were asked to email the researcher a picture of a document (e.g., lesson plan, reflection) of their choice that they

believed would support and further convey their described experiences. During the second-round interview participants were given an opportunity to discuss the supplemental material they chose, and to further explain how it related to foundational literacy knowledge. Thus, this supplemental document provided another opportunity for participants to explain their experiences using foundational literacy knowledge.

According to Merriam (2009), “Personal documents are a reliable source of data concerning a person’s attitudes, beliefs, and view of the world...they do reflect the participant’s perspective, which is what most qualitative research is seeking” (p. 143).

The first purpose of the document was to understand what the preservice teachers planned as part of their literacy lessons. Second, since each participant already had taught these lessons, the lessons provided an opportunity for them to reflect on how they may have used their foundational literacy knowledge during the lesson. Third, this document provided an opportunity for participants to reflect on these experiences. According to Cilesiz (2011), “Collecting data from two sources from the same participants enables the researcher to compare the information from both data sources and to eliminate any inconsistencies, which would indicate untruthful data” (p. 60). In other words, triangulation, or collecting data from multiple sources “...provides breadth and depth to a study by ensuring complete and thorough findings” (Penner & McClement, 2008, p. 97).

Reflection Documents

At the end of the foundational literacy course that was taught during the Spring 2016 semester, preservice teachers were required to use the information learned in the

course to create an artifact (e.g. poster, video, book) that represented at least three major topics from the course, and to write a reflection paper that explained (a) how the artifact reflected at least three course topics, (b) how preservice teachers' thinking about readers and writers changed from the beginning of the course to the end of the course, and (c) how preservice teachers may approach literacy instruction in the future based on what they learned in the course. The instructor assessed each reflection paper during the Spring 2016 semester according to a standardized rubric. Preservice teachers earned full points if they wrote how their thinking may have changed from the beginning of the course to the end, and how they may approach literacy instruction in the future. The instructor did not award points based on any other criteria. As such, the reflection papers were used to understand how their thinking about readers and writers changed from the beginning of the course to the end of the course. In addition, to understand their beliefs about effective literacy instruction, the researcher used the end-of-course reflection papers as triangulation to ensure validity. As such, the researcher used this end-of-course reflection paper to verify the data from the participants' interviews.

Data collection was completed over a six-month period and ended when saturation of the data was achieved when no additional themes or information was gleaned towards understanding the phenomenon (Merriam, 2009).

Data Analysis

The researcher read each transcribed interview at least two times to immerse herself in the data. Then the researcher read each transcribed interview at least two more times to begin recording memos and highlighting concepts. "By dwelling with the data" (Penner & McClement, 2008, p. 98), the researcher became more familiar with the data.

The researcher utilized Moustakas' (1994) phenomenological data analyzing procedure. "The general procedure includes preparing data for the analyses, reducing the data phenomenologically, engaging in imaginative variation, and uncovering the essence of the experience" (Yüksel & Yılırm, 2015, p. 10). The steps of the data analysis as depicted by Yüksel and Yılırm (2015) can be found in Figure 3.

Step 1: The Epoché

According to Moustakas (1994), "Epoché requires that everything in the ordinary, everyday sense of knowledge be tabled and put out of action" (p. 87). As such, the researcher "bracketed" her prior knowledge about the participants and their perceptions of their experiences with foundational literacy knowledge in a reflective diary. Utilizing the recommendations by Wall, Glenn, Mitchinson, and Poole (2004), the researcher utilized this approach in order to bracket "...personal experiences, preconceptions, beliefs and attitudes to the research situation" (p. 21). To achieve this bracketing, the researcher

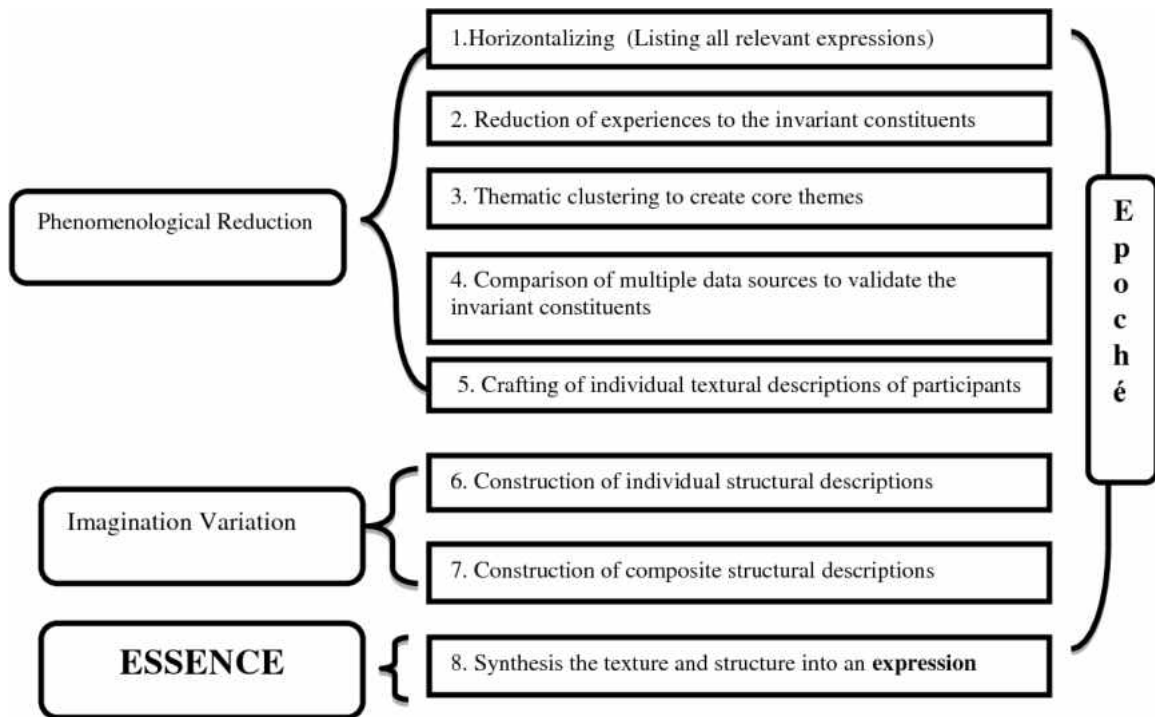


Figure 3. Steps of Data Analysis in Yüksel & Yılıırım (2015, p. 11).

recorded her pre-judgments before and after interviewing, as well as during the data analysis process. Since the researcher was also the instructor of the Understanding Readers and Writers course, it was important for her to be aware of how her perceptions could influence what questions she asked participants, how she responded to her participants, what data were collected, and the entire data analysis process. In order to address this, the researcher was continuously reflexive during the entire research study (Wertz et al., 2011). In order for the researcher to be reflexive during the research study, the following strategies were utilized as recommended by Maxwell (2013).

1. Intensive, Long-Term Involvement. The researcher interviewed each participant twice. In addition, the researcher transcribed all of the interviews, and interviews were immediately transcribed after each interview. Along with this, the

researcher also collected supplementary materials that were used by the researcher to provide an additional opportunity to check and confirm any inferences that were being made (Maxwell, 2013).

2. Rich Data. The researcher was able to collect rich data due to the "...long-term involvement and intensive interviews enable you to collect "rich" data, data that are detailed and varied enough that they provide a full and revealing picture of what is going on" (Maxwell, 2013, p. 126). The researcher took notes/memos before, during, and after each interview. These memos served as a way to take a reflexive stance in addition to taking objective notes during the interview process. As such, verbatim transcripts were taken by the researcher (Maxwell, 2013).

More specifically, the researchers' memos served as an opportunity to provide:

...detailed subjectivity statements from the author/s that outline the subject positions occupied by the researcher prior to and during the study. In addition, the decision making of the researcher is explained in reports, and challenges, problems, and ethical dilemmas that arose during the research process... (Roulston, 2010, p. 84)

Along with this, the researcher kept notes regarding the decision making process, or what the researcher "...did to generate interpretations and conclusions from the study" (Roulston, 2010, p. 84).

3. Respondent Validation. After first-round interviews were transcribed and sent to participants, during the second-round interviews participants had the opportunity to discuss with the researcher any issues/questions/and/or comments they had

pertaining to their first-found transcripts. One out of nine participants went over grammatical issues with the researcher concerning the first-round interview transcript. As a result, the researcher fixed these grammatical issues and resent this participant the revised transcript for her approval. All other participants agreed to the contents of the first-round transcripts. Additionally, second-round transcripts were also sent to participants for their feedback. The researcher did not receive any comments from participants regarding their second-round interview transcripts. Along with this, two participants were randomly selected to provide a member check of the emerging findings and interpretations (Maxwell, 2013).

4. Searching for Discrepant Evidence and Negative Cases. The researcher continuously identified and analyzed for negative cases. “Instances that cannot be accounted for by a particular interpretation or explanation can point to important defects in that account” (Maxwell, 2013, p. 127). As a result, the researcher, examined “...both the supporting and discrepant data to assess whether it is more plausible to retain or modify the conclusion, being aware of all of the pressures to ignore data that do not fit your conclusions” (2013, p. 127). The researcher asked her advisor, committee members, and participants for feedback on the conclusions as a way to identify any “...biases and assumptions and to check for flaws in your logic or methods” (p. 127). Additionally, the researcher continuously “...returned to the textual data and checked their claims in order to evaluate their goodness of fit, with attention to potentially contrary evidence...” (Wertz et

al., 2011, p. 373) in order to revise any of the statements that were made if needed.

Step 2: Phenomenological Reduction

The first component of phenomenological reduction is “*Bracketing*, in which the focus of the research is placed in brackets, everything else is set aside so that the entire research process is rooted solely on the topic and question” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 97). During this step, the researcher treated every statement equally. During this phase, the researcher reviewed all first-round interviews. The researcher combined all transcripts into one document and then highlighted the information that was relevant to the research goals and question. This information was saved into another file for the next phase of the data analysis.

Researcher: Why do you think those skills, strategies, and activities are effective? Participant Diane: I think it was because they were having a lot of fun with it.
--

Figure 4. Sample of Bracketing Phase Taken from Interview Transcripts

For example, any information that was not highlighted, repetitive, or vague was removed from this document and put into a separate file labeled, “irrelevant statements”.

In order to determine if it would be considered a significant statement, each expression, or meaning unit of the experience, was tested using the recommendations set forth by Moustakas (1994). Moustakas (1994) recommends to:

Test each expression for two requirements (a) Does it contain a moment of the experience that is necessary and sufficient constituent for understanding it?

Expressions not meeting these requirements were eliminated, and (b) Is it possible to abstract and label it? If so, it is a horizon of the experience. (p. 121)

The researcher then compared invariant constituents, or categories, with other data collection sources, including researcher's memos and the participants' reflection papers in order to "verify accuracy and clear representation across the data sources" (Yüksel & Yildirim, 2015, p. 12). The researcher then combined similar invariant constituents, or categories, and clustered them with a thematic label. As such, these became the core theme of the experience (Moustakas, 1994). As recommended by Fade (2004) and Moustakas (1994), these clustered and labeled constituents need to be expressed explicitly in the interview to ensure that the themes reflect the context of the participants' words.

During the third step, once all the codes had been identified and verified with the end-of-course reflection paper and the researcher's field notes, the researcher created an individual textural description for each research participant (Moustakas, 1994). Textual description includes describing what the participants are saying and the topics they discuss (Padilla-Díaz, 2015).

Step 3: Imaginative Variation

Imaginative variation provides the opportunity for the researcher to, "...derive structural themes from the textural descriptions that have been obtained through Phenomenological Reduction" (p. 99). A structural description refers to how the experience is expressed by the participant (Padilla-Díaz, 2015). The researcher used the following guidelines suggested by (Padilla-Díaz, 2015). These include:

- What elements do people unintentionally filter?

- What are some events evidenced through the stories without the person being aware of?
- How does the person construct meaning within his or her social and personal worlds (p. 105).

Step 4: Synthesis of Meanings and Essences

In this step of the analysis, a textural-structural description was written for each participant (Moustakas, 1994). According to Moustakas, (1994), “The fundamental textural-structural synthesis represents the essences at a particular time and place from the vantage point of an individual researcher following an exhaustive imaginative and reflective study of the phenomenon” (p. 100).

Since this study had nine participants, the researcher followed all of the steps above for each participant using the first-round interview. Next, the researcher completed the above steps for the second-round interviews. The second-round interviews were triangulated with the themes, or meaning-units, from the first-round interviews in addition to the end-of-course reflection paper and supplemental document that was discussed by the participants during the follow-up interviews. After, the researcher created meaning units common to all participants in order to create a composite textural and structural description based on the shared descriptions of all the participants.

According to Yüksel and Yılırim (2015):

In the composite textural and structural descriptions, researcher can eliminate individual meaning units in order to create the essence of the phenomena.

Researcher should write composite narratives from the third person perspective representing the group as a whole. This step is the synthesis of the narratives for

the group as a whole. The composite structural description is combined in the composite textural description to create a universal description of the investigation. The purpose of this step is to reach the essence of the experience of the phenomenon. (pp. 12-13)

Steps of this data analysis as described by Yüksel & Yılırm, (2015) can be found in Figure 3 above.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher treated all participants in accordance with the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). Even though there were no known risks associated with participating in this study, considerations were made to ensure confidentiality and to remind participants that the interviews would be audio-taped and transcribed. Participants were ensured that all identifying information would be removed from the interview transcripts to maintain confidentiality. Participants had the opportunity to review and edit their transcripts. The consent forms and all other study materials containing identifiable information were kept in a locked and secure location at the researcher's home.

Interviewer Qualifications and Approach

The interviewer, who was also the researcher in the study, has a Master's degree in Education, and completed coursework in qualitative research and adult learning theory prior to initiating the study. The interviewer maintained positive relationships with study participants and was reflective about how her opinions and biases could impact study results.

The Self-As-Researcher and Instructor

Given that the researchers' perceptions have the potential to threaten a true phenomenological approach, it was imperative for the researcher to be explicit during the research process regarding her own experiences and how her position influenced her study (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher began her teaching career as a special education teacher who taught 6th to 8th graders math and language arts. In addition, the researcher designed Individual Education Plans (IEP's) for these students who had various learning and emotional needs. The researcher also worked closely with classroom teachers to ensure her students' IEP accommodations were being met in their mainstreamed classrooms. After her 4.5-year tenure as a special education teacher, she took a position teaching 2nd graders. After only half a year, she had to relocate to another state due to competing family demands. As such, she taught 5th grade for five years before she had to move again, at which time she enrolled as a doctoral student at Prairie University where the present study took place. In addition, she was the instructor for the course Understanding Readers and Writers for six semesters at this university.

The researcher's prior experience as a middle school special education teacher and second and fifth grade classroom teacher, combined with her time as a doctoral trainee, sparked her interest and commitment to this research study. Witnessing the frustration her preservice teachers were experiencing struggling through the course early in their training, she wondered what effect front-loading a foundational literacy course had on preservice teachers as they completed their subsequent literacy methods coursework and student teaching. Therefore, she decided to interview preservice teachers who took the foundational literacy course during the Spring 2016 semester for the present study.

Researcher Reflexivity

The researcher was central to the data collection process, and therefore several measures were taken to preserve the scientific integrity of the research. At the time of data collection, which began in July 2018, the researcher was not employed as an instructor in the undergraduate elementary teacher education program; however, the researcher was the instructor of record for the foundational literacy course that the participants completed during the Spring 2016 semester. Given that the researcher and participants knew each other well through their classroom interactions, the present research may have been impacted by researcher bias or response bias. As an attempt to minimize the impact of these biases, the researcher engaged in ongoing self-reflection by utilizing journals and communicating with her advisor regularly during the research process. All research activities were completed after course grades were finalized. In addition, to address potential subjectivity and strengthen the credibility of the research, the researcher utilized various safeguarding techniques including triangulating her data sources and research methods, and conducting member-checking, peer debriefing, bracketing, and journaling (Maxwell, 2013). The researcher was committed to the awareness of how her participants, data collection procedures, and data analysis procedures could bias study results. All collected data were de-identified prior to analysis. In addition, the researcher ensured that her participants understood that they would not be negatively impacted as a result of participating in the study. Finally, the researcher maintained an awareness that she was "...responsible for creating a climate in which the research participant will feel comfortable and will respond honestly and comprehensively" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 114).

Assumptions

There were several assumptions for this study. First, it was assumed by myself, based on the research that I had read and my experiences teaching the course, that the participants would minimally draw from the foundational literacy knowledge during their subsequent coursework and student teaching. Second, it was assumed that the participants would value learning about literacy teaching approaches more than foundational literacy knowledge. Third, it was assumed that due to the course being taken early in the teacher education sequence, participants would have a difficult time remembering what they learned. Finally, I assumed that participants would have a lack of opportunity to apply their foundational literacy knowledge during subsequent coursework and student teaching, which would be limiting factors of this teacher preparation program.

Researcher Bias

“The problem of phenomenological inquiry is not always that we know too little about the phenomenon we wish to investigate but that we know too much” (van Manen, 1984, p. 46). In qualitative studies the researcher collects data via interaction with study participants, thereby introducing biases (Merriam, 2009). To address this, van Manen (1984, p. 46) recommends that:

It is better to make *explicit our understandings, beliefs, biases, assumptions, presuppositions, and theories* in order then to simply not try to forget them again but rather to turn this knowledge against itself, as it were, thereby exposing its shallow or concealing character.

Therefore, an attempt to limit researcher bias was made by completing the following steps:

1. The researcher took detailed notes during the audio-recorded interviews and sent typed interview transcripts to each participant for member-checking immediately following interview completion (Maxwell, 2013).
2. The researcher repeatedly conducted member-checks with her participants (Creswell, 2014; Maxwell, 2013).
3. The researcher considered results that supported study hypotheses as well as those that negated *a priori* expectations (Creswell, 2014; Maxwell, 2013).
4. The researcher asked her advisor to provide feedback throughout the study to ensure that no data were inadvertently ignored (Maxwell, 2013).
5. The researcher used bracketing techniques, or what Moustakas (1994) refers to as part of the “Epoché process” (p. 89), in which the researcher underwent a constant awareness of her own pre-judgments to not affect what the participants were trying to say. The researcher practiced this process by writing down any thoughts that may have inhibited her from fully engaging in what a participant was saying, and ensuring that this information was separated from the data collection (Moustakas, 1994).
6. The researcher used participants’ own words as part of her data collection, analysis, and synthesis and kept referring back to them throughout the study (Moustakas, 1994).

Trustworthiness: Reliability and Validity

Lincoln and Guba (1985) use the terms credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability to address threats to reliability and validity. The following section outlines how the researcher addressed these threats (Robson, 2002).

Credibility

Credibility, or how one can establish confidence in the truth of inquiry, was promoted in several ways. The researcher used data triangulation by considering both interviews and supplemental documents to ensure consistency of information across multiple sources. Respondent validation, (Maxwell, 2013) or member checks, also provided participants with an opportunity to confirm data accuracy and the appropriateness of data interpretation. Additionally, the researcher searched for negative cases, or instances when the data contradicted the researcher's expectations. She also kept an audit trail that included all raw data, interview transcripts, documents, research journals, and the specific details of the coding and data analysis procedures (Robson, 2002).

The researcher used bracketing to promote credibility in accordance with Wall, Glenn, Mitchinson, and Poole's (2004) framework. This includes bracketing before, during, and after each interview. For example, before each interview, the researcher bracketed her own experiences relating to teaching preservice teachers a foundational literacy course early in their teacher preparation program. The researcher imagined her personal experiences being put aside, which better enabled her to be a neutral interviewer. During the interview process, the researcher used bracketing techniques by making a conscious effort to refrain from reacting to issues that arose during the interview. Bracketing after the interview consisted of reflecting on the methodological

process, such as how the interviews were progressing and what type of data was being collected.

Throughout the data collection process, the researcher bracketed all preconceptions and personal knowledge when listening to participants. She additionally reflected on participants' personal experiences using a reflection diary and stayed in constant communication with her dissertation advisor (Penner & McClement, 2008).

Transferability

Transferability refers to the extent to which findings of a given study are applicable to other contexts and participants. The results from this study were not intended to transfer to other situations, though themes may be similar in some contexts. Rather, the findings were intended to provide a rich description of a phenomenon in one public teacher preparation program in the Midwest (Maxwell, 2013).

Dependability

Multiple efforts were made to ensure dependability, or whether the findings of the study could be replicated if the study were to be repeated with the same participants in the same or a similar context (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researcher kept an audit trail of all the decisions that were made throughout the research process. Additionally, peer debriefing, as provided by the researcher's advisor and committee members, triangulation, and reflexive journaling were utilized (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Confirmability

Multiple methods of confirmability, or the degree to which the findings of a study are determined by the participants and not the biases, motives, interests, or perspectives of the researcher, were utilized (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Reflexive journaling was used

to record the researcher's personal thoughts and beliefs that could impact the data. The audit trail was also used to promote the transparency of the researcher's process. Peer debriefing ensured that the conclusions the researcher drew were appropriate according to both the participants and content experts. Further, triangulation data methods, (i.e., using interviews and documents) provided another means to ensure that the conclusions were consistently supported across multiple sources of data (Robson, 2002). Finally, the researcher provided examples of her raw data as part of the dissertation to support the conclusions (Maxwell, 2013).

Limitations

1. This study was limited by the sensitivity and integrity of the investigator. Since the researcher collected all data, she was left to rely on her own instincts and abilities (Merriam, 2009).
2. Researcher biases may have impacted the data and results even though efforts were taken to minimize this risk (Merriam, 2009).
3. During the time of the interviews some participants were in their first month of teaching. Therefore, as they discussed their experiences with student teaching, it is possible that some of their reported experiences may have actually been drawn from their current teaching experiences.
4. Since participation in this study was voluntary, participants who did not participate could have had different experiences to share.
5. Although three data sources were used in this study, incorporating a focus group and observations could have enhanced the data collection process (Yüksel & Yilirim, 2015).

Chapter Summary

The goal of this chapter was to outline the research methods used to answer the research questions. The procedure, study participants, data collection, and interview questions contributed to the study's phenomenological methodology. A constructionist phenomenological methodology was used in order to examine the perceptions of preservice teachers' experiences with foundational literacy knowledge. The goal of Chapter IV is to provide the results of this study.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to qualitatively examine the impact that a foundational literacy course, taken early in a teacher education program, had on nine elementary preservice teachers' subsequent methods coursework and student teaching experiences. The study used a phenomenological approach as it aimed to understand the essence of learning foundational literacy and using foundational literacy later in their methods courses and student teaching. The research questions were:

1. How do preservice teachers describe their philosophy of teaching literacy?
2. How did preservice teachers experience the foundational literacy course?
3. How do preservice teachers experience foundational literacy knowledge during their subsequent literacy methods coursework and student teaching?

Chapter IV presents the three themes that emerged from the data: Philosophy of Teaching Literacy, Perceptions of Foundational Literacy Knowledge, and Barriers. The chapter concludes with a description of the textural, structural, and essence of the participants' experiences.

Theme 1: Philosophy of Teaching Literacy

When the researcher asked participants to share their philosophy of teaching literacy all participants discussed the importance of student engagement, or ways to make reading fun, and knowing your readers. Making reading fun included getting students to

find a love of reading, the importance providing students reading choices based on their interests, and knowing how to do fun activities. Knowing your readers included seeing where each kid was, finding out what they're reading, and finding out if their students should be moved up a reading level.

Making Reading Fun

Gabby talked of the importance of getting her students to love reading. Gabby said, "I would say the biggest thing is just getting kids to really find a love of reading. I think there is nothing more important than having them actually enjoy it...". The importance of providing students with choices about what they want to read was mentioned by Helen. When the researcher asked Helen what a teacher should know in order to teach reading well, she explained that teachers need to understand their students' interests. She explained, "I think they [teachers] need to understand their students' interests. I think if you make it enjoyable they'll probably get more involved in what you want to do in class and a better outcome." Emma also mentioned that it was important for students to have fun with the lessons teachers teach. She explained that it was important for teachers to do this by using a variety of different approaches. She explained,

I think being able to kind of have fun with the lessons they teach... when students don't realize they're learning is when they learn best. So I think it's important for a teacher to have a variety of different lessons or different approaches to lessons... like the students can have fun with this and not feel like they're being given all of this information they have to memorize...

The importance of teachers knowing different approaches to lessons was mentioned by all participants. Knowing different approaches was explained by participants as incorporating any of the following: reader's workshop model, Daily 5, literature circles, and breaking students into different size groups. Gabby shared,

I would say, like a Jan Richardson model of having a reader's workshop model, a mini lesson, breaking off into um, guided reading groups as well as having independent reading time, or having a kind of Daily 5— um, station thing. I just like having reading not just be sitting and listening to a teacher for an hour or something. I like it when kids move around doing different things to keep them engaged. Reading can be boring just knowing how to do different kinds of activities with it— whether it be small group, whole-group, or own, with a partner, um, I think all those strategies are really important for kids to know how to do and for teachers to teach them.

Gabby's perception of effective literacy teaching included teachers knowing how to implement a reader's workshop model. She explained that model was effective because students were engaged, they were moving around, and they were doing different activities that would keep them from getting bored. She mentioned that this model was important for teachers to know how to do in classrooms. Similar to Gabby, Amber mentioned that having an equal balance of reading and writing was important when teaching reading. She then explained why she believed the Daily 5 was an effective way to promote her literacy philosophy. She explained,

Um, I think it's important to have an equal balance of both reading and writing. I think they go hand in hand with each other for students. During my student

teaching experience we did hour block of writing and reading separately, but then with the reading block, they did do Daily 5, so, one of the stations they could free write, they can go back to continue writing...So, I think it's important to have that balance opportunities for students to get both the literacy and the writing.

The researcher then asked Amber why she thought the Daily 5 was an effective way to promote her students' reading and writing development. Amber said,

I think it was a good way for 4th grade—I've seen it in other classes, but for younger grades, but I wasn't in the classes for that long to see how productive it was, but for 4th grade, it kept them, um, it kept them, like they had choices and options, so they felt like they were in charge of what they were learning and doing. I know it took the cooperating teacher a few weeks at the beginning of the school year to establish those routines and expectations for each round— while she would take a group for guided reading while the other students did the Daily 5 rounds and I think that having different choices for them to do for 20 minutes to half-hour allowed them to make that choice and be independent and all while working I did see that they really enjoyed reading more because they got to choose what kinds of books they wanted to read, they have the option to work with their peers or individual, they had options to continue to work and research or work on what they had previously been working on, so I do think it was beneficial for students.

For Amber, the Daily 5 was an effective way to promote her students' reading and writing development because it was consistent with her beliefs about literacy. Her literacy beliefs included the importance of providing her students with different choices

and activities. As a result of providing her students with these different activities, Amber believed that this made her students enjoy reading more. It is important to note that Amber appeared to be more focused on discussing how her students were responding to the activities rather than focusing on what specific literacy knowledge she was expecting her students to learn. Rather, Amber appeared to focus on the importance of routines and procedures rather than the importance of identifying the literacy needs of her students.

Knowing your readers. The construct, knowing your readers emerged as a subtheme of philosophy of teaching literacy. Knowing your readers included being able to put students into leveled groups for guided reading so participants could ask them questions, find out what their students were reading, or find out if they should be moved up a reading level. All participants mentioned that “seeing where each kid was” was instrumental in being able to teach literacy effectively. For example, Fran explained that breaking students into different groups was effective because she could see “where each kid was”. The researcher asked Fran to name two to three methods or activities that she believed were effective in helping develop her students’ literacy skills. She said,

...I would do the same groups, or sometimes I would do random groups, but they would go around three different stations. First station— they would read that story that was in the curriculum and like the next station, would work on vocabulary for that story, and the other group would usually do iPad’s or another fun activity that was connected to that story. So I found that splitting them into groups did help them a lot because when you are working with three to four kids, then I could see where each kid was and how they were doing with the story and

um, kind of um, ask them what else they were thinking— about the other questions I had.

In this example, Fran believed that breaking students into small groups was an effective strategy. She spent a lot of time explaining the activities her students were completing at the different stations. She then talked about the benefits of breaking students into small groups. In these groups, Fran believed that this was the time she could see “where her students were at”. To Fran, this meant asking them questions about what they were reading, or in Fran’s words, “how they were doing with the story”. Again, Fran appeared to be focusing on the activities her students were doing rather than focusing on ways to strengthen her students’ literacy needs. In fact, there was no indication from any of the participants how the literacy activities were designed to strengthen their students’ literacy needs.

When the researcher asked Helen what she believed a teacher needed to know in order to teach reading well, she said that teachers should find out their students’ reading level so that they could place them in an appropriate reading group. Helen said,

...it would mean to find out where they are for their reading level and then place them in one group they would be most beneficial in. Because, if it is too hard to comprehend and it is just going over their heads, they might get frustrated which can also lead to them not really enjoying that part of the day and then if it is too easy, they may like zone out and — so I guess placing them where you know that they are going to be pushed enough, not pushed too hard, where they don’t want to do it.

Betty also talked about the importance of using her students' reading levels. For example, when the researcher asked Betty what does a teacher need to know in order to teach reading well, she said,

You need to understand your reader— you need people to understand what levels they're at so that way you can push them or help them— it's what they need to learn to be able to grow. Otherwise, they won't be able— and I think it's important that you have student interest, otherwise, you're not going to get that passion. And that's just knowing your readers.

All participants talked about the importance of knowing their students' reading levels. The reasons they gave for knowing their students' reading levels included knowing what guided reading groups to put their students in as well as being able to monitor their students' comprehension by asking students questions related to what they were reading. It is also relevant to note that the participants did not mention the importance of assessment. Participants did not mention the importance of identifying what their individual students' literacy needs were in order to be able to target those skills during guided reading instruction, for example. Rather, participants appeared to focus on the importance of knowing their students' reading levels to group their students. Grouping students based on reading levels provide a general overview of their students' reading levels, but was a common experience shared by all participants.

Personal and Practical Knowledge

The construct personal and practical knowledge emerged as a subtheme of philosophy of literacy teaching. Participants mentioned that their beliefs about effective literacy instruction were inspired by both their personal and practical experience.

Examples of participants' personal beliefs included learning styles, former elementary teachers, and parents. Emma believed that her literacy philosophy was influenced by her past school experiences with reading. She said,

I didn't like reading when I was younger, so like, to see that they're excited to read— and just learn more about stuff through reading and just having an overall positive attitude towards it— was good because I didn't like reading until I was in high school. So, just like starting them young...

Emma's past experiences with reading influenced her philosophy of literacy. Emma continued to explain that she believed that if literacy strategies were helpful to her, then she believed that they would also be helpful to her students. She said, "I learn a lot better with pictures or when I have hands-on, or you know, something physical to work with. So, I think using manipulatives can help a student interact." Some participants mentioned people in their lives that had influenced their philosophy of literacy. For example, Fran talked about how her mom was influential. She said,

...my mom is pretty laid back and she loves to read and she read quite frequently to my siblings and myself, so I think that I just kind of get that attitude from her since... showing how much she loves to read and that like, you know, finding several different styles of books and types of books to expose kids to is really important, and um, just making sure that it is a fun hobby outside of school.

Gabby talked about how her former teachers had influenced her literacy philosophy. She said,

I enjoyed reading and writing and was something that I felt my teachers did a really good job at... I thought it was so much fun and I thought I did so much

better because I had so much fun with it, so I think it's just a need to instill the same, um, you know, belief that I actually had to my students is kind of what I am going for, you know?

Besides personal knowledge and experiences, participants mentioned practical knowledge and experiences that had influenced their literacy philosophy. This included knowledge gained during their TEAM Reading methods course, observing teachers and students in classrooms during field experiences, and student teaching experience.

The most mentioned topics when referencing their practical knowledge included the TEAM Reading methods course, which included learning about literacy strategies, utilization of the strategy resource book, lesson planning, and differentiating for different reading levels. The TEAM Reading method course was the last methods course participants took prior to student teaching. When the researcher asked participants what literacy course was most influential to their philosophy of literacy, all nine participants mentioned that the TEAM Reading course was most influential to their literacy beliefs. For example, Emma discussed how the TEAM Reading course was most influential because it focused on reading strategies. She made particular reference to the reading strategies book. She said,

There was a class, during my TEAM class— um, just specifically because we learned a lot from one of our textbooks. It was about the reading strategies that had loads of different ways to approach how students decode words or how students got the details of reading and just a variety of strategies that show— and it has different lessons....and I think that helps me closer to my student teaching as well.

Similar to Emma, Amber mentioned that the TEAM Reading course helped her because it focused on literacy strategies and she was able to apply this knowledge when teaching small groups of students. She said,

I think my TEAM course really helped a lot because we spent 4 hours specifically on reading and writing techniques and then, um, once a week, we worked with these students, like a group of three students and got to use the book, the lesson plans, cause we had books on our lesson plans in TEAM— um, courses, that probably helped to create the lesson plans and try them out on just a small group of students that we could build off of.

When the researcher asked Gabby what literacy information helped her the most, she explained that experiencing planning and differentiation was the most beneficial for her. She said, “I would say, um, probably differentiating for different reading levels...I think getting to experience planning and differentiation for these different levels was probably most beneficial throughout.” Ingrid, like Amber believed that the TEAM Reading course helped to shape her literacy philosophy because this course provided her the opportunity to apply her knowledge. When the researcher asked Ingrid what helped to shape her philosophy of teaching literacy, she said, “...I think the time I realized everything that I totally learned in every class came together was during my TEAM experience because I had all the knowledge and that’s when I was really able to use that knowledge and try it.”

Participants also mentioned that being able to observe different classrooms during their literacy field experiences influenced their literacy philosophy. Vada said,

I think getting to experience different schools and seeing different teaching styles while we were observing those classrooms also helped um, kind of see how I was going to teach literacy and what literacy kind of means to me because um, seeing several different teaching styles and seeing several different ways how teachers set up their classrooms, and kind of organize their classrooms and I think kind of impacted me on how I would want to be teaching literacy myself and how I would want to be um, preparing myself for that.

Vada talked about how observing classrooms provided her opportunities to see different teaching styles and to see how teachers organize their classrooms. Amber also explained that observing classrooms helped to shape her philosophy. She also talked about how her practical experiences helped her make sense out of the literacy course knowledge she had learned.

When the researcher asked Amber what shaped her philosophy of literacy, she said, "...I think like the field experiences and especially student teaching I saw it all come alive and see how everything connects with each other and the students actually using those techniques and strategies that I have learned." Amber went on to explain that once she was able to see for herself the knowledge that she had learned being used in classrooms, this helped her make sense out of what she was learning in prior literacy coursework. She continued,

... so that seeing everything actually come alive in a classroom— it all clicked in my head because you can read about it and learn about it, but I think once I was in the classroom and was actually able to use it myself, then everything started to come together for me as a teacher.

Besides valuing observing teachers and students, participants mentioned that their student teaching experience helped to shape their literacy philosophy. Diane shared that she felt like she had benefited so much from her student teaching experience that she wished her student teaching experience was longer. More specifically, Diane mentioned watching students, building relationships, and observing teachers during student teaching helped her shape her literacy philosophy. She continued, “Cause, I, when I am in the classroom, I’m seeing students every day, and building relationships, and watching teachers constantly— all day long. And I think that really benefitted me. I learned so much.” Similar to Diane, Gabby also believed that she would have benefited more if she could have spent more time student teaching. She said,

You can never have enough time when you are practicing skills and things like that. I mean, that’s the only way I really learned with actually doing them rather than just discussing them. So obviously in student teaching, I had that time. So I would even say longer student teaching because there is so much to learn. I think the biggest thing is time with kids— that’s what taught me the most when I got to be with them.

Participants’ philosophy of teaching literacy intersects with the next theme, perceptions of foundational literacy knowledge, as indicated by the subthemes, making reading fun and personal and practical knowledge. Participants made references to these themes when discussing their experiences with foundational literacy knowledge.

Theme 2: Perceptions of Foundational Literacy Knowledge

When prompting for information about participants’ experiences with foundational literacy knowledge, the participants had the option of referring to (Appendix

C), which consisted of a list of literacy topics that were covered during the foundational literacy course. The researcher was interested in exploring, *what and how* participants used foundational literacy knowledge during their literacy methods coursework and student teaching experiences.

Benefits of Knowing Literacy Terminology

Benefits of knowing literacy terminology emerged as a subtheme of perceptions of foundational literacy knowledge. Benefits of foundational literacy knowledge included knowing literacy terms, knowing how to administer literacy assessments, and the importance of knowing the different questions and literacy strategies. Diane believed that being familiar with the literacy terms during her subsequent literacy methods coursework helped her feel more prepared during coursework. She explained,

My writing teacher [during methods] she presented some stuff. I would not have a clue what was going on, so I did learn some stuff with your class, because I would definitely be scared if I've been in those classes I took because I wouldn't have known what was going on.

Similar to Diane, Ingrid believed that since she was already familiar with the literacy terminology it was something that she had appreciated when taking literacy methods coursework. She said, "When I heard things referenced, I knew what they were rather than having to figure out what it was. Like with the writing process... I knew what that was." Betty also believed that understanding the literacy terms were helpful during her literacy methods coursework because it provided her a good introduction to the literacy terms that she heard later on. Betty said, "Well, yeah, understanding what the stuff was.

What we were teaching. Like if someone was doing a fluency lesson, you have to understand what fluency was. I guess the first place I learned that was in T&L 335.”

Similar to Betty, Gabby said,

...I really didn't know what phonemic and phonological awareness was until I took the course, so the fact that that introduced me to it is something I use now... however, many years it has been, so it was a very good, um, introduction to a lot of really important um, topics that I needed to know.

Gabby believed that the foundational literacy course provided her a good introduction to a lot of important topics that she needed to know. Interestingly, when preparing to take an additional Praxis exam, Diane and Emma were surprised that they were already familiar with all of the literacy terminology that was going to be on the exam. Diane shared, “When I took the Praxis exam, every single little thing you ever taught in that class was brought right back.” Diane was extremely enthusiastic when talking to the researcher about how the foundational literacy course made it easier for her to prepare for the additional exam. Emma also expressed that she was thankful for the foundational literacy course because she also felt more prepared when she had to take the additional Praxis exam. She said,

...I think the Understanding, T&L 335 helped a tremendous amount on my Praxis. There were so many questions about the blends, digraphs...I think it was assessments and it kind of talked about different strategies that I remember reflecting back to that course. I was extremely thankful for that course.

Participants also mentioned that knowing how to administer literacy assessments was also beneficial. For example, Diane mentioned that she had applied her foundational

literacy knowledge during her literacy methods coursework when her mentor teacher asked her to administer literacy assessments. Diane said, “At the end of the year they had to take their reading, like, test, and see where they are reading level-wise. And I was able to do it myself.” Diane said that this experience made her feel independent, happy, and prepared. She shared, “That made me feel good that she trusted me to do that. I didn’t feel lost because we did it in your class— we had practiced it in your class and I think that really helped me.” Betty also said that she was able to use her assessment knowledge. During student teaching, Betty explained she used Fountas & Pinnell to put students into reading groups. She said, “I guess one thing I really used was Fountas & Pinnell to put them into their reading groups— to figure out the reading levels.” Similar to Betty, Helen also talked about using her foundational literacy knowledge during student teaching. She said, “...I performed a reading analysis on them. It was pretty awesome because she [cooperating teacher] let me do it with most of the students because she was so busy getting other things set up.”

Participants believed that they had used their foundational literacy knowledge because they were able to recognize the literacy terminology. They also benefited from literacy assessment knowledge because they were able to complete this task during their literacy methods field experiences and during student teaching. Participants felt that this knowledge was beneficial because it made it easier to complete the tasks that were asked of them. However, participants did not mention analyzing assessment results and determining students developmental levels. All of which require strong foundational literacy knowledge. Instead, the focus appeared to be giving of assessments, the practice rather than the theory and purpose behind it.

Knowing the Different Questions and Strategies to Use

When the researcher asked participants to refer to their literacy lessons they had sent the researcher to describe how they may have used their foundational literacy knowledge when teaching a literacy lesson, participants stated that their foundational literacy knowledge helped them know what questions to ask and what strategies to use with their students. For example, when the researcher asked Amber how she used her foundational literacy knowledge during her character trait lesson she said, “I think in 335 I learned when to stop during read-alouds— the different strategies I could use.” The researcher then asked Amber how she used her foundational literacy knowledge when working with a small group of struggling readers. She said that she worked on word patterns and helped them by giving them different strategies. She said, “I think there were some students who were really low that I worked with and so like working on those word patterns— there were two students I worked with everyday so I would work on strategies like context clues and pictures so she could figure out the words. So that I think it was the fluency part for her too.” The researcher then asked Amber what knowledge she used to determine what questions to ask her students. She said, “I did go back in the Jan Richardson because I was so— knowing I was going to be in 4th grade, I was so like looking into the higher levels and so going back and seeing what first grade levels needed, I know I need to look at those strategies.” For Amber, she believed that she had used her foundational literacy knowledge because she knew when to stop to ask her students questions. Amber said that she remembered learning about this during the course. During the discussion, she also thought that she may have been using her fluency knowledge as well. In order to inform her instruction, Amber referred to the literacy

strategies book to help her find strategies that she could use with students who were on a first grade reading level.

When the researcher asked Betty how she used her foundational literacy knowledge to teach her reading comprehension lesson with her students, she said,

I did a non-fiction lesson — it was actually a pretty big book and I think it was about whales, so after each page I would have them write a sentence about what's the major point on this page and they would write it down in their journal...and they were able to retell the story properly—being able to retell the story and being able to understand it.

Betty emphasized that she used her foundational literacy knowledge to help her students be able to retell a story. The way Betty used foundational literacy knowledge in this example appears that she also focused on the tasks, or the procedures that she had to follow in her lesson plan.

When the researcher asked Gabby how she used her foundational literacy knowledge to teach her summarizing lesson, she also emphasized that she used the literacy knowledge to help her students identify the main idea in the story. She said,

...knowing how to identify things within a story and knowing how to ask questions that lead them in the right direction without giving them the answers because if they're not getting— you need the guiding— but you obviously don't want to just tell them where to find things, so, it just helps just to know how to guide them into finding what you're going for pretty much without just giving it to them.

When the researcher asked Emma how she used her vocabulary knowledge during her literacy lesson, she said,

I think we did decoding the words and figuring out, inferring what it means. So, if they didn't know a certain vocabulary word, we would kind of talk about it—try to figure out what the word meant, with you know, the surrounding sentences and surrounding things—so that's what I learned in the Understanding Readers and Writers class, kind of came into play here— and let students figure out the vocabulary word rather than simply telling them what it was.

Emma went on to state,

I definitely think that [vocabulary knowledge] was helpful when I was doing assessments with them because if they didn't use a vocabulary word, um, you know, we'd figure it out with what's around it, and try to guess the word of course. I also actually read them a book— um, like a read-aloud. It was a big chapter book that we would read pages and a lot of times, because the book was many levels above, um, levels they were reading at, there were a lot of vocabulary words they didn't understand, so I think that was important.

Emma believed that she may have used her foundational literacy knowledge as evidenced by the quote, “I think we did decoding...”. Emma also discussed literacy strategies she had used with her students such as, figuring out the words using surrounding sentences, in which she said she specifically remembered learning about during the foundational literacy knowledge course.

In contrast, when the researcher asked participants about their perceptions of foundational literacy knowledge in general and not related to their literacy teaching

experiences during literacy methods field experiences and/or during student teaching, participants' beliefs were more specific and related to how teachers can use foundational literacy knowledge to help them identify students' specific literacy needs and be able to use this knowledge to develop literacy instruction. When the researcher asked Amber if she believed foundational literacy knowledge was important for teachers to know, she said,

I think they need to know, um, where their students are at. I think that assessment piece. I think assessing students and then I think their cueing systems and what's missing and what they know and how to build off of that through phonics, or through fluency, comprehension...

Amber's response when asked about foundational literacy knowledge in general indicated that she believed teachers need to assessment knowledge to "know where their students are". She also made specific references to the cueing systems and the importance of teachers trying to find out what cueing systems the students are missing. Effective literacy teachers are able to identify what graphophonic, semantic, and syntactic cueing systems their students are using and misusing in order to determine what their instructional literacy needs are. Teachers can use this knowledge to plan appropriate literacy instruction that is designed to target specific literacy skills. This was a major area of study during the foundational literacy course.

Participants' perceptions of foundational literacy knowledge in these examples appeared to describe how foundational literacy knowledge can be used as a tool to help teachers identify literacy needs. Participants' responses appeared to be more indicative of a higher level of appropriation of foundational literacy knowledge. In sum,

participants' perceptions of foundational literacy knowledge during their literacy methods coursework and student teaching experiences appeared to be less connected to their literacy teaching practices and more connected to the tasks and procedures they used to teach the literacy concepts.

Theme 3: Barriers

All participants mentioned structural and contextual barriers that they believed may have limited their ability to use their foundational literacy knowledge. The structural barriers mentioned most often were the timing of the foundational literacy course. The contextual barriers mentioned most often included the focus of literacy methods coursework and during student teaching, included roles and responsibilities, cooperating teachers, and the grade placement for student teaching.

Structural Barriers

The timing of the foundational literacy course presented several challenges for all participants. Some participants believed that taking a foundational literacy course so early in their program, as beneficial as they believed the course may have been, participants expressed that the course would have been more useful if was required later in their program. For example, Amber said,

Um, I feel like it was a good class to take. Um, maybe... it was kind of in the beginning of my program. I feel like it would be helpful to have towards the end— right before I went out to, um, student teach, or into the field, just so I could be more aware...

Betty also questioned the course placement. Betty said, "...I feel like the course would have been really helpful to have during TEAM or something...if I would have had it

during like right before student teaching I would have been able to take more information from it.” Betty continued to provide additional reasons why the course should be moved later on in the program. She said,

I feel like they should switch TEAM Reading— have that be your first time when you go because I know during TEAM Reading, I feel like, we did oh, like read-aloud and went over books—we did things like that. Like what Daily 5 is...

Betty also referred to the list of literacy topics that the researcher sent to participants prior to their interviews (Appendix C), and explained, ...where this stuff [foundational literacy knowledge] seems like, underlying type of stuff that you might see in the classroom... this seems like stuff you really, like you really need to know. If it’s stuff you’ve seen, you could understand better once you learn the basics like literacy instruction.... I still feel like that would have been such a good course to have at the end— maybe even have two courses of that.

For Amber and Betty, the foundational literacy course would have been more beneficial if they were able to take the course after methods, to learn the practical knowledge first and then learn the theory behind it. Gabby said that she wished she was able to remember what she had learned because she remembered the foundational literacy course being valuable. She said,

I wish I could remember more because I remember it being a valuable course. I remember it being valuable. I really didn’t know what phonemic and phonological awareness was until I took the course, so the fact that that introduced me to it is something I use now— however, many years it’s been, so it

was very good, um, I don't want to say introduction, but it was essentially an introduction to a lot of really important, um, topics that I needed to know.

When referring to the list of literacy topics in (Appendix C), Betty said that she did not remember what the three cueing systems were. She said, "...I can't remember—I don't remember the three cueing systems— maybe that is something I know, but I'm not sure. I just don't remember what that is." Although participants said that they remember the course being beneficial, it was hard for them to recall details. Along with this, Betty and Emma noted that due to their lack of literacy knowledge and experience at the time, they felt like this negatively impacted them. Betty said,

I feel like some of it [the foundational literacy knowledge] I didn't understand when I was going through it because I didn't have the background maybe... especially [it was] my first course and things. I never met with any students or anything like that, so I didn't understand. I had no experience in the classroom. The only experience I had was teaching religious education. That was— that's not— so, I, yeah, some of it went over my head. But now, when I look back and see the stuff, I'm like, oh yeah, this is something that you need now...

The researcher then asked Betty for an example and she said, "... I even feel like when we did those big assessments I feel like those went over my head— I didn't understand it— how much you would actually use it." Emma also believed the assessments were confusing the first time she learned about them during the foundational literacy course. She said,

I definitely felt overwhelmed. I am not going to lie. It was hard because I don't believe I was doing like classroom placements at the beginning of that class, so it

was hard to look at all of the assessments and kind of put them into action. And I didn't think, you know, a teacher actually did this—

Besides the literacy assessments, many participants expressed how challenging it was to learn all of the information that was required during the course. For example, Diane said,

...taking your course was difficult. It was just so many terms, so many little things, and everything sounded so familiar, like similar, like each term was like you have this term and this term and this— and it was very difficult— and that's not on you, that course is just hard in general— I felt like it was too much to be crammed into one semester. If it was a year, I would think maybe that would help more.

Betty was also overwhelmed by the course content. She said,

...I feel like the knowledge you learn in 335 is really important, but understanding it is extremely important too because you'll need it when you are actually teaching. And that's why I almost feel, maybe the course should be two different courses— so much important information, it's insane.

Several participants also expressed that in retrospect they wished they had kept the course resources because they now feel like those would have been helpful. Betty said, "...it would have been awesome if I still had those resources—like maybe if I printed them out. That would have been something I could have done in hind-sight."

Emma also wished she would have kept the course resources. She said, "I wish I would have kept some of the articles that we read because I think that would have benefited me when I start to go into the classroom...". Fran talked about wishing that she had taken

more notes on the readings and she wished that she saved them in a more organized way. She said, “I think I should have taken more notes on the readings and um, saved them in a more organized way.” All participants mentioned that the timing of the foundational literacy course may have negatively impacted the extent to which they were able to use their foundational literacy knowledge.

Contextual Barriers

Participants also reported several contextual barriers that impacted them. The participants expressed that they were not able to apply foundational literacy knowledge because the focus during methods courses was focused on other topics. In other words, participants felt like they were not motivated to use this knowledge because they did not need it in order to complete these courses. All participants believed that the literacy methods courses were not focused on “in-depth things” but rather, these courses were more focused on as Betty described as learning what the Daily 5, read-aloud, and lesson-planning are, for example. Further, when the researcher asked Amber if she was able to use any of the foundational literacy knowledge during her literacy methods coursework she said, “...what we used in methods that’s what we used, kind of... cause we focused on the lesson plans rather than in-depth things... and we looked at the standards.” Cindy also expressed that the TEAM Reading methods course was more focused on lesson-planning. She stated, “It [TEAM] was more lesson-planning.” In other words, it appeared from these examples that participants believed that their literacy methods coursework may have been separate from the foundational literacy knowledge.

In addition to participants’ perception that the foundational literacy course and their literacy methods coursework focused on separate things, another reason why

participants expressed they were not able to use their foundational literacy knowledge was because of the grade-level they were assigned to during literacy methods field experiences and/or during student teaching. Diane shared that she did not have an opportunity to apply foundational literacy knowledge because of the age of her students during her literacy methods field experience. She explained,

I really think 335 course was a lot for like really young learners, like primary through probably 2nd grade, but, um, I asked my professor [methods], kind of asked her— you know, I don't see a lot of the struggle and the miscues and the rereading and learning how to read, so I asked her and said, "Am I going to see these things, um, in older graders?" And she said, "Not really, they are already pretty much developed readers." So, I didn't see much in class, like, um, blending and segmenting and all of that good stuff we learned about, because I feel that they learn that when they're super young.

Gabby, who student taught in a third grade classroom, expressed that some of the foundational literacy knowledge could not be applied during her student teaching experience because she taught 3rd grade. When the researcher asked Gabby what foundational literacy knowledge she was not able to use during student teaching, she said,

Umm, I guess, I obviously didn't use a lot of strategies for primary levels because I wasn't planning on that— so I didn't use any knowledge as far as letter-recognition and sounds. So you know... we did all kinds of things like digraphs and blends— I used that some because we did a word inventory, but generally speaking, I didn't use a lot of those primary things because readers were at a 3rd

grade level. So, but those things didn't apply to me as much, but obviously, if I was working with younger readers, they would have.

Similar to Diane and Gabby, Emma also believed that the age of the students had impacted her ability to use foundational literacy knowledge. She said,

I taught fourth grade for student teaching. I think a lot of the, um, phonics, I think, which I think was the early literacy learning and um, like the consonant digraphs and blends—I didn't use any of that in my student teaching since they were so much older and they already learned that way back.

These quotes indicated that participants believed that foundational literacy knowledge was not applicable to because of the students' ages. It is important to note that these quotes were not consistent with what they had expressed after they had taken the foundational literacy course. For example, based on Diane's end-of-course reflection paper, she wrote,

This course helped me understand how each literacy component is connected. I think this course is very beneficial since it does teach about underlying reasons why a student may be struggling and it helps teachers be better prepared for helping not only young readers but all readers.

Diane expressed that all of the literacy components were connected and this knowledge was dependent on the other. Gabby stated, "The first major concept I learned from this course was how the concepts of reading and writing are like building blocks and each concept builds off of one another...". Similar to Diane, Gabby also stated how the literacy concepts were interconnected. Emma wrote in her end-of-course reflection paper that it was important to teach phonological awareness regardless of what grade she might

teach in the future. She stated, “In my future literacy instruction it does not matter what grade, but I will teach or review phonological awareness. This course has shown me how important those skills are for literacy.” While participants at the end of their program perceived that foundational literacy knowledge was just for young students, what they wrote about in their end-of-course reflection papers appeared to not be consistent with their literacy beliefs about foundational literacy knowledge at the end of their program.

Participants also shared that they were not able to use certain aspects of foundational literacy knowledge because they did not see this knowledge being applied during student teaching. For example, when the researcher asked Amber if there was anything during her student teaching experience that may have conflicted with what she learned about during the foundational literacy course, Amber stated,

I would say probably the assessment piece cause I know it depends on your cooperating teacher as well, but I didn't assess my students as much as I did in the course or what I learned... like I never saw informal assessments on the Benchmark curriculum. They did STAR—the STAR assessment... but sometimes she would just not do it because it was too complex for the students, I think.

In this example, Amber noted that her cooperating teacher did not utilize informal literacy assessments. Emma mentioned that she was surprised that spelling instruction was not introduced sooner during her student teaching placement. She said,

... I thought they would have introduced spelling a lot sooner in the school year cause it can benefit them throughout the school year rather than just at the end....During the foundational literacy course we learned a lot about the spelling

development of students and how important that is to their reading as well— kind of benefits them —they can become better readers. So, I was surprised that I didn't see a lot of the spelling, um, in my student teaching, or during my methods courses as well.

Cindy also explained that there was a disconnect with the foundational literacy course and what she had experienced during student teaching. She explained that she did not see writing assessments being utilized. She also explained that she did not spend time identifying what specific literacy needs her students needed. She shared,

I feel like there was kind of a disconnect, um, with the assessment piece.... Um, for writing and the Readers and Writers course, I felt like there were a lot of that you wanted to look at the reader and writer as a whole and that you won't be able to see that unless you actually did the assessment and actually sat down with the students themselves.

Cindy also noted that she wished she had seen more writing assessments during student teaching. She said,

...maybe it's just in the first grade since they are beginning to write, but I didn't see a whole lot of assessments into seeing where their writing was going. We kind of just looked at it, and, um, made sure there was punctuation, they're trying to spell the words right, um, sounding it out as long as they are sounding it out, then it was good. Um, as long as they had complete sentences— like those things.

Besides not observing spelling or writing instruction during student teaching, participants also believed that their role and responsibilities during student teaching was another factor that may have impacted their ability to use their knowledge. For example,

Helen believed that the focus during student teaching was on completing day-to-day tasks. She stated, “When I was student teaching, I was more focused on the day-to-day and what I needed to do.” Cindy felt that her responsibility during student teaching was to teach like her cooperating teacher. This also meant learning all of the class procedures and teaching literacy from the curriculum. Cindy explained,

... I always wanted to make sure I was doing it the right way in the right order... in the eyes of my cooperating teacher. I didn’t want to stray too far from her path. I wanted to do what she wanted... Like, so for guided reading, I wanted to make sure I was following the classroom rules, like, she had like a “Take a Break Chair”— where students go who were acting out— like if they had three breaks, they had to go to a different classroom... I didn’t really bring in a whole new concept on how to teach— I kind of used her ideas...for guided reading, it was always something that she told me what to do or what the curriculum says we should do— most of the time it was keeping the curriculum going.

In addition to the above barriers, some participants believed that it was difficult to determine if they were using their foundational literacy knowledge because they felt like all of their knowledge had blended together. Gabby explained,

... it is almost hard for me to like recall specifics, is like, now, I’ve only built on them, so to try to pinpoint exactly where...it is difficult because all the knowledge piles on and figuring out where it came from, I don’t know. All I really know is that I know what I know, many things I know now because of that course introduced me to so many things. Does that make sense?

Helen believed that it was difficult for her to know if she was using her foundational literacy knowledge because they referred to literacy terms differently than how the course defined them. Helen stated,

... for your class, there was focused more on the terminologies and we did get to practice like, the reading analysis and all of that stuff too, um, but like, when I was actually student teaching, I wasn't like, oh yeah, because they base it on levels for reading, but that's considered emergent reader, so you don't even sometimes make those connections— Like with it, until later, you know what I mean? They don't call it that.

Both structural and contextual barriers were expressed by participants as being possible challenges that may have impacted the extent to which they were able to apply their foundational literacy knowledge. Structural barriers included the difficulty expressed by participants being required to take a foundational literacy course so early on in their program. For example, Amber and Betty perceived that their lack of prior knowledge and experiences impacted their ability to understand how important the course knowledge would be later on in their program. Diane and Betty expressed feeling overwhelmed and frustrated with having to learn so much information during one semester. Contextual barriers as expressed by participants included the perception that their literacy methods coursework and student teaching experiences focused on different things. Amber and Cindy for example talked extensively about how their literacy method coursework focused less on “in-depth things” but more on practical knowledge such as lesson-planning and read-alouds. Diane, Gabby, and Emma believed that foundational literacy knowledge was not applicable to the age of students they worked with during

student teaching. Amber, Cindy, and Emma expressed that they were not able to use their assessment, writing, and spelling knowledge because it was not being used by their cooperating teachers. Finally, Helen, Cindy, and Gabby expressed that their roles and responsibilities during student teaching may have impacted their ability to apply their foundational literacy knowledge. All participants expressed that these barriers made it difficult for them to apply their foundational literacy knowledge in these different settings.

Participants in this study suggested that foundational literacy knowledge experiences consisted of the following themes: Philosophy of Teaching Literacy, Perspectives of Foundational Literacy Knowledge, and Barriers. Subthemes included making reading fun, knowing your readers, and personal and practical knowledge connected to the theme philosophy of teaching literacy; benefits of knowing literacy terminology, knowing the different questions and strategies to use connected to the theme perspectives of foundational literacy knowledge; and structural barriers and contextual barriers connected to the theme barriers. In the following section, the researcher describes participants' composite textural and structural description in order to form the essence of foundational literacy knowledge (Moustakas, 1994).

Textural Description

Participants experienced learning and using foundational literacy knowledge when talking about their philosophy of literacy instruction. For participants, they believed teachers must be able to get their students engaged in reading. Gabby said, "I would say the biggest thing is just getting kids to really find a love of reading. I think there is nothing more important than actually enjoy it..." In order to do this, participants

believed it was important for teachers to make reading fun, which meant providing students with reading choices. Participants also shared that it was important for teachers to know their students' reading levels to determine whether they should be moved up a reading level. All of which, participants expressed, was essential to student engagement.

Participants experienced foundational literacy knowledge during their literacy methods coursework where they experienced several benefits of being familiar with the foundational literacy terms that they were introduced to during the foundational literacy course. Diane talked extensively about the benefits of being familiar with literacy terminology prior to literacy methods coursework. She said, "When I heard things referenced, I knew what they were rather than having to figure out what it was. Like with the writing process... I knew what that was."

Participants experienced foundational literacy knowledge during their literacy methods field experiences and/or during their student teaching experiences. Participants expressed that knowing how to administer literacy assessments was very beneficial. Helen expressed, "I performed a reading analysis on them [students]. It was pretty awesome because she [cooperating teacher] let me do it with most of the students..." Participants also expressed they used their foundational literacy knowledge when working with students because they knew what questions to ask and what types of strategies to use. Amber shared that during her character trait lesson she stopped and asked her students questions about what they had read. She said, "I think in 335 I learned when to stop during read-alouds—the different strategies I could use." Stopping and asking their students questions about what they had read or providing their students with

reading strategies provided opportunities for participants to use their foundational literacy knowledge.

Lastly, participants expressed that they may have been limited to the extent to which they were able to use their foundational literacy knowledge due to structural and contextual barriers. Structurally, participants wondered whether the course would have been more useful if they had taken the course prior to their TEAM Reading methods course or student teaching. For example, Betty said, "...I feel like the course would have been really helpful to have during TEAM or something...if I would have it during like right before student teaching I would have been able to take more information from it." Contextual barriers, included, a separation between the knowledge they learned during the foundational literacy course knowledge and the knowledge they learned during the literacy methods coursework. Additionally, the age of the elementary students during participants' literacy methods field experiences and/or during student teaching placements was another perceived barrier. For example, Gabby expressed that she did not use phonics knowledge because she believed that phonics knowledge is for primary grades and not for 3rd grade. She explained,

Umm, I guess, I obviously didn't use a lot of strategies for primary levels because I wasn't planning on that— so I didn't use any knowledge as far as letter recognition and sounds. So you know... we did all kinds of things like digraphs and blends— I used that some because we did a word inventory, but generally speaking, I didn't use a lot of those primary things because readers were at a 3rd grade level. So, but those things didn't apply to me as much, but obviously, if I was working with younger readers, they would have.

Participants also mentioned that their cooperating teacher did not use foundational literacy knowledge during student teaching. For example, Amber said,

I would say probably the assessment piece cause I know it depends on your cooperating teacher as well, but I didn't assess my students as much as I did in the course or what I learned... like I never saw informal assessments on the Benchmark curriculum...

Structural Description

Participants experienced foundational literacy knowledge during their personal and practical literacy experiences, the TEAM Reading methods course, and student teaching. Personal experiences included past memories of childhood experiences with learning. Emma, for example, stated that her beliefs about effective literacy instruction stemmed from her negative experiences with reading in school, which she believed instilled the need in her to ensure that her future students will love to read. For Emma, this meant incorporating literacy strategies and hands-on activities that work for her. Fran talked about how some of her elementary teachers and family members inspired her philosophy of literacy instruction.

Another way participants in the study experienced foundational literacy knowledge was during their TEAM Reading methods course. All nine participants talked enthusiastically about the value this course had on their beliefs about effective literacy instruction. Learning about literacy strategies, utilization of the strategy resource book, lesson planning, and learning how to differentiate for different reading levels was significant for all participants.

Participants also experienced foundational literacy knowledge when observing teachers and students during their literacy methods field experiences and student teaching. Participants talked a lot about the benefits of seeing teachers and students use the literacy strategies and techniques they had learned about in coursework “come alive”. Observing teachers and students helped participants decide if literacy strategies were effective. For example, Amber mentioned that the Daily 5 was an effective strategy because she was able to see it being implemented while she was student teaching. Vada said that observing different teaching styles was “impactful” because it had helped her to envision how she was going to teach literacy in the future.

Participants experienced foundational literacy knowledge during their literacy methods coursework. Participants expressed that hearing familiar literacy terms had helped to make their courses easier to understand. Diane talked about being able to better understand class lectures. Participants also expressed that when their mentor and/or cooperating teachers would ask them to administer literacy assessments they were able to do this for them. Additionally, when participants were reading books to their students, they expressed that they stopped and asked them questions in addition to giving them literacy strategies. Betty explained that she used the Fountas & Pinnell literacy assessment to put her students into reading groups. Participants expressed that they had an easier time completing the tasks that were asked of them during their literacy methods courses, field experiences, and during student teaching.

Lastly, participants expressed several barriers that they believed may have impacted the extent to which they were able to apply their foundational literacy knowledge. For instance, participants expressed that taking the foundational literacy

course so early in their program may have prevented them from being able to use more of this knowledge throughout their program. Participants suggested that they may not have had enough prior knowledge and experiences to fully understand the course at that time. In retrospect, some participants felt like they should have spent more time studying the foundational literacy course material and some had even wished they would had kept the course resources.

During student teaching, participants said that they felt like they had to stay consistent with how their cooperating teachers taught literacy. For example, Cindy said that her cooperating teacher told her what to teach. Participants also expressed feeling surprised that cooperating teachers were not utilizing some of the foundational literacy knowledge. For example, Amber said that she never saw her cooperating teacher use informal literacy assessments. Emma stated that she was surprised during student teaching that spelling instruction was not introduced sooner in the school year. Participants also expressed that some of the foundational literacy knowledge was not applicable to the age of the students they had taught during student teaching. Diane, Ingrid, Gabby, and Emma, for example, all mentioned that they were not able to apply some of the foundational literacy knowledge due to the age of the students they had worked with during student teaching.

Essence

For participants, the essence of foundational literacy knowledge stemmed from their literacy philosophy, which influenced their perception of foundational literacy knowledge. Participants also expressed barriers that they perceived as impacting the extent to which they were able to apply their foundational literacy knowledge.

Chapter Summary

The findings of this study revealed three major themes. The first theme, philosophy of literacy instruction, includes the subthemes making reading fun, knowing your readers, and personal and practical knowledge. This theme highlights the impact beliefs can have on perceptions of effective literacy instruction. Thus, this finding also indicates that this knowledge influences participants' perceptions of foundational literacy knowledge. The second theme, perceptions of foundational literacy knowledge, includes the subthemes benefits of knowing literacy terminology and knowing different questions and strategies to use. This theme provides evidence to suggest that prior literacy experiences can impact how participants view foundational literacy knowledge. Thus, how participants view foundational literacy knowledge impacts how they use this knowledge in practice. Along with this, this finding also suggests that although participants may be able to express their foundational literacy knowledge in general terms, this does not also mean that they know how to use foundational literacy knowledge most effectively in practice. The third theme, Barriers, includes the subthemes structural and contextual. This theme suggests that participants' prior knowledge as well as the structural and contextual settings are all factors that can promote and/or inhibit foundational literacy knowledge appropriation.

Chapter V presents the discussion, implications, and recommendations.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter V presents the discussion, implications, and recommendations. The chapter continues with a summary and conclusion.

Discussion of Findings

The study aimed to understand participants' experiences by studying preservice teachers' perceptions of both learning foundational literacy knowledge and using foundational literacy knowledge later in their methods courses and student teaching. The first goal of this study was to determine if changes should be made to the current literacy course sequence at this teacher education program. The second goal was to better inform the research problem pertaining to how teacher education programs should best design their courses to prepare elementary preservice teachers with the foundational literacy knowledge they need to be successful literacy teachers. There were three themes that emerged from the data. These included: philosophy of teaching literacy, perceptions of foundational literacy knowledge, and barriers. There were three subthemes that emerged from the first theme, philosophy of teaching literacy, which included making reading fun, knowing your readers, and personal and practical knowledge; there were two subthemes that emerged from the second theme, perceptions of foundational literacy knowledge, which included benefits of knowing literacy terminology and knowing the different

questions and strategies to use; and there were two subthemes that emerged from the third theme, which included structural and contextual barriers.

Given the challenges that teacher education programs face with trying to design coursework and experiences that will prepare preservice teachers to be effective literacy teachers, programs may not realize how their coursework and experiences are being perceived by their preservice teachers. Examining preservice teachers' beliefs are important because their beliefs can impact what knowledge they learn. Additionally, these beliefs can impact what knowledge they decide to use during literacy teaching. Therefore, studying preservice teachers' beliefs is a very important way to monitor programs' effectiveness. Results from this study indicate that participants' philosophy of teaching literacy had the greatest impact on their perceptions of foundational literacy knowledge. Preservice teachers also expressed barriers that they felt may have impacted the extent to which they were able to apply their foundational literacy knowledge during their subsequent literacy methods coursework and student teaching experiences.

The first theme, which helped to answer the first research question, reveals that participants' beliefs about effective literacy instruction overemphasizes the affective components of literacy knowledge and minimally references the cognitive components. This theme also reveals that participants rely on their observations to determine literacy effectiveness. For example, participants talked extensively about finding fun ways to help their students love to read. They also talked about the importance of providing

students reading options as well as providing students with fun literacy activities. Although effective literacy instruction includes student engagement, which was one of the topics that was discussed during the foundational literacy course, the course emphasized the cognitive dimensions of literacy instruction. This did not appear to be a major focus for the participants. However, the major components of engagement theory that was discussed during the foundational literacy course that participants talked extensively about in their interviews included: the emphasis on student choice, the importance of teachers providing students a variety of text genres based on students' interests, and the importance of integration of social collaboration when discussing text. All of these components were evident in the participants' interviews and end-of-course reflection papers. However, the assumption made by participants that incorporating enjoyable literacy activities would automatically lead to student learning is not consistent with what was emphasized during the foundational literacy course. Also, participants talked extensively about utilizing a reader's workshop model, Daily 5, and literature circles, as were most commonly described by participants as being effective literacy strategies. While effective literacy teachers may utilize various grouping options such as a reader's workshop model, Daily 5, and literature circles to help motivate their students, teachers must be able to use their literacy knowledge to inform their instructional decisions.

The construct, knowing your readers, emerged as a subtheme of making reading fun. Knowing your readers, as expressed by participants, included administering literacy assessments so teachers can put their students into leveled groups for guided reading. While the foundational literacy course emphasized the importance of identifying students' literacy skills so that teachers can plan appropriate literacy instruction, it appeared that participants drew on their practical knowledge they learned during their TEAM Reading methods course to support their literacy decisions. A reason for this could be that they were told what literacy lessons to teach by cooperating teachers, which is why they said they were not aware of what their students' literacy needs were.

Along with this, when the researcher asked participants to name two or three methods or activities that they believed were effective in helping to promote their students' literacy needs, participants' responses appeared to associate grouping arrangements with literacy methods or activities. Again, guided reading provides a context for literacy learning and it is not considered the method or activity. Participants' belief that grouping arrangements are most important for teachers to be able to do is an interesting finding considering that the foundational literacy course focused on the importance of teachers being able to connect students' literacy needs to specific literacy methods or activities. Participants' literacy teaching experiences revealed that they focused on matching literacy activities to students based on what they were told to teach or by what they were required to teach in the curriculum without appearing to know what

exactly those specific needs were. Therefore, this theme revealed that participants' practical experiences had a major impact on their literacy beliefs and practices.

The construct personal and practical knowledge emerged as the last subtheme of philosophy of teaching literacy. Participants provided several examples of how their personal and practical experiences influenced their philosophy of teaching literacy. Participants' personal experiences emphasized teachers' personalities, strategies, and activities. It seemed that participants overemphasized the affective dimensions of literacy knowledge rather than the cognitive dimensions of literacy knowledge.

Participants expressed that they were also influenced by the literacy knowledge they learned during the TEAM Reading methods course which included learning about literacy strategies, lesson planning, and being able to differentiate for different reading levels, for example. Participants' perception of "being prepared" meant knowing what literacy strategies to use and then being able to use those strategies with students. Again, it appeared that participants focused on the practical rather than the theoretical aspects of teaching literacy. Thus the knowledge that participants perceived as being the most practical was the knowledge that they perceived to be the most valuable.

Participants also believed that learning how to teach literacy could be accomplished by observing teachers and students in classrooms, in other words, through the apprenticeship of observation. The problem with this belief is that much of what effective literacy teachers do cannot be observed. For example, the "why" of teaching—

or rather the rationale for all of the instructional and assessment decisions teachers make in the classroom that cannot be observed. For instance, teachers must use a variety of assessment strategies in order to know what specific literacy needs their students need. They must plan literacy lessons and assessments based on those needs. After, they must use that data to inform their next steps. As such, participants' philosophy of literacy instruction predominately focused on the affective components of literacy knowledge. Their beliefs about literacy instruction were closely related to their personal experiences as students and tended to be grounded in a transmission view of knowledge from teacher to student.

There were two subthemes that emerged from the second theme, perceptions of foundational literacy knowledge. These included benefits of knowing literacy terminology and knowing the different questions and strategies to use. For example, participants talked extensively about feeling better prepared during their literacy methods coursework because they could understand what their instructors were discussing during their lectures. Participants also believed that they used their foundational literacy knowledge when working with small groups of students because they knew when to stop and ask questions. Participants talked about how they used foundational literacy knowledge to help their cooperating teachers group their students. What these discussions reveal is that participants appeared to be motivated to use their foundational literacy knowledge in order to help their mentor and/or cooperating teachers complete

their tasks. Due to their practical experiences, this could be a reason why participants viewed foundational literacy knowledge in this way.

Lastly, the third theme that emerged, Barriers, addressed the final research question, which found that the participants' perceptions of foundational literacy knowledge were influenced by their philosophy of literacy instruction. Along with this, participants expressed structural and contextual barriers, which they perceived may have impacted the extent to which they were able to apply this knowledge during their subsequent literacy methods coursework and during student teaching. Participants' perception that they lacked the prior knowledge and skills to understand the significance of the foundational literacy course would suggest a reason why they would have had a difficult time applying this knowledge later in their program. Secondly, participants' perception that their literacy methods coursework was separate from foundational literacy knowledge suggests that they view this knowledge as separate from one another rather than interdependent on each other. This is significant because if participants view foundational literacy knowledge in this way, they are less likely to use this knowledge later on. Third, participants' perception that foundational literacy knowledge applies only to younger elementary students suggests they continue to hold misconceptions about foundational literacy knowledge. This is important considering these beliefs can negatively impact their future students. Fourth, participants expressed they did not get to observe their mentor and/or cooperating teachers use certain foundational literacy

knowledge. As a result, participants believed that they were not able to apply this knowledge. The reason why this is important is that without opportunities to observe teachers using foundational literacy knowledge, participants may continue to believe that this knowledge is not essential to effective literacy instruction.

During their student teaching experience, participants said that they felt like they had to teach literacy consistently with how their cooperating teacher taught. They said that they spent most of their time trying to learn the routines and procedures of the classroom. What this finding suggests is that those other demands took up all of their mental effort. If participants are to use foundational literacy knowledge during student teaching, this may mean that some of these perceived demands may need to be decreased in order for them to focus on applying their foundational literacy knowledge. This may also mean that teacher education programs may need to reevaluate what preservice teachers are being required to accomplish during student teaching.

Finally, participants expressed that they found it difficult to know if they had used their foundational literacy knowledge because the literacy terms introduced to them during the foundational literacy course may have been different than how they were used during student teaching. This finding suggests that each setting in a teacher education program should strive to use consistent literacy language when referring to literacy knowledge with their preservice teachers. As evidenced by participants, using different literacy terms across different contexts can inhibit their ability to use this knowledge

consistently in different settings. In sum, what this theme suggests is that participants' prior knowledge as well as the structural and contextual settings in their teacher education program can either promote or inhibit foundational literacy knowledge appropriation.

Implications

The findings in this study have several implications for teacher education programs. First, it is clear that preservice teachers' practical knowledge and experiences had the most impact on their literacy beliefs and practices rather than their foundational literacy knowledge. Results from this study confirmed the researcher's assertion that preservice teachers would value learning about practical literacy approaches to reading instruction more than foundational literacy knowledge. This finding, that preservice teachers perceive their practical experiences in classrooms and working with students as the most valuable experiences, aligns with other researchers who have found that practical experiences have a tremendous impact on participants' literacy beliefs (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Leko, Kulkarni, Lin, & Smith, 2014). When the researcher asked participants about their philosophy of literacy instruction, for example, participants drew on their practical experiences to support those beliefs. Their assessment of how well an activity or strategy worked was based on the fact that other teachers were using the same activity or strategy, or that the students enjoyed and were

engaged with the activity, not on any inherent understanding of how, or if, the strategy or activity promoted literacy development.

Participants also valued the knowledge they were able to apply to their practical experiences. Participants believed that learning about differentiation and lesson-planning was most beneficial because they were able to use those practices during student teaching. Researchers explain that "...they [preservice teachers] may value different aspects of teaching knowledge depending on how connected they view that knowledge to teaching practice" (Fives & Buehl, 2008, p. 172). This study's findings confirm the assertion that preservice teachers draw from their knowledge that they believe would be most useful for them during practice (Leko et al., 2014).

These findings also confirm assertions that preservice teachers have simplistic beliefs about what it means to be an effective literacy teacher (Richardson, 1996; Smagorinsky & Barnes, 2014). For example, participants believed that learning how to teach reading is best accomplished through observation. Due to participants' emphasis on gaining knowledge about teaching by observing other teachers, this suggests a view of teaching that is based on what Desforges (1995) described as "an improvisational performance" (p. 394). This belief can lead preservice teachers to think that "experience is the best teacher" (Fajet, Bello, Leftwich, Mesler, & Shaver, 2005, p. 724). The problem with this thinking is that it can lead to "...inaccurate perceptions of what they need to know and do to help students learn" (Moats, 2009, p. 390). "In light of what the

research says about the influence of pre-service teacher perceptions, these findings may cause education students to believe that a strong knowledge base in pedagogy is not necessary to become a competent teacher” (Fajet et al., 2005, p. 724). The finding indicates that participants in this study were relying on their observations to test whether literacy strategies were effective rather than using their foundational literacy knowledge. While the foundational literacy course participants took at the beginning of their program focused on the importance of using their literacy knowledge to determine what literacy strategies to teach, the participants in this study, however, appeared to rely on their observations of teachers and students to determine this, without any evidence if the strategies actually were effective in promoting literacy development. This is why literacy teacher educators need to be more explicit with preservice teachers about how they use foundational literacy knowledge as a guide to determining their practical instruction.

Therefore, due to the impact practical experiences have on preservice teachers’ beliefs and practices, teacher education programs should integrate foundational literacy knowledge throughout coursework and field experiences, making it difficult to separate one from the other. More specifically, literacy strategies cannot be taught in isolation but should be explicitly taught with how they draw on knowledge of literacy and literacy development. If preservice teachers are going to learn how to teach literacy effectively, they need to understand how foundational literacy knowledge and literacy strategies are an integrated practice (Ballock, McQuitty, & McNary, 2018).

Secondly, although participants expressed that they believed that the foundational literacy course included important information, they were only minimally able to connect this to their practices during their literacy methods coursework and student teaching

experiences. Participants believed that being familiar with literacy terminology was helpful during their literacy methods coursework and during their student teaching experience. This finding is quite promising considering that the research suggests preservice teachers do not value learning about foundational knowledge (Fives & Buehl, 2008; Montecinos et al., 2011). Along with this, research has found that coursework can help to build preservice teachers' confidence (Jimenez-Silva, Olson, & Hernandez, 2012) and that the higher number of reading courses preservice teachers tend to complete have higher-levels of self-efficacy (Clark, 2016). This is important because according to motivational theory, confidence and efficacy can help to make preservice teachers feel more capable of using their literacy knowledge in the future (Fives & Buehl, 2008). However, familiarity with a term does not necessarily denote deep understanding of the concept.

Participants also believed they had benefited from the assessment knowledge they learned during the foundational literacy course. This finding is consistent with prior research that suggests preservice teachers value knowledge they are able to apply to the classroom (Fives & Buehl, 2008). However, with regard to the extent to which participants used foundational literacy knowledge, participants' beliefs revealed a minimal level of appropriation (Grossman et al., 1999). For example, participants used labels to describe how foundational literacy knowledge was being used in the classroom. Additionally, participants did not talk about how foundational literacy knowledge can be used to determine what literacy strategies they use with their students (ILA, 2017). Rather it appeared participants recalled their experiences using foundational literacy knowledge by reflecting on the literacy strategies they used teaching that literacy

concept. While it is promising that participants believed that learning literacy terminology was helpful during their literacy methods coursework, they also need to be able to explain how their literacy knowledge (i.e., phonological awareness, print concepts, decoding, sight word knowledge, fluency, vocabulary knowledge, etc.) can be used to help them identify what literacy needs their students need in order to determine “evidence-based instructional approaches” (ILA, 2017, p. 2).

Interestingly, however, when the researcher asked participants about their beliefs about foundational literacy knowledge in general, participants’ responses revealed a higher level of conceptual understanding. This finding suggests that while the foundational literacy course may have provided participants with an understanding of foundational literacy knowledge, their beliefs-in-practice, however, did not reveal the same level of conceptual understanding (Leko, Kulkarni, Lin, & Smith, 2014).

In order to help preservice teachers apply their literacy knowledge, literacy teacher education programs must explicitly demonstrate how this knowledge connects to practice. Literacy teacher education programs must also provide multiple opportunities for preservice teachers to apply this knowledge in elementary classrooms with elementary students.

Finally, participants identified several barriers that limited their ability to apply the foundational literacy knowledge. First, participants believed that their lack of prior experiences at the time of the course had impacted them. According to Desforges (1995), preservice teachers’ lack of prior knowledge can impact what knowledge they learn during coursework. Additionally, these perceptions can also affect what knowledge they apply later in their program (Grossman, Smagorinsky, & Valencia, 1999). For example,

participants did not realize at the time they took the foundational literacy course how much teachers actually use foundational literacy knowledge until they began student teaching. This finding is consistent with prior research that states if participants do not perceive that the knowledge they are learning has practical value, then they are less likely to spend the time to learn it (Fives & Buehl, 2008).

Participants also said that they believed the number of literacy topics being covered during the course was difficult and overwhelming. Learning foundational literacy knowledge requires teachers to learn a specialized knowledge that differs from their reading and verbal ability (Moats, 1994; Phelps, 2009). In other words, this knowledge is not learned, "...simply through experience with speaking and with print; just as with children, teachers acquired it through study and practice" (Moats, 1994, p. 96). Since participants believed that the course covered too many topics and that they expressed feeling overwhelmed learning it at the time—both of these factors would have had a negative impact on their learning (Fives & Buehl, 2014; Pajares, 1992). Due to this, it is important for teacher education programs to consider preservice teachers' beliefs when designing their curricula (Fajet et al., 2005; Pajares, 1992).

Participants also believed that the goals of the literacy methods coursework and student teaching were not aligned with foundational literacy knowledge. For example, participants believed that their literacy methods coursework was focused on learning literacy strategies and not focused on "in-depth things", such as what they described as being foundational literacy knowledge. Prior research indicates that when there is a lack of alignment between what preservice teachers learn and what they are expected to do during student teaching, these competing goals can affect what knowledge preservice

teachers are able to apply (Brownell et al., 2014; Grossman, Smagorinsky, & Valencia, 1999; Leko & Brownell, 2011). For example, besides competing goals, participants discussed competing demands, which they believed impacted their ability to apply their knowledge. Participants talked about how they were more focused on making sure they were following their cooperating teachers' classroom procedures rather than focusing on foundational literacy knowledge. These beliefs are consistent with prior research that states that competing goals and demands can prevent preservice teachers from applying their literacy knowledge in different settings (Grossman et al., 1999).

In addition to competing goals, another factor that can affect knowledge appropriation is their student teaching placement. For example, participants stated that they were either able to or not able to apply their knowledge based on the grade they were assigned to teach during student teaching. This perceived barrier is troubling in light of research that indicates that phonics instruction, for example, should continue through Grade 6 and beyond if students need it (NRP, 2000). Additionally, research indicates that reading comprehension depends on students' ability to use and integrate all of the following literacy components:

- (1) Automatic Word Recognition: (i.e., phonological awareness, print concepts, decoding and sight word knowledge, fluency in context, and automatic word recognition);
- (2) Oral Language Comprehension: (i.e., vocabulary knowledge, background knowledge, and knowledge of text and sentence structures);

(3) Strategic Knowledge: (i.e., general and specific purposes for reading, knowledge of strategies for reading, and strategic knowledge) (McKenna & Stahl, 2015, p. 8).

What this finding reveals is that preservice teachers' student teaching placements can either promote or inhibit preservice teachers' appropriation of literacy knowledge (Leko & Brownell, 2011).

Participants also believed that it was difficult to decide at the time if they were applying their foundational literacy knowledge. Further, preservice teachers believed that all their knowledge came together, so this made it difficult for them to know what knowledge they were using. Researchers express that preservice teachers should be able to identify what literacy knowledge they are using so they can use this knowledge to inform their practice (Joshi et al., 2009). For example, according to Joshi et al. (2009):

... although individuals might be able to use reading strategies and skills in their own reading at an implicit level, they may not have an explicit understanding of some reading-related concepts that govern the ability to apply the strategies.

However, an explicit knowledge of such critical reading strategies and skills is necessary for teaching others these same skills, because one cannot teach something one cannot express explicitly. (p. 398)

In other words, although participants in this study believed they were not able to know exactly what type of knowledge they were using, participants should have been able to rely on their foundational literacy knowledge to make appropriate literacy decisions, and not rely on their observations. This prompts programs to reexamine how

each setting within their program is conducive to preservice teachers being able to appropriate this literacy knowledge.

The implications stated above were based on the research findings from participant interviews, course reflection papers, and lesson plans. “Those who are ill-prepared to begin their teaching careers are likely to harm their students’ academic achievement by first not knowing the appropriate reading acquisition and remediation strategies to provide to their students” (Hurford et al., 2016, p. 11). Thus, teacher education programs must ensure that their preservice teachers are being prepared to teach reading effectively. Teacher education programs can do this by ensuring that they are not only equipping preservice teachers with foundational literacy knowledge, but they are also preparing them to apply this knowledge in practice (American Federation of Teachers, 1999; Dillon, O’Brien, Sato, & Kelly, 2011; International Literacy Association, 2017; National Reading Panel, 2000; Shulman, 2000). Moreover, findings from research studies have shown that foundational literacy knowledge can be learned and used to benefit student achievement when preservice teachers are given opportunities to practice using this knowledge in university and elementary classrooms (Washburn, Joshi, & Cantrell, 2011).

Recommendations

Despite limited by a small, homogeneous sample the findings of this study provide recommendations for teacher education programs. It is also important to note that preparing preservice teachers to teach literacy effectively is extremely complex, there are no easy solutions, and this problem is not new. Teacher education programs have been struggling with this for a very long time. However, it is the researcher’s hope that

teacher education programs can continue to use preservice teachers' voices as a powerful way to evaluate their programs' effectiveness. First, due to the finding that preservice teachers draw from the knowledge that they believe would be most useful in practice (Leko et al., 2014), it is critical to identify those literacy elementary teachers who are applying the foundational literacy knowledge in ways that are consistent with how the content is being taught in teacher education programs. Along with this, these effective literacy teachers must also be willing to make explicit connections with their preservice teachers while they are being observed. This way, preservice teachers can see that foundational literacy knowledge is something that effective literacy teachers use.

Second, since it was found that the foundational literacy course was not aligned with preservice teachers' prior beliefs and experiences at the time the course was required (Fives & Buehl, 2014; Pajares, 1992), it is recommended that the foundational literacy course be required later in the literacy sequence or be split into two separate courses. The second foundational literacy course would focus on how to apply foundational literacy knowledge. Hurford et al. (2016) provide examples of literacy courses that are designed to provide opportunities for preservice teachers to practice using foundational literacy knowledge in practical settings that are aligned with literacy coursework. Hurford et al. (2016) state:

The two practicum courses would be designed to address the application of the material learned in the Science of Reading course or courses, the first of which would involve assessment and evidence-based strategies to assist with reading acquisition while the second practicum course would involve assessment and intervention strategies specifically for struggling readers. The instructor would

observe and evaluate each student's technique providing feedback during and after the process. (p. 11)

Third, due to the finding that preservice teachers struggled with appropriating their foundational literacy knowledge, it is recommended that all settings (i.e., university, field experiences, student teaching, etc.) and all the people that teach in those settings (literacy teacher educators, mentor teachers, cooperating teachers, advisors, etc.) must be consistent with what, how, and why foundational literacy knowledge is applied across all settings and social structures (i.e., pedagogy, resources, culture) (Grossman, Smagorinsky, & Valencia, 1999; Jimenez-Silva, Olson, & Hernandez, 2012). Within the context of the present study, for example, teacher educators might want to consider using McKenna and Stahl's (2015) Reading Cognitive Model as a possible foundational literacy knowledge framework. Preservice teachers can also use this model to help them decide appropriate literacy instruction.

Fourth, besides needing time to learn the knowledge, another important aspect of cognitive restructuring is providing the time that is necessary for teacher educators to monitor preservice teachers' beliefs about effective literacy instruction throughout their program (Pajares, 1992). The findings in the current study showed that participants continued to have misconceptions about foundational literacy knowledge at the end of their program. Feiman-Nemser (2001) prioritize examining beliefs during teacher education because of the impact preservice teachers' beliefs have on their literacy practices. Thus, preservice teachers need plenty of opportunities to reflect and examine their literacy beliefs throughout their program.

Fifth, it is necessary to provide preservice teachers with plenty of opportunities to apply their foundational literacy knowledge across different settings within the teacher education program. One approach is to utilize McDonald, Kazemi, and Kavanagh's (2013) core practices model, which focuses on the actual tasks and activities involved in teaching literacy, which can help to teach preservice teachers how strategic knowledge informs and utilizes foundational literacy knowledge. For example, Ballock, McQuitty, and McNary (2018) incorporated core practices to help develop their preservice teachers' literacy knowledge. Findings from their study revealed that by using student writing samples as a core practice, required preservice teachers to use their literacy knowledge in order to complete the task. In addition, "The tutoring programs in Al Otaiba and Lake (2007) study was designed for preservice teachers to incorporate their foundational literacy knowledge of language structure directly in their tutoring lesson plans" (Washburn, Joshi, & Cantrell, 2011, p. 40). Along with this, if preservice teachers are not able to work with students directly, utilization of case-studies has been shown to be an effective way to link theory and practice (Eckert, 2008; Hennissen, Beckers, & Moerkerke, 2017).

Areas for Future Research

This study examined the impact a foundational literacy course, taken early in a teacher education program, had on nine elementary preservice teachers' subsequent methods coursework and student teaching experience. First, future research could follow these same study participants into their second and even third year of teaching. It would be interesting to explore how participants' perceptions compare considering studies have revealed that participants may be more likely to apply their foundational literacy

knowledge in their second year (Leko & Brownell, 2011). Second, considering that participants in this study felt that their roles and responsibilities during student teaching prevented them from being able to apply their foundational literacy knowledge, future research could explore this phenomenon. Third, future research could examine specific recommendations from the present study and how they are being infused into the program. Possible questions could explore the impact of integrating foundational literacy knowledge into literacy coursework. What tools are being used to help preservice teachers integrate foundational literacy knowledge during their teacher education program? Lastly, future research could examine how effective elementary teachers apply their foundational literacy knowledge during whole and small group reading instruction. Researchers can examine their practices in order to inform literacy teacher education pedagogical coursework and practical experiences.

Chapter Summary and Conclusion

In summary, this study highlights how a foundational literacy course taken early in a Midwest University teacher education program, had minimal impact on nine elementary teachers' literacy beliefs and practices at the end of their program. This study also highlights that requiring a foundational literacy course at the beginning of a teacher education program is one way to support preservice teachers' perceived preparedness, confidence, and expressed beliefs about the importance of foundational literacy knowledge (Jimenez-Silva, Olson, & Hernandez, 2012; Moats, 1994). However, findings from this study concluded that once preservice teachers were distanced from this knowledge, foundational literacy knowledge became less of a focus. Leko et al.'s (2014) study agreed that once preservice teachers are distanced from their coursework

knowledge, their beliefs are no longer specific. Instead, they revert back to their practical experiences. Lastly, barriers that preservice teachers identified as potential reasons that may have had limited opportunities to apply foundational literacy knowledge during their subsequent literacy coursework and student teaching experiences, affirms assertions with regard to the effect context can impact preservice teachers' knowledge appropriation (Grossman, Smagorinsky, & Valencia, 1999). This study supported prior research that several barriers can impact preservice teachers' ability to learn and apply foundational literacy knowledge (Leko & Brownell, 2011). Research has found that preservice teachers' beliefs can impact what knowledge they are able to apply during their program (Grossman et al., 1999). As a result, programmatic changes should be made in this teacher education program. Without such changes, the impact that one foundational literacy course has on preservice teachers' literacy beliefs and practices may remain minimal.

APPENDICES

Appendix A Recruitment Email

Dear _____,

I hope that you are doing well!

My name is Allison Izzo and I am completing my dissertation at the University of North Dakota. I am emailing you because I was your instructor for T&L 335, Understanding Readers and Writers, in Spring 2016 and I am hoping you will agree to participate in a study about the course.

I am interested in exploring your perceptions and experiences about how the foundation literacy knowledge you learned in TL 335 impacted your thinking about literacy teaching in your subsequent reading and writing methods courses and in student teaching. The findings of this study will help improve how UND prepares elementary teachers to teach reading.

Your participation will involve two interviews on two separate occasions on a day and time that is most convenient for you. Interviews will be conducted via phone or Skype and will be audio-recorded and I may take notes as well. In addition, I will be seeking permission to use the last assignment you completed in TL 335, “The End-of-course Reflection” in the research study. Your name and all information will be kept confidential.

Participants will need to have majored in elementary education and did or will not have minored in Literacy. In addition, participants will have had to student taught during the Fall 2017 or Spring 2018 semesters. If you are interested in participating in this study, you will need to read and sign your informed consent in order to participate. I have attached a consent form to this email. After you have read and signed the consent form, please email me a signed copy at allison.izzo@ndus.edu. I will then email you a short demographic survey.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

*Please be aware that not all participants who complete the survey will be contacted for interviews.

Thank you for your time,

Allison Izzo
allison.izzo@ndus.edu

Appendix B
Consent Form for Participants

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH DAKOTA
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

TITLE: *Preservice Teachers' Perceptions of Effective Literacy Instruction Of-Practice and In-Practice*

PROJECT DIRECTOR: *Allison Izzo*

PHONE # *701-777-2862*

DEPARTMENT: *College of Education & Human Development*

STATEMENT OF RESEARCH

A person who is to participate in the research must give his or her informed consent to such participation. This consent must be based on an understanding of the nature and risks of the research. This document provides information that is important for this understanding. Research projects include only subjects who choose to take part. Please take your time in making your decision as to whether to participate. If you have questions at any time, please ask.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?

As elementary preservice teachers who took TL 335 Understanding Readers and Writers course during the Spring 2016 semester and have completed or in the process of completing their Student Teaching during the Spring 2018 semester— you are invited to be interviewed with the purpose of exploring the your perceptions regarding the impact of using foundational literacy knowledge. The researcher conducting this study is Allison Izzo, a doctoral student in Teaching and Learning at the University of North Dakota (UND) under the under the supervision of Dr. Anne Walker, an Associate Dean and Professor in the College of Education & Human Development at UND.

The purpose of this research study is to examine the perceptions and experiences of elementary preservice teachers who completed one undergraduate foundational literacy course, entitled, *T&L 335 Understanding Readers and Writers*, during the Spring 2016 semester. There is a lack of current literature regarding how foundational literacy knowledge is being used by elementary preservice teachers. This study seeks to fill the gap in literature.

HOW MANY PEOPLE WILL PARTICIPATE?

Six to ten people will take part in this study.

HOW LONG WILL I BE IN THIS STUDY?

Participation in the study will last for two interviews with each interview lasting about 60-90 minutes.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN DURING THIS STUDY?

If you choose to participate in this study, you will complete a brief demographic survey. If you choose to complete and submit the survey by May 25, 2018 you will be eligible to win a \$50 Amazon gift card in a drawing. If you are chosen to participate in two interviews and

you agree to participate, you will be sent a \$30 Amazon gift card for your time upon completion of the interviews. You will not incur any costs for being in this research study.

You will be contacted to set up an interview time and day that is most convenient for you. The phone and/or Skype interview will last approximately 60-90 minutes and are digitally recorded. You are free to not answer any questions during the interviews. The digital recordings of each interview will be transcribed and returned to you to ensure accuracy of the written document. You may strike out any comments you feel would jeopardize your anonymity. No personal identification is used on any written document and all descriptions of persons or places are anonymous. Data is presented in a collective (aggregate) description to assure your anonymity.

Prior to the follow-up interview, you will be asked to send the researcher a copy of a document of your choice (i.e., lesson plan, reflection, assessment, etc.) that you believe would support and further convey your experience using foundational literacy knowledge during your subsequent coursework and/or student teaching experiences. During the follow-up interview, the researcher will ask you questions about the document. In addition, the researcher will ask follow-up and/or clarification questions regarding statements made during the first interview.

The researcher will also ask to use the last assignment you completed during the TL 335, Understanding Readers and Writers course, "The End-of-Course Reflection Assignment" as an additional data source to be used during the study. When the analysis of the initial interviews are complete, a member check will be performed to confirm the results with members of the participants. Two participants will be selected at random and they will be asked to complete a member check by phone. During the member check, participants will be emailed a summary of the analysis and they will have the opportunity to comment on whether they believe that the results are consistent with their own experiences as elementary preservice teachers. Following these phone calls and/or Skype calls, the researcher will revise the findings in order to rectify any errors identified by the participants, and to ensure that new explanations that arose from the member check were appropriately coded. It is anticipated that these phone calls will take 15-20 minutes. No personal identification will be used on any written documents and all descriptions of persons or places are anonymous. Data is presented in a collective (aggregate) description to assure your anonymity.

The researcher will randomly select 2 participants and email each of them a summary of the analysis. They will have the opportunity to provide their feedback as to whether they believe the results are consistent with their own experiences. This phone/Skype conversation will last 15-20 minutes.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF THE STUDY?

Although there are no risks in participating in this research beyond those experienced in everyday life, some participants may feel somewhat uncomfortable or embarrassed answering questions regarding their perceptions or experiences as elementary preservice teachers. Should you become upset at any point in the study, you may stop at any time, or choose not to answer any questions. If you are a student and would like to talk to someone about your feelings about this study, you are encouraged to contact the University of North Dakota Student Counseling Center at (701) 777- 2127 or another agency that provides mental health services in your area.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THIS STUDY?

Although you will not be paid for being in this study you will receive a \$30 Amazon gift card for being interviewed. You will not incur any costs for being in this research study. By participating in the study you may benefit personally in terms of better understanding and reflecting on your literacy practices. A summary of the results can be made available to you at your request.

WILL IT COST ME ANYTHING TO BE IN THIS STUDY?

You will not have any costs for being in this research study.

WILL I BE PAID FOR PARTICIPATING?

You will not be paid for your participation in this research study.

WHO IS FUNDING THE STUDY?

The University of North Dakota and the principal investigator, Allison Izzo, are receiving no payments from other agencies, organizations, or companies to conduct this research study.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The records of this study will be kept private to the extent permitted by law. In any report about this study that might be published, you will not be identified. Your study record may be reviewed by Government agencies and the University of North Dakota Institutional Review Board.

Any information that is obtained in this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law.

Confidentiality will be maintained by means of anonymous transcripts of all interviews. You have the right to review and edit your transcripts. Consent forms will be kept in a locked and secure location with only Allison Izzo, Allison Izzo's advisor, Dr. Anne Walker, and the Institutional Review Board (IRB) will have access to the data and consent forms.

You might be concerned that your responses during the interview process will not be anonymous. To assure confidentiality, you will have the opportunity to review the transcripts of your interview and strike out any statements that you wish to exclude.

If we write a report or article about this study, we will describe the study results in a summarized manner so that you cannot be identified.

IS THIS STUDY VOLUNTARY?

Your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to participate or you may discontinue your participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University of North Dakota.

If you decide to leave the study early, you are asked to inform Allison Izzo that you would like to withdraw.

CONTACTS AND QUESTIONS?

The researcher conducting this study is Allison Izzo. You may ask any questions you have now. If you later have questions, concerns, or complaints about the research please email the principle investigator Allison Izzo at allison.izzo@ndus.edu or by phone at +37 347-8210-162. If you have further questions about the study, my doctoral advisor, Dr. Anne Walker, will be happy to

answer them. Her phone number is (701) 777-2862 and her email is anne.walker@email.und.edu.

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, you may contact The University of North Dakota Institutional Review Board at (701) 777-4279 or UND.irb@research.UND.edu.

- You may also call this number about any problems, complaints, or concerns you have about this research study.
- 1. You may also call this number if you cannot reach research staff, or you wish to talk with someone who is independent of the research team.
- 2. General information about being a research subject can be found by clicking “Information for Research Participants” on the web site: <http://und.edu/research/resources/human-subjects/research-participants.cfm>

I give consent to be audio recorded during this study.

Please initial: Yes No

I give consent for my quotes to be used in the research; however I will not be identified.

Please initial: Yes No

I give consent for my last assignment in TL 335, Understanding Readers and Writers, “The End-of Course Reflection Assignment” to be used in the research; however, I will not be identified.

Please initial: Yes No

I give consent for my supplemental document (e.g., lesson plan, reflection, assessment, etc.) that I emailed to the researcher, to be used during this study however, I will not be identified.

Please initial: Yes No

Your signature indicates that this research study has been explained to you, that your questions have been answered, and that you agree to take part in this study. You will receive a copy of this form.

Subjects Name: _____

Signature of Subject

Date

I have discussed the above points with the subject or, where appropriate, with the subject’s legally authorized representative.

Signature of Person Who Obtained Consent

Date

Appendix C
Interview Reminder Email and Reference Guide for Participants

Dear Participant,

I am so excited to be able to chat with you on _____ about your literacy experiences! It may be helpful for you to *briefly* think about your undergraduate literacy coursework and student teaching experiences as it pertains to literacy prior to our interview. **If not, that is perfectly OK! :)**

Please feel free to use (or not) the foundational literacy concepts/terms below to help communicate your literacy experiences and/or any other personal resources (i.e., course syllabi, portfolio, list of literacy courses, etc.) that may help to spark some of your literacy memories as you completed your coursework and student teaching. **If not, that is perfectly OK! :)**

The concepts/terms listed below is by no means cumulative, please feel free to discuss your literacy experiences during the interview however you want—add to it, don’t use it... whatever you wish.... **this list is solely meant to help jog your memory and by no means am I requiring you to use these terms during our interview.**

Sample interview questions that I may ask you—What foundational literacy knowledge and/or resources were you able to use during your subsequent literacy coursework—What literacy knowledge did you value most during your student teaching experience? What surprised you the most about literacy instruction while you were student teaching?

I hope that you find this helpful and please let me know if you have any questions. I am looking forward to chatting with you soon and thank you **SO** much!

Allison

T&L 335 Understanding Readers & Writers Foundational Literacy Concepts/Terms

Vocabulary development	Decoding, sight words, and automatic word recognition	
Emergent reading and writing process	Perspectives of learning to read (i.e., cognitive, linguistic, motivational, and sociocultural)	phonics (i.e., short vowels, long vowels, blends, digraphs, contractions, prefixes, suffixes, syllabication, onset, rime, constant patterns)
fluency	affective factors	phonological/phonemic awareness

Assessments (i.e., emergent literacy, 6+1 Writing Rubric, miscue analysis, informal, formal, formative, summative)	The Reading Process	Three Cueing Systems
Miscue Analysis	Spelling development and spelling inventories	Conducting good retellings
Writing assessment reports	Recording and coding miscues	print concepts
Strategic knowledge (i.e., general purposes for reading, specific purposes for reading, knowledge of strategies for reading)	Decoding, sight words, and automatic word recognition	phonics vs. phonological development
Reading comprehension	ELL readers and writers	Dyslexia

Appendix D
Semi-structured Interview Guide

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol PROBES

Interview # _____

Possible probes that may be used:

Expansion of ideas probes:

- What do you mean by _____?
- In your description, you used the word _____, what do you mean by that?

More depth and detail:

- Then what happened?
- Can you give me an example of that?
- You mentioned that....
- You mentioned _____ tell me more about that
- You said _____ what was that like for you?
- You mentioned that you _____ walk me through what that was like for you.
- You mentioned _____, describe an example of that.

Reframing the question may be used

The interviewer may summarize key ideas and themes back to the interviewee to ensure a proper understanding.

- Earlier you talked about _____, tell me more about _____
- In your description, you used the word _____, what do you mean by that?
- Think of a time when you had an _____ experience. I would like you to tell me about that in as much detail as possible.

Interview Script

Consent form signed: yes/ no. (circle one)

Review purpose of the interview:

The purpose of the interview is to explore your perceptions regarding your use of foundational literacy knowledge during your subsequent coursework and student teaching experiences. It is estimated that the interview will last 60-90 minutes. If you are willing, the interview will be audio-recorded for the purpose of review and transcription. Your name and identifying information will not be recorded.

Do I have permission to record our conversation? yes/no (circle one)

Date/Time of interview:

What is your year in school?

Other (Please specify):

Where did you student teach?

What grade did you student teach? _____

First interview questions (asking additional questions to clarify unclear information or to re-focus responses to be pertinent to the study):

Research Question #1 with associated questions:

What are preservice teachers experiences using the foundational literacy knowledge during their methods coursework and during student teaching?

1. When you hear the term, “foundational literacy knowledge”, what do you think of?
2. How do you define, “foundational literacy knowledge”?
3. Tell me about a time when you used foundational literacy knowledge during your methods coursework?
 - a. Who was involved?
 - b. What was involved?
 - c. Where did this occur?
 - d. Why did you use
 - e. How did you use the foundational literacy knowledge?
4. Tell me about a time when you used foundational literacy knowledge during student teaching?
 - a. Who was involved?
 - b. What was involved?
 - c. Where did this occur?
 - d. Why did you use
 - e. How did you use the foundational literacy knowledge?

Research Question #2 with associated questions:

How are these experiences described in terms of their (a) perceived usefulness during their methods coursework and during student teaching; (b) perceived value to their further teaching practice; © and what type of knowledge was used?

5. Think back to T&L 335, the Understanding Readers and Writers course that you took during the Spring 2016 semester, what were some of the things you used the most regarding foundational literacy knowledge during your methods coursework? The least? Anything else that you would like to add?

a. How about during student teaching? They most, the least, anything else you would like to add?

6. Think back to T&L 335, the Understanding Readers and Writers course that you took during the Spring 2016 semester, what foundational literacy knowledge has been most helpful to you as a future elementary school teacher? What knowledge has been the least helpful?

7. How did you feel the foundational literacy course, T&L 335 Understanding Readers and Writers fit in with the rest of the courses you took?

a. How about during student teaching?

8. What are some of the things that you believe have stood in your way from using your foundational literacy knowledge during methods coursework? What about during student teaching?

9. What do you think could have helped you in making more progress from using foundational literacy knowledge during methods coursework? How about student teaching?

10. What do you think could have made learning foundational literacy knowledge more valuable to you as a future classroom teacher?

Research Question #3 with associated questions:

What are preservice teachers' perspectives on the desirable components of literacy instruction for elementary-aged children and how do their perspectives compare to the ones they made after taking the foundational literacy course?

11. Being at the point you are now, in what ways has your thinking about readers and writers changed?

12. What do you think are the most important components needed to teach students to read?

13. How do these desirable components describe your teaching philosophy?
14. How might you approach literacy instruction in your future classroom?
15. How did you usually go about teaching a typical literacy lesson?
 - a. What resources do you use?
 - b. Who do you go to for support/questions?
16. If someone was observing your literacy lesson, what might they see you and/or the students doing?

Close of first interview:

These are all the questions I have for you today— thank you again for your time. I will be transcribing our interview from today and then sending the transcription to you within a week. Once you receive the transcription, I will ask that you read it through and then email me to let me know if you are uncomfortable with anything that was in the transcription. I would like to contact you again for a follow-up interview, intended to last approximately 60-90 minutes. Also, before our second interview, please email me a picture of a document (i.e., lesson plan, reflection, assignment) of your choice that you believe would support further your experience with foundational literacy knowledge. I am going to ask you questions pertaining to this document as well as some follow-up questions regarding your responses from the first interview. Would you be willing to talk again? yes/ no (circle one).

Second interview questions (follow consent process above):

1. Please describe the document you chose to support your experience with foundational literacy knowledge.
2. Why did you choose this document?
3. Using the sample probes, the researcher will ask follow-up questions regarding the participants' responses to the first interview.

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