

THE ROLE OF PRACTITIONER INQUIRY IN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF
TEACHERS WORKING WITH ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

By

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By

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Chair: Maria Coady
Co-chair: Dorene Ross
Major: Curriculum and Instruction

There is an increase in the population of linguistically diverse students in United States schools. Research shows teachers feel they were insufficiently prepared to teach diverse learners. There is a need to prepare ESOL teachers to meet the academic needs of ELLs effectively and address their underachievement.

Existing literature on professional development (PD) of teachers points to insufficient research that links PD to student learning. Scholars suggest a shift in PD from imparting knowledge for teachers and "training" them to enhancing *authentic* professional learning. Furthermore, there is limited literature on the effects of practitioner inquiry on the PD of ESOL teachers, and little is known about teachers' inquiry studies with ELLs. Therefore, this qualitative study explored how practitioner inquiry influenced teachers' perspectives and practices related to ELLs.

The study used a constructivist theoretical perspective and recruited five teachers from Maple County School District, who had completed practitioner inquiry with ELLs in the year 2009-10. Interviews served as the primary data source, while documents,

electronic mail, and researchers' notes were used as secondary data. Structural narrative analysis and thematic analysis were used to analyze the data.

The results of this study added to the limited research and supported practitioner inquiry as an effective PD tool for ESOL teachers that provided continuous learning opportunities and insights into the academic needs of ELLs. It highlighted teachers' perceptions of inquiry as a valuable tool to explore practice, transform it, increase student learning, gain a better understanding of students, and become aware of the relationship between instruction and student outcomes. Most teachers generated *knowledge-in-practice* specific to teaching ELLs successfully. Additionally, implications for researchers and practitioners were also presented.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Statement of the Problem

In the United States, the population of English language learners (ELLs) who come from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds has continued to increase, while the teaching force has remained largely White and monolingual (Coady, Hamann, Harrington, Pacheco, Pho, & Yedlin, 2007; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Echevarria, Vogt & Short, 2008; Lucas & Grinberg, 2008; Menken & Antuñez, 2001). According to Darling-Hammond (2006) contemporary teachers will encounter students of whom 15% (higher in urban areas) speak English as an additional language, and 40% are from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds. Further, teachers will encounter international students who have had diverse cultural, linguistic, and educational experiences. These numbers are expected to increase by 2050 and suggest the need to prepare teachers who address the specific needs of ELL students (Lucas & Grinberg, 2008; Meskill, 2005).

More than 70% of ELLs reside in California, Texas, New York, Florida, and Illinois (de Cohen & Clewell, 2007; Lucas & Gringberg, 2008; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2006). The percentage of ELLs in Florida public schools has increased over the past decade (FDOE, 2011). According to the Florida Department of Education (FDOE) (2011), in 2008-09, there were 4,353,097 ELLs (8.8%) in the US and the District of Columbia, and there were 226,157 ELLs (8.6%) in Florida.

Increasing English Language Learner Diversity

The Florida Department of Education (FDOE) defines an ELL as an individual who meets any of the following situations: (i) born in a country other than the United States; (ii) speaks a language other than English; (iii) lives in a home where a language other

than English is spoken; or (iv) is an American Indian or Alaskan native and lives in an environment where a language other than English is spoken which impacted his or her level of English proficiency; and therefore has "sufficient difficulty speaking, reading, writing, or listening to the English language to deny such individual the opportunity to learn successfully in classrooms where the language of instruction is English" (FDOE, 2011, p.1). Florida has a large number of ELLs and there are specific teacher preparation requirements for teachers who intend to work with ELLs that are specified in the Consent Decree (FDOE, 2011).

The increase in students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds speaks to teacher education programs that respond to changes in diversity. ELLs in particular require specific linguistic and cultural support in order to succeed academically (de Jong & Harper, 2005, 2007). When teachers are not prepared to meet the needs of their ELLs, they are unable to support their students in meaningful and authentic ways (Lucas & Grinberg, 2008).

ELLs speak a wide variety of languages and come from different cultural backgrounds (Coady et al., 2007; Echevarria et al., 2008). Moreover, Echevarria et al. (2008) point out that some ELLs come from strong academic backgrounds, while others may have had limited schooling; some have attended educational institutions in their home country and have begun learning English prior to emigrating, while others have not. These latter students are most at risk of failing, due to a need to acquire English while simultaneously learning new academic content (Echevarria et al., 2008).

In addition to newcomer immigrants, some ELLs are born in the US and come from homes where English is not spoken as a native language (Echevarria et al., 2008).

Some of these students are literate in another language and only need to learn English, while others may have limited language proficiency in English (Echevarria et al., 2008).

Another factor that affects ELLs' academic success is their socio-economic status (SES). Research shows that students who live in poverty are at a higher risk of failure in schools than their counterparts from higher SES backgrounds (Echevarria et al., 2008). Based on these factors and variations within the ELL student population, teachers need specific preparation to work effectively with ELLs (Lucas & Grinberg, 2008).

Professional Development for Teachers of English Language Learners

Unfortunately, the growing numbers of diverse students is met with a teaching force that is insufficiently prepared to meet the academic needs of ELLs (Menken & Antuñez, 2001; Téllez & Waxman, 2006; Wong-Fillmore & Snow, 2005). Many teachers lack the basic foundational knowledge related to ELLs, such as second language acquisition and cultural differences that affect learning, and are therefore un- or under-prepared to meet the needs of ELLs (Gándara, Maxwell-Jolly, & Driscoll, 2005; Karabenick & Noda, 2004). Lucas and Grinberg (2008) contend that ELLs are denied their civil rights when teachers are not adequately prepared to teach them. They highlight the importance of teacher education programs that address the academic needs of diverse learners and increase understanding of how culture and language affect learning (Borko, Whitcomb & Byrnes, 2008; Cochran-Smith & Demers, 2008; Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2008; Feiman-Nemser, 2008; Florio-Ruane, 2008; King, 2008; Smith-Maddox, 1999). Téllez & Waxman (2006) argue that teachers' limited knowledge of specific pedagogy for teaching English to ELLs has hampered the academic growth of ELLs.

Recently, teacher quality has become a top priority in the reform agenda under the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2001, 2008). Under this Act, all teachers of ELLs are required to be "highly qualified" (Gándara & Maxwell-Jolly, 2006, p. 106). The increase in the numbers of ELLs in schools also gave rise to national teacher standards set forth by Teachers of English for Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) (TESOL, 2010). While these guidelines are useful in preparing teachers to work with ELLs, there remains a need to explore how educational training programs, including PD programs, subsequently affect the work of teachers dealing with ELLs (Fry, 2007; Knight & Wiseman, 2006; Téllez & Waxman, 2006).

Teaching ELLs effectively is not only about incorporating *just good teaching* practices (de Jong & Harper, 2005, 2007); successfully teaching ELLs involves providing differentiated instruction and understanding "the complex link between cultural identity, language use, and proficiency in two [or more] languages" (de Jong & Harper, 2005, p. 14) . In order to move from *just good teaching* to teaching ELLs effectively, teachers need specific knowledge, skills, and dispositions. These include knowledge of language, culture, and effective practices for ELLs (Wong-Fillmore & Snow, 2000).

Coady et al. (2007) reiterate that successful education for ELLs includes providing support in linguistically and culturally responsive ways. Students who find that the school environment affirms their linguistic and cultural identities have a greater chance of achieving academic success (Cummins, 2001). ELLs bring with them diverse linguistic, culture, and social knowledge and experiences that can be developed as a resource. Moreover, students who are fluent in English and an additional language can contribute to a more global environment.

In their review of the literature, Téllez & Waxman (2006) found that there were no signs of improving teacher quality for ELLs, despite the persistent data on underachievement of ELLs. They cite Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1995) to suggest that the *one-shot* in-service PD programs are not likely to show any positive results and suggest that "[t]he most effective professional development growth opportunities are those whose topics emerge from teacher interests, require a long term commitment from all parties, and engage in clear measurement and evaluation of goals and teaching targets" (Téllez & Waxman, 2006, p. 6). They further contend that creating collaborative environments in schools is not sufficient to enable teachers to overcome the barriers created by state, district, and school policies that hinder their efforts to help ELLs. For example, standardized tests create "a sense of helplessness and alienation, which results in a weak sense of teacher self-efficacy and self-belief" (Téllez & Waxman, 2006, p. 6). Teachers need to have a strong sense of self-efficacy and self-belief if they are to be effective teachers of ELLs. Additionally, they need continuous PD to obtain skills needed to facilitate learning for ELLs. Practitioner inquiry is one form of continuous PD that has strong potential to foster such feelings (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993, 1999, 2009).

Research Questions

This study explored the experiences and perspectives of five elementary school teachers who engaged in practitioner inquiry with ELLs. Four out of the five participants identified themselves as ESOL teachers, while the fifth teacher who was ESOL certified, had a large number of ESOL students in her class (23 out of 25 students were ESOL). Specifically, this study explored the nature of the teachers' inquiry studies, what they learned from systematically inquiring about problems and issues related to their ELL

students, and how they believed the inquiries shaped their practice and changed their understanding of the needs of their ELLs. The overarching research question that guided this study was “How do teachers of ELLs believe practitioner inquiry has influenced their perspectives and practice related to teaching of ELLs?” The following sub questions were explored:

(a) What questions or problems do teachers address in their inquiry studies?

(b) How do they believe the study has changed their thinking and practice?

Significance

The need to provide effective PD for teachers working with ELLs in schools in the United States is a growing concern for teachers, administrators, policymakers, and teacher educators alike (Borko et al., 2008; Cochran-Smith & Demers, 2008; Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2008; Feiman-Nemser, 2008; Florio-Ruane, 2008; King, 2008; Smith-Maddox, 1999). Additionally, there has been a dearth of research on the experiences of teachers who have engaged in practitioner inquiry with ELLs (Nevárez-LaTorre, 1999, 2010). Therefore, this study aimed to provide insights into the perceptions and experiences of teachers who have engaged in practitioner inquiry with ELLs. This research adds to the literature on practitioner inquiry as PD for teachers of ELLs by exploring teachers’ beliefs about how practitioner inquiry contributed to their understanding of issues related to teaching ELLs, and how their understanding and practice was transformed as a result of the inquiry process.

Definition of Key Terms

The key terms of the study are described below:

- **PRACTITIONER INQUIRY.** Also known as practitioner research, teacher inquiry, or action research refers to “a spiral of cycles of planning, execution, fact-finding, and reflection leading to social action and social change” (Borko et al., 2008, p.

1029). Practitioner inquiry is based on the role classroom teachers play as knowledge generators and focuses on the concerns of teachers; it engages the teacher in the design, data collection, and interpretation of data around a question the teacher generates.

- ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNER. In this study, the term *English Language Learner (ELL)* is used interchangeably with the terms English as a Second Language (ESL) students, English to Speakers of Other Language (ESOL) students, and Limited English Proficient (LEP) students. More recently, the term English Learner (EL) is also used to refer to ELLs.
- TEACHERS OF ELLS. Teachers who teach ELL, ESL, or ESOL students.
- TEACHER EDUCATION. Both pre-service teacher education and in-service PD that focuses on the growth and development of teachers who are already in the profession of teaching.
- TEACHER PREPARATION. Refers to preparing beginning teachers for the teaching profession.
- PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT. Refers to any activity that aims to improve the performance of paid teachers in their present or future roles of practice and instruction (Desimone, 2009).
- TEACHER LEARNING. Refers to the knowledge that teachers co-construct as a result of their instruction while working with students. It marks a shift from the primary concept of transferring knowledge, as in traditional PD programs, from expert teachers to novice teachers (Webster-Wright, 2009).
- STUDENT LEARNING. Broadly defined in this study as any intended outcome as a result of the teacher's instruction. This could include enhanced interest in the content being taught; increased skills such as reading, writing, listening and speaking; and improved student outcomes as measured by formative or summative assessments.

Limitations

One limitation of this study is that it does not capture the entire process that teachers experienced throughout their inquiry journeys. As such, it does not present the prolonged activity in which teachers engaged, but captures only one aspect of their learning as they described it during the interview. This study reports on how participants narrated their experiences and constructed their learning from the inquiry process.

A second limitation of this study is the limited time for building rapport with participants. The data collected for this study was based on a single, 60- to 90-minute individual interview with each participant. Although this method was appropriate to gather rich data to answer the research questions, it did not provide ample time for rapport building. Even though 15 minutes for casual conversation were allocated before and after each interview, participants came to the interview ready to answer the interview questions right away. This lack of sufficient time for rapport building was compensated for by email exchanges with participants before and after the interview was conducted.

Organization of Chapters

This dissertation is organized as follows: Chapter Two presents the theoretical framework that guided the study; Chapter Three presents the methodology that informed the design, data collection, and analysis, as well as the study's context and a profile of each of the five participants. Chapters Four and Five present the findings, and Chapter Six provides a discussion of the findings, implications for educators and researchers and presents the conclusion for this study.

Conclusion

This chapter noted an increase in diversity in schools in the United States and highlighted the problem of preparing teachers to effectively address the linguistic and cultural needs of ELLs. As noted in this chapter, little is known about the perspectives of teachers related to implementing practitioner inquiry projects with ELLs. The significance of this study was followed by the research questions and limitations of this research. The following chapter provides the theoretical framework that guided this study.

CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide the theoretical framework and literature review for this study. The perspectives that informed this study are derived from literature in the following areas: (a) effective pedagogy for ELLs in the context of mainstream, inclusion classrooms; (b) Professional Development (PD); (c) research on PD for teachers of ELLs; and (d) practitioner inquiry. In addition, a review of empirical studies on practitioner inquiry will be presented. The context for this study is the mainstream, inclusion classroom in Florida, with English learners with multiple language ability levels in English. This review begins with a brief overview of the research-based recommendations for effective practice for ELLs.

Effective Pedagogy for ELLs in the Context of Mainstream, Inclusion Classrooms

As more ELLs are placed in mainstream classrooms with the expectation that they will receive effective instruction, often in an inclusion model of instruction, it becomes imperative that teachers develop the knowledge and skills to successfully address their needs. In the inclusion model of instruction, ELLs may receive ESOL instruction from ESOL teachers, but are mainstreamed for most, if not all, of the entire school day (Reeves, 2006). Scholars highlight the need to differentiate between preparing culturally responsive teachers for a broader, diverse population and specifically preparing teachers for ELLs (Lucas & Grinberg, 2008). Research suggests teachers need specific knowledge and skills to teach ELLs effectively (Coady, de Jong & Harper, 2011; de Jong & Harper, 2005; Lucas & Grinberg, 2008; Peregoy & Boyle, 2005). Teachers need linguistic and cultural knowledge that they can integrate with curricular, instructional,

and pedagogical decisions related to teaching ELLs (de Jong & Harper, 2005). Scholars recommend effective practices for teachers of ELLs that are research-based and that support effective instruction of ELLs. A synthesis of recommendations derived from that literature is included below.

Build Relationships and Provide a Low Anxiety Environment

Language learning for ELLs is most productive within the context of strong positive relationships between teachers and their students that help teachers gain a better understanding of their ELL students and that can further provide meaningful opportunities to facilitate language development and academic learning (Coady et al., 2011; Cholewa, 2009; Cummins, 2000; Gándara et al., 2005; Knight & Wiseman, 2006; Minaya-Rowe, 2006; Ryan & Patrick, 2001). According to Cummins (2000), student-teacher relationships have a positive influence on teaching ELLs successfully. When teachers build relationships with students, show that they care for them, and believe in their ability to be successful, students are more likely to meet those expectations (Cummins, 2000). ELLs benefit when teachers develop personal relationships with them and establish connections between students' life experiences and the curriculum (Cholewa, 2009; Coady et al., 2011; de Jong, & Harper, 2005; Echevarria et al., 2008; Lucas & Grinberg, 2008; Minaya-Rowe, 2006).

Another important factor that affects acquiring English language for ELLs is monitoring the level of anxiety in the language learning situation. Anxiety can be a barrier to acquiring English language (Krashen, 1982; Lucas & Grinberg, 2008; Peregoy & Boyle, 2005). Krashen (1982) refers to this perceived sense of anxiety as the affective filter and suggests that one important variable in learning a language is providing a low anxiety environment. Stress can prevent ELLs from processing the *comprehensible*

input (language) they encounter and can also become a barrier to social interactions that are vital for language development (Krashen, 1982, 2003; Lucas & Grinberg, 2008; Wong Fillmore & Snow, 2000). This means that teachers must be careful not to place ELLs in situations that may be stressful or embarrassing (Lucas & Grinberg, 2008). One way that language learners may perceive anxiety is when they are required to produce language before feeling ready. It is recommended that students be given the time they need to start producing a second language; this varies by individual student, and, as such, reinforces the notion that having a strong relationship with and knowing a student is beneficial to second language learning. Just because students remain silent, teachers must not assume that they do not comprehend. Rather, during the "silent period" (Peregoy & Boyle, 2005, p. 56) students may be listening and understanding the target language; this is an important stage in second language development.

Understand Second Language Acquisition

The importance for teachers to understand how a second language is developed cannot be stressed enough. This includes a basic understanding of the structure of the English language including its oral and written, formal and informal forms (de Jong & Harper, 2005; Wong Fillmore & Snow, 2000). Research on second language development highlights the significance for teachers to understand the linguistic patterns of discourse and to value ELLs' linguistic backgrounds as a resource for further learning (August & Shanahan, 2006; de Jong & Harper, 2005; Echevarria et al., 2008; Lucas & Grinberg, 2008; Wong Fillmore & Snow, 2000) rather than as a barrier to second language development. Teachers also need to understand that errors in English learning frequently occur due to language transfer; that is, how the first language

influences the development of English (Krashen, 1982; Peregoy & Boyle, 2005; Wong Fillmore & Snow, 2000).

Scholars also suggest ELLs benefit when teachers have knowledge of the grammar and history of the English language, speak at least one foreign language, and know how languages are similar or different from English, in order to understand the hurdles in learning English as another language (August & Shanahan, 2006; de Jong & Harper, 2005; Lucas & Grinberg, 2008; Wong Fillmore & Snow, 2000). This knowledge will help teachers to understand the factors that affect second language acquisition, such as language transfer (referred to in the pejorative as linguistic interference), and how to support second language development, such as focusing on targeted vocabulary development and the use of cognates (Echevarria et al., 2008; Peregoy & Boyle, 2005). Cognates are "words that look similar and have the same meaning in two languages" (Lightbown & Spada, 2006, p. 99).

Use Knowledge of Second Language Learning to Inform Practice

Teachers of ELLs benefit from understanding the value of instructional strategies that support second language development (Peregoy & Boyle, 2005). Learning a second language takes time, requires understanding the rules of form and function of the target language, and developing the social (semantic, pragmatic) skills of the new language to communicate in social and academic contexts (Krashen, 1982; Peregoy & Boyle, 2005). Research suggests that ELLs acquire certain grammatical forms sooner than others (Krashen, 1982; Peregoy & Boyle, 2005). This knowledge helps teachers understand why ELLs learn some forms sooner than others so they can allow them additional time to learn more complex grammatical forms.

Provide Opportunities for Social Interaction

Krashen (1982) distinguishes between acquiring and learning a second language and contends that a second language is acquired similar to the way a first language is acquired. Language acquisition is a natural process that occurs when the second language is used in direct, frequent, and meaningful interactions with native speakers of the target language, whereas a language is *learned* when there is a particular focus on teaching and learning the form and functions of a language (Krashen, 1982; Lucas & Grinberg, 2008; Peregoy & Boyle, 2005). Teachers should therefore support second language acquisition through meaningful interactions, rather than relying solely on teaching the form and functions of a new language. A focus on language acquisition rather than language learning has had a profound influence on classroom practice for ELLs and has led to a move away from teaching a second language by drawing only on the drill and skill approaches to teaching language (Peregoy & Boyle, 2005).

The concept that language should be acquired in natural communicative settings reflects Vygotsky's sociocultural theory which suggests that individual learning occurs through social interactions (1978). Based on this knowledge, teachers of ELLs support second language acquisition if they provide ample opportunities for ELLs to engage in meaningful and authentic opportunities for social interaction within the classroom. When ELLs communicate in natural settings or interact socially, their understanding of the target language is more likely to be scaffolded or supported by non-verbal cues such as gestures and facial expressions (Peregoy & Boyle, 2005). Students can also negotiate meaning by using non-verbal cues to indicate a lack of understanding, indicate a need for repetition, and ask for further clarification (de Jong & Harper, 2005; Lucas & Grinberg, 2008; Peregoy & Boyle, 2005). An effective method to support social

interactions in the classroom is the use of co-operative learning strategies. Co-operative learning is "an instructional organization strategy in which students work collaboratively in small groups to achieve academic and social learning goals" (Peregoy & Boyle, 2005, p. 89). Cooperative learning is most beneficial for ELLs when they are given specific tasks to participate in the group and that meet their language ability level.

Make Language Comprehensible and Slightly Challenging

Krashen (1982) highlights the importance of presenting language that is slightly challenging. Krashen's concept of providing comprehensible input for the language development of ELLs has had a major influence on classroom practice for ELLs and "provides a cornerstone for sheltered instruction" (Peregoy & Boyle, 2005, p. 56). A second language is made comprehensible when teachers modify instruction to address the specific needs of ELL students. Research suggests that visual cues such as gestures, facial expressions, and general background information must be used to make content *comprehensible* (Krashen, 1982; Lucas & Grinberg, 2008; Peregoy & Boyle, 2005).

Findings from a major research study conducted by researchers from the National Center for Research on Education, Diversity and Excellence (CREDE) suggest that high-quality instruction for ELLs is similar to that required for mainstream students; however, ELLs need specific instructional accommodations to develop their English language skills (August & Shanahan, 2006; Echevarria et al., 2008; Goldenberg, 2006; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2006). This means teachers of ELLs must employ extra-linguistic information such as use of real life objects, visuals such as pictures, and acting out words to show their meaning, particularly when new vocabulary is introduced to make content comprehensible. Teachers can also make content comprehensible by making

connections to the background and past experiences of their students, using modified speech and fewer idiomatic expressions, repetition, increased use of visual aids, real life objects, demonstrations, as well as use of adapted text and supplementary materials (August & Shanahan, 2006; Echevarria et al., 2004, 2008; Goldenberg, 2006; Peregoy & Boyle, 2005; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2006).

Along with opportunities for social interaction with native speakers of the target language, ELLs benefit when the language to be acquired is slightly above their existing level of competence (de Jong & Harper, 2005; Krashen 1982; Lucas & Grinberg, 2008; Peregoy & Boyle, 2005). This is represented as $i + 1$, where i indicates the input language and $+1$ represents the level that is slightly beyond the learners' current level of second language proficiency. ELLs grow academically when they are challenged intellectually and when teachers communicate high expectations to them (Coady et al., 2007). Other scholars support this on the premise that ELLs are not intellectually challenged frequently enough due to the mistaken assumption that they are of limited ability (Lucas & Grinberg, 2008; Minaya-Rowe, 2006).

Understand the Difference Between Acquiring Social versus Academic Language and Teach Content as well as Develop Language

Teaching ELLs successfully requires an awareness of the mistaken assumption that a student's social language proficiency also indicates that student's academic language proficiency (Cummins, 2003). This distinction draws attention to the different time periods required by ELLs to obtain conversational fluency in a second language in comparison to the time required to acquire academic language. Cummins (2000; 2003) suggests that, whereas it may take students approximately two years to acquire basic interpersonal skills to function on a daily basis in the second language, it may take

seven to 10 years for them to be proficient in the academic forms of the language. Teachers who work with ELLs need to be aware of this distinction. If not, teachers can easily conflate a student's conversational fluency with his or her academic proficiency, and therefore miss the opportunity to provide support to develop the student's academic language.

Another important distinction is the difference between language development and content learning when teaching ELLs (de Jong & Harper, 2005; Echevarria et al., 2008). The difference between teaching language and teaching content becomes blurred, especially while teaching content subjects like English language arts, as teachers may not realize that they need to provide language support for ELLs to completely understand content. Coady et al. (2007) state that the "seldom recognized linguistic dimension of (even math) tests often limits the ability of ELLs to fully demonstrate their content knowledge and understanding" (p. 247) because of their inability to understand the language. The tendency to overlook the language difficulties that hinder content learning is not limited to tests alone, but may also impede everyday learning. Teachers may be unaware of this distinction if it falls beyond their repertoire of experience and if they do not utilize instructional strategies for teaching ELLs successfully. As such, ELLs often face the dual task of learning content and comprehending the language as they demonstrate their content knowledge (Coady et al., 2007; de Jong & Harper, 2005; Echevarria et al., 2008).

Professional Development

As detailed in Chapter One, the classroom environment in schools today has changed drastically. Teachers find themselves in classrooms that look very different

from their classrooms 20 to 30 years ago, as they take on the responsibility for a student population that is increasingly diverse. Scholars point to the need to prepare teachers who can effectively meet the learning needs of ELLs in mainstream classrooms (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Echevarria et al., 2008; Lucas & Grinberg, 2008; Menken & Antuñez, 2001). Therefore, PD programs must focus on preparing teachers who can teach culturally and linguistically diverse student populations, with the goal of addressing the achievement gap (Fry, 2007).

Cochran-Smith and Demers (2008) highlight the effect of the paradigm shift from positivism to postmodernism on teacher education research. Major influences originated with developments in the area of cognitive science, the impact of research perspectives from anthropology and other interpretive traditions, as well as innovation in educational research and practice, such as the emergence of teacher research. As a result of these changes, perceptions about effective teaching broadened to include:

Representing complex knowledge in accessible ways, asking good questions, forming relationships with students and parents, collaborating with other professionals, interpreting multiple data sources, meeting the needs of students with widely varying abilities and backgrounds, and both posing and solving problems of practice.

(Cochran-Smith & Demers, 2008, p. 1010)

As a result, research on teacher education shifted from focusing on teacher behavior to focusing on "teacher knowledge, learning, thinking, and ideas" (Cochran-Smith & Demers, 2008, p. 1010). A further change became evident in the ways the educational community began to view teacher learning and development, and the roles teachers played in educational reform.

From 1980 onwards, the focus shifted from the technical view of training teachers to teach toward more focus on teacher learning (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2008;

Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993, 1999; Desimone, 2009; Hansen, 2008; Meyers & Rust, 2003, Webster-Wright, 2009). Today researchers are increasingly focused on studying the impact of professional development on teacher learning and student achievement (Desimone, 2009).

Additionally, research suggests that teachers need to learn how to make important decisions, teach according to diverse situations, reflect on their work, and meet the needs of diverse learners (Borko, Whitcomb & Byrnes, 2008; Caro-Bruce, Flessner, Klehr & Zeichner, 2007; Cochran-Smith & Demers 2008; Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2008; Desimone, 2009; Feiman-Nemser, 2008; King, 2008). Evaluating teacher PD programs is challenging, as measuring and identifying teacher learning is complex and perhaps the most difficult aspect of assessing teacher PD (Borko, 2004; Desimone, 2009; Feiman-Nemser, 2008). Since teacher learning happens in a variety of contexts, it should be studied in a variety of contexts, taking into account the individual teacher as well as the wider social context in which learning happens, so that diverse issues related to teaching all students effectively can be understood and addressed.

Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) distinguish between three concepts of teacher learning that serve as the foundation for differing perspectives about PD. The first is "*knowledge-for-practice*," which refers to formal knowledge, theory, and practical implications developed by experts for teachers to implement in their classrooms. The second, "*knowledge-in-practice*," is derived from teachers' practices and reflections on their practice. It is based on the assumption that teacher learning takes place when teachers have opportunities to explore knowledge that is embedded in their work and that informs future pedagogical decisions. The third conception, "*knowledge-of-*

practice,” is defined as the knowledge teachers generate when they look at their schools and classrooms as “sites for intentional investigation at the same time that they treat the knowledge and theory produced by others as generative material for interrogation and interpretation” (p. 250). Both “knowledge-in-practice” and “knowledge-of-practice” present a framework for conceptualizing practitioner inquiry for PD for teachers, where teachers take charge of their learning by integrating theory in the field with their practices to generate knowledge about teaching. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) explained that inquiry as a stance for teacher leadership is “intended to problematize the roles teachers play in designing and implementing initiatives for their own learning” (p.295).

Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993, 1999) suggest that real reform is embedded in research-based practices that link theory to practice, blurs the lines between practitioner inquiry and “expert” research, and challenges the notion of what constitutes knowledge, evidence and acceptable research. It is grounded in the relationship between teacher learning and student learning and is designed to prepare teachers to be successful with all students, including those from diverse linguistic, socio-economic, and cultural backgrounds (Borko et al., 2008; Caro-Bruce et al., 2007; Cochran-Smith & Demers, 2008; Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2008; Desimone, 2009; Feiman-Nemser, 2008; King, 2008).

Teacher PD needs to utilize teacher skills, knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes, and prepare teachers as lifelong learners who use current research to guide their investigations within classroom and school settings. This approach to PD allows teachers to become producers of knowledge, not just consumers of research by outside

experts (Lewin, 1949). Such a model would benefit from research in education that focuses on effective PD supported by empirical studies that provide evidence of effective PD practices.

Research that spans the past two decades shows that authentic PD happens over time in settings that support learning (Hoban, 2002; Webster-Wright, 2009). Knowledge can be generated when individuals actively engage with others to investigate problems that emerge in their professional practice. Many agree that effective PD is based on a notion of professional learning as continuous, active, social, and related to practice (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman & Yoon, 2001).

Research on PD for teachers during the past 20 years indicates that effective teacher PD programs can enhance instruction and increase student learning (Borko, 2004; Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2008; Wagman, 2005). Research on teacher PD highlights key components of effective PD. These include teachers' content knowledge and active engagement in learning. Other factors that may contribute to effective PD include coherence, duration, collaboration, teacher reflection, teacher leadership and empowerment, and partnerships with researchers. Understanding student thinking and diversity also contributes to effective PD.

Content Knowledge

Effective PD focuses on teaching and learning subject matter knowledge that deepens the theoretical and factual knowledge of teachers. It develops an understanding of how new knowledge is created and used in a conceptual framework (Wei, Darling-Hammond, Andree, Richardson & Orphanos, 2009). Research suggests that subject matter knowledge increases teacher knowledge that impacts teacher learning, and to some extent, student learning (Borko, 2004; Desimone, 2009; Guskey

& Yoon, 2009; Hammerness, Darling-Hammond, Bransford, Berliner, Cochran-Smith, McDonald & Zeichner, 2005).

Active Engagement in Learning

Effective PD occurs when teachers are actively engaged in learning as opposed to learning passively in a “sit and get” model of listening to lectures (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993, 1999; Desimone, 2009). Active engagement can prepare teachers as lifelong learners who engage in inquiry and use what they learn to improve instruction (Hammerness et al., 2005). Developing a “metacognitive approach” (Hammerness et al., 2005, p. 366) can help teachers take ownership of their learning by analyzing and creating solutions based on systematic inquiry. Through this type of PD, it becomes more likely that teachers will attribute success and failure of students to what is embedded in the class/school environment as opposed to outside factors (Gallimore, Ermeling, Saunders & Goldenberg, 2009).

Coherence

PD is most effective when there is consistency between teacher learning, beliefs and knowledge, and when school reforms, policies, educators, and leaders positively support teacher learning (Desimone, 2009; Valli, Cooper & Frankes, 1997; Wei et al., 2009). Coherence is also important in the ways teachers develop their identities as teachers within the classroom so they “integrate ways of thinking, knowing, feeling and acting into principled and responsive teaching practice” (Feiman-Nemser, 2008, p. 699), and share their learning with other teachers, mentors, researchers, and the wider educational community.

Duration

Research suggests that effective PD and meaningful changes occur in teacher learning when PD extends over time. The recommended duration ranges from 20 hours or more of contact time that spreads over a semester, to 50 hours for improvement in skills that impact student learning (Desimone, 2009; Wei et al., 2009).

Collaboration

Collective participation between teachers, researchers, administrators, and mentors that connects teachers across grades, schools, or districts provides opportunities for shared learning. In other words, sharing and problem solving can contribute to effective PD for teachers (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1992, 1993, 1999, 2009; Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2008; Desimone, 2009; Lieberman & Miller, 2008). An example of collective participation is the Professional Learning Community (PLC) model. PLCs can exist in the form of a critical friends group, study groups, writing groups, and collaborative data collection and analysis groups. Some scholars contend that PLCs have the potential to improve both teacher learning and student achievement. However, there is insufficient evidence that links engagement in PLCs with student learning (Vescio, Ross & Adams, 2008). Studies show that teachers who participated in PLCs that maintained a clear focus on teaching practice and student learning came to see their classrooms as places for their own learning, as well as their students' learning (Vescio et al., 2008). Additionally, Borko (2004) notes that strong PLCs have powerful effects on school reform and improvement in instruction.

Teacher Reflection

When teachers engage actively in reflective problem solving by using evidence to examine what works in the classroom or school as well as what needs improvement,

they may bring about positive change in their own learning, and affect student achievement (Cochran-Smith & Lytle 1993, 1999, 2009; Dewey, 1910, 1933, 1938; Gruen, 1938; Tom, 1985). In 1938, Dewey presented the image of the teacher as a “reflective practitioner,” suggesting teachers become students of teaching and link theory to practice through reflection (Borko et al., 2008, p. 1029; Cochran-Smith & Lytle 1993, 1999; Dewey 1910, 1933; Smith-Madox, 1999). Effective teaching practices prepare teachers who make decisions as they teach, apply new knowledge to instructional practices, and reflect on what they do (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2008). Although there is limited research that supports the relationship between teacher reflection and student achievement, there is evidence of its importance for effective PD of teachers (Borko et al., 2008; Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2008; Desimone, 2009; Feiman-Nemser, 2008; King, 2008).

Teacher Leadership and Empowerment

Research indicates that when teachers are allowed leadership roles, such as the role of teacher-researchers, teacher learning is increased, as teachers are empowered to take ownership of their work (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2009; Florio-Ruane, 2008; Meyers & Rust, 2003). According to Meyers and Rust (2003):

[w]hen teachers consider themselves to be researchers, not just consumers of research, they are exercising leadership. When teachers write about their teaching and about their professional work, they are exercising teacher leadership. And when teachers form networks to share their knowledge and work, they are breaking down the formidable obstacles that have thwarted teacher leadership for so many decades (p. v).

Teachers are more likely to apply findings from research they initiate and design. When teachers participate actively in school improvement and change, they feel empowered (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2009; McCarthy & Riner, 1996; Valli et al., 1997). Scholars

suggest distributing leadership roles among teachers (Fullan, 1985, 2001; Harris, 2003; Lambert, 1998; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Sergiovanni, 2001). The effect of such distribution motivates teachers, enhances the quality of teaching, and positively impacts student achievement (Alger, 2008).

Understanding Student Thinking

When teachers understand how students learn and examine how to connect subject-matter concepts and students' experiences, they gain insights into the role of student thinking in the learning process (Ayers, 2004; Borko, 2004; Dewey, 2004).

Teachers who collaborate with researchers to study their classrooms and school environments take on new roles as teacher-researchers who use the prior knowledge of their students to increase their learning (King, 2008).

Understanding Diversity

The increasing diversity in student populations calls for a professional model that enables teachers to be successful with students who are not only varied in terms of their racial, cultural, social, economic, and linguistic backgrounds, but who may come from different regions of the world. Researchers propose various approaches that acknowledge diverse learners' unique backgrounds and diverse ways of learning. Such considerations provide ELLs with equitable opportunities for learning, such as understanding ELLs' cultural and individual growth, building partnerships between home and school, and using appropriate teaching methods (Garcia, 2002; King, 2008; Nieto, 2004).

However, scholars have recently challenged this key-component conception by suggesting new directions in PD. These are discussed in the following section under

major reviews of literature on PD (Guskey, 2009; Guskey & Yoon, 2009; Wayne et al., 2008).

Major Reviews of Literature on Professional Development

In conducting the literature review, databases containing abstracts of empirical and conceptual reviews of PD for teachers in K-12 contexts since 2008 were consulted. These databases included EBSCOhost, Eric, Academic Search Premier, PsycINFO, Professional Development Collection, Academic Search Alumni Edition, OmniFile Full Text Mega (H.W. Wilson), Education Full Text (H.W. Wilson), Social Science Full Text (H.W. Wilson), Psychology and Behavioral Science Collection. The search was limited to peer-reviewed, scholarly journal articles. In addition to a basic search using Google Scholar, journals such as *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *Journal of Teacher Education*, and *American Educational Research Journal*, were also consulted. The search used terms included "major reviews of professional development for teachers" and "literature reviews AND professional development for teachers." Articles that did not address PD for teachers in K-12 in the US were excluded. For example reviews of PD for faculty or teachers in higher education, in international contexts, or specific to certain topics or subjects like technology, medicine, and science were excluded. Further, since major earlier reviews of research on PD by Kennedy (1998); Clewell, Campbell, and Perlman (2004); and Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss, and Shapely (2007) have been analyzed by Wayne et al. (2008), these were not included in the current discussion. Relevant reviews by Webster-Wright (2009) and Desimone (2009) were included because of their contribution to the discussion of effective PD. The following six reviews

are included for this section: Wayne et al. (2008) Guskey & Yoon, 2009; Webster-Wright, 2009; Desimone, 2009; Opfer & Pedder, 2011; and Avalos, 2011.

Wayne et al. (2008) focused their review of literature on studies that highlighted the influence of PD on student achievement. They built on literature reviews by Kennedy (1998); Clewell et al. (2004); and Yoon et al. (2007). Wayne et al. (2008) stressed that although findings from Yoon et al. (2007) show a large effect size, they do not include PD programs that involve multiple trainers. They concluded that when PD was delivered in favorable settings by those who had designed it, student achievement was increased. However, little is known about the effects of PD when it is delivered in specific settings or by multiple trainers. They also noted that "although a consensus has emerged in the literature about the features of effective PD, the evidence on the specific features that make a difference is weak" (Wayne et al., 2008, p. 469). Accordingly, they called for greater evidence that links specific features of PD, such as teacher subject matter knowledge, active learning, coherence, collective participation, and duration to demonstrate an increase in student achievement.

In one of the most comprehensive syntheses to date of research on effective PD, Guskey and Yoon (2009) stressed the importance of assessing PD. In their review of over 1,300 studies that investigated the effects of PD on student learning outcomes, they highlighted the difficulty of establishing the relationship between PD and student achievement. They discovered that only nine out of 1,343 studies met the standards of reliable evidence set by What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) and provided a small research base on common elements of effective PD. These common elements included workshops, outside experts, time, follow-up activities, and content.

The nine studies suggested a positive relationship between teacher participation in workshops or summer institutes and increases in student learning. The workshops focused instructional practices based on research, and provided active-learning experiences and opportunities for teachers to use their learning specifically for their classrooms. Studies in which the contact time was 30 or more contact hours showed positive results on student learning. This provided evidence that time is crucial to effective PD. Effective PD must be “well organized, carefully structured, purposefully directed, and focused on content or pedagogy or both” (Guskey & Yoon, 2009, p. 497).

All nine studies showed that significant amounts of sustained follow-up support had a positive impact on student learning. The researchers found that job-embedded assistance was useful for educators in adapting new instruction and material in their unique classrooms. The analysis showed that effective PD comes from activities based on "careful adaptation of varied practices to specific content, process, and context elements" (Guskey & Yoon, 2009, p. 497). The fifth element that was common in all nine studies was the importance of content and pedagogical knowledge. All nine studies were developed with a focus on both content and pedagogical knowledge.

Findings from this synthesis were modest and the authors emphasized how little is known about factors affecting PD and its relationship to student learning. Their analysis also highlighted the gap in research on how PD affects student learning. Guskey and Yoon (2009) stressed the importance of critically examining PD and identifying specific goals of PD and the best way to achieve them. Thus, they asserted that rigorous, quality research that illuminates the relationship between PD, change in instructional practice, and improvement in students' learning was greatly needed.

Drawing on research on PD and professional learning over the past two decades, Webster-Wright (2009) suggests a shift in both research and practice from conceptualizing PD as focusing on training teachers, which centers around the notion of teacher behavior and includes what teachers should do, to supporting PD as authentic professional learning that is rooted in the learning experiences of the teacher. Webster-Wright (2009) critiques and presents an overview of existing research to understand continuing professional learning and draws on three areas to propose reframing PD. These include community education, workplace learning, and professional learning. Next, she draws on research that spans the past two decades to present an overview of professional knowledge and learning, examines philosophical assumptions, incongruities and tensions behind the research, and presents implications for the conceptualization of PD.

While searching for reasons why didactic PD practices are still common, Webster-Wright (2009) found that the majority of articles on PD she reviewed focused on training teachers rather than supporting ongoing professional learning. PD programs grounded in the training model are based on the assumption that PD is transferable, despite a research base that stresses that PD cannot be simply transferred (Darling Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Lieberman, 1995). This approach suggests a deficit-model of teaching in which teachers are represented as lacking knowledge while teacher educators, by comparison, are considered knowledge possessors. In her review, the author critiqued PD programs that focused on content rather than enhancing teacher learning. She suggested that the trend toward content is visible both in research and practice, and recommended developing and evaluating PD programs that focus on

authentic professional learning. Even though many recent PD programs are more teacher-oriented, engaging, and interactive, some continue to be didactic and delivered periodically, and many fail to engage teachers with authentic work experiences.

The concept of continued professional learning is inadequately understood and reflects the epistemological and ontological beliefs about the nature of reality and knowledge that determine how knowledge and research are created (Webster-Wright, 2009). A common assumption behind contemporary PD programs holds that well-developed PD programs with good facilitators will result in professional learning and a change in professional practice (Wayne et al., 2008; Webster-Wright, 2009). This assumption needs to be questioned. Such a conceptualization of PD is limited to a discourse that focuses on the professional as deficient, rather than one who can co-construct knowledge by engaging in self-directed learning.

In her review Desimone (2009) explored the following research question to examine what counts as PD:

How can we best measure professional development, and its effects on teachers and students, toward the end of improving professional development programs and policies to foster better instruction and student achievement?

(Desimone, 2009, p. 182)

The author also examined the purpose of a core conceptual framework that is supported by research and "implications for modes of inquiry" (p.182) in studies related to teacher learning. Based on her findings the author suggests that there is research-based support for identifying core features of effective PD and for a core conceptual framework to study the effects of PD. Desimone (2009) recommended a set of core features for a conceptual framework to measure PD that would enhance quality. She

contended that the framework would increase understanding of teacher learning in a way that would benefit teachers and enhance student learning. According to her framework, five core features – content focus, active learning, coherence, duration, and collective participation – enhance teachers' knowledge and skills and contribute to a change in their attitudes and beliefs about teaching and learning. Desimone (2009) asserted that following this model would result in change in instruction, leading to improved student learning. She suggested that this framework should be used in future studies to measure the effectiveness of PD and serve as a guide to what should be measured, allowing researchers to build a knowledge base and compare across studies.

Avalos (2011) reviewed research-based PD publications over a ten year period (from 2000 to 2010) that focused on teacher learning, facilitation and collaboration, factors influencing PD, effectiveness of PD, and issues related to select themes. After reviewing an initial 111 abstracts and articles, she focused on nine studies for closer scrutiny. The author found that the thematic emphasis of these articles over a ten-year period included the following areas: Professional learning, mediations (these included school-university partnerships, teacher co-learning, and workplace learning), conditions and factors, effectiveness of PD, and specific areas and issues. The selection of the nine articles included eight research-based articles and one research review. The selection of these articles was based on their thematic significance. These included a focus on the learning of practicing teachers, the embedded or situated nature of teacher professional learning and development, and the role of mediations in the quality of their learning.

The author found that the thematic emphasis of the articles indicated the complex nature of teacher learning and development. She also discovered that, although different kinds of PD formats impacted teacher PD in varying degrees, little is known about contained PD over time. However, a key finding was that prolonged PD interventions and combinations of tools for learning and reflective experiences were more effective. Teacher partnerships also had a powerful influence on learning even though teaching continues to be a solitary activity for many teachers. The traditional role of teacher educators and researchers also showed a shift to more partnership-oriented relationships. Finally, the wider selection of articles pointed to teachers' concern with standardized test scores as a result of policy and accountability in education that led to the traditional practice of seeking help from outside experts.

In another review, Opfer and Pedder (2011) used complexity theory to review a wide range of empirical and theoretical research on teachers' professional practices, the generative systems of these practices, and the effect of teachers' learning experiences on their knowledge and change in practice. The purpose of the review was to provide "an explanation for why teacher learning may or may not occur as a result of professional development" (Opfer & Pedder, 2011, p. 382). The authors draw on literature on PD, teacher learning, teacher change, and organizational learning to highlight that teacher learning is influenced by three subsystems: the teacher, the school, and the learning activity that interrelates in diverse and complex ways and with varying degrees of intensity. They argue that because teacher learning consists of multiple strands and variables, it is unique and not generalizable. They suggest a shift in the conceptualization of teacher learning and PD research that moves away from

implying a cause-and-effect approach to understanding teacher learning and a move toward understanding how, why, and under what conditions teachers learn. The authors also suggest that scholars must utilize methodological practices that highlight the three subsystems (teacher, school, and learning activity) in order to understand teacher learning. The review emphasizes the "multicausal, multidimensional, and multicorrelational quality of teacher learning and its impact on instructional practices" (Opfer & Pedder, 2011, p.394). The authors recommend a conceptualization of PD that moves away from focusing on the effects of PD activities to understand how individual and school variables affect teacher learning and change.

In summary, research highlights the complex nature of teacher learning and PD (Avalos, 2011; Desimone, 2009; Opfer & Pedder, 2011) while evidence of the connection between PD, teacher learning, and student achievement remains inadequate. Similarly, evidence on how students learn and factors that support ongoing professional learning is insufficient to draw conclusions, as is knowledge about contained PD over time (Avalos, 2011; Webster-Wright, 2009). Additionally, scholars are looking at the effects of core areas such as collective participation, active learning, coherence, duration, and subject matter knowledge to understand their impact on effective PD and are calling for greater evidence that links these areas to student achievement (Desimone, 2009; Guskey & Yoon, 2009; Wayne, et al., 2008). There is a need for more research that establishes the relationship between PD, change in learning and practice, and increase in student learning (Guskey & Yoon, 2009; Opfer & Pedder, 2011). Research that focuses on professionals who can co-construct knowledge by engaging in self-directed learning is also needed (Webster-Wright, 2009).

Guskey (2009) further supported the need for evidence that links PD to "an inquiry-based profession, rather than a haphazard set of activities based on intuition, hearsay, tradition, and folklore" (Guskey, 2009, p. 232).

Research on Professional Development for Teachers of ELLs

Historically, language education programs consisted of professionals who were not directly trained to teach ELLs but had acquired training on the job (Gándara et al., 2005; Téllez & Waxman, 2006). Such teachers lacked basic knowledge about ELLs and their learning needs. As such, teachers failed to acquire the required expertise, became stressed, burned out, and left the job, or continued teaching without the desire to provide quality education (Karabenick & Noda, 2004; Téllez & Waxman, 2006). Today, mainstream teachers who teach content area subjects (math, science, social studies) are faced with teaching students from diverse backgrounds and are expected to reduce the underachievement of ELLs (Ruiz & Lozano, 2010). Teacher educators face the challenging task of providing PD that is effective for teachers of ELLs and that addresses the needs of the growing population of diverse students.

Traditionally, mainstream teachers across the United States have not been required to take ESOL/ESL related courses to prepare them to address the academic needs of ELLs. In their review of state requirements for teachers of ELLs, Menken and Antuñez (2001) found that only 37 states offered an ESL/English Language Development (ELD) teacher certification/endorsement and only 23 of those required ESL certification. Out of the 19 states that required an endorsement for bilingual /dual language certification, 17 have made it a legal requirement. Some states also accept

emergency credentials that require only passing an examination to teach ELD/ESL and bilingual students (Téllez & Waxman, 2006).

In the State of Florida, mainstream elementary teachers must meet legal requirements to teach ELLs, according to The Florida Consent Decree (FDOE, 2011). The requirements include fifteen academic hours or the equivalent, or 300 PD hours in ESOL that must include instruction in each of the following areas: (a) methods of teaching English to ESOL students; (b) ESOL curriculum and materials development; (c) cross-cultural communication and understanding; (d) applied linguistics; and (e) testing and evaluation of ESOL students. These requirements are in addition to requirements such as a bachelor's degree, teaching certification, and a score of 220 on the test of spoken English. Secondary teachers who teach ELLs in content areas such as math, science, social studies, and computer literacy are required to complete 60 hours of PD or corresponding college credit (3 academic hours) in (a) methods of teaching English to ESOL students; (b) ESOL curriculum and materials development; and (c) testing and evaluation of ESOL students. Other subject area teachers are required to have ESOL strategies and issues related to cultural and linguistic diversity infused into their pre-service program (FDOE, 2011).

Many teachers who work with ELLs feel that they were insufficiently prepared to address the needs of their students (Batt, 2008; Meskill, 2005; Téllez & Waxman, 2006). Research shows that the perceived lack of appropriate qualifications, knowledge and skills in educating ELLs and understanding diversity or multicultural education are the greatest obstacles educators face in improving education for ELLs (Batt, 2008). Téllez and Waxman (2006) highlighted the shortcomings of second language teacher

education programs that consisted of both pre-service and in-service programs. They argue that many of these programs fail to provide sufficient linkages between language and culture; they fail to develop links between bilingual education, foreign language teaching and English language development; and they regard language teaching as analogous to teaching content. Some programs provide a heightened focus on teaching strategies with little knowledge about how and when to use them, and provide a disconnected view of how language and culture relate to student learning. Given these problems, the authors indicated a need for PD that focuses on teacher learning and enables teachers to succeed in a climate of high stakes testing. They argued that when "teachers have a strong sense of their own efficacy, they can make a real difference in the lives of their students" (Téllez & Waxman, 2006, p.7).

Review of Research on Professional Development for Teachers of ELLs

This section presents a discussion of major research on PD for teachers of ELLs. In searching for major reviews, databases containing abstracts of empirical and conceptual reviews since 2005 were consulted. These databases included EBSCOhost, Eric, Academic Search Premier, PsycINFO, Professional Development Collection, Academic Search Alumni Edition, OmniFile Full Text Mega (H.W. Wilson), Education Full Text (H.W. Wilson), and Psychology and Behavioral Science Collection. A basic search using Google Scholar was also conducted. The search terms used included: "reviews of professional development of teachers of ELLs," "professional development of teachers of English Language Learners AND literature reviews," and "teacher professional development AND literature reviews." The search was limited to peer-reviewed, scholarly publications specific to the PD of teachers of ELLs within the context of K-12 education in the US. Newspaper articles and articles on specific issues

such as equity, bilingual education programs, or specific strategies for teachers of ELLs were excluded while book chapters were included. The review of *Research on preparing teachers for diverse populations* by Hollins and Guzman (2005) was excluded as this had already been reviewed by Lucas and Grinberg (2008) and is included in this discussion. One survey (Gandara et al., 2005) and the following three reviews of research are included in this discussion: Lucas & Grinberg, 2008; Knight & Wiseman, 2005, 2006.

Even though there is limited empirical evidence that documents the kind of preparation required to prepare teachers of ELLs, there is some knowledge of what teachers need to know to be successful with ELLs (Gandara et al., 2005). In a survey that studied the perceptions of 5,300 educators to understand the challenges, experiences, and PD needs of teachers in California, Gandara et al. (2005) found that the knowledge and skills that contributed to effective teaching of ELLs included: a) the ability to communicate with students; (b) the ability to engage students' families; (c) knowledge of language uses, forms, mechanics, and how to teach these; and (d) a feeling of efficacy with regard to teaching ELLs (p. 3). Gandara et al. (2005) identified the following factors that contributed to effective instruction: (a) knowledge of teaching and learning; (b) deep content knowledge; (c) experience; and (d) full certification in the field (p.3). Nevertheless, there is paucity of research that provides substantial evidence to support how these skills contribute to effective instruction for ELLs.

In a review of research on PD of teachers of diverse learners including ELLs, Knight and Wiseman (2005) looked at (a) what comprised PD for teachers of diverse learners (b) how PD for teachers of ELLs affected teacher outcomes and (c) how PD for

teachers of ELLs affected student outcomes. A total of 18 studies met the criteria for rigorous research. Findings pointed to a paucity of evidence to support effective PD approaches. The findings also showed that studies on PD for teachers of diverse learners (a) provided little direction for enhancing their effectiveness to teach diverse learners; (b) provided little evidence to support the effectiveness of specific PD models and strategies for teachers of diverse learners; (c) presented trends that favored inquiry and collaborative models of PD including learning communities but provided little knowledge about their relationship to student outcomes; and (d) presented instructional models supported by research for their effectiveness, but highlighted a gap in knowledge about how to make these skills and knowledge accessible to teachers of diverse learners.

In another review of research on PD for teachers of ELLs, Night and Wiseman (2006) analyzed 19 studies of PD for linguistically and culturally diverse students that they divided into three categories: (a) PD to prepare teachers to teach using specific programs; (b) PD to increase teacher knowledge and use of multicultural or culturally relevant instruction; and (c) PD to increase teaching skills through learning communities (p. 84). Findings from their review of studies showed (a) little evidence that confirmed change in practice related to teachers of ELLs; (b) mixed effects of PD training models on student and teacher learning; (c) PD models that involved learning communities and inquiry are popular models of PD for teachers of ELLs but little is known about how that model affects student outcomes; and (d) limited effectiveness of student instructional models, such as Sheltered Instruction. It should be noted, however, that not much is known on how to extend this knowledge to teachers of ELLs. The authors contended

that PD developers and researchers must join together to completely evaluate the effects of PD for teachers of ELLs so that the findings can be shared with teachers, teacher educators, and policy makers to improve PD of ESOL teachers.

Lucas and Grinberg (2008) reviewed literature on preparing teachers for ELLs over the previous two decades. The review included empirical studies and conceptual, theoretical, and policy literature that comprised reports of empirical research, conference papers, peer-reviewed journals, and book chapters. The purpose of the review was to understand teacher education for linguistically diverse students. The authors distinguish between preparing teachers to teach diverse learners, which subsumes the specific focus on addressing the language needs of learners and instead includes preparing culturally responsive teachers for a broad, diverse population.

Out of the 17 empirical studies the authors identified eight focused on preparing classroom teachers to teach ELLs. The remaining nine investigated an area related to the education of ELLs in mainstream classrooms. The authors also included literature that provided theoretical and conceptual arguments related to teaching ELLs in their review. The review focused on the following: (a) to stress the importance of preparing ALL teachers to teach ELLs effectively and highlight that this is a neglected area in the research; (b) to address the question: What knowledge and skills do teachers need to effectively address the academic needs of ELLs; and (c) to investigate the current education of teachers for ELL students, including PD of teachers. The authors highlight the qualities teachers need to specifically teach ELLs; these include the experiences, attitudes and beliefs, knowledge, and skills to teach ELLs effectively.

Based on their review, the authors suggest four structural strategies and three process strategies. They also discuss three themes that emerged from their review of the literature. Structural strategies suggested to prepare classroom teachers include structural changes in teacher education programs, such as adding a course related to ELL students; modifying current courses to integrate issues specific to ELLs; modifying preprogram requirements; and adding a minor or a certificate. Process strategies include providing mentoring for in-service teachers, cross-institutional collaboration, and PD for faculty. The first theme highlights the signification for teachers to have various language-related experiences. The second emphasizes the value for teachers to have linguistic knowledge. The third theme stresses the importance of collaboration for teachers of ELL.

In summary, researchers who write about PD for teachers of ELLs suggest key features that are important for effective teaching, such as having diverse linguistic and cultural experiences; knowledge of linguistics (Lucas & Grinberg, 2008); ability to communicate effectively with ELLs and their families; knowledge of language uses, form, and mechanics; feelings of efficacy; and knowledge of teaching, learning, and content (Gandara et al., 2005). Moreover, teachers need to be fully certified and have experience teaching ELLs (Gandara et al., 2005).

There is, however, limited empirical evidence to support these claims (Lucas & Grinberg, 2008; Knight & Wiseman, 2005, 2006). Researchers have also found limited evidence to confirm that PD leads to change in the practice of ELL teachers (Knight & Wiseman, 2005, 2006). They call for further research on how to enhance PD for teachers of ELLs and further investigation of the effects of popular models of PD, such

as learning communities and inquiry, on student achievement (Knight & Wiseman, 2005, 2006). Researchers also identified a gap in the literature on how to make effective skills and knowledge accessible to teachers of ELLs, and suggested increased collaboration between researchers and PD developers to evaluate the results of PD for teachers of ELLs (Knight & Wiseman, 2005, 2006).

The Need for Practitioner Inquiry for Teachers of ELLs

In language teaching circles, the call for in-service PD to prepare effective teachers gained attention in the 1980s and 1990s because PD is considered vital for the long-term development and success of teachers and for the programs in which they work (Wright, 2009). Richards and Farrell (2005) supported the growing realization that not everything teachers need to know can be provided in pre-service education, and that the knowledge base of teaching constantly changes. The need for in-service PD opportunities became further pronounced with the emergence of teacher-led initiatives such as action research or practitioner inquiry, reflective teaching, and team teaching (Richards & Farrell, 2005).

Studies of teacher-led initiatives show that teachers are prepared to take on the responsibility for their own PD to better address the needs of their students (Richards & Farrell, 2005); they do not need to rely solely on external professional development programs to create more effective learning experiences for their students. Teachers have demonstrated that they can take on the role of researcher to investigate problems and find solutions to the problems they face in the unique context of their classrooms (Cochran Smith & Lytle, 1993, 1999). Such systematic investigations are more likely to provide authentic solutions that address particular problems as compared to PD programs based on a “one size fits all” model (Reyes, 1992).

One form of teacher-led initiative is practitioner inquiry or action research. Richards and Farrell (2005) contend that “[t]eachers who have carried out action research often report significant changes to their understanding of teaching” (p. 173) and that teaching and learning can be considerably altered by adding the dimension of researcher to existing practice. Teachers can also use practitioner inquiry in multilingual schools to assist in constructing effective learning opportunities for their students and creating significant differences in their learning environment that enhance linguistic and academic achievement (Caro-Bruce et al., 2007; Meyers & Rust, 2003; Nevárez-La Torre, 1999, 2010).

In summary, PD for teachers of ELLs has been under-investigated, despite the fact that many educators who teach ELLs feel under-prepared for the task (Téllez & Waxman, 2006). There appears to be a gap between what teachers need to know to be successful with ELLs and what they actually know and practice (Wong Fillmore & Snow, 2000). Although some reform efforts have resulted in mandatory teacher preparation courses for teachers of ELLs in states where the ELL population is increasing, such as Florida, little is known about how well these efforts prepare teachers of ELLs, or how PD efforts can further supplement their learning. Additionally, there is a dearth of literature that provides evidence of effectiveness of efforts to prepare ELL teachers to meet the academic needs of their students (Knight & Wiseman, 2006). However, research suggests that teachers who engaged in action research were able to significantly enhance their learning (Richards & Farrell, 2005).

Practitioner Inquiry

A host of factors are now recognized as contributors to educational improvement. It is generally believed by researchers, policymakers, school leaders, and politicians

that good instructional practices can mitigate outside factors that prevent students from being successful in school, such as poverty, failed school policies, and racism (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). Teachers and other practitioners are recognized as the single most important factor in all reform efforts. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) draw attention to the important work teachers do and "the sometimes dramatic impact a single teacher can have on learning and lives of students" (p. 1). They argue

practitioners are deliberative intellectuals who constantly theorize practice as part of practice itself and that the goal of teacher learning initiatives is the joint construction of local knowledge, the questioning of common assumptions, and thoughtful critique of the usefulness of the research generated by others both inside and outside contexts of practice. (p. 2)

Practitioner inquiry marks a major shift in PD as a genre where practitioners engaged in teaching become researchers. When engaging in practitioner inquiry, teachers investigate and systematically study questions that emerge in their classrooms or schools to inform instruction and improve practice (Borko et al., 2008; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993, 1999, 2009; Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2008, 2009; King, 2008; Lampert, 2008). Practitioner inquiry, also known as teacher inquiry and action research, has been called the "single most significant development ever in the field of teacher education research" (Zeichner, 1999, p. 8).

The major genres of practitioner inquiry include action research, participatory action research, practitioner inquiry, self-study, the scholarship of teaching, and the use of practice as a context for research (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009) (Table 2-1). Although some of these terms may be used interchangeably, Cochran-Smith and Lytle describe them distinctly. The focus of this study will be on practitioner inquiry or teacher inquiry to explore how teachers of ELLs believe engaging in practitioner inquiry has influenced their perspectives and practice related to teaching ELLs.

A common feature of practitioner inquiry is collaboration. Teachers, student teachers, school leaders and university-based professionals may collaborate to provide relevant support to each other during the inquiry. They may work in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to examine their practice, question their assumptions, and generate local knowledge. They do this by engaging in the process of inquiry described in this chapter. In some cases they also work on issues of equity and social justice by ensuring access to equal educational opportunities for all students.

Practitioner inquiry breaks from previous research traditions that emerged from the “process-product” and “qualitative/interpretative” paradigms and determined the role of the teacher as “a technician” or “story character” (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2009, p. 2). While traditional research was linear and *outside-in*, practitioner inquiry is *inside-out* and determines the role of the teacher as an insider telling a story. It is cyclical and focused on insights that help teachers identify how to make meaningful change (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2009).

Practitioner inquiry creates opportunities for teacher leadership that is based on collaboration and collegiality to support continuous growth, learning, and PD for teachers. Additionally, practitioner inquiry consists of “teacher professional practice as a cognitive process of posing and exploring problems and dilemmas identified by teachers themselves” (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2009, p. 5). By engaging in practitioner inquiry, teachers are able to raise questions about issues that may not be visible to outside researchers and potentially generate knowledge that is vital for practitioners and the larger community of educators and researchers. When practitioner inquiry is adopted as a stance, it empowers teachers who can contribute to policy decisions that are usually

imposed from the top down with little input from practitioners. This then gives them a voice in important decisions about teaching practices (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2009).

The Practitioner Inquiry Process

There are several stages in the practitioner inquiry process that evolve and develop over time and include several recurring cycles. These include planning, observation, reflection, and action (Nevárez-La Torre, 1999, 2010; Richards & Lockhart, 1996; Wood, 1988). Frequently, teachers begin the practitioner inquiry process at the data collection stage by defining a problem and determining the best course of action. However, teachers may begin at any stage of the cycle and complete the whole process. They are not as fixed as the five steps suggested in Figure 2-1 from *How to Do Action Research in Your Classroom: Lessons From the Teachers Network Leadership Institute* by Rust and Clark (2006).

Taking a stance

The first step is to make a commitment to begin a cycle of inquiry. Asking simple questions represents a good beginning. Teachers may have many different wonderings or questions: What works well and what does not? Who is learning and who is not? Is the curriculum designed to promote student learning? Do students from specific backgrounds face similar challenges or achievements? Questions are a great way to probe everyday challenges. Once teachers refine their questions into “wonderings” they can move on to the next stage in the process. A useful practice is to set aside a few minutes each day to reflect and record thoughts about the happenings during each day.

Designing a study

A good study design begins with a good, clear question that is free of technical jargon. Sharing wonderings with a group who can provide critical, constructive feedback

is ideal for further refinement. Next, teachers must identify a timeline for the study, thoughtfully and realistically, allowing enough time to collect and analyze data, and then reflect and share their work with a collaborative group or partner and make revisions. Timelines can be aligned with the academic calendar for convenience.

Data collection and analysis

Data collection and analysis can be a challenging, time consuming, and overwhelming experience. Teachers can be guided to ask what kind of evidence would be useful to answer their inquiry question, and to determine what resources are available in their daily practice that would provide sufficient evidence to answer the question. A variety of data collection methods in practitioner inquiry include items such as drawings, photographs, interviews and conversations, anecdotal records, observations, samples of student work, surveys, and student or teacher journals. It is suggested that more than one form of data be collected for triangulation purposes. Once data are gathered, it is important to select a way to represent them. Graphs, charts, and color-coded representations, for example, are all useful ways to look for patterns across the data. Finally, it is important to explain findings.

Improving practice

It is imperative that findings are compared to prior research or similar studies to look for connections with work that has already been done in the field. An important question is whether one's research has found results consistent with prior research or discovered unique findings. To establish credibility, teachers can consult their collaborative group. If a study shows new findings, teachers can generate a new question for the next cycle of research.

Beginning again

As practitioner inquiry is cyclical, it is expected that the first round of practitioner inquiry will lead to new and better questions and studies. Reflection on the first experience should lead to a new wondering and research design. Figure 2-1 (Rust & Clark, 2006) illustrates the practitioner inquiry cycle. At the cycle's core is taking a stance to engage in an inquiry, designing a study, collecting and analyzing data, improving practice, and beginning again. This theory of practitioner inquiry has the potential to improve practice once all the stages of the process are completed.

Practitioner Inquiry Movement

Practitioner inquiry emerged from the works of John Dewey and Kurt Lewin. Dewey (1910, 1933, 1938) defined the importance of intentional reflective thought and saw the scientific methods embedded in the process of inquiry, a naturalistic logic that provided the basic methods and their relationship to subject matter. Inquiry was thus identified as “a powerful instrument of progressive self-criticism and development” (Gruen, 1938, p. 427). In 1948, Lewin used the term action research to describe “a spiral of cycles of planning, execution, fact-finding, and reflection leading to social action and social change” (Borko et al., 2008, p. 1029). Lewin (1949) recommended that teachers work alongside researchers to establish practitioner inquiry as a valid form of research, blurring the lines between *research on teachers* and *research with teachers*, which paved the way for studies in education that used action research (Foshay, 1953).

Action research developed rapidly in the 1940's, and by the 1960's and 1970's, practitioner inquirers, in partnership with researchers and consultants, became popular in education. As a result, by the mid 1970's and 1980's, an expanded view of practitioner inquiry developed, which emphasized the study of methods (Smulyan,

1984). The research that emerged during these decades consisted of both conceptual and empirical studies that documented the development of practitioner inquiry as a movement, and provided evidence of practitioner inquiry as a viable form of PD (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999).

Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) presented five trends that emerged during the practitioner inquiry movement. These consisted of (a) the emergence of practitioner inquiry in schools, teacher education programs, PD and school reform; (b) emergence of theories of practitioner inquiry and conceptual frameworks to guide practitioner inquiry; (c) dissemination of practitioner inquiry beyond the school context; (d) critique of practitioner inquiry; and (e) the effect of practitioner inquiry on university culture.

Practitioner Inquiry in Current Times

Practitioner inquiry has thrived over the past two decades, even in an era of accountability where standardized tests often determine how and what teachers teach. Proponents of practitioner inquiry go beyond accepting that the purpose of education is to prepare students to fill economic roles in society. They question the purpose of schools and goals of teaching and learning, and extend answers to these questions beyond improved test scores on standardized tests alone. They may pose questions about preparing students for "democratic ideals, deliberation and debate, and challenging inequities" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009, p. 9), and raise questions about equity and social justice.

Supporters of practitioner inquiry realize that in the current educational milieu of accountability, debates, and measures, teaching is often regarded as an act of transmission of specific knowledge, whereas learning has been reduced to the evidence of that knowledge. As such, diversity of individual and local contexts is regarded as

inconsequential (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). Practitioner inquiry provides an alternative:

When practitioners engage in inquiry, they typically work from expanded rather than narrow views of teaching and learning. This includes conveying knowledge to students, to be sure, but it also includes representing complex knowledge in accessible ways, asking good questions, co-constructing curriculum, forming relationships with students and parents who have widely varying abilities and backgrounds, collaborating with other professionals, interpreting multiple data sources, and posing and solving problems of practice.

(Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009, p. 10)

Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) highlight five core areas that have developed in the area of practitioner inquiry over the past decade. These include:

(1) Emphasis on issues of equity, engagement, and agency: In contrast to testing student performance on standardized tests, practitioner inquiry places the student at the center, to make education equal and accessible for all students.

(2) Development of new conceptual frameworks: A recent shift in the literature on practitioner inquiry includes the perspectives, experiences, and understandings of practitioners, as well as those of university-based researchers.

(3) The continued growth and reinvention of inquiry communities: Many practitioner inquirers have continued to maintain inquiry communities and added a dimension to address "standard-based and policy-driven pedagogy, curricula and assessment" (p. 21).

(4) The use of practitioner inquiry to shape school and district reform and educational policy: This consists of "efforts to disrupt the new master narratives of evidence-based decision making and accountability by reframing reform initiatives and making schools and districts more permeable to alternate epistemologies and ways of constructing teacher and student learning" (p. 27).

(5) Persistence of efforts to alter relationships of research and practice: In the last decade practitioner inquiry has become more visible in the university culture and in colleges of education. Several publications highlight the visibility of practitioner inquiry in the academic research and literature.

A key belief of the practitioner inquiry movement is that vital knowledge, which informs and transforms practice, is generated within the classroom by teachers who teach. Such knowledge can augment student learning and emerges from the questions, theories, and strategies teachers generate together when they explore the knowledge, practice, and theories produced collectively by others.

In summary, practitioner inquiry provides a model for teachers to add the role of researcher to existing practice. In doing this, they take control of their professional learning as they investigate issues that emerge in the school context, collect and analyze data, and use their findings to improve practice. Through this process, teachers are able to generate new knowledge and participate in ongoing PD as they explore a new question that emerges from the previous inquiry. Hence, they take charge of their learning and produce knowledge that is specifically related to their unique classroom context. Practitioner inquiry also provides a way for teachers to question previously-taken-for-granted structures that marginalize ELLs and their academic needs.

The current study is informed by perspectives drawn from three bodies of literature. These include literature on PD, PD for teachers of ELLs, and practitioner inquiry. The literature on PD in general, and on PD for ELL teachers specifically, allowed me to look closely at the experiences of teachers who engaged in practitioner inquiry with ELLs to understand what they learned as a result of their inquiries. The literature on practitioner inquiry allowed me to study the questions teachers posed in their inquiries, how they believed engaging in inquiry changed their thinking and practice, and what insights they gained as a result of their studies (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993, 1999, 2009).

Empirical Studies on Practitioner Inquiry

This section presents a discussion of practitioner inquiry studies. First, studies that focus on the effect of practitioner inquiry on teacher learning, practice or student achievement and teacher perceptions of inquiry in general, are presented. Next, studies related to teacher learning from inquiry with ELLs are presented. Several of these studies provided insights into more than one outcome; for instance, studies of teacher learning from studies with ELLs also provided insights about teachers' perceptions of their inquiry experience. These are discussed below.

Effect of Practitioner Inquiry on Teacher Learning, Practice, or Student Achievement

In a case study that explored high school teachers' experiences with collaborative teacher inquiry and change in practice, Ermeling (2010) examined two cycles of instructional planning, classroom implementation, and reflective analysis. The study included four high school science teachers who participated in a 14-month teacher inquiry process. During the inquiry they focused on highlighting instructional problems, linking theory to action, using evidence to inform reflection, and working toward improvement. Data were collected using videotape, participant observation, researcher field notes, and emails. Findings showed considerable change in practice in the instruction of two participants. The study confirmed that meaningful change in practice can occur when teachers are provided opportunities for working in job-alike teams where they can explore the cause and effect relationship between instruction and student learning and when they are guided by trained leaders, and use inquiry protocols in stable settings that encourage continuous improvement in practice.

In another study, Kavaloski (2007) initiated an inquiry to see if it would increase her students' engagement with learning, improve their perceptions of themselves, and increase student achievement at the high school level. She began with the research question, "Can service learning enhance academic achievement?" (p. 127). Frustrated by the lack of enthusiasm and interest in learning from her students, she initiated a service learning project for middle and high school students, requiring them to learn about Malcolm X and to teach sixth grade students in the school what they had learned. Kavaloski (2007) discussed her inquiry question in her Classroom Action Research experience and received collaborative support from her colleagues, who acted as "critical friends" (p. 148). Sharing her inquiry helped Kavaloski "validate and legitimize service learning as a pedagogical tool that enhances academic achievement" (p. 148). She collected data through interviews and observation. The service learning program, initiated by Kavaloski (2007), not only continued to increase student achievement, it won local, state, and national recognition and changed the public image of the school. The study showed how teachers can use reflective practice to improve instruction and bring sustainable change.

In a study in the United Kingdom, Powell, Tindal & Millwood (2008) described a model of personalized, work-integrated learning that was fully online and collaborative in nature. The Ultraversity Project at Anglia Ruskin University was a three-year undergraduate degree program that emphasized inquiry in the workplace for a cohort of students who were also involved in full time employment in educational institutions. Hence, the purpose of the project was to allow students to become "student researchers" and to engage in inquiry collaboratively as a cohort. They supported each

other in their work contexts in “an online community environment where social construction of knowledge is realized through collaboration and critical friendship between learners” (p. 68). Students developed Individual Learning Plans (ILPs), or inquiry proposals, and negotiated with the teaching staff. Students also implemented an e-portfolio approach, which utilized media and technology that included audios, videos, weblogs, and websites.

Data for this study were drawn from online questionnaires completed by 65 out of a potential 142 respondents. Semi-structured interviews were carried out to gain richer data. Data analysis was carried out using interpretive phenomenological analysis. The participants in the degree program showed high levels of achievement in degree results and career progression that pointed to the model used in the study as a “potent source for innovation in higher education” (p. 79).

In their study, Swanson and Finnan (1996) found that once teachers become aware of the advantages of reflection, inquiry, and risk taking, unexpected changes can take place. In their study at Middleton School, the authors studied two projects: Javits (a Jacob Javits Demonstration Project) and The Accelerated Schools Project (ASP), which works from a basic premise that student achievement can be increased in a challenging, rich learning environment that encourages their curiosity. The ASP holds the belief that instruction should be provided to all students as if they were gifted. It involves teachers in school-wide reform. Both projects were based on using action research for school improvement.

Findings of the study indicated that action research gave teachers the tools for research and reflection and provided new ways to view their students, which caused

teachers to take charge of change. Though the researchers were cautious about making generalizations based on a single case, they clearly identified a positive impact on school improvement and change as a result of using action research through the two projects. They highlighted factors vital for successfully implementing change based on what they learned from their study. These included: (1) providing opportunities for teacher empowerment (the researchers learned that teachers will take risks and make efforts to improve the school culture and impact classroom behavior if they feel empowered to do so); (2) understanding action research (they concluded that it is vital to create an understanding of the action research process among the whole school staff, including the principal); (3) understanding that change initiatives must be supported by working in concert to increase learning in the classroom and transforming the school culture; and (4) understanding that change initiatives require sustained support for teachers as they make difficult decisions about how and when to make changes to their classrooms and school.

Research techniques used in the study included formal and informal observations, interviews, reflective journals, student work and samples. Findings showed positive changes as a result of the two projects. These included (a) improved student achievement supported by increased standardized test scores and conclusions drawn from observations; (b) teacher improvement that was supported by observations and teachers' reports of self-improvement, and (c) modifications in the school program. Middleton elementary showed the highest gains out of three schools that used the ASP. Hence, the researchers felt the combination of the Javits and ASP projects together

may be reasons for such a powerful impact. The findings also demonstrated an increase in higher level thinking skills of teachers (Swanson & Finnan, 1996).

Teacher's Perceptions of Practitioner Inquiry

Mule (2006) examined five inquiry projects completed by teachers in an inquiry-based PD school context during a one-year internship. The researcher used the phenomenological case study method to understand participants' perspectives and how they made meaning of their inquiry experiences. Data sources included participants' inquiry projects, in-depth interviews, participants' electronic portfolios, and reflexive texts such as journals, daily logs, and lesson plans. Additional data sources included the researcher's field notes and program documents, observations, and discussions with participants. The data were analyzed using grounded theory to identify prominent themes that emerged and highlighted teachers' perceptions of inquiry.

Findings revealed that teachers perceived themselves as inquirers. They shared that although the experience was initially challenging, it was useful in making them more aware practitioners. The inquiry also made them reflect on their teaching, learning, and on what students were doing. Participants' variously perceived inquiry as running wild (because initially they saw it as challenging, unorganized and unnecessary); as providing them with a space of their own; as an opportunity for increasing collaboration; and as a pleasurable experience.

The researcher identified four outcomes of the study. The first outcome showed that inquiry-based programs may disrupt common assumptions that view teachers as consumers of knowledge rather than knowledge producers. A second outcome showed practitioner inquiry provided teachers with opportunities for collaboration and collegiality. A third outcome highlighted inquiry as an important tool for reflection. The final outcome

showed that practitioner inquiry provided teachers with opportunities for discussing and inquiring into their practice by participating in learning communities.

In a study on PD in a culture of inquiry, Snow-Gernono (2005) investigated the experiences and perceptions of six teachers who had engaged in practitioner inquiry. Using a phenomenological case study method, the author's goal was to understand how teachers perceived their experiences with practitioner inquiry. The researcher used purposeful sampling to recruit participants who were part of a school-university partnership. Data were collected from three intensive interviews, field observations, researchers' formal and informal notes, and participants' journals or inquiry papers. The researchers used evidence from the data sources to create six portraits of "inquiry as a stance," and captured the essence of participants' experiences. The researcher discovered important shifts that supported practitioner inquiry for PD of teachers.

Findings revealed that participants valued learning communities that provided support to teachers engaged in practitioner inquiry. They shared that they valued supportive inquiry communities because they provided them with opportunities for collaboration and dialogue with other professionals in a safe environment that encouraged asking questions and sharing uncertainty. The author suggested that these findings highlight the tensions in collaborating and engaging in dialogue outside the inquiry experience that have the potential to enhance teacher learning and professional growth.

Teacher Learning from Inquiry Studies with ELLs

Goldstone (2003) conducted an inquiry to investigate how she might increase her Asian American, non-English speaking students' understanding of achievement standards related to speaking and listening. She began her inquiry by asking, "What

happens when I communicate explicitly with parents about the New Middle School English Language Arts Standards for Student Achievement?" (p. 63). Her data collection included assessment of student achievement during discussions, notes from communication with parents about the speaking standards, and written and spoken comments from parents and students about speaking. As she analyzed her data, Goldstone (2003) highlighted the difficulty of raising her students' achievement as a result of cultural barriers, lack of confidence, and shyness. As she responded to these barriers, she was able to help students make gains in classroom discussions. Before Goldstone (2003) began the inquiry, only six of her 66 students met the criteria for speaking. After the inquiry, 52 students met most of the criteria for good verbal presentations.

Reis-Jorge (2007) investigated the role of formal instruction and engagement in research in influencing teachers' views of practitioner-inquiry and themselves as future practitioner inquirers. The researcher used a case study method with nine participants attending a training session on Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL). Data were collected through questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and field notes based on observations. Using grounded theory to analyze the data, the author found that "highly-structured" ways of conducting research did not provide participants with the skills and tools for reflection required for changing practice. Teachers shared their perceptions that adopting "a reflective stance" (p. 415) provided the means to further their practice through the systematic process of noticing, observing, describing, analyzing and evaluating. Participants perceived this process as a way to move beyond

making intuitive judgments toward making more rational, and informed decisions that led to generating knowledge to inform their instruction.

In another study Sowa (2009) investigated the perceptions of six ESOL teachers to understand how action research projects could socialize them to teach linguistically diverse students and develop reflective practice. All participants were Caucasian females between 25 to 36 years of age and were certified or licensed teachers with four to ten years of teaching experience. Data included surveys completed by teachers, action research projects with ELLs, and teachers' reflection papers. The researcher examined teachers' statements about the effect of the projects on their teaching and beliefs about ELLs. Participants shared their perceptions about how they had grown as teachers by becoming more reflective and confident about their overall practice, especially in relation to teaching ELLs. Participants also shared that they had gained a better understanding of the needs of ELLs and how culture affected their learning. They reported that as a result of the inquiry projects they had become more aware practitioners who focused more thoughtfully on how to make instruction specific to the learning needs of ELL students. However, most teachers were skeptical about continuing to use action research projects in the future, due to time constraints and student testing. The overall findings confirmed that action research can support teacher understanding of ELLs, can help them develop inquiry as a stance, and can enable them to develop insights related to teaching ELLs.

In a study that explored the beliefs and attitudes of teachers of ELLs, Nevárez-La Torre (1999) studied the practitioner inquiry experiences of teachers in The Bilingual Teachers Research Forum. The Bilingual Teachers Research Forum is a collaborative

inquiry group of teachers who are engaged in practitioner inquiry with linguistically diverse students. The group consisted of five bilingual teachers in an urban school setting, one faculty member, and a doctoral student. Participants' teaching experience ranged from five to 20 years in ESOL, special education, and literacy in elementary and middle schools. They also had varied experience conducting teacher research.

The purpose of the study was to gain insights into teaching and learning in bilingual and ESOL classrooms by investigating participants' attitudes and beliefs about teaching linguistically diverse learners. Each member of the research team worked as a participant observer and constructed their researcher role as a colleague supporting teachers engaged in practitioner inquiry. The researchers examined how the inquiry process transformed teachers' perceptions of their roles as practitioners and their classroom practice. Using qualitative methods, data were gathered over two years and included teachers' monthly journal entries, transcriptions of conversations during forum meetings, and transcriptions of interviews with teachers.

Findings from the analysis supported practitioner inquiry as a tool for producing knowledge and generating theory. Inquiry also enabled teachers to question beliefs that had formerly been taken for granted about teaching ELLs. The researchers found that teachers who engaged in inquiry reflected and improved teaching and learning, and critically examined their practice in ways that were meaningful to their school context. The study also illuminated school structures that contributed to student failure and that undervalued teacher knowledge and creativity. Based on their findings, researchers viewed practitioner inquiry as a tool for change and growth in teachers' perceptions and classroom practice, and they suggested practitioner inquiry as a potential tool for PD.

In another study Merino and Dixon (2010) showed how Exemplary New Teachers (ENTs) recognized and addressed the language needs of their ELLs during classroom tasks and instruction through their inquiry studies. The authors investigated how ENTs addressed academic literacy in language arts through inquiry. The researchers targeted two recent cohorts of novice teachers who were teaching large numbers of ELLs to explore exemplary cases and then focused on two cases to provide an extensive illustration of teachers' learning from their inquiry studies. Data collection included participants' inquiry reports, artifacts, faculty reflections, student responses, interviews, and electronic mails.

The researchers provided comprehensive descriptions of the inquiry studies of the two participants. The first participant, Tanya, focused her inquiry on developing reading, speaking, and vocabulary skills, while the second participant, Rachel, focused her inquiry on improving grammar instruction for ELLs. Rachel developed a complex series of grammar lessons that involved collaborative group work and context-based learning. Tanya discovered the power of inquiry in helping her understand her practice. The inquiry exposed her to literature and strategies that were previously unknown to her. She also understood the importance of the California English Language Development Test (CELDT) for testing listening and speaking forms. The test was useful in helping her see that her students struggled in speaking.

Rachel discovered that students began to use the grammatical structures she had taught them in context-based activities and were noticing them more in their reading. Students also showed greater success on grammar tests. Like Rachel, the other participants did not regard practitioner inquiry as an academic exercise but as a means

of solving dilemmas and challenges in their classrooms. Based on participants' learning from their inquiry studies, the researchers gained insights into the difficulty of developing pedagogical skills related to enhancing academic literary skills. They concluded that engagement in the inquiry enabled participants to discover alternate ways of teaching and learning which resulted in changes in practice. They also identified the potential teacher inquiry has to empower teachers to bring change, advocate for their students, and assume leadership roles.

In summary, the review of empirical studies in this section highlighted several benefits of practitioner inquiry. The literature confirmed that teachers who engaged in practitioner inquiry became reflective and critical of their own instruction. They gained a better understanding of their students and of the cause and effect relationship between their instruction and practice, and student outcomes (Ermeling, 2010; Swanson & Finnan, 1996). In the process, they generated knowledge that improved their practice and increased student achievement (Kavaloski, 2007). Teachers' perceptions also confirmed the value of practitioner inquiry for reflection, leading to a change in practice, student learning, and the generation of knowledge and theory (Reis-Jorge, 2007). Studies of practitioner inquiry with ELLs supported these findings (Goldstone, 2003; Nevárez-La Torre, 1999; Sowa, 2009). However, despite the benefits of practitioner inquiry, there is limited research that highlights the effect of practitioner inquiry on the professional development of teachers working with ELLs (Nevárez-La Torre, 1999; 2010).

Conclusion

This chapter presented the theoretical framework that informed this study. An overview of effective pedagogy for ELLs in the context of mainstream, inclusion

classrooms was presented. This was followed by PD for teachers, PD for teachers of ELLs and practitioner inquiry. Finally, I discussed empirical studies conducted on practitioner inquiry. The literature highlighted important features of effective PD, underscored the limited research-based evidence that links PD to student outcomes, and stressed the importance of shifting the focus to teacher professional learning (Guskey & Yoon, 2009; Webster-Wright, 2009). Research on PD for teachers of ELLs emphasized the need for effective instructional practices for ELLs. The discussion of empirical studies underlined the value of practitioner inquiry and identified a gap in knowledge concerning the effect of practitioner inquiry on PD of teachers of ELLs. With this in mind, the purpose of this study was to address this gap by examining how teachers believe practitioner inquiry has influenced their perspectives and practice related to the teaching of ELLs. In the next chapter I present the methodology used in this study.

Table 2-1. Genres in Practitioner Inquiry (Adapted from Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009)

PRACTITIONER INQUIRY				
Action Research / Participatory Action Research	Teacher	Self Study	The Scholarship of Teaching	The use of Teaching as a Context for Research

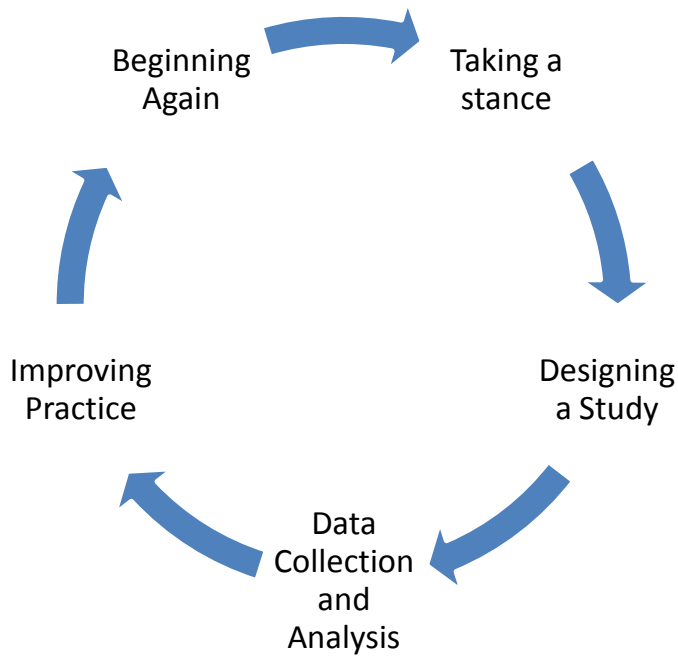


Figure 2-1. Practitioner Inquiry Cycle (adapted from Rust & Clark, 2006). *How to do action research in your classroom: Lessons from the teachers network leadership institute* (p.3). Retrieved from http://www.teachersnetwork.org/tnli/Action_Research_Booklet.pdf

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter presents the research methodology and methods used in this study. It describes the theoretical perspective and methods employed to collect and analyze the data. The purpose of this study was to understand how practitioner inquiry has influenced participants' perspectives and practice related to teaching ELLs, explore what kinds of problems or questions they posed in their inquiry studies, and uncover how the experience has changed their thinking and practice.

To understand the experiences, perspectives, and beliefs of teachers working with ELLs and what they learned in their inquiries, this study used a qualitative research methodology. Qualitative research methods, such as in-depth interviews and artifacts, were utilized to understand how each participant made sense of her inquiry experience, how they identified, explored, and researched a question that emerged as they worked with ELLs, and what they subsequently learned (Crotty, 1998; Hatch, 2002).

In the following section, I will provide a detailed description of the research methods I used in this study. I begin with a discussion of the theoretical perspective that formed the framework for this research. Next, I describe the selection criteria used to recruit participants, the study context, and the participants themselves. I then give an overview of the role of the researcher, followed by an explanation of the data collection and analysis methods. The chapter ends with a discussion of the trustworthiness of this study.

Theoretical Perspective

The theoretical perspective that informed this study was constructivism, which looks at the task of creating meaning for individuals as research participants while rejecting the positivist perspective that there is an objective reality waiting to be found (Crotty, 1998; Fosnot, 2005; Hatch, 2002). Constructivism is grounded in constructionism; however, there exists an important distinction to be made. Under a *constructionist* perspective, the social aspect of meaning is central and refers to the collective generation of meaning. Under a *constructivist* perspective, the focus remains solely on “the meaning making of the individual mind” (Crotty, 1998, p.58). To that effect, constructivists believe in abstract, local, and multiple realities that are specific to individuals who co-construct them as they interact with their environment (Crotty, 1998; Hatch, 2002; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). From this perspective, researchers and respondents construct subjective reality through mutual engagement with each other (Mishler, 1986).

For constructivists, “there is *no* true or valid interpretation” (Crotty, 1998, p. 47), but rather constructed multiple realities and interpretations that are more useful, liberating, fulfilling, or rewarding than others, depending on the individual interpretation of a phenomenon (Crotty, 1998; Hatch, 2002). Constructivists attempt to investigate participants’ perceptions, experiences, and meaning-making processes about the object or phenomenon under study. Hence, the goal and purpose of this study, in the constructivist vein, was to understand and describe participants’ beliefs about their learning that emerged from their inquiries, from their perspectives, experiences, and points of view (Koro-Ljungberg, Yendol-Hoppey, Smith & Hayes, 2009).

Constructivism brings objectivism and subjectivism together so that they become bonded as one. According to Crotty (1998), objectivism is based on the belief that "truth and meaning reside in their objects independently of any consciousness," (p. 42) while subjectivism claims that "meaning emerges only when consciousness engages with [it]"(p.43). However, constructivists hold that when human beings engage with an object of interest, together they create meaning. From this perspective, the subjective reaches into the object so that the object and subject become united as one and inseparable as meaning is created. Crotty (1998) describes this as intentionality. Intentionality reflects the *intention* to engage with the object of interest that creates an "intimate and very active relationship between the conscious subject and the object of the subject's consciousness" (Crotty, 1998, p. 44) so that the subjective and objective are united and inseparable and work in interaction with one another. It blurs the boundaries between whether to begin interpretation in a study with the object or the subject.

Flick (2004) explains that there exists considerable criticism of constructivism in terms of how reality is approached. While one point of view contests that *everything* is constructed and accepts the existence of an external reality, the other questions whether an external reality can be constructed free from the perceptions of those constructing it. "Perception is seen not as a passive-receptive process of representation but as an active-constructive process of production" (p. 89). This position has consequences for the concept of representation under constructivism. Constructivists hold that representations cannot be verified for precision against the object it aims to represent, rather the notion of verifiability is questioned. For constructivists

"the different representations or constructions can only be compared with one another. For constructivist epistemology, and empirical research based

on it, knowledge and the constructions it contains become the relevant means of access to the objects with which they are concerned."

(Flick, 2004, p. 89)

Meaning therefore emerges when researchers interact with the object of interest in certain ways. Meaning further leads to interpretation as data are analyzed.

Interpretation is an "ongoing accomplishment" (Crotty, 1998, p. 47) made possible by the interpretive strategies researchers use.

It was this construction of meaning and interpretation that I captured when teachers shared their experiences of what they did in their inquiry projects and described what they learned and how it affected their practice. These epistemological considerations formed the basis of this study's methodology. Interviews served as the primary data source while documents served as a secondary data source to answer the research questions. Reflective notes during the interviews and electronic mails that provided knowledge to answer the research questions were also included as secondary data.

Participant Selection

Teachers Engaged in Practitioner Inquiry with ELLs

After receiving approval from the University of Florida's Institutional Review Board (IRB), a professor at the University was contacted and was requested by the researcher to be a key informant in this study. Through the key informant, the researcher was able to gain access to professors-in-residence in Maple County (pseudonym), who recommended inquiry studies on issues related to ELLs that were completed by teachers in the year 2009-10.

The key informant was highly experienced in coaching teachers and teacher educators in practitioner research, and identifies with Marshall's (1996) definition of "an expert source of information" (p. 92). She possessed the required characteristics in terms of her role in the community, knowledge of practitioner inquiry, and willingness to communicate her knowledge to the researcher. The advantages of contacting a key informant were to identify suitable participants and to gain access to quality data in a relatively short time. Marshall (1996) also highlights some disadvantages of using a key informant, such as the possibility that a difference in status between researcher and informant may contribute to an uncomfortable interaction, that the key informant may not represent the dominant view in the community, and the possibility of not being a true informant. These were not relevant in this context because the key informant merely identified relevant people with knowledge of practitioners who have engaged in an inquiry with ELLs and are considered highly reflective by them (Marshall, 1996). The key informant suggested I contact two professors-in-residence in Maple County to gain access to participants relevant for this study. She suggested one participant, Elaine (pseudonym), a highly reflective teacher, who participated in this study. The professors-in-residence suggested the remaining four participants.

Sampling

Criterion sampling (Creswell, 2008; Gall, Gall & Borg, 2007) was used to access and recruit the five participants from Maple County School District who were "information-rich" (Patton, 1990, p. 169). This method was used because it was difficult to identify teachers who worked with ELLs and who engaged in practitioner research in the local district. According to Patton (1990), "[t]he validity, meaningfulness, and insights generated from qualitative inquiry have more to do with the information-richness of the

cases selected and the observational/analytical capabilities of the researcher than with sample size” (p.185). Therefore, a criterion sampling strategy provided an epistemological match to my chosen methodology.

I retrieved the Inquiry Celebration Book for Maple County from the Lastinger Center for Learning at the University of Florida, and I read through the summaries of inquiries that teachers had presented. Through electronic mail, I contacted participants who met the sampling criteria and invited them to participate in the study. According to Gall et al. (2007), criterion sampling involves “the selection of cases that satisfy an important criterion” (2007, p.184). The following criteria were used to select the five teachers who were chosen:

- had completed a cycle of inquiry with an ELL in the academic year 2009-10;
- were willing to share their inquiry stories;
- taught in Maple County School District; and
- had one or more ELLs in her/his classroom.

These criteria allowed me to identify a purposeful group of participants who were studied in depth (Gall et al., 2007).

Study Context

Research Setting

Maple County is one of several counties in Florida that has formed a partnership with the Lastinger Center for Learning, a part of the University of Florida's College of Education. The Lastinger Center is an endowed program for elementary schools whose purpose is to increase student achievement by improving teaching practice. The Center emphasizes an inquiry-based approach in which College faculty and Center personnel collaborate with teachers and principals to facilitate year-long inquiry projects focused

on school improvement. The Center also arranges professors-in-residence at the school sites to mentor teachers as they plan and engage in inquiry projects. Teachers who engage in a yearlong inquiry and present at the annual inquiry celebration receive a \$500 stipend. Participants can also receive a full-tuition scholarship to study at the University of Florida once they make a five-year commitment to teaching in high-poverty schools. Table 3-1 provides demographic and background information of ELL students at each of the schools where participants for this study taught.

Interview Setting

The interviews took place at two local restaurants that were in close proximity to where the participants lived and worked in Maple County. Through email correspondence, the researcher and participants mutually determined the interview locations. Local restaurants were selected for the interview as they provided a comfortable place for both the interviewees and researcher and provided an informal setting where rich conversations emerged as participants and researcher shared snacks. Even though the restaurant was a busy place and became noisy around meal time the researcher was able to secure a quiet corner which afforded some privacy. The noise did not affect the quality of the interview recordings or the conversations that emerged.

Description of Participants

Participants in the Study

All participants were White females between 37 and 60 years of age. Although all of the participants seemed to be similar in terms of racial background and preparation for teaching ELLs, there was considerable diversity in their individual experiences,

family backgrounds, education, and traveling experiences, as well as in their Spanish language proficiency. Table 3-2 provides a description of participants' background.

Elaine

Elaine was a White female in her mid-50s with 16 years of teaching experience. Although she identified herself as Caucasian, she pointed to the diverse cultural and social experiences she has had that she believed better describe her. She explained:

Though I would be typically described as Caucasian, I often think it is important to take into consideration the fact that I have always lived, gone to school, and worked in large, diverse, urban areas of central and south Florida, because though my "race" may be considered Caucasian, it is not the sum total of who I am. Cultural and social experience describe who I am more fully.

(Elaine: Email correspondence)

Elaine completed her bachelor's degree in education and started her teaching career as a first grade teacher. The following year she became a third grade teacher. After two years as a third grade teacher she undertook training to become a Reading Recovery teacher. The Reading Recovery program is a very effective short-term intervention that provides individual reading instruction to low-achieving students for 30 minutes every day with a trained teacher, for about 20 weeks.

Elaine moved to Maple County when her husband took a position there and soon found a job as an ESOL teacher. She did not know much about teaching ESOL students and had taken only one ESOL course in her teacher education program. She also spoke some Spanish. Her strong background in testing and Reading Recovery helped her in getting the ESOL teacher position, which she has maintained since.

Initially, the program for students followed a pull-out model during the reading block in language arts; later, as the ELL population increased at her school and she became more aware and knowledgeable about working with ELLs, she advocated for

an ESOL push-in model in an inclusion classroom setting. In the inclusion model ELLs may receive ESL instruction, but are mainstreamed for most, if not all, of the entire school day (Reeves, 2006). In the pull-out model of instruction, ELLs receive the majority of their instruction in mainstream classrooms and are regularly *pulled-out* to receive additional help from an ESOL teacher or aide to support their English language development (Peregoy & Boyle, 2005).

Elaine's concern for teaching ELLs developed because of the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) training she received over two university semesters, during her Master's program. The SIOP is a research-based model of instruction that provides support in developing academic English for ELLs in content area teaching (Echevarría, et al., 2008). She wanted to incorporate inclusion because she "was concerned about the education that students were getting in their main classrooms outside the reading block" (Elaine: Interview). She explained that her interest in teaching ELLs is marked by her motivation to provide equitable education for them.

Bella

Bella was a White female in her 40s with four years of teaching experience as an ESOL teacher. She was born in New York City to Puerto Rican parents. They, along with her siblings, had migrated from Puerto Rico to New York for better work opportunities and a better life. Bella's family spoke only Spanish at home and she spent three months each year, for 11 years, in Puerto Rico, staying with her aunt and uncle. She went to school in New York and was an ESOL student herself. She was bilingual and learned both English and Spanish simultaneously. She reported that she had to think and process in Spanish, then translate into English. However, she did not discover

this "processing issue" until she went to college. She was a good student and graduated with honors. When asked how she would describe her background she said:

I consider myself a New Yorican (A New York Puerto Rican). I used to describe myself as having one foot in Puerto Rico and another in New York. Now I just say I'm an American born of Puerto Rican descent. My ethnicity is always Puerto Rican and my race is White. I don't like using Hispanic because that is "made up" to fill a quota somewhere. Just to add a little humor, I consider myself the United Nations: my first name is German, last name Italian, Puerto Rican descent, born in New York. My children are really multicultural since they have a father who is Italian/German and I have one child of all three ethnicity [sic]!

(Bella: Email correspondence)

Bella worked as a juvenile probation officer for 10 years because of her background in criminology. However, once she started a family, she felt her job was not conducive to family life so she started to work at the YMCA, teaching Spanish to students after school. Bella went back to college and got her teaching certification, which included 120 hours of ESOL coursework. Bella recalls that although she was an ESOL student herself during her K-12 schooling, she was not labeled ESOL because she was born in the United States. However, her parents were Hispanic and she spoke Spanish first. She recalled

I had that accent and a lot of time I couldn't remember the English word for something so I would use the Spanish word. So I remember all those feelings . . . feeling like I had to do it on my own. So when I went to school and they had this course on ESOL . . . I said that I wanna be an ESOL teacher.

(Bella: Interview data)

To become an ESOL teacher, Bella took the 120 hours of ESOL coursework during her teacher education program. She wondered why ESOL strategies were not used for "all" students because she believed they benefit all students, not just the ESOL students. She took a short term ESOL position in Maple County, which became a permanent job. Due to Bella's previous work background in child protection and juvenile

delinquency, she has seen "a lot of negatives" (Bella) and wanted to shift to having a more positive impact on children. Bella has lived in Maple County for over 15 years. It was there that she met her husband while still in law enforcement, got married, and had three children – a 13-year-old boy, a nine-year-old boy, and a seven-year-old girl.

Although Bella grew up speaking Spanish at home and recalls translating words into English at school, she now felt that she had become American, and that Spanish was her second language. She explained that her husband was American and so she did not speak Spanish very often. She added that she still spoke Spanish with her family and is learning a Mexican dialect because most of her students are from Mexico. She believed this helped her bond with her students because when she made mistakes, she could tell them it is okay to do so when you are learning a new language.

Jessica

Jessica was a 60-year-old White female with 30 years of teaching experience in "all aspects of education." She had two children – a son and a daughter – who are in college. Jessica completed her undergraduate and graduate education in New York. Since then, she has taught in public and private schools and worked for nine years as Director of Education for the Service Learning Center in New York and Florida.

She moved to Maple County four years ago to be near her family after her divorce. She was disappointed that her public school service years will not be considered in Maple County. She worried she may not be able to afford to stay in Maple County for long because neighboring counties offer a more promising work environment and would acknowledge her previous teaching experience when determining her compensation.

Jessica loved to teach writing and preferred to work in Title I schools because she felt she was an effective writing teacher for Title I school children. She compared her

teaching experience and PD support at Oaks County (pseudonym) where she taught before moving to Maple County. Jessica believed Oaks County was more teacher-friendly and provided additional resources for teachers to engage in PD, such as funds to purchase teaching materials after attending PD programs so they could immediately implement what they learned.

Jessica explained that engaging in an inquiry was not mandated at her school but her principal was very involved in it. She believed that teachers who were interested in improving themselves chose to participate in inquiry, and that the \$500 they received when they presented their work at the Inquiry Celebration at the end of the year was an added incentive. She believed that engaging in inquiry helped teachers to reflect on their work, improve their practice and become better teachers. Jessica added that since her school did not make Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) again this year, more teachers were thinking about what the inquiry teachers have done differently to get higher scores.

Amy

Amy was a White female in her 40s and had eight years of teaching experience, four of which were spent working with ELLs. She was in the military and used the GI Bill to get her Bachelor's degree in education. She explained that people in the military earn free college education and a stipend if they have served for over four years, and that was how she found her way into college. Amy was the first in her family to go to college. She left the military when she anticipated a posting away from home, which meant leaving her children behind. She explained that being an ESOL teacher was her "calling."

I love going to school, I love learning and sharing my knowledge and I thought well – teaching would be continuous education . . . and I was a little intimidated by kids, but once I started teaching them it was great, it was my

calling . . . because reading is my passion and culture is my passion, so being an ESOL teacher is perfect, I'm very happy.

(Amy: Interview)

Amy grew up in Miami and went to a private Catholic school, after which she joined the Coast Guard for 10 years and then went back to college to get her Master's degree and become a teacher. She highlighted her linguistically and culturally diverse background and explained that accepting and affirming diversity came naturally to her.

I grew up in Miami, and I have a spattering of Spanish, and I lived in Puerto Rico for four years, and I grew up in a Cuban culture. My mom's family is Native American and Black and my dad's family is Italian and I'm adopted so many cultural things come my way--it's just natural.

(Amy: Interview)

Amy's first military assignment was in Maple County where she met her husband, got married, and bought a home. They moved back to Maple County when he retired. They have two children. Her daughter was in college and her son was to begin high school the following year. Amy believed that she modeled good scholastic skills for her children.

Sarah

Sarah was a White, 37-year-old female who had been teaching ESOL students for eight years. She was a mother of three girls -- an eight-year-old, a five-year-old, and a seven-month-old baby. Sarah moved to Maple County because she was offered a scholarship to play college basketball. Since then, she had stayed in Florida.

Sarah always wanted to be a teacher but realized that "was not where the money was" and changed her major to computer science. A year into her program, she realized that she did not want to work with computers and changed her major back to education. She completed her Bachelor's degree while working full time, and eight years ago took

her first teaching position and completely "fell in love with being an ESOL teacher" (Sarah, interview).

Sarah recalls being frustrated with the ESOL aspect of her degree because the program was trying to infuse ESOL into the coursework at the time, and she felt it was not being done with authenticity. However, her first job offer was as an ESOL teacher. She explained that even though the pay was not high, she loved the work that she did.

I really fell in love with what I was doing with families . . . and I knew it was where I wanted to be. So the next semester it turned into a contract and the next school year I was cut from school because of numbers and then I went over to another school in the area and I opened an [ESOL] program from scratch over at that school.

(Sarah: Interview)

Sarah expressed her amazement at the work ethic of ELL students and their attitude toward education, and she expressed surprise at how different they were from students born in the United States. She explained that her ELLs regarded education as an opportunity for a better life for their families and not as a burden, which is why many stayed in the United States illegally. Sarah explained her motivation to work with ELLs

To make their life better and it makes me wanna be there even more because I know I am a part of making a difference for them, for their future, for their families, for themselves, for their kids. It's exponential, it's unbelievable. It's a burden on me because it seems like a huge responsibility.

(Sarah: Interview)

When Sarah's school partnered with The Lastinger Center at the University of Florida in a PD reform effort, she opted to become an inquiry coach. She took an inquiry class and was offered a stipend and a fully paid scholarship to get an Educational Specialist Degree (Ed.S.), which she had completed the previous year.

ESOL preparation of participants

It was important to consider the preparation each participant had to teach ELLs in order to better understand how participating in practitioner inquiry contributed or did not contribute to their learning to address the needs of ELLs effectively and how the inquiry added to their understanding of ELLs. Participants had varying degrees and types of ESOL preparation (Table 3-2). The participants were either ESOL endorsed or certified, or had taken graduate level ESOL courses at a university. According to The Florida Consent Decree (FDOE, 2011), teachers already certified in a subject area can add the ESOL Endorsement by completing the five ESOL approved college courses, the 300-hour district ESOL in-service program, or a combination of the two (Chapter Two). The ESOL K-12 Certification requires passing the K-12 ESOL Area Test, and completing 120 hours of ESOL training.

Sarah completed a Master's (M.Ed.) and an Educational Specialist (Ed.S.) degree with a focus on ESOL. Her coursework included the study of linguistics, cultural competence, bilingual education, and ESOL methods. She explained that the program focused on how to use ESOL strategies and content in all other courses that she took.

Bella was ESOL certified and completed the Teacher Education Special Program (TESP) to obtain a teaching certification. This is a one-year program for students who already have a non-education Bachelor's degree and want to teach. The program included 120 hours of ESOL, comprising two ESOL courses (*ESOL Issues: Principles and Practices I and II*) and approximately 45 to 50 hours of an ESOL internship in a classroom with an ESOL-certified teacher. She became ESOL-certified by taking the ESOL test along with the 120 hours of ESOL training. The 120 hours of ESOL coursework included topics such as Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS)

and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) (social vs. academic language acquisition) strategies, and laws related to ESOL students.

Amy had a Bachelor's and a Master's degree in education. She was ESOL certified and endorsed. She took ESOL classes in college and passed the certification test when she graduated. Later she took classes because they were offered by Maple County for the endorsement, which included ESOL testing, applied linguistics, ESOL curriculum, empowering ESOL teachers, and cross cultural communication. Jessica was also ESOL certified. She completed the required ESOL courses and took the test to be certified.

Elaine was currently completing an educational doctorate degree. She had completed the five endorsement courses, which included ESOL methods, ESOL curriculum, ESOL applied linguistics, ESOL testing/assessment, and ESOL cultures. Elaine also completed the Advanced ESOL Training (AET) program during her Master's program, which provided targeted instruction for teachers of ELLs, and received training in SIOP (Structured Immersion Observation Protocol) (Echevarria et al., 2008) for two university semesters when it was offered during her graduate program.

Role of the Researcher

As the principal investigator, it is important to situate my position in this study and reflect upon my subjectivity in order to monitor my biases and assumptions over the course of my research (Glesne, 2006; Merriam, 1995). My interest in practitioner research emerged from my educational experiences in the United States as I pursued a doctorate in education at a university in the southeast. I came to the United States in 2006 as a Fulbright scholar from Pakistan to pursue a Master's degree in Education. Before arriving, I taught at a large university in Islamabad, Pakistan, which has several

campuses nationwide and provides education to over 17,000 students. In addition to teaching English to undergraduate and graduate students in business, and upon fulfilling several other professional responsibilities, I was asked to train new faculty. This was disconcerting for me, as I had entered academia and had taught for 17 years in higher education and K-12 education without any formal teacher preparation myself. During this time, I seized opportunities for self growth by continuing my education and attending workshops and conferences, even though these were not required by the organization I served and meant I needed to secure funding. At the heart of my endeavors was a belief that PD is vital to self-growth and improvement, and that effective PD would help me serve my students better and make a difference in education.

As a Pakistani female, I have lived most of my adult life in the capital city, Islamabad. I was born in the small town of Kohat, which is in the North West Frontier Province (NWFP), a place characterized by high poverty, low literacy, and a male-dominated environment where women are seldom seen on the streets or play any significant role in social and professional activities. Over the course of my life, I have observed and experienced teaching and learning in different countries and cultures. My mother, grandfather, and aunts taught in public schools in the NWFP (mostly Kohat). Most of these schools were housed in proper school buildings with a formal school system, whereas others were set up in dilapidated houses with all students grouped into one class, irrespective of age and academic skills. These particular schools were also devoid of any accountability. Exploitation, such as requiring students to bring gifts for

the teacher, was common. There was also physical, verbal, and emotional abuse of children, and learning seemed non-existent.

Fortunately for me, I had the privilege of traveling widely and being exposed to education in international contexts as my father worked for Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I started my initial schooling at The Pakistan School in Beijing, China. The school was initiated by my mother and is recognized as an international school today. I attended middle school and part of high school in England. I completed high school and graduated with a Bachelor's degree in English and psychology from a Pakistani university. When I was asked to teach at The Pakistan School in New Delhi, India, it seemed a natural choice for me, as it was a profession so common to my family. However, the realization that I had entered an important profession without any formal teacher preparation created a desire that finally brought me to the United States in pursuit of an M.Ed. and then a Ph.D. in education. These opportunities were funded by the Fulbright organization, the Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan, and the United States Education Foundation in Pakistan (USEFP).

In addition to being a teacher and an international doctoral student, I am also a wife and mother of three children who have attended public schools in the United States. Through the experiences of my children, and from other university-related experiences in public schools, I have been able to make comparisons between education in grades K-12 and examine the disconnect between theory and practice through observations and discussions with family, friends, and colleagues. This divide is evident between the professional discourse at the College of Education and what teachers practice in classrooms. Issues in education are also a regular topic of

discussion at home as my husband, a doctoral student in higher education, and I share our experiences in international contexts.

It is with these experiences that I embarked on this research study, investigated the perceptions of teachers who used practitioner research with ELLs in the United States, and explored their experiences with inquiry. I hope to continue my journey to explore and understand practitioner inquiry and address the deeper issues of PD in the United States and in Pakistan.

Data Collection

Data Collection Methods

In this section I describe the procedures and rationale for the use of individual interviews. Next, I explain the purpose and procedure for using artifacts (Table 3-3). Finally, I describe the use of electronic mails and reflective notes, as these constituted a significant source of data for this study (Figure 3-1).

Pilot interview

Since the interview questions were very carefully structured to ensure the collection of rich data during a single individual interview, I was concerned about completing the interviews within the 60 to 90 minutes specified and approved by IRB. I also wanted feedback on the interview guide to check that questions did not overlap. Therefore, I conducted a pilot interview with Justin (pseudonym), who was recommended by the key informant. Justin had completed several inquiry studies and was a student at the local university. The pilot interview confirmed that the time allocated for the interview was sufficient to elicit rich responses. I also received feedback from Justin that the questions enabled him to think deeply about his inquiry experiences. Justin reported that receiving a copy of the interview guide just before the

interview started provided the necessary time to think deeply about his experience before responding. Based on the success of the pilot interview and the positive feedback from Justin, no changes were made to the interview guide, as the interview questions provided deep insights into Justin's experiences with inquiry and helped to further probe his responses. The interviews with the participants further confirmed Justin's views about the usefulness of the interview guide in reflecting deeply about the inquiry experiences. The interview guide served as a perfect tool to elicit rich data for this study.

Individual interviews

Qualitative interviews "are special kinds of conversations or speech events that are used by researchers to explore informants' experiences and interpretations" (Hatch, 2002, p. 91). For constructivists, individual interviews serve as a social encounter where knowledge is co-constructed between interviewer and interviewee, and meaning is not simply elicited but "actively and socially assembled" (Holstein & Gubrium, 2003, p. 4) and reported as narratives or interpretations (Hatch, 2002). During the interview, the researcher gains access to the respondent's world and lived experiences that may be understood in the interview process through words, gestures, voice, tone, expressions, and the natural flow of the conversation as meaning is constructed (Hatch, 2002; Kvale, 1996).

The purpose of using individual interviews in this study was to uncover and explore how participants perceived, described and made meaning of their inquiry experiences (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Crotty, 1998). The interviews were used as "reconstructions" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.268) that provided descriptions and explanations of past events (Hatch, 2002); in this case participants reconstructed the

inquiry stories they had completed during the 2009-10 academic year and shared how they believed the inquiry influenced their thinking and practice related to teaching ELLs.

Semi-structured, individual interviews were used as a primary data source. Also called “formal,” “structured,” or “in-depth interviews” (Hatch, 2002, p. 94), these were designed for the specific purpose of collecting data from research participants. They are formal because they are led by the researcher, take place at a predetermined time, and are usually recorded on tape. They are “structured” because interviewers come to the interview site with a set of guiding questions but may allow the conversation to be led by responses from the informant. The semi-structured and in-depth characteristics allow the interviewer to probe deeper into interviewee responses to acquire rich data (Hatch, 2002).

After obtaining informed consent from participants, a total of five individual interviews were conducted. Each interview was audio recorded and lasted approximately 60 to 90 minutes. Informal conversations 15 minutes before and after each interview helped develop rapport between participants and the researcher. During this time, the researcher and participants introduced themselves to each other and engaged in casual conversation related to the weather. In line with constructivist epistemological considerations, the interviews were kept “flexible” (Hatch, 2002, p. 95) to create opportunities for interactive conversations where the researcher and respondents could share responsibility for the questions and answers (Hatch, 2002). Each informant was presented with an interview guide based on semi-structured interview questions. The purpose of the interview questions was to understand the kinds of inquiry questions teachers chose and why they selected them, the kinds of data they

collected, and the ways in which they believed the inquiry had changed their thinking and practice. Additional questions were used to probe deeper into teachers' experiences, inquiry journeys, reflections, and learning (Hatch, 2002) (Appendix A).

The interviews were transcribed within two days of conducting the interview. This was done to ensure that details from the researcher's memory were recorded while they were fresh. Transcribing within days of the interview helped the researcher recollect and record gestures and facial expressions accompanying participants' emotional accounts of their learning from inquiry. These nuances helped to look beyond what was said, noted and recorded on tape and provided vivid details that helped to understand the themes and rich data that was discovered during the analysis (Hatch, 2002; Meriam, 1995). I took notes as I interviewed participants and transcribed the data to capture nuances, and to add "context" and "nonverbal information" from my "notes and memory" (Hatch, 2002, p. 113). A total of 84 single-spaced pages of transcriptions were collected from all five interviews.

As Creswell (2008) notes, "open-ended interviews that provide actual words of people in the study, offer many different perspectives on the study topic and provide a complex picture of the situation" (p. 552). I was able to collect information-rich data that I compared across the five interviews to look for similarities and differences in participants' narratives. Through the interview process, I obtained information on the personal backgrounds of the participants, their educational experiences, and how they came to a career in education. The interviews also served as a rich source of information to address the research questions. This information was further supported

by the secondary data, such as participants' inquiry write-ups and the documents they brought to the interviews.

Artifacts

The use of unobtrusive data such as artifacts is common in qualitative studies and is generally used as a secondary data source. Artifacts in educational research may include a teacher's lesson plans, student work, official/unofficial documents, photographs, school records or any material used in the setting being studied (Hatch, 2002). The major advantage of using artifacts is that it does not influence the setting being examined. The main disadvantage lies in "interpreting the meaning and significance of the objects" (Hatch, 2002, p. 25). Participants were requested to explain how they believed the documents they brought with them helped their understanding of change that occurred as a result of their inquiries. Hence, the artifacts were explored from the perspectives of the participants themselves.

I read the Inquiry Celebration Book for Maple County to identify and understand inquiries teachers engaged in with ESOL students. Through the recruitment email, I asked participants who had agreed to participate in the study to share their written inquiries and bring copies of artifacts they believed were meaningful in describing their experiences, or that showed change in their learning as a result of the inquiry. During the interviews participants were asked to describe how the artifacts contributed to their beliefs about their inquiry experience and learning. Probing questions were used to gain rich, deep insights into their beliefs about the documents they brought.

Participants were asked to share artifacts that included teachers' written inquiries, student work, data collected by teachers, teachers' journals, personal notes or anything they believed documented their experiences. These were collected as a secondary data

source and included written inquiries, interviews the participants had conducted, journals, pictures, writing from students, and more (Table 3-4. & Figure 3-1). As the choice of documents was left to the participants, there were considerable differences in what each participant brought. These were analyzed based on how participants described them during the interview; how they believed they contributed to change in their thinking and practices; and how they helped to enhance their knowledge of ELLs and assist them in teaching their students effectively. For example Jessica brought photographs of the "Living" Word Wall to describe how her inquiry led to student learning and change in her practice.

McCulloch (2004) suggests that the difficult task of document analysis can be managed by a basic discussion of the document in terms of “authenticity, reliability, meaning and theorization” (p. 42). To maintain consistency with the constructivist epistemological framework of this study, I looked at how teachers described the documents, and how they believed they were meaningful to them. My purpose was to understand how their perspectives, understanding, and practice related to issues with ELLs were altered through the practitioner inquiry experience. Therefore, artifacts such as student work, teachers’ inquiries, papers, journals, individual notes, data, or anything they brought with them to share during the interview was included in this study.

Researcher’s field notes

Additional sources of data included my “raw field notes” (Hatch, 2002, p. 82) such as my personal notes and reflections on the research process during the interview, transcription, and data analysis stages. The field notes served as a secondary data source and were useful in triangulating the data to check for consistencies and irregularities across multiple data sources. The purpose of the field notes was to capture

the context in which the interview took place, record any non-verbal cues, ask further questions as the interview progressed, and to gain insights into participants' experiences that were not reflected in the interview. The field notes proved to be useful in noting responses that needed further probing. They were also useful in noting participants' gestures and facial expressions that provided insights into what their experiences meant to them at a deeper level. As such they provided rich details and supported insights gained from the interviews. There were no irregularities or inconsistencies between the data collected from the interviews and that was recorded in the researchers' field notes.

Electronic mails

Electronic mails served as another secondary data source for this study. Since participants lived at a distance, I communicated with them through emails. This was done with the approval of IRB. Electronic mails that generated knowledge about participants and for answering the research questions were included as data for this study. A total of 138 email exchanges took place between all five participants and myself from January 4, 2011 to December 7, 2011. These included recruitment emails, emails sent for deciding on a meeting time and for follow-up questions, and sharing interview transcriptions. Electronic mails used for recruiting participants and for logistical purposes were not included as a data source. Electronic mails were useful in establishing rapport between the researcher and participant both before and after the interview. Before the interview they helped to answer any questions or concerns participants shared related to their participation in the study. After the interview they served to ask participants additional questions about their teacher preparation

experiences related to teaching ESOL students and to share transcriptions of the interviews.

Compensation: Reciprocity

It is customary for researchers to acknowledge the time and knowledge participants share with them by giving something in return. In order to build rapport, provide compensation, and express my appreciation, I presented each participant with a gift card to a local bookstore and a personalized thank you card. In addition, I offered Jessica my support in writing a book she was planning to publish on the inquiry she had completed in her class. Towards this end, I sent her a list of books she might read to add to her background knowledge on practitioner inquiry.

Confidentiality

All data were saved on the researcher's secure hard drive and kept in a secure place. Pseudonyms were used to protect the confidentiality of the participants, academic institutions and the School District where the participants teach. The list connecting participants' names to the pseudonyms was kept confidential by the researcher. Once the study was completed and the data were analyzed, the list was destroyed.

Methodological Reflections on the Interview Process

The interview was a collaborative process during which each participant co-constructed her experience related to the inquiry project with the researcher. Participants were eager, willing, and open to sharing their stories, experiences, and beliefs in response to the interview questions. Therefore, there were few interruptions from the researcher except for clarification, probing or repetition. Reflections on the

interview process with each of the participant are described below. These are presented in the order in which the interviews were conducted.

Elaine

Elaine appeared to be a highly reflective teacher with a passion for teaching and working with ELLs and with ESOL teachers. The conversations that emerged during the interview with Elaine were profoundly reflective. There were several pauses in her responses and each reply appeared to be well considered. Her desire for an equitable education for ELLs was apparent in her concern for effective PD for ESOL teachers that would help them provide meaningful instruction to ELLs. The ease with which she responded and shared her story helped me obtain rich data and a clear understanding of her experience with the inquiry project.

Bella

Bella was very forthcoming in her responses, stories and experiences from the start of the interview. She was the only participant in my sample who came from a diverse background. Her parents were from Puerto Rico and although she was born in the United States she was an ESOL student as a child. She described herself as an "animated" person who liked to bring words "alive" for her students. Throughout the interview, she used gestures to accompany her words and describe how she introduced words to her ELL students. Bella was warm and friendly in person and in her response to questions.

Jessica

Jessica was calm, rather quiet, and very composed. She gradually opened up to share her experiences. She was very straightforward in her replies to the interview questions and shared information frankly about herself as a teacher and about her

personal life and career. Jessica came to the interview eager to share documents as well as her belief about the success of her inquiry. She appeared to be very generous in sharing and talking about her work. Throughout the interview there were many instances where I felt that I had to probe a bit deeper and wait for elaboration.

Amy

Amy discussed her work with ELLs with enthusiasm and was clearly excited about her inquiry project. She appeared a bit nervous at the beginning of the interview and later explained that conferring with new people was out of her comfort zone. She linked this to her inquiry on conferring with ELLs during their reading block. She seemed to be a little shy but very passionate about her work and confident in her beliefs about teaching ELLs and what she learned from her experiences with them.

Sarah

The interview with Sarah developed as a joint endeavor as she co-constructed her experience with the inquiry project and shared her experiences with ELLs. Sarah appeared to be a very social and involved teacher with a growing interest in facilitating PD in the county. She seemed very open and frank to sharing her views, especially related to PD. She was friendly and helpful and offered to maintain future partnership, as both of us share an interest in PD and inquiry with teachers.

Data Analysis

The data for this study were analyzed using structural narrative analysis and thematic analysis (Bazeley, 2009; Hatch, 2002; Grbich, 2007; Labov 1972; Riessman, 2008). Structural analysis provided a systematic way to study participants' narratives and made evident the similarities and differences across the five stories that helped to understand the general and specific learning experiences of the five participants.

Structural analysis also highlighted the questions teachers posed, how they collected and analyzed data and enhanced their learning. Thematic analysis served to identify common themes across the five cases, understand what teachers learned from their inquiry experiences, and how they believed it changed their understanding of ELLs or their own practice. Both methods were used to analyze the data simultaneously, as each method provided different kinds of knowledge related to teachers' experiences.

Structural analysis provided a way to understand the background of each teacher and the reasons she engaged in an inquiry. It also provided a method to explore any potential tension that was felt, and to discuss what and how the knowledge gained impacted the various practices of the participants. Thematic analysis served as a useful method to look beyond the semantic level of data and to explore the underlying assumptions, ideas, conceptualizations, and ideologies that informed the semantic content of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Using structural analysis and thematic analysis simultaneously reinforced findings from each method of analysis and supported triangulation of data to understand the value of inquiry for participants (Glesne, 2006). Knowledge generated from structural and thematic analysis provided rich, thick descriptions to answer the research question and sub-questions, and reinforced the themes that were identified from the narratives of the participants.

Narrative Meaning Making

The word “narrative” is derived from “narrate” which means “to tell (as in stories) in detail” (Creswell, 2008, p. 512). Narratives provide a way for people to explain, organize and share their experiences in the form of stories. These may include oral and/or written, stories, anecdotes, life histories, or filmed account of events (Sands, 2004).

Narrative analysis provides a method for interpreting texts and helps researchers interpret how people perceive reality, make sense of their experiences and their worlds, and carry out social actions. As Creswell (2008) explains

People live storied lives. They tell stories to share their lives with others and to provide their personal accounts about classrooms, school, educational issues, and the settings in which they work . . . stories reported in qualitative narrative research enrich the lives of both the researcher and the participant (p. 511).

Oral narratives of personal experience provide one way to study discourse because the structure of these speech events is usually very clear and well-defined (Labov, 2001). The study of narrative is not limited to any one discipline and extends the interpretive trend in the social sciences. The term *narratology* was coined by Todorov in 1969 in an attempt to "elevate the form to the status of an object of knowledge for a new science" (Riessman, 1993, p.1). Hence, narrative analysis takes the story as the object of investigation. The purpose of narrative analysis is, therefore, to see how participants "impose order on the flow of experience to make sense of events and actions in their lives" (Riessman, 1993, p.2).

When analyzing narratives, researchers collect, analyze and describe the stories that participants tell to answer the research question. Narratives can provide useful, specific insights into the practical lives of teachers, thereby bridging the gap between theory and practice. In turn, participants feel that what they experience in classrooms is important and that they are heard (Creswell, 2008). Teachers' stories provide a window into the world of teaching and learning and can provide a rich source of data. Hence, I explored participants' narratives to understand how they believed learning occurred as a result of their involvement in practitioner inquiry.

Structural narrative analysis

In order to analyze participants' stories, structural narrative analysis provided a format through which the story of each teacher was examined. This was an appropriate method to analyze each teachers' inquiry story, understand her background, the rationale for her study, how she collected and analyzed data, and what she learned based on the narratives that were co-constructed between her and the researcher during the interview. The word "story" is used interchangeably with "narrative" throughout this dissertation and refers to the accounts by participants of their inquiry experiences as they were co-constructed during the interviews.

Personal narratives consist of certain structures that hold them together (Labov (1972, 1981). Structural narrative analysis allows us to "slow down the narrative account . . . step back from it . . . [and] notice how a narrator uses form and language to achieve particular effects" (Riessman, 2008, p. 81). This method of analysis was useful in analyzing how the participants told the narrative as well as what they discussed and why they felt it was important. Since narratives are meaning-making structures they "must be preserved . . . by investigators, who must respect respondents' ways of constructing meaning and analyze how it is accomplished" (Riessman, 1993, p.4). However, it is important to remember that informants' stories do not represent an objective reality but that stories are constructed, creatively narrated, backed by assumptions and interpretation (Riessman, 1993).

There are no prescribed sets of standards to conduct narrative analysis. Riessman (1993, 2008) suggests important decisions researchers make, include facilitating narrative telling during the interviews, transcribing and analyzing narratives. Facilitating narrative telling involves asking open-ended questions that encourage participants to

co-construct narrative accounts collaboratively with the interviewer. While transcribing, it is recommended that the interview be first transcribed in its entirety along with descriptions such as pauses, laughs, and hesitation. The next stage involves identifying narrative segments for detailed analysis. Riessman (1993) explains that "the task of identifying narrative segments and its representation . . . [is] the stuff of analysis itself, the 'unpacking' of structure that is essential to interpretation . . . [because] interpretive categories emerge, [and] ambiguities in language are heard" (p. 58). Transcribing at this level provides vital insights that indicate the meaning of narratives.

During the analyzing stage, arranging and rearranging the interview text based on discoveries the researcher makes is "a process of testing, clarifying and deepening our understanding of what happened in the discourse" (Riessman, 1993, p. 60) that informs meaning-making and interpretation of narratives. Key examples of narrative structural analysis include the popular framework presented by Labov (1972, 1981), strategies that describe reduction to core narrative, and analysis of poetic structures discussed by Riessman (1993). However, structural analysis of data for this study do not draw on the work of Labov (1972, 1981). Instead the following steps suggested by Riessman (2008) were employed:

Facilitating narrative telling: Prior to each interview, participants were informed that the data would be analyzed using narrative analysis and that they could tell their stories in response to the interview questions if they chose to do so. Participants were asked open-ended questions. Some questions were asked to elicit background information, such as how the participants came to have a career in education (Appendix A). During the interview, as participants made sense of their stories, there were only

minimal interruptions from the interviewer. The interviewer asked questions to probe deeper and gain clarification when necessary. At times, the same question was asked differently to gain rich responses and to encourage participants to think deeply about the question.

Transcribing: I transcribed the interviews and used my notes to capture the nuances that added details to the interview text. Such as respondents' gestures, facial expressions, hesitations, repetition of words, pauses, as well as words that were stressed. These details helped to understand what certain aspects of the narrative meant for the narrator as I explored why participants hesitated, repeated or stressed particular words or expressions, or how their facial expressions supported or contradicted their verbal accounts. I added notes as I transcribed the data to capture nuances, add context and nonverbal information that supported the interpretation.

Analyzing: Narratives are interpreted differently based on the epistemology that informs the interpretation. In line with the constructivist epistemology, my aim was to explore how narrators made sense of their experiences, what meanings they assigned to their stories, and how meaning was co-constructed in the interaction between the participant and researcher. Hence, interpretation was based on how participants produced their narratives and made meaning from their stories.

In order to locate narratives related to the research questions, I read through the transcripts line-by-line and identified data related to a pre-determined structure. The structure was divided into the following parts: (a) the background of each participant; (b) how she came to engage in the inquiry; (c) rationale for her inquiry; (d) statement of her wondering/question (and any subsequent wondering/question); (e) the strategy she

used to modify or introduce an intervention; (f) data she collected and analyzed (g) what she learned from her findings; and (h) commitment to further inquiry (Table 3-5). This was done to gain similar data across the five cases and to understand how the stories were similar or different. This also helped determine what knowledge participants gained from their experiences. Additional components, such as the effect of participants' inquiry on other teachers, were also included to understand any additional experiences or effects of inquiry not already captured.

Next, each story was summarized using a summary chart to compare and contrast across the five cases and understand experiences that were similar as well as unique. Understanding similarities and differences across cases helped to draw conclusions about what and how teachers learned, how their learning enhanced their understanding of ELLs and what changes they made to their practice based on their learning. The summary chart also helped analyze the kinds of questions and concerns teachers addressed and how the process of inquiry related to the value of inquiry for them. This structure was used to describe each teachers' inquiry story in detail and was supported by data where appropriate.

The key components of the structure provided a systematic way to understand and analyze each story. Using this structure to analyze the stories of participants helped trace their inquiry experiences and make comparisons using a similar structure. Doing so helped to see how the teachers' stories, concerns, and experiences were the same and/or different. This helped to draw conclusions about teacher learning from inquiry as opposed to other forms of PD. Using a structure to analyze the stories highlighted key

areas of interest for the researcher and supported conclusions that were drawn by analyzing the data.

Using a defined structure to select the data also addressed the issue of representation that is evident in narrative analysis by ensuring that only data that related to the specific structure was systematically identified, selected, and analyzed. The issue of representation emerges at several stages during the research process. The first level of representation occurs when the narrator selects certain features from a whole body of experience to include in the narrative and excludes other features of interpretation in telling the narrative. Similarly, issues of representation emerge as the researcher listens, transcribes, analyzes, and presents the texts for reading. Said (1979) problematizes the issue of representation in social science research by asking if it is at all possible to present a true representation of anything since it is embedded in language, culture, institutions, and the politics of the represented. Systematically selecting narratives related to the structural components identified before, during, and after data analysis provided a methodical way to identify narratives for this study and reduce my personal bias to the extent possible.

Narrative analysts approach the issue of truth as it relates to narrative analysis differently. Some believe that narratives express experience in the order in which they occur (Labov & Waletzky, 1967), while others hold that language represents reality or that narratives compose reality (Riessman, 1993). Still others argue that narrators reflect their ideologies and interests in their narratives (Riessman, 1993). The issue of truth in narrative analysis for this study was approached by acknowledging that narratives are interpretations by participants; in turn they require interpretation by the researcher who

does not hold claim to certitude but rather aims for believability and understanding (Riessman, 1993).

Thematic analysis

In addition to using structural narrative analysis, thematic analysis was used to identify salient themes across the five studies. Thematic analysis provides a way to analyze data by "organizing and interrogating data in ways that allow researchers to see patterns, identify themes, discover relationships, develop explanations, make interpretations, mount critiques, or generate theories" (Hatch, 2002, p. 148). The analysis may be based on repetition of words or phrases, case studies, metaphors, or a search for evidence that answers the research questions. Identified themes can coincide with themes in the reviewed literature, from myths/evidence in the field of study, from the researchers "gut feeling" (Grbich, 2007, p. 32), or from participants' views. Themes are

integrating concepts. They can be defined as statements of meaning that run through all or most of the pertinent data. One searches for themes by asking: What broad statements can be made that meaningfully brings all of these data together?

(Hatch, 2002, p. 156)

Braun and Clark (2006) argue that thematic analysis can be used as a specific method of analysis in its own right rather than as a tool used across different methods, such as grounded theory, when a rigorous thematic approach is used to "produce insightful analysis that answers particular research questions" (p. 29). At a minimum level, thematic analysis organizes and describes the data in rich detail. At a maximum level it interprets the data. One way to ensure rigorous analysis is to clearly identify the theoretical underpinnings of thematic analysis within the context of the research. This helps to clear assumptions about the nature of reality and of knowledge that guided the

research and analysis methods. Thematic analysis was used in this study, as it is compatible with a constructionist paradigm and is a flexible tool which can lead to the discovery of rich, complex, and detailed accounts of data. However, a clear and detailed description of the steps taken to identify patterns, themes, and decisions made during thematic analysis enables rigorous analysis. Important decisions taken in the analysis process need to be highlighted. These include: (a) analysis of entire data or part of data; (b) inductive and deductive analysis; and (c) semantic or latent themes.

Analysis of entire data or part of data: Data may be analyzed by either of the following: (a) rich descriptions of the entire data set that provides an accurate representation of patterns, codes, and analysis to present a sense of predominant themes or; (b) detailed descriptions of one particular theme or group of themes, in the data, that reflects a particular question or point of interest to the researcher.

Inductive and deductive thematic analysis: In thematic analysis, themes are usually identified using either an inductive (bottom up) or a deductive/theoretical (top down) approach (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Frith & Gleeson, 2004; Hayes, 1997). In inductive analysis, themes are closely linked to the data and may have little relationship to the interview questions or the researcher's theoretical interest (similar to data analysis using grounded theory) (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Patton, 1990). Inductive analysis is "a process of coding the data *without* trying to fit it into a pre-existing coding frame, or the researcher's analytic preconceptions. In this sense, this form of thematic analysis is data driven" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 13). However, data cannot be coded in isolation from the epistemological position of the researcher and therefore, cannot be free of the theoretical and epistemological positions that guides their research. The

deductive approach, on the other hand, is guided by the researcher's theoretical and analytical interests and focuses less on the overall description of the entire data but provides a detailed analysis of some part of the data. A choice between inductive or deductive analysis is determined by considerations of how and why the data is being coded. For example, the deductive approach is used when coding for a specific research question, whereas the inductive approach is used when the research question evolves during the coding process.

Semantic or latent themes: Another important decision to consider in a thematic analysis is the level at which themes are analyzed. Themes can be identified at the semantic (explicit) or latent (interpretive) level. Semantic level analysis deals with the surface level meanings of the data and may consist of a summary of patterns describing what has been said, while at the latent level the researcher looks beyond what has been said to explore deeper meanings. Latent levels move from description of patterns at the semantic level to a deeper interpretation that theorizes the importance of patterns and presents their meaning and significance, and may draw connection to existing literature (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Patton, 1990). At the latent level, thematic analysis "starts to identify or examine the *underlying* ideas, assumptions, and conceptualizations – and ideologies - that are theorized as shaping or informing the semantic content of the data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 14). Most, though not all, latent themes are informed by a constructionist position, as they deal with the co-construction of meaning.

In this study, data were analyzed using the inductive approach. After an initial reading of the data, consistent patterns were identified across the five studies that related to the value of inquiry for participants and provided rich descriptions of their

learning from inquiry. Next, a deeper analysis of the selected data was conducted which helped to discover latent themes that moved from a semantic description to a deeper level of interpretation of assumptions underlying the data. The focus of analysis was less on the overall description of the entire data; rather a detailed analysis of the selected data was conducted. This resulted in discovering a group of themes that provided deep insights into the experiences of teachers (Table 3-6).

Grbich (2007) describes two ways to analyze data using thematic analysis: the block and file approach and conceptual mapping. The block and file approach enables researchers to keep large amounts of data together in a table format. This can result in large columns of data that become difficult to manage. Conceptual mapping, on the other hand, enables researchers to manage brief summaries of emerging topics that are represented by short words and phrases in the form of a map. However, this way of representing data may result in decontextualising and oversimplifying the data, and researchers may find that they frequently need to refer to the original data for a more detailed story of the issue (Grbich, 2007).

The interview data for this study was analyzed using the block and file approach to ensure that the data remained intact in one place. Headings, based on how teachers believed they learned from the inquiry experience and how they valued inquiry, were used. These headings helped to guide data selection and provided abundant information to understand participants' experiences. These headings also made columns more manageable. The data were highlighted and color-coded to keep them within the context of the overall interview data and to keep cases separate. Next, the selected sections were grouped and placed in separate tables. Headings and color

coding were used to illuminate and categorize the contents of each column and highlight possible themes.

Bazeley (2009) suggests strategies researchers can use to improve and name categories in thematic analysis. These include "comparison and pattern analysis to refine and relate categories or themes; using divergent views and negative cases to challenge generalizations; returning to substantive, theoretical or methodological literature; creating displays using matrices, graphs, flow charts and models; and using writing itself to prompt deeper thinking" (p.1). Once the data for this study were selected and possible themes identified, comparison and pattern analysis was used to refine and select possible themes that related to the research questions. Next, all the data pertaining to a particular theme were entered into another chart, along with the name of the participant, to draw comparisons and conclusions across the cases. Finally, writing was used to support deeper thinking and analysis. Table 3-6 presents the step-by-step process used to identify themes.

Confirming the Analysis

In order to verify the interpretation, I shared the analysis process, interpretation, and findings with my professors. This included the steps I had taken to select narratives, narrative structures, and themes. I also looked at the documents provided by each participant to discuss how each document supported the interview data from the participants' perspective. Documents shared by participants are presented in Figure 3-1 and Table 3-4.

Trustworthiness

In qualitative research, the question of trustworthiness is addressed by understanding how well the study does what it was designed to do (Glesne, 2006;

Merriam, 1995). Trustworthiness refers to validity and reliability of a study (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). On one hand, reliability is the extent to which the results of a study will be found again. It is problematic in qualitative research to assume that studies that deal with complex humans can be replicated; instead, qualitative researchers focus on “consistency” and “dependability” of a study. The question to be addressed therefore becomes “whether the results of a study are consistent with the data collected” (Merriam, 1995, p. 56).

Validity, on the other hand, refers to the extent to which the study results depict reality. For qualitative researchers, there is no such thing as an immutable reality that can be observed and measured, but there is instead a belief that reality is constructed, multidimensional and prone to constant changes (Golafshani, 2003; Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Merriam, 1995). Hence, there are interpretations of reality. The following strategies were used to strengthen the trustworthiness of this study and establish rigor: triangulation, member checking, peer examination, and debriefing (Angen, 2000; Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Glesne, 2006; Golafshani, 2003; Merriam, 1995; Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson & Spiers, 2002).

One way to build the credibility of a research design is to triangulate, or use multiple methods to collect data. The current study used both interviews and artifacts as data collection sources. Additionally, the researcher maintained field notes in a journal to note observations and reflections during the interview process. A further source of data collection was via electronic mails between the researcher and participants that added to participants' descriptions of themselves and their experiences.

At the data analysis stage, member checking, peer examination, and debriefing were used. Member checking consists of sharing interview transcripts, personal notes, final conclusions and/or other data with participants to ensure that participants are being correctly represented. In line with constructivist epistemology member checking was used to validate the perspectives of the participants in this study. Interview transcripts were shared with research participants to ensure that they were in agreement with the data that had been transcribed. Participants did not indicate any disagreement with the transcribed interviews.

Additionally, peer examination was used. This consists of asking someone else to examine the data and conclusions to check for consistency between the data collected and the findings. I shared the data selected for analysis with my co-chair, committee members and had several opportunities to discuss the relationship between the data analysis and conclusions that were drawn as a result of the analysis. During the data analysis stage, one committee member looked at the data and suggested steps to complete the structural analysis, while my co-chair looked at the data I had selected and provided feedback related to emergent themes.

Debriefing provides an opportunity to test emergent findings to see if they seem reasonable to a disinterested debriefer, and serves to check the researcher's biases and assumptions by analytical probing. I asked my co-chairs, professors, and peers to review and reflect on my work and provide feedback. The findings for this study were shared with a co-chair and a peer in my graduate program. They read my work and we discussed the findings and looked at how these were related to the data analyzed. Based on the questions they posed, I was encouraged to look at multiple ways to

analyze data and make connections to the findings. The revisions based on feedback from my co-chairs, professors, and peers helped me fine-tune the research analysis process.

Two additional sources that were used during the research process to establish trustworthiness were the researcher's subjectivity and rich descriptions. A statement of the researcher's experiences, assumptions, and biases or subjectivity is a reflection of how these were monitored in the study. I ensured that, alongside data collection and analysis, I constantly reflected upon my subjectivity and biases to monitor how they impacted the research process. As a first step, my subjectivity was detailed in this chapter and continued throughout the study. Rich, thick descriptions provided the research context by describing data collection and analysis in detail so that readers can understand the value of the research for their own purposes and understand how conclusions were reached (Glesne, 2006).

Other considerations aimed at establishing trustworthiness during this study were activities suggested by Morse et al. (2002) that ensured both reliability and validity of the research. These included: (a) methodological coherence, which comprised congruence between the research question and the methods used – i.e., the methods were carefully selected to complement the research questions; (b) sampling sufficiency, which I ensured by recruiting an appropriate number of participants who have knowledge of the research topic; and (c) collecting and analyzing data simultaneously, which was believed to establish what is known and what new information is found.

Conclusion

This chapter situated the study in a constructivist perspective and explained the methodology that was used to investigate how teachers of ELLs believe practitioner

inquiry has influenced their perspectives and practice related to teaching ELLs. Further, the chapter detailed data collection methods that included individual interviews, artifacts, the researcher's raw field notes, and email correspondence between participants and the researcher. The data analysis methods were also highlighted, which included narrative structural analysis and thematic analysis. Finally, the steps taken to establish trustworthiness of this study and the researcher's subjectivity were addressed.

Table 3-1. Student Demographics (FDOE, 2011; Market, 2010/2011)

Participant(s)	Elementary school	ELL population at the school	ELLs' backgrounds
Elaine, Jessica, Amy	Fox Creek	19.3%	Mexican, Columbian, Puerto Rican, Micronesian, French, Russian, Albanian, Hawaiian, Polynesian Islands.
Bella Sarah	Eagle Peak Bay View	34.5% 33.7%	Mexican Mexican-American, Asian, Pacific Islander, Albanian

Table 3-2. Participant Background

Pseudonym	Background	Race	Job title	Speaks a language other than English	Teacher preparation/ Qualification	Teaching experience	Age in years	Elementary school	Inquiries completed
Elaine	Business	White	ESOL Teacher	Some Spanish Vocabulary	Ed.D. M.Ed., (ESOL) B.Ed., (ESOL endorsed)	16 yrs	50's	Fox Creek	2
Bella	Criminology	White (Puerto Rican)	4th grade ESOL teacher	Spanish as L1, now L2	M.A., (TESOL) (in progress) Teacher Certification (ESOL infused) B.SC., (Criminology)	4 yrs	40's	Eagle Peak	1
Jessica	Education	White	4th grade teacher	-	M.Ed., ESOL certified	30 yrs	60 yrs	Fox Creek	1
Amy	Military	White	ESOL teacher	Some Spanish vocabulary	M.Ed., B.Ed., ESOL certified and endorsed	8 yrs (4yrs ELLs)	40's	Fox Creek	1
Sarah	Computer Science	White	ESOL teacher	2 yr Spanish in High School and in Mexico	Ed.S., (ESOL) M.Ed., (ESOL)	8 yrs	37 yrs	Bay view	1

Table 3-3. Data Planning and Collection Matrix (Adapted from LeCompte & Schensul, 1999)

Research Questions	What did I need to know?	Why did I need to know this?	What kind of data answered the question?	Where did I find the data?	Whom did I need to contact for access?
How do teachers of ELLs believe practitioner inquiry has influenced their perspectives and practice related to teaching of ELLs?	Teachers' perspectives of their learning through practitioner inquiry.	To explore how engaging in practitioner inquiry can help teachers address the needs of ELLs.	Primary data source: Individual interviews with teachers of ELLs who engaged in practitioner inquiry Secondary data source: Artifacts shared by teachers	In interviews with the teachers and in artifacts they shared	The professor at The University of Florida and resident directors at elementary schools in Maple County.
Sub-question (a) What questions or problems do teachers address in their inquiry studies?	What kind of issues do teachers address through their inquiries that are related to ELLs?	To understand what kinds of issues teachers face in teaching ELLs.	Primary data source: Individual interviews Secondary data source: Artifacts	In interviews with the teachers and in artifacts they shared	The professor at The University of Florida and resident directors at elementary schools in Maple County.

Table 3-3. Continued

Research Questions	What did I need to know?	Why did I need to know this?	What kind of data answered the question?	Where did I find the data?	Whom did I need to contact for access?
Sub-question (b) How do they believe the inquiry has changed their thinking and practice?	<p>Their beliefs about how the inquiry has changed their knowledge and/or beliefs about the problems and needs of ELLs or related to teaching them.</p> <p>Their beliefs about how they have incorporated what they have learned from the inquiry and made changes to their practice.</p>	<p>To understand what teachers learn from their inquiries with ELLs and explore what new knowledge teachers gain to better address the needs of ELLs.</p> <p>To understand how teachers use the knowledge they gain in their inquiry to change their practice.</p>	<p>Primary data source: Individual interviews Secondary data source: Artifacts</p>	<p>In interviews with the teachers and in artifacts they shared</p>	<p>The professor at The University of Florida and resident directors at elementary schools in Maple County.</p>

Table 3-4. Secondary Data

Participant	Document 1	Document 2	Document 3	Document4
Elaine	Inquiry write-up (final paper for practitioner theory course)	Interview with teachers	Journal	Oral language assessment instrument
Bella	Inquiry write-up	-	-	-
Jessica	Inquiry write-up	Student writing	Pictures of word wall	-
Amy	Inquiry write-up	Conferring tables with student data	PPT of her inquiry	-
Sarah	Inquiry write-up	-	-	-

Table. 3-5. Structural Analysis of Participants' Inquiry Stories

Background of the teacher	Description of who the participant is and how she came to engage in inquiry.
Rationale for the study	Description of the dilemma she was experiencing in her teaching that led to her wonderings/research question(s).
Wondering	Statement of the participants' wondering (and any subsequent wondering)/research questions and the purpose of her inquiry.
Strategy	Description of what the participant did, how she modified her instruction or introduced an intervention to investigate the impact it had on her students' learning.
Data collection and analysis	Description of the data each participant collected to study the effect of her instruction, and how she collected and analyzed it.
Teacher learning	Discussion of what the participant learned about ELLs and/or her practice based on change in her instruction, the data she analyzed and from engaging in inquiry.
Commitment to further inquiry	Description of the new inquiry questions that emerged from the participants' previous inquiry experience or a new wondering she wanted to explore.
Other	Any other influence of the inquiry, e.g., commitment to sharing the inquiry experience with other teachers or other teachers replicating the participants' inquiry because of the success she had and that she shared with them.
Summary chart	Summary of the five studies to look for similarities and differences across the five cases.

Table 3-6. Process Used to Identify Themes

Serial #	Steps taken
1.	Read the data line-by-line and identified data that <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="464 302 1365 373">a. related to what and how teachers believed they learned from inquiry. <li data-bbox="464 380 1279 411">b. described teachers' perceptions of the value of inquiry.
2.	Read the selected data and summarized it based on <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="464 451 1365 483">a. what and how teachers learned from engaging in the inquiry. <li data-bbox="464 489 1135 520">b. how teachers described the value of inquiry.
3.	Re-read the data, looked for patterns and relationships across the stories of the five participants.
4.	Looked for underlying assumptions that the selected data suggested and grouped it together. Then looked for connections to that theme across the five cases for similar patterns. For instance, I looked at teachers' description of learning from inquiry and discovered latent themes underlying their description by asking, "What caused their learning?" that was similar across the five cases. I discovered the systematic collection and analysis of data lead to learning. This was identified as the first theme across the five studies.
5.	Identified possible themes represented by the data by asking "how" teachers learned and "how inquiry shaped their learning and practice." This helped in identifying common threads across the experiences of the five participants. Next, I marked the data with these themes.
5.	Entered the selected data into a table with participants' name in the first column, the data in the second column, and interpretation, possible themes and summary in the third column.
6.	Shared the data with a professor and discussed the themes.
7.	Based on the themes that were narrowed down, went back to the original data to look for any further evidence for that theme.
8.	Decided on data that supported the themes, removed non-examples of themes.
9.	Wrote summary generalizations for each theme.
10.	Selected the data that supported each theme and placed it in a separate table.

- Primary
- Secondary

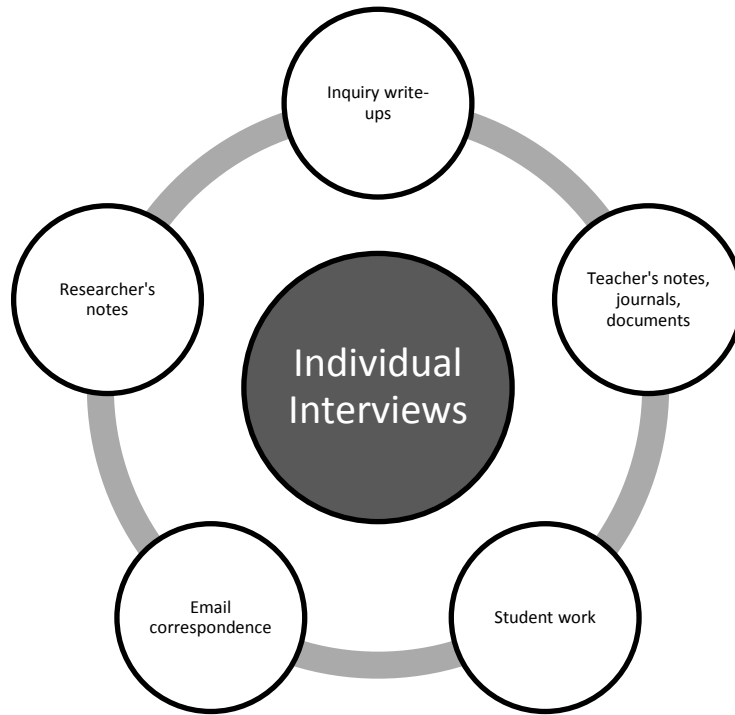


Figure 3-1. Primary and Secondary Data

CHAPTER 4 INQUIRY STORIES

Introduction

This study investigated how teachers of ELLs believed practitioner inquiry influenced their perspectives and practices related to teaching ELLs. In order to understand the participants' perspectives about inquiry and its relationship to their practice, it is important to first understand the inquiry experience itself and how it played out for the five participants in this study. Hence, the purpose of this chapter is to share the inquiry stories of the five participants, including a description of the background that led to these teachers' studies, the research question(s) they posed, the ways they collected and analyzed data, what they learned about their ELLs and/or their own practice as a result of engaging in inquiry, and the sense they made of each step of the inquiry process along the way. Each of the inquiry stories were derived from my analysis of interview transcripts and documents shared with me (such as inquiry write-ups) using a narrative structural analysis.

Elaine's Story

Elaine was an ESOL teacher at Fox Creek Elementary School located in West Florida. She taught kindergarten, first and third grade ESOL students in a pull-out model of instruction. In the pull-out model of instruction, ELLs receive the majority of their instruction in mainstream classrooms and are regularly *pulled-out* to receive additional help from an ESOL teacher or aide to support their English language development (Peregoy & Boyle, 2005). Elaine embarked on an inquiry journey as part of a doctoral seminar called *Practitioner Inquiry: Theory and Practice*. She focused her inquiry on three small groups of ELLs that she worked with daily. As a Reading Recovery teacher

with intensive training in the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) model of instruction, Elaine wanted to push herself to integrate what she had learned from experts with the knowledge she had gained in the field. The SIOP is a research-based model of instruction that provides support in developing academic English for ELLs in content area teaching. Elaine was aware of an internal tension precipitated by the knowledge that she needed to teach ELLs with language objectives in mind, as outlined by the SIOP Model, as opposed to her current practice of teaching in response to observed language needs as they arose (Echevarria et al., 2008). She knew that she had to systematically explore this tension in order to resolve it. She explained:

Deep down, I felt it but I had yet to systematically explore this tension in order to resolve it. Instead, I tried to convince myself that I knew enough to recognize language needs and address them in the moment, on the run as it were. I also felt that I had enough knowledge and skill to model for others, and yet . . . there was self-doubt. Deep down I knew I had work to do.

(Elaine: Inquiry write-up)

She was also caught up with the passion to share her expertise with her co-teaching peers for the benefit of their ELLs. She set out to explore her inner tension and self-doubt and began her inquiry by wondering, "How will researching, developing and implementing the practice of including language objectives for Reading/Language Arts instruction affect my ability to recognize and document on-going language development for my ELLs?" Her sub-questions included the following questions:

- What differences, if any, will explicit incorporation of language objectives make in planning for instruction within my co-teaching relationships?
- How will explicit language development accelerate/affect the oral and written language development of ELLs?

(Elaine: Inquiry write-up)

To gain insights into her wondering, Elaine began collecting three forms of data. First, she administered the Record of Oral Language (Clay, Gill, Glynn, McNaughton &

Salmon, 2007), a testing instrument that allows teachers to gather information regarding a student's control of oral language structures by having them listen to and repeat sentences of varying syntactic structures and complexity.

Second, she conducted informal interviews with first grade ESOL inclusion teachers in order to begin a dialogue about their practice as it related to the language development of ELLs. In the inclusion model, ELLs may receive ESL instruction, but are mainstreamed for most, if not all, of the entire school day (Reeves, 2006). Through these dialogues, Elaine hoped to engage these teachers in discussions regarding the importance of language objectives in concert with content objectives. Third, she began journaling to document her inquiry experiences in a narrative format. Her journal was comprised of a list of steps taken in seeking sources of information, and a list of what she needed to do next.

At this point she also looked at the county approved reading program materials for ESOL students. These materials were specifically written to provide differentiated instruction for ELLs. Elaine realized that in resisting the use of packaged materials she had missed the opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of how language development is addressed in the curriculum. Even though her reasons for ignoring these materials were to provide differentiated instruction using materials classroom teachers were using to scaffold ELLs' learning, and to provide a model for mainstream teachers, she was frustrated with herself. She explained:

Here is where I began to fully realize the tension I felt as a language teacher versus a reading teacher. This is when I realized I needed to focus on finding a better balance in my practice between focusing on content and focusing on the language development of my ELLs. Ironically, my professor [in the *Practitioner Inquiry* course] recognized this as a tension before I did

(or was at least willing to address).

(Elaine: Inquiry write-up)

As a result of understanding her inner tension, she also recognized that she did not have the confidence to fully articulate the needs of ELLs for her colleagues in co-teaching relationships because she had not completely explored them herself. This caused her to struggle emotionally and it became hard for her to come to terms with facing what appeared to her to be an instructional shortcoming. Elaine explained the tension that emerged from her strong background in reading and her role as a language teacher as she tried to determine whether she was supporting her ELLs as language learners or as readers:

My inquiry was that there was a sense of disconnect, a little bit, and I was struggling with it. You know I had this strong reading background and then I had this very much growing experience and background in language development, but I knew I had a long way to go and here I was looking at this method basically of working with ESOL kids that involved language development on top of content development and I was struggling, struggling trying to figuring out, "am I supporting them as language learners? Or am I still too heavily a reading teacher?" Feeling like I understood it but not enough to feel completely and fully confident in articulating that to the teachers that I worked with, and I felt that was super important because I know that personally I can affect the language development and reading development of ESOL students very effectively, but how do I affect more through my work with teachers you know as effectively as they needed to, and I knew that I was doing it but I could not articulate it and oh, was having a hard time with it.

(Elaine: Interview)

With this realization Elaine became ready to address the inner tension her professor had pointed to. She shifted her inquiry to explore more deeply her own efficacy as an ESOL teacher and reframed her inquiry question as, "What will I learn about my instructional decision-making concerning language teaching for ELLs as I explore and carefully observe the reading and language behaviors of these students and my resulting instruction?" This time her sub-questions became:

- How will this process of carefully looking at my own instructional decision making affect my growth as an ESOL teacher? What discoveries will it yield? What will I learn as a result?
- What balance will I see in my instructional decision making between reading development and language development?
- What forms will my instructional decision making take?

(Elaine: Inquiry write-up)

With a change in direction, Elaine continued to collect data using the Record of Oral Language assessment with the kindergarten, first and third grade students she taught daily. A second form of data collection was observational notes of students' oral, written, and reading errors in order to understand what language structures and confusions they were negotiating. A third form of data came from Elaine's continued journaling that documented the highlights and discoveries made while she explored the tension she was feeling within her practice. She realized that the new direction of her inquiry was fraught with feelings of insecurity, and even though she understood the value of facing these insecurities, she worried about publicly sharing them. She explained:

This process of engaging in inquiry had turned from an opportunity to highlight the importance of planning for language instruction across content areas to a deep self-reflection of my own efficacy as an ESOL teacher Affectively, it was tough . . . and yet, I came to find out that by pushing myself through the process, I gained some sorely needed confidence and direction.

(Elaine: Inquiry write-up)

As she progressed in her inquiry, Elaine began to refocus her questions and observations on her own practice, and felt her inner tension beginning to calm. Based on the data she collected and analyzed, she made three statements about what she learned as a result of engaging in the inquiry.

First, she found herself more purposefully planning to teach language by bringing in more real life objects (like actual nuts to crack open and eat) or using her iPhone to

display pictures of unfamiliar objects such as a shrimp (boiled and ready to eat and as it appeared live) because they were unfamiliar words for her students.

Second, she learned the value of the data gained from the Record of Oral Language assessment. Through administering this particular assessment instrument, she learned that she had made assumptions about the English language proficiency of two of her students and that they were struggling with language much more than she realized. She discovered that one student, Keith, had been relying heavily on visual cues and less heavily on semantic and syntactic cues, while the other student Eve, was struggling not only with repeating simple sentences but also with comprehension. This knowledge made successive instructional challenges related to these students easier for her to understand, and guided future scaffolding decisions she made and helped her more explicitly scaffold their learning.

Third, she began to recognize the importance of the *knowledge-for-practice* that she had gained in a Master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction and the *knowledge-in-practice* (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999) that she had gained over the years through experience in the classroom, and was able to make connections between the two. She was further able to link all of this with her training in Reading Recovery and SIOP. This increased her confidence and caused her to acknowledge the effective skills of an ELL practitioner she had been using all along. Additionally, she felt that in noting observations about effective and ineffective student responses, she had pushed herself further in resolving issues related to language learning. She summed up her inquiry experience:

I recognized that I was indeed thinking more like an ESOL teacher, making the beginnings of a shift in my thinking that was starting to ease the tension

I had been feeling, quite literally, for ten years. The process of inquiry was giving me direction and leading me toward more purposeful problem solving!

(Elaine: Inquiry write-up)

As her inquiry progressed, Elaine shared her inquiry experience with her peers at school and continued to gather data to further ease her inner tension and explore her efficacy as an ESOL teacher. She also hoped that her ongoing inquiry would provide rich topics for conversation among her peers within a critical friends group. Her work is now supported by her realization that understanding and facing her own need for change and growth was a necessary predecessor to achieving her goal of becoming a change agent among her educational peers.

Bella's Story

Bella was a fourth grade ESOL teacher at Eagle Peak Elementary School located on the Gulf Coast of Florida. She participated in an inquiry study as a Professional Development (PD) requirement at her school. She focused her inquiry on nine fourth grade ELLs that she taught in an inclusion setting. Concerned that most ESOL students face increased challenges in passing standardized tests because of limited proficiency in academic English language skills, Bella decided to engage in an inquiry that focused on the vocabulary development of the ESOL students in her class. She wanted to help develop their academic English language skills so they could successfully pass tests such as the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT), Writing Common Assessments, and the Florida Assessment in Reading (FAIR), as well as completing the required fourth grade curriculum. The FCAT measures selected benchmarks in mathematics, reading, science, and writing in grades three to 11 (FDOE, 2011). The FAIR test is a computerized program that helps teachers screen and monitor students'

progress in reading in order to guide their instruction (FDOE, 2011), and the Writing Common Assessments measure students' progress in writing and assesses their ability to write on a topic, using descriptive words and details.

Bella identified the increase in knowledge of key vocabulary words as the key to achieving her goal and collaborated with a fourth grade reading and writing teacher as she embarked on an inquiry journey to explore how she could enhance her ESOL students' academic language. She explained her dissatisfaction with the way vocabulary was being taught:

They had put all the ELL students into two classrooms. One teacher did the science and math and the other one did reading and writing and they would switch. So, with the reading and writing teacher I would go in [as the ESOL teacher], and she did this vocabulary program with the students but one of the things that kind of bothered me was that it was 26 weeks of words and they give you eight words per week. That's a lot of words but they [ESOL students] would know them for the moment but as the weeks went by, the old ones were forgotten because she never went back to review them and I said, "I don't like that," because I want that to be ingrained in them, even if it is one-two words from each week, because it builds their vocabulary, and [they can] have that sense of "I recognize that word" when they come upon it, but it seemed like if you don't review it--it's like a forgotten thought.

(Bella: Interview)

Bella hoped that building students' vocabulary, supported by content and visuals, would enhance their reading comprehension and improve their writing skills. To guide her inquiry Bella began with a wondering that she stated this way:

Incoming fourth-grade ESOL students are subjected to taking high achievement tests, many without much [development of] academic English vocabulary. I wonder if providing direct and consistent weekly research based vocabulary lessons would help increase reading comprehension for [students at] all ESOL levels including the lowest English language learner.

(Bella: inquiry write-up)

Bella used Beck's (2007) *The Elements of Reading: Vocabulary Level D (fourth-grade level)*, a 24-week program that introduced eight new words each week with

picture cards, teacher's Read-Aloud Anthology with weekly vocabulary words, and shared reading books using the same vocabulary. Students were given a vocabulary worksheet in both Spanish and English (All of Bella's ELLs were Spanish speakers) so that parents could help them at home. The vocabulary lessons occurred daily for 20 minutes during the reading block. Bella described what she did:

I took over this portion of the lesson. We had them act out words and we played the games and we used all the words and we showed the motions of words to show what's the meaning [and] what's the antonym.

(Bella: Interview)

She set up a system in which words were introduced in context by reading a story. She made sure students learned the words through games such as bingo, showing meanings through motions, and by looking at antonyms and synonyms. Students were asked to copy the words and read them in a story in shared reading in a whole group. A weekly quiz was given to assess what students had learned (Table 4-1).

To gain insights into her students' learning, Bella collected four forms of data from the beginning of the academic year. First, Bella used the FAIR reading comprehension standard scores to monitor progress (Figure 4-1). Second, she graphed students' Writing Common Assessment scores (Figure 4-2). The third source of data Bella relied on was students' written class work and assessments (i.e., artifacts). The final data source came from Bella's informal observations of the use students made of new vocabulary in their oral language. She made a note of these observations using tally marks.

Based on her data, Bella made five statements about what she learned from her inquiry. First, she discovered that almost all of her ELLs' reading comprehension scores increased as demonstrated through their FAIR reading comprehension scores. All three

of her beginner ELLs showed gains by the third FAIR assessment; her intermediate and intermediate/high ELL's scores also increased, while two of her ELLs' scores decreased by the third assessment (Figure 4-1). However, she did not explain the reason for this decrease.

Second, she saw gains in students' Writing Common Assessment scores. Her beginning ELLs made steady progress with one beginning/intermediate student receiving a score of four by the conclusion of the project, while her newest ELL moved from a zero to a three. Similarly, all but one of her intermediate ELLs showed gains from the first to the last Writing Common Assessment. Bella explained that the student who did not show progress often failed to complete her assignments. Two students received a five for the last assessment, while others also showed an increase in scores (Figure 4-2). The FAIR average standard scores further showed steady upward progress of her ELL students over time (Figure 4-3).

Third, the written classroom work and assessments further supported Bella's findings. She noted that students used new vocabulary words in their writing as well as in their daily conversation. Since the new vocabulary words had been used correctly in context or correctly compared to similar scenarios in a story or discussion, she concluded that students understood the words correctly. She explained that although students did not remember *all* the words, they remembered a majority of them and "it started showing up in their writing" (Bella's inquiry write-up). She believed that her instructional modifications, as a result of the inquiry, helped students make connections between words, their meanings, and accurate use.

Fourth, Bella shared that the inquiry experience confirmed what she was taught in school about teaching ELLs effectively, such as the importance of repetition, discussion, consistency, building confidence and drawing on cognates to enhance vocabulary. She explained:

I learned that consistency, repetition, and discussion of words helps them understand more, and also pointing out the cognates to them . . . building their confidence--it showed me that is what they needed. They really did super well. It is kind of funny to have children who, when they come to you, they speak like, "Oh! Ms. B he was happy," to "Oh My God! It was stupendous, we were jovial," you know, to go to that kind of vocabulary. Did they use it all the time? No, but they used it more than they would have had they not had this instruction.

(Bella: Interview)

Finally, she learned the importance of setting the bar high but also within the grasp of her students so they could meet her expectations as she pushed them to achieve the desired goal. She noted:

That they can reach the expectations you have for them, that's what I learned . . . if you give them something and you aim high with reasonable expectations, they will meet those. If you aim low they will stay there. So to baby them isn't the answer--to push them is the answer, that's what I learned from this when you look at the [growth in their use of] vocabulary words--that's what I learned from this.

The following year Bella moved to a new school where teachers were not required to participate in an inquiry, yet she decided to engage in another inquiry. She wanted to focus on developing the summarizing and comprehension skills of her ELLs by asking them to read passages and make an outline of what they read in the margins. She wanted to explore whether improving students' summarizing skills would affect their comprehension skills. She explained that even though engaging in an inquiry was not a requirement, she was doing it for herself "it's my own inquiry. I'm doing it for myself because my principal doesn't require me to do it and so I'm doing it for myself."

Jessica's Story

Jessica taught fourth grade at Fox Creek Elementary School located in West Florida. When the student population at her school shifted due to rezoning in the district, she found herself, as an ESOL certified teacher, teaching a class in which 23 of her 25 students were ELLs. When her principal introduced an inquiry study as part of staff development at her school, she seized the opportunity to participate. Jessica knew that successfully teaching ELLs and preparing them to pass the *Florida Writes* test would depend on building their vocabulary skills. The *Florida Writes* test is an assessment that measures the writing proficiency in grades four, eight, and ten in Florida (FDOE, 2011). Students struggled with many words commonly used in the curriculum, such as "reason," and therefore limited vocabulary was one barrier to their comprehension.

Jessica realized the extent of the language difficulties of her students when they were unable to comprehend a science lesson that dealt with *how the ramp affects distance* because of their unfamiliarity with the word *ramp*. Additionally, she noted that their writing production was limited (most were less than one page long), and there was very little evidence of rich vocabulary that consisted of Tier Two words. Beck, McKeown and Kucan (2008) stress the importance of Tier Two words as essential for building literacy skills for language learners because these words "characterize written texts – but are not so common in everyday conversation" (p.7). They explain that ELLs are less likely to encounter these words in daily language because the prospects of learning Tier Two words come from interaction with books. In comparison Tier One words represent "every day, basic, familiar words" (p. 7). Jessica explained the situation of her students:

They wrote like they talked. Their language was very stilted, basic, and just very elemental and I knew that if I was going to get them to pass the *Florida Writes* I needed to really [work on] vocabulary.

(Jessica: Interview)

She decided to focus her inquiry project on building the vocabulary skills of her students. She stated her wondering by asking, "What is an effective strategy for my ESOL students to use to increase Tier Two vocabulary words into their writing?"

She began by carefully observing existing instructional practices within her classroom and noticed the Word Wall that was mandated by the district. An ideal word wall is an interactive compilation of words placed on the wall and used to teach vocabulary, spelling, letter-sound correspondence, and more (Wagstaff, 1999). Typically, words are added to the wall as they are encountered in learning and removed when they become a part of the students' repertoire of knowledge. Jessica's Word Wall consisted of lists of words she had selected from textbooks and displayed. She explained

My initial inquiry started out with this broad [topic] of vocabulary. And the district requires us to have a Word Wall and so I did what everybody else did; I would take the words from the textbook and we'd put them up on the wall. And we'd never look at them again.

(Jessica: Interview)

She wondered if the word wall, used as suggested at her school, was an effective way to address the vocabulary needs of her ELLs and asked her students if they looked at the words or used them. When no one raised a hand, she decided to explore alternate ways to develop their vocabulary. She explained:

It got to the point where I looked at them one day and I'm thinking we never look at them, we never use them, they don't use them in their writing, we are just required to use it, and I'm wasting my space, and I'm wasting my time by even writing these words, and putting them up there and I looked at the kids one day and I said, "Who looks up at those words? Raise your hand." Nobody raised their hands. I said, "Who uses those words? Who remembers what those words mean?" and nobody remembered anything so I said, "OK, let's sit down and talk."

(Jessica: Interview)

In accordance with her students' suggestions, Jessica decided to replace what she now referred to as the "Dead" Word Wall with an interactive "Living" Word Wall. She told her students that *they* would be putting only "great words" that *they* read in books, on the wall to use in their writing. In order to give students ownership of the words and help her document who was using the word, Jessica asked them to put their initials in a dot above the word. As an incentive she introduced a competition between girls and boys by using pink and blue dots for their initials that would result in a pizza party (Figure 4-4). She also ticketed a few words she felt they should know, such as "cumulonimbus" from their science vocabulary, and added a cross-curricular dimension to their writing. She included meanings of difficult words in parentheses (Figure 4-5). She also created a strategy to encourage students to use the words. When students used these words, they were awarded a blue ticket that led to the monthly drawing from the Treasure Box, a student store of small gifts used to reward students who are on task with their assignments (Figure 4-5).

To gain insight into her wondering, Jessica collected five forms of data. First, she charted students' Writing Common Assessment scores at different times during her inquiry. Second, she read students' writing on the Writing Common Assessment and made notes related to the length of their writing and the richness of vocabulary they had used. Third, she counted and maintained a record of the rich vocabulary students used in their writing. Fourth, she administered a survey to explore students' perceptions related to the usefulness of the Living Word Wall. The final source of data came from students' FCAT scores.

Based on the data she analyzed, she made seven statements about what she had learned from engaging in this inquiry. First, the Writing Common Assessment scores showed marked improvement from the first to the third assessment. The score range on the first assessment was 0-4. This contrasted with a range of 2-5 on the third assessment (Table 4-2). The number of students who obtained scores in the higher range also increased. The first assessment showed the largest number of students, 64%, received a score of three. By the third assessment 29% of students obtained a four, while 54% had received a five. Additionally, 12% of her students had a zero on the first assessment while none of her students had a zero or a one by the third assessment, and only 4% of her students had a score of two (Table 4-2). These numbers showed improvement in her students' writing.

Second, analysis of students' writing showed considerable increase in the length of their writing, as well as an increase in the richness of vocabulary they used, by the third assessment. In the first assessment the length was weak. Most pieces were one page or less in length and there was very little evidence of rich vocabulary. The words used were very simple (Figure 4-6).

By the third assessment, the length had greatly increased. Most students wrote more than two pages (Figure 4-7). The vocabulary was rich and used correctly in most of the work. Examples included “quintessential,” “whispered,” “snoozed,” “unsuspecting,” “teleported,” “embarrassing,” “revolutionary,” and “cumulonimbus.”

Third, Jessica wrote the rich vocabulary on a post-it note for each child's writing piece. On the first assessment, she did not record any words. By the third assessment, many students had between 10 and 15 words written on their post-it notes--this was a

significant increase. Fourth, results from student surveys showed that all students used the Living Word Wall and noted that it had helped them tremendously in improving their writing. Ninety-five percent responded that they had added words to the Wall, and *all* felt that it should be expanded and that it was too small.

Fifth, Jessica was astounded by the FCAT scores, which she believed clearly showed the relationship between the changes she was making to her Word Wall practice and her students' achievement. Two of her students had three's and were on grade level. Six had five's, and the rest had four's, which were above grade level. One of her students, Nelly, who had recently arrived from Micronesia and spoke absolutely no English when she arrived, got a three, while another student who was identified as an exceptional student and "could barely put sentences together correctly" before the inquiry, got a four. Jessica's class had more five's than any other fourth grade class at her school and was the only class (out of five fourth grade classrooms) where *all* students passed the FCAT. She was amazed and attributed the success to her inquiry with the Living Word Wall.

Six, the Living Word Wall generated unprecedented enthusiasm among students for writing and an interest in vocabulary. Jessica noted that the Wall "just exploded, all of a sudden and I couldn't keep up with these sheets, they were finding them [words] in their work." She explained:

What happened was mind boggling. They weren't satisfied with the words that were on the [Living] Word Wall and were constantly finding words to add. If I didn't get the words up there fast enough, they got quite annoyed with me. The class started to become preoccupied with words. Every time I read to them, they would interrupt and say, "That's a great word, we need to add that word to our Word Wall." They started to add words that they would hear from their parents or grandparents, from their books, from everywhere. It was hard for me to keep track of all the words that students wanted to

add, so I devised a sign-up sheet, hung it up near the Word Wall and that really helped.

(Jessica: Inquiry write-up)

As she moved on in the inquiry, she encountered new problems and solved them as they arose. She resolved the issue of students "accidentally copying each other" by placing sheets where students would write their names next to the word they contributed. Some of the students added a word they recalled from their memory. This was a problem because students were not using new vocabulary words. To engage students in meaningful reading and improve the level of words they contributed, she required them to find a "new" word in a book they read and add the name of the book next to the word on the word list.

A final statement Jessica made was related to her personal gain in understanding to teach ELLs effectively. She learned that when teachers involve students in continuous, active engagement in learning, such as bringing in vocabulary words that *they* had read in books, it helps them take ownership of the words. This increases their academic growth because they are encouraged to use the words they contribute. This results in the kind of success Jessica experienced in her inquiry. She explained:

That with persistence and with having them pull their own vocabulary words, they are going to use them more than if you shove it down their own throats. They have to have a reason for learning these vocabulary words. They're not only pulling them out, they are taking ownership of them. Now what do you do [with] them? Now they actually have to use them. Because even so every once in a while they use them incorrectly and I sit down with them on a one-on-one basis and say, "Let's talk about how you use this word," and if they didn't use it correctly, "well let's do a better choice."

(Jessica: Inquiry write-up)

Based on Jessica's successful inquiry experience, other fourth grade classroom teachers decided to do a similar project in their classes. For the next year's inquiry, Jessica was planning to study whether student-led inquiry would increase non-fiction

reading comprehension. She was still in the planning stages of her new inquiry and wanted to focus on integrating activities that would enhance her students' vocabulary, comprehension, summarizing, synthesizing, and presentation skills.

Amy's Story

Amy was a first grade ESOL teacher at Fox Creek Elementary School located in West Florida. Intrigued by the opportunity to engage in an inquiry as staff development at her school, she decided to embark on her first inquiry journey with eight first grade students that she taught in a pull-out model of instruction. Amy was teaching first-grade students for the first time at a new school and knew little about student conferences, a practice encouraged at this school. She wanted to use her inquiry to push herself out of her comfort zone because conferring did not come easily to her. She wondered what she might learn about working effectively with ELLs and supporting their learning needs through an inquiry about how to effectively use student conferences. Since the process of conferring involved conversations with ELLs, and reading books, she anticipated a positive learning experience awaited her. She stated her wondering:

If I develop a process using conferring data for conferencing and differentiation of skill groups, how will it affect English language comprehension, reading levels, reading strategies, and thinking as readers?

(Amy: Inquiry write-up)

To prepare herself for her inquiry study, Amy joined a book study group on *Conferring with Readers: Supporting Each Student's Growth and Independence* (Serravallo & Goldberg, 2007) to learn how conferring would support her students' comprehension, decoding skills and reading fluency, and to gain knowledge that would help her become a more effective teacher of ELLs. Next, she looked at students' FAIR scores, running records from students' teachers, and compiled a list of skills

kindergarten and first grade students needed to develop. Finally, she put together a conferring notebook with the list of skills she would teach while conferencing with students.

During the reading block, Amy worked with ELL students for the 30 minutes of independent or guided reading time. During this time, students were seated on a carpet quietly reading their books. Before she even sat down with them, Amy observed their reading behaviors to see what they were doing. For instance, she noted whether they were looking at words or staring into space or examining pictures. She used this time to think about ways that she could compliment each student to reinforce desired reading behaviors. Next, she sat with each student and listened as he/she read. She complimented what they did well, and observed them to determine what they needed to work on. During this time, she also added notes to the conferring table that she had adapted from her book study book. Next, she taught the skill they needed to learn. As a reminder, she placed sticky notes in students' books so they would continue to practice whatever skill she had taught.

To gain insight into her wondering, "If I develop a process using conferring data for conferencing and differentiation of skill groups, how will it affect English language comprehension, reading levels, reading strategies, and thinking as readers?" (Amy: Inquiry write-up). Amy collected two forms of data. First, she adapted a conferring chart that was described in her book study book, *Conferring with Readers: Supporting Each Student's Growth and Independence* (Serravallo & Goldberg, 2007, p. 109) and used it to take notes while conferencing with her ELL readers (Table 4-3). She used this to compliment what students were doing well and made a note of it in the *compliment*

column of her chart. For instance, if the student re-read a text for comprehension, she would compliment it and note it on her chart. Next, she would list the skill she *taught* that the student was struggling with and made a note of *next steps* she would take for follow-up (Table 4-3).

Second, she wondered what she would learn if she used a similar conferring process for a guided reading group (Table 4-4.). She adapted another chart from *Conferring with Readers* (Serravallo & Goldberg, 2007) to record the knowledge she gained about her students during guided reading. She explained:

Then it would pretty much compliment what was taught (and next steps), so I took it, I started doing the chart with the compliment provided and next steps and I thought, well I'm doing that in reading too, so I put the two forms together and did a guided reading record underneath my conferring. So I could do what our skill was and then as we talk[ed] about it, who was getting it, who wasn't and I'd take notes on it [She provides an example of a chart she used (Table 4-4) to explain her practice].

[Students] were in a skill group together and then I put who it was when I talked to them. Everything that I could find that they were doing right, I would add on the list. So if they read fluently, they used a character voice or something like that I'd write it down, and then [I'd teach them] what they were struggling with or I'd just make notes of everything and teach them one thing . . . and then next steps. If they asked for a book, "I like dinosaurs, would you bring me a dinosaur book?" I'd make a note [in] next steps, or [note] they are ready for the next level or something like that.

(Amy, interview)

Based on the data she collected, she made four statements about what she learned from her inquiry. First, through the conferring process, she was able to clearly monitor her students' learning and knew when they were ready to move to the next level. For instance, she noticed that students' vocabulary skills and reading fluency improved, and that she was able to support their vocabulary development explicitly. She also found that documenting the conferring date and the level of each student was valuable in determining the precise growth her ELLs had made. Her systematic

observation and records of students' skills, such as, "fluent, comprehends, and decodes multi-syllabic words," helped her move students forward more quickly, methodically, and in a more effective and efficient way. She explained:

Talking with the ESOL students when they were talking about their book, making connections and then using words, and not helping them describe, so I think it helped a lot with their vocabulary. [It] gave me the opportunity to help with their vocabulary . . . I've learned that it was a valuable tool. It does show the growth--that the child learns, and that was valuable, too, because sometimes you go, "I don't see them grow," but when you are doing it [recording the skills mastered] all the time, you can see the growth.

(Amy: Interview)

Second, she learned where students needed support and when to re-teach a skill by using anecdotal notes to record their changing skills and needs. She found that systematically collecting data and providing data-driven instruction helped her identify the strengths and weaknesses of her ESOL students as readers and enabled her to examine her instruction and her ELL students' learning closely (Table 4-4). This helped her provide differentiated instruction where it was needed most and she began to provide students the extra scaffolding they needed.

She related:

Once they accomplished that level, I would move them quickly and that was one thing that was greater than conferring – is that you could move them faster because you were with them all the time seeing what they could do and if they weren't able to – if you tried to [move them up a] level and they couldn't do it, you just go back and try it again.

(Amy: Interview)

Third, she learned to use data to organize and plan skill groups, guided reading groups, and interventions. Conferring helped her group students according to their skill level and allowed her to focus on teaching a particular skill or strategy as needed (Figure 4-8). She noted:

Oh! It was such an eye opener. I really got to know what they liked to read. I could talk to them about what they liked to read, and if I noticed a lot of them stumbling on the same skill I could pull a group.

(Amy: Interview)

She explained how the data helped her re-group students for instructional purposes:

In January I had [students] *En*, *Fn*, *Gn* and *Hn* in a guided reading group. I would read with *Dn* one-on-one. In February *En*, *Fn*, and *Hn* were growing as readers faster than *Gn*. So looking at the data helped me regroup *Dn* and *Gn* together and leave the other group intact. *Bn*, *Cn*, and *In* were seen at a different time.

(Amy: Inquiry write-up)

Finally, the most enjoyable benefit for Amy was the ability to know her students as individuals as well as readers through the conversations she had with them. She observed them talking about the stories they read, making connections between them, and forming opinions. She discovered that conferring was a great way for her to connect with her first-grade students and build a relationship that paved the way for further conversations and learning. In this way she was able to support their learning related to what they were reading and to assist with the skills they needed to develop in order to become more fluent readers. For Amy, the inquiry illuminated the importance of conversations in the language development of ELLs. She explained:

We need to have more conversations. I don't think teachers let kids talk enough in the classroom. They are told to be quiet and do their work. ELL kids need to talk and understand language, especially idioms. Teachers are saying, "big cheese," so what are you talking about? "We are talking about that person." A lot of communication is missed if you don't talk. I have a lot of conversations with my kids and I don't mind noise. I guess a lot of people don't like noise [but I don't mind] as long-as they are on task.

(Amy: Interview)

During the year she did her inquiry, Amy's schedule allowed her to have exclusive conference time. The following year she was unable to use time spent conferring with students as a formal structure. Instead she was required to co-ordinate with the

mainstream teacher and teach the skill recommended by her. However, because she better understood the value of conferring, she still talked to her students about what they were reading. This helped her provide informal data-driven instruction by understanding students' reading level and teaching them the skills they needed to learn to move forward.

Amy is committed to the value of inquiry and believes this adds to her skills as a teacher. In the following year, she became engaged in a new inquiry. In that project, she was focusing on journaling, although her concept of journaling was somewhat different from the traditional notion of a journal as a place to record thoughts. She began using notebooks for her second-grade students to create word books. She asked students to record words and their sounds to provide them with a structure for writing.

Sarah's Story

Sarah is an ESOL teacher at Bay View Elementary School located in West Florida. She decided to participate in an inquiry when it was offered as part of staff development at her school. She focused her inquiry on eight second grade ELLs whom she taught in a pull-out model of instruction. Sarah's wondering was motivated by her knowledge that her second grade ESOL students were "in danger of not being successful." She used a measure of reading fluency called The Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), a test that assesses the acquisition of early literacy skills from kindergarten to sixth grade. DIBELS consists of three levels: red, yellow, and green, where red signals a danger zone and indicates students are in danger of being unsuccessful. Concerned that *all* eight of her second grade ELLs scored in the "red" level on the DIBELS assessment, Sarah decided to partner with fourth-grade students and their teacher to engage in an inquiry to increase the reading fluency of her students. She realized that

her ELLs were not fluent readers and that their limited vocabulary was a major reason for their language difficulties. She related:

At that time, I had second-grade ESOL kids and we were using a measure called DIBELS in the county, which is a measure of reading fluency, and they have three levels red, yellow and green, like a stop sign. Red is like a danger zone. These children are in danger of not being successful. Well, none of the students that I was working with were green or yellow – they were all red kids – so they came to me alike. We had a pull out model at that time – we were really struggling with fluency – and I acknowledged that so much of their struggle has to do with their vocabulary, that they just don't have that vocabulary.

(Sarah: Interview)

Sarah taught the eight, second grade ELLs for an hour and 45 minutes every day. She focused her instruction on vocabulary development and language acquisition during this time. She concluded her instructional period each day with 30 minutes of independent reading. However, she noted that her students did not show any enthusiasm for the independent reading phase of the day. She explained:

For many of my students, this was not a very exciting time of the day. Some of the students' independent reading levels required them to read books that are simple in structure and just a few pages long. This was an area in my Reading Block that I felt could be put to better use.

(Sarah: Inquiry write-up)

She decided to use this time to bring in fourth grade students for peer-tutoring. To understand the effects of these partnerships for both her second grade ELLs and the fourth grade peer-tutors who were not ELLs, Sarah posed two inquiry questions:

1) What will the effects of cross grade-level peer-tutors be when pairing my second-grade ESOL students with fourth-grade "buddies" in terms of the second-grade students' Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) scores? And 2) what other effects might this pairing have on these two groups of students?

(Sarah: Inquiry write-up)

She partnered with a first grade ESOL teacher who did a similar inquiry with her first grade ESOL students and fifth grade peer-tutors. Sarah also partnered with fourth grade

students and their teachers to explore the effects of cross-grade, peer-tutor partnerships on the reading fluency of her ELLs. She reflected that at the time her focus was on identifying students who could serve as peer-tutors and were best able to miss instruction to work with her ELLs. She noted:

What I ended up doing is that I pulled in some kids [as peer tutors] that actually weren't ESOL kids . . . they were low SES kids. So we started talking, my colleague and I (she worked with first-grade). We talked about some ideas about what could we do to increase these kids' fluency and that kind of led into what we decided to do as an inquiry and I paired my kids with the fourth-graders and she paired her first-graders with the fifth-graders and [we] did a similar project.

(Sarah: Interview)

The fourth-grade teacher that Sarah partnered with looked at her students' math performance and picked the eight students who would be best able to miss math instruction in their classroom. These students were from diverse backgrounds and included Caucasian, Hispanic, African American, and Asian students, while the seven second grade ESOL students were all Hispanic except for an African American boy who had limited English language proficiency.

During the 30-minute Reading Block the fourth-grade students were asked to listen as their ESOL buddies read their books, log the focus skill of the day, and complete the Book Log (Table 4-5). Sarah explained:

I had the [ESOL] students working in "just-right" books with the fourth graders keeping a log of what they did each day with their buddies. The fourth graders were to log what the focus skill of the day was and a specific comment or compliment. The skills or strategies align with the focus skills I presented during each day's mini lesson. Some days I told the students what to work on; other days I let them choose.

(Sarah: Inquiry write-up)

To gain insight into her inquiry she collected three forms of data. First, she used the Oral Reading Fluency scores that the fourth grade peer-tutors recorded daily.

Initially, she had planned to use the DIBELS scores, but soon realized that the test took place only three times in a year and her inquiry involved a six-week partnership with the peer-tutors. Therefore, she could not wait for the DIBELS scores. She asked for help from colleagues and administrators about what kind of data to collect. Her peers and a group of administrators suggested that she teach the peer-tutors to collect one-minute timed readings as data. Subsequently, she taught the fourth grade peer-tutors how to take timed readings and to score passages accurately. She taught them how to use the stop-watch, mark mistakes and to calculate words per minute. A second form of data was Sarah's observations of her students' partnerships with their peer-tutor. A third data source was the peer-tutors' book logs, documenting the progress of each student, and notes about what was done for the inquiry project each day (Table 4-5).

Based on the data she collected, Sarah made three statements about what she had learned from engaging in this inquiry. First, she found a fairly regular improvement in most students' Oral Reading Fluency scores (Figure 4-9). As can be seen from the graph showing the Oral Reading Fluency scores in one week, the majority of students showed growth in the number of words they read per minute across the six weeks of data collection (Figure 4-9).

Second, based on her observations, she noticed benefits for both the ESOL students and the peer-tutors. The ESOL students became less shy and reserved. They worked comfortably and participated actively, whereas the peer-tutors responded to their assignment with responsibility. She also noted that her ELLs started to look forward to the Reading Block and exhibited enthusiasm for their meetings with the peers. She explained:

I was completely impressed with how seriously both groups of kids took their “jobs” and looked forward to them daily. The second graders were easier to get focused when I would remind them that their buddies were coming soon. My students would see their buddies outside the window and get very excited, jumping up and down and waving.

(Sarah: Interview)

Third, in addition to increased class participation in their ESOL groups and enthusiasm for reading, Sarah's students began to participate more in their mainstream classrooms. Their classroom teachers reported that students who had not spoken all year were now raising their hands to participate. Sarah attributed this change to the opportunity to interact with peer tutors during her inquiry. She related:

Their teachers did compliment me on that. They said that [the students] had begun to participate more, that they were actually more confident [in] the whole group. They were raising their hands. Kids that had not spoken all year would raise their hands and participate . . . the [mainstream] teachers were like, "What did you do to John? What did you do to Ray?" I was like, "What do you mean?" They were different kids in class. I really attribute it to their experience here. It was not anything I did academically for them but it was just giving them that opportunity to interact with students that they would never have interacted with on a daily basis. They would never have had that opportunity, so it was great.

(Sarah: Interview)

The following year Sarah planned an inquiry in partnership with a guidance counselor at a local high school. Their project was an extension of Sarah's previous inquiry and involved high school students coming to Bay View Elementary School after school to read with fifth-grade students.

Conclusion

In order to understand participants' perspectives about inquiry and its relationship to their practice, this chapter presented the inquiry stories of each of the five participants in this study. Analysis of the stories that described participants' background, how they became involved in inquiry, the questions they posed, data collection and analysis

methods used, and what they believed they learned from the inquiry process helped to draw the following conclusions:

- (a) Four teachers participated in the inquiry as PD for staff development while one participant, Elaine, engaged in the inquiry to fulfill a requirement for a doctoral seminar in her graduate program.
- (b) All five participants investigated ways to enhance their efficacy as ESOL teachers.
- (c) All teachers began the inquiry by identifying a problem related to teaching ELLs and in general, they questioned existing practices that were ineffective.
- (d) Two participants, Bella and Jessica explored how to enhance the vocabulary of their students. Elaine focused specifically on making language objectives explicit alongside content objectives. Amy explored what she would learn about her students as readers by conferring with them. And finally, Sarah explored the effects of peer partnerships on student learning.
- (e) Four participants modified their practice to study the effects of diverse instructional strategies on students' learning while one participant, Elaine, made a shift during the inquiry to study her own practice as an ELL teacher.
- (f) All five participants learned to use systematic data collection and analysis to see what and how students were learning and where they were struggling. This helped them provide support where it was needed to move students forward quickly and effectively, and understand their own instructional practices.
- (g) Two participants, Elaine and Amy learned that they had made assumptions about the language proficiency of their students while three participants, Bella, Jessica and Sarah confirmed their assumptions that there was a better way to teach ELLs.
- (h) Four participants showed a commitment to further inquiry, while one participant, Elaine, decided to share her inquiry experience with her peers.

The next chapter will present a cross-case analysis of the five stories and discuss salient themes that emerged from analysis of the data.

Table 4-1. Bella's Weekly Program Using *The Elements of Reading: Vocabulary Level D*

Day	Activity
Day 1	Introduction of the picture and matching word: Students are shown the picture and asked to describe what they see. The sentence that is provided on the back of the card is read. Synonyms are written on the side of the picture on the whiteboard. Finally, the students help create a motion so that they can remember the word.
Day 2	Teacher read-aloud: Before the story is read, the words are reviewed with matching motions. The use of the words in the story is discussed.
Day 3	Shared reading: Bella reads the story, and students follow along in their books. The words are reviewed again. Students are asked to give an example of the word and use it in a sentence.
Day 4	Word emphasis: Various activities are incorporated so students remember the words and demonstrate how they are used. Examples of activities include: Show and tell, re-enact, and bingo.
Day 5	Testing: Students are given a quiz with the weekly words.

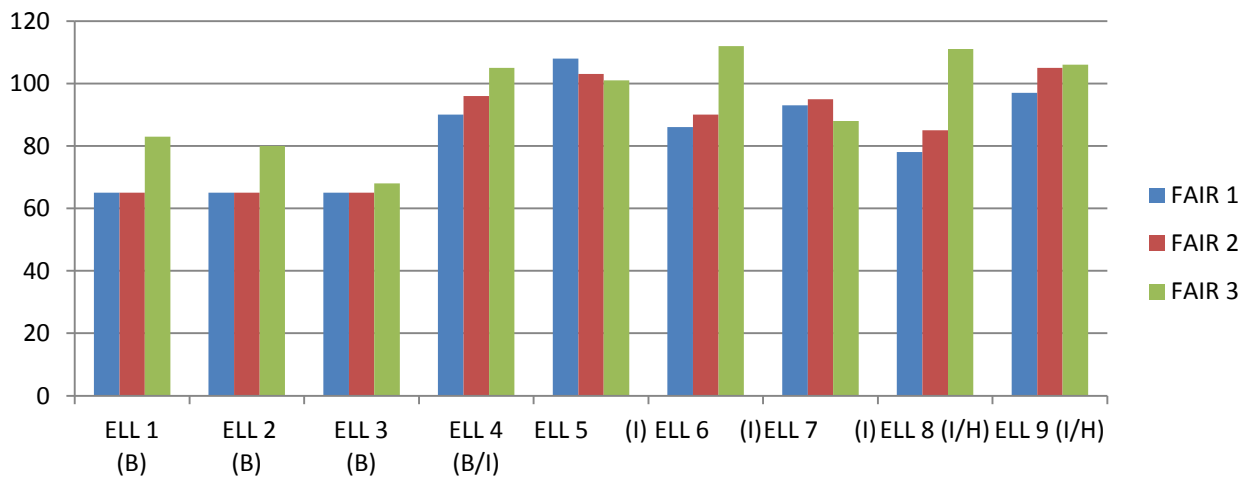


Figure 4-1. Fair Individual Reading Comprehension Scores

(B=Beginner; I=Intermediate; I/H=Intermediate/High)

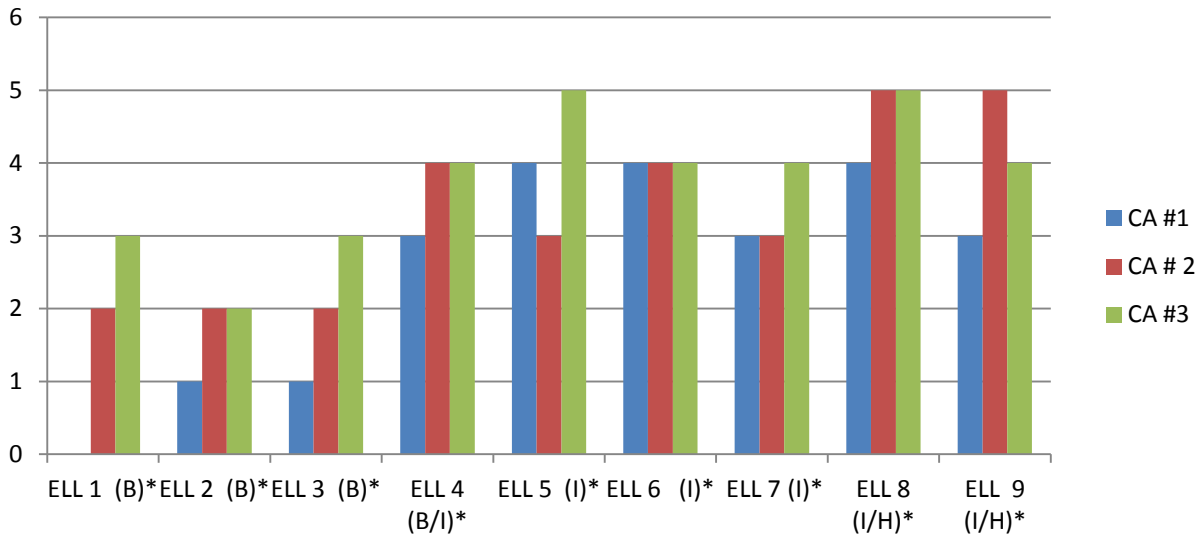


Figure 4-2. Writing Common Assessment Individual Scores
(B=Beginner; I=Intermediate; I/H=Intermediate/High)

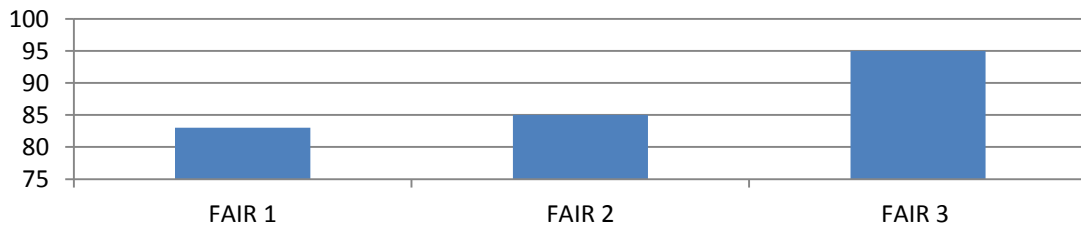


Figure 4-3. FAIR Average Standard Score for ELLs



Figure 4-4. The "Living" Word Wall Showing Color Coding Based on Gender



Figure 4-5. The Blue Ticket Awarded for a Word Used Correctly

Table 4-2. Writing Common Assessment Scores

	Writing common assessment -1	Writing common assessment-2	Writing common assessment -3
	12% scored 0	0% scored 0	0% scored 0
	0% scored 1	0% scored 1	0% scored 1
	4% scored 2	8% scored 2	4% scored 2
	64% scored 3	8% scored 3	12.5% scored 3
	20 % scored 4	60% scored 4	29% scored 4
	0% scored 5	20% scored 5	54% scored 5
	0% scored 6	4% scored 6	0% scored 6
Score range	0-4	2-6	2-5

Luke
 I had a good time with a friend and his name is victor we went to a Carnival and all of our family came too. first we went to the fairest weel. then we vent were we were there were lots of mirror, we had to find the way out. Next we went to a little rollor coaster. then we went to the bumper cars. last, we went to the swirrle where you spin around and around. wen I got off I was so dizzy that I almost fell. I had to go home, wen we got home we sat down then my mom said "all of us has to take a shower. after we took a shower we put our cloth on we went to bed. I was dreaming that we are going again.

Figure 4-6. Luke's writing before the "Living" Word Wall was introduced.

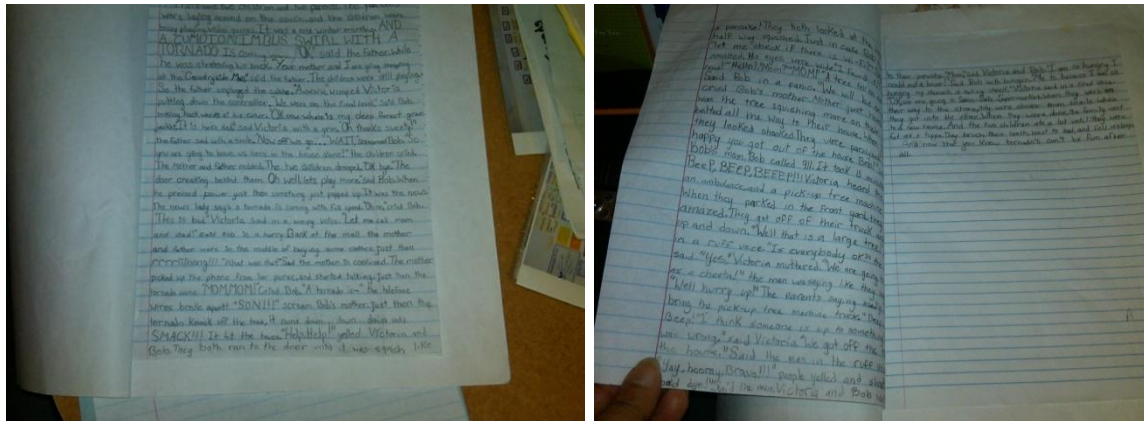


Figure 4-7. Luke's writing after the "Living" Word Wall became popular.

Table 4-3. Conferring Record Table

Conferring Record			
Student/ Date	Compliment	Taught	Next Steps
O. M. 1/15/10	Re-read for comprehension	Vowel sounds	Flash cards/ vowels Wants book on fishing
Next Student			

Table 4-4. Guided Reading Conferring Record Table

Guided Reading Record	
Date: 2/25/10	Students: Andy, Julie, Rose, Jasmine
Book level: 8	Book Title: A Bad Day for Little Dinosaur

Teaching Point and Notes:

- Pausing for punctuation
- Reading with expression
- Review stressed words in bold

Conferring Record			
Student /Date	Compliment	Taught	Next Steps
Rose 2-25-10	Good comprehension, sight words, bold words, voice	Come/came It, took	Needs fluency
Jasmine 2-25-10	Sight words, voice, attention to punctuation, good comprehension	Lucky/looking	Needs fluency

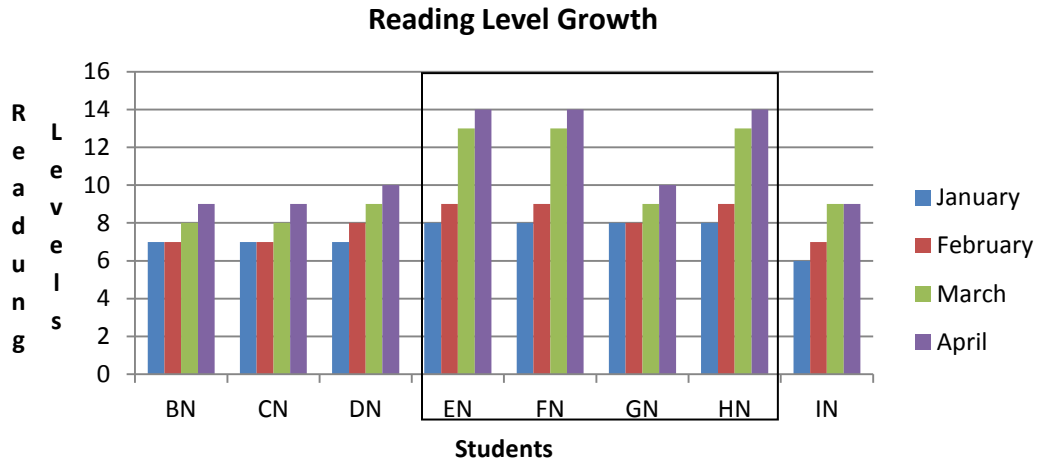


Figure 4-8. Graph Showing Student Growth in Reading

Table 4-5. Book Log Used by Peer Tutors

Book Log and Notes by: Tom

Name: Juan

Grade: 2nd

Date: 2-25-10

Focus Skill: Summarizing

Compliment: I loved how he was telling me what the story was about.

Week of 3-27-09 ORF Results

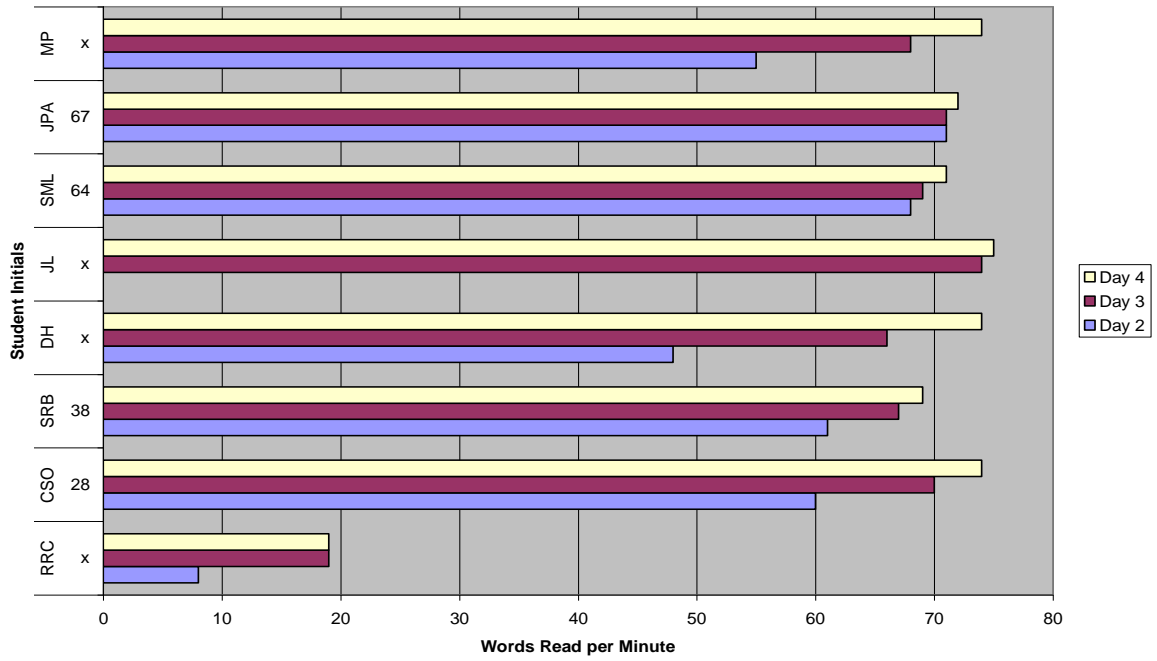


Figure 4-9. Students' Oral Reading Fluency Scores

CHAPTER 5 CROSS CASE ANALYSIS

Chapter Four presented data about the inquiry studies conducted by the five teachers in this study. The narratives about their inquiries demonstrate that each teacher used the inquiry process to deal with a felt problem in her practice and to generate and test a potential solution. The narratives also show that each teacher valued the process enough that she concluded her inquiry with new questions and new ideas for the next inquiry study or with a commitment to continue with the previous inquiry. In addition to telling the story of their inquiries, the five teachers also talked about their perceptions of the value of inquiry as Professional Development (PD) during their interviews, and discussed the way conducting inquiry shaped their thinking and practice. The current chapter draws across the data from the five interviews to answer the research questions posed for this study:

- Research sub-question (a) What questions or problems did teachers address in their inquiry studies and what conclusions did they draw?
- Research sub-question (b) How and why did teachers believe the study changed their thinking and practice?

To answer the first sub-question, a brief description of the questions or problems teachers addressed in their inquiry studies is presented. Following this, the chapter addresses the second sub-question about the value of inquiry for teacher learning by describing three themes that were communicated by the teachers. Themes related to the value of inquiry across the five teachers included: (a) teacher learning is supported by systematic data collection and analysis; (b) teachers learned to accept responsibility for student learning and used effective practices; and (c) teachers became empowered to be proactive about instructional decision-making.

Research Sub-question (a) What Questions or Problems did Teachers Address in Their Inquiry Studies and What Conclusions Did they Draw?

Area of Focus

Participants were selected because they were ESOL teachers or were teaching ELLs and focused their inquiry studies on an issue related to the language difficulties of ELLs. In terms of specific focus, all five teachers shared a concern about the vocabulary development of ELLs. By engaging in the process of inquiry and systematically analyzing data, participants reinforced their initial beliefs that building vocabulary needs to be a "top priority" for ELLs' academic growth because of its effect on developing their oral and written comprehension as well as their reading, writing, and speaking proficiency. As Jessica explained:

It was a very quick realization that vocabulary had to be a top priority and just getting them to understand what you meant. They would just sit there. They are incredibly polite. They are incredibly quiet. [So] getting them to respond back and letting [teachers] know that they don't understand [instruction given by teachers], was a challenge.

(Jessica: Interview)

Bella and Jessica focused their inquiries specifically on building the vocabulary skills of ELLs to develop their comprehension, writing, and oral language proficiency, while Elaine's focus on language objectives included improving the vocabulary of her students by using real life objects and technology such as an iPad and iPhone. Similarly, Amy related that she would take students into the field to explain words such as "weed," and Sarah shared her concern for the vocabulary development of ELLs by voicing her displeasure that ELLs are tested for vocabulary words that they are not taught on standardized tests. Participants also explored ways to increase the students' reading levels, fluency, and English language comprehension with the goal of moving ELLs forward. Although at a surface level it is apparent that the teachers all focused on

vocabulary, the impetus for their questions came from tensions they were experiencing about their practice. Each teacher talked about the tensions she experienced in her practice as well as the questions driving her inquiry.

Sources of Specific Questions: The Importance of “Felt Personal Tensions”

Engaging in the inquiry provided an opportunity for teachers to question their practice in an area of *personal* felt tensions. The source of the teachers’ tensions emerged from feeling that they were not addressing the language development of their students as effectively as was necessary to successfully move students forward. This was articulated by Elaine when she shared that,

the biggest realization was that first of all I needed to give more thought to what I was doing and solving that tension in order to build that confidence and to be able to carefully, clearly articulate the needs of ELLs for the other teachers. [Instead] I was like jumping to working with the teachers without carefully being sure [about the needs of ELLs myself] and I knew that I was making that jump.

(Elaine: Interview)

Elaine alluded to her inner tension several times during the interview. It was disconcerting for her to acknowledge that like other ESOL teachers, she was not addressing the needs of her students as fully and completely as she had previously believed she was. Similarly, Amy's inquiry emerged from her desire to be more confident about her practice and ensure that she was meeting the needs of her students. As a novice first grade teacher she wanted to evaluate the effectiveness of her teaching. She stated, "I wanted to know more" [about effectively teaching ELLs]. She wanted to better address the needs of students by asking herself how student conferences would help better support the learning of her students and make her a better ESOL teacher.

In the same way, the other participants critically observed strategies they were using but that they had never questioned in terms of their effectiveness in supporting the learning of ESOL students. Even though some teachers were using strategies suggested to them by the school or district or that they had learned in a graduate program, they had not systematically studied or explored their impact on the academic growth of ESOL students. Amy explained that she was generally asked by the mainstream teacher to teach a specific set of skills to a group of ESOL students in the class. She taught the same skill to ALL students regardless of their level of understanding and knowledge. Similarly, even though Elaine had spent two university semesters receiving training and developing an understanding of how to effectively implement the SIOP model, she lacked the confidence to apply her learning in a way that supported the language development of the ESOL students and coach other teachers to support ELLs' language development. Her initial question focused on studying the oral and written language development of students and how her own learning might affect her coaching of other ESOL teachers. However, the self-doubt she experienced as she began data collection steered her in a new direction, because she sensed that she was not addressing the learning of students as needed. She re-formed her question to explore more explicitly her own role as an ESOL teacher.

Likewise, Jessica's anxiety focused around her use of the Word Wall because deep down she knew that it was not being used purposefully and did little to develop students' language. She stated her discomfort with the Wall:

I initially started out the year with a run of the mill word wall. The words that I put up were the vocabulary from stories from the text and quite frankly we only glanced at them from time to time. I put up the word wall because I was supposed to, not because it was functional . . . I didn't know *who* was

using the word or if I could actually document that they were indeed using the words.

(Jessica: Inquiry write-up)

Bella's tension derived from her discomfort at the way vocabulary words were taught and she stated her disapproval with teaching weekly words that were soon forgotten. Sarah's tension emerged because she knew that students lacked enthusiasm for the last 30 minutes of the Reading Block as many students were required to read books that were short and simple in structure.

As a result of their engagement with inquiry around questions derived from tensions within their own practice, participants learned that they were not addressing students' language development as needed for their growth. It was the inquiry process that encouraged teachers to ask questions about their practice. It was the "felt tension" within their practice that led them to specific questions and showed them how they could improve their practice to address the language development of ESOL students. As participants explored ways to address the needs of ELLs, they discovered that students also showed increased test scores. Three teachers, Bella, Jessica, and Sarah were particularly concerned about the performance of students on standardized tests. They learned that inquiry was an effective way to address that concern as well. Bella explained that the pressures of accountability and testing often cause teachers to teach to the test without confirming whether students are learning. She explained:

Teachers' hands are so constrained with this FCAT thing that they sometimes forget that there are other means of teaching that are much better than giving them a sheet of paper to fill out We have a tendency with FCAT to hurry up and teach things because there is so much to cover. We teach multiplication, "you get it, good, you don't, oh well, you'll get it next time," but repetition is the only way, especially for ELLs who are learning to understand the concepts. If you teach well you don't have to

worry about FCAT, but if you teach to FCAT, you don't teach students to think.

(Bella: Interview)

As Bella explained, teachers concerned with only FCAT preparation fail to use effective practices that help students grow academically, such as repetition of new concepts. Standardized testing is a major concern for teachers. Learning from inquiry helped the participants increase student performance on tests, and helped increase their students' understanding of concepts by using effective strategies such as repetition that supported student learning.

As a result of their learning from inquiry, it became clear that it is the experienced tension of the teacher that creates the learning opportunity, because through this concern, they explored their instruction and looked for ways to improve it. Not only did teachers increase their learning and improve their practice, but they also made valuable discoveries about effective pedagogy for ELLs.

Conclusions from Teacher Inquiry

As teachers addressed the tensions they felt about their practice they made important discoveries about effective pedagogy for ELLs. They drew conclusions from the insights they gained from their inquiry experience. These included insights about meaningful use of content, repetition, group competition, and the importance of authentic use of conversations.

Insights about meaningful use of content

The teachers concluded that it was not only important to focus attention on vocabulary building but that vocabulary needed to be presented to students with specific direction about how to use it. Both Bella and Jessica explained the importance of presenting material to students in a way that it becomes meaningful for them and shows

them how they can use it. Initially, the Word Wall had little meaning for the students because they could not interact with it. However, when Jessica actively involved students, and sought their views on ways to make it useful, the results were powerful. She asked students how they felt about transforming the "Dead" Wall into a "Living" Wall. Students reported that they liked the idea that they would contribute words *they* had read to the wall as opposed to Jessica selecting and adding words from texts they read. She also introduced a tally mark system to record who had contributed a word and who was using it. She introduced a form to accompany their writing that detailed which new words students had used in their writing piece. She learned that by providing these explicit strategies for using words students showed stronger commitment to learning.

Jessica explained how this supported their vocabulary development and writing:

[I learned that] they're sponges. They can take up information but we just have to present it to them in a way that shows them that they can use it. That shows there is immediate application instead of extraneous information because all these great words that were up there and if you don't ever use them again they're not going to know how to use them. So they're using words like quintessential, really great words and they are using them correctly. So I'd say they're sponges.

(Jessica: Interview)

Bella's experience was similar. She learned that students benefitted when teachers used visuals, motions, and acted out words to "bring them alive!" She pointed out that because of lack of time, busy schedules, and concern for preparing students for standardized tests, teachers often do not pay enough attention to how words can be presented so that students will remember, learn, and use them. She explained

You need visuals, hands on - all the methods: the auditory, kinesthetic, all of those things. Visuals are very important for everyone, not just ELLs, but we are so busy that we don't have time to do those things, and they [ELLs] lose something because they don't have those things. That's what I have learned doing this [inquiry].

Insights about repetition

Similarly, Bella, Sarah and Amy drew conclusions about the importance of repetition in enhancing students' learning. Sarah and Amy discovered that repeated readings augmented students' reading fluency. Sarah explained, "definitely that the repeated readings [were vital] for ESOL kids. We saw gains in that [fluency] for them," and Bella made several references to the importance of repetition for ELLs, especially when new concepts were being introduced. She explained that most teachers were under pressure to teach increased content in a short span of time and were provided little opportunity for repetition of concepts. As a result, students soon forgot what was taught. She noted that teachers needed to repeat new words and present them in multiple ways over time so that the words became ingrained and students learned how to use them correctly. She explained the importance of repetition in teaching vocabulary words, "I think what supported vocabulary [development] and basically what I have learned is that you have to repeat something more than two or three times [or] it doesn't get embedded."

Insights about group competition

Both Sarah and Jessica saw the benefits of engaging students in group competition. Jessica noted that a friendly competition between the girls and boys for a pizza party or a treasure box prize provided the motivation for students to contribute more words to the Word Wall and led to increased use of words in their writing. Sarah's second grade students partnered with their peer-tutors to compete with other peer-tutors and their tutees. They wanted to show increased performance in comparison to their peers. Sarah explained that the peer-tutor-partnerships provided a novel

experience for her students to be competitive since competing was not their normal experience. According to her, providing a safe and comfortable place with expectations for ESOL students to be competitive was unique as they were not expected to "race to be at the top of the class" in their mainstream classrooms.

It was a friendly competition between those big kids, those partnerships, those big kids and those little kids. They would take their notes to each other and they would say, "What'd your kid do today? My kid did this, what did your kid do?" and every day they would compare notes on their performance. So those young kids wanted to please their partners. So I just think that the emotional part of it, them having the comfort, number one, and then that desire to impress and be competitive for the first time. They were each racing to be at the top in my classroom, whereas there was never a race they had in their own classroom.

(Sarah: Interview)

Insights about the importance of authentic conversations

Another important conclusion for teachers was about the importance of having conversations with students. Conversations between teachers and their students helped build the relationship that was necessary to understanding ELLs as students, as well as individuals outside an academic environment. Having regular conversations with students helped teachers understand the unique experiences that may hinder students' academic growth, and led to establishing a relationship of trust between teachers and students. It also helped teachers relate high expectations from students. For example Bella learned that some of her students had traumatic experiences such as immigration raids, seeing parents shipped away and having to live on their own with relatives. Bella pointed out that these harsh realities affect how students learn and that if teachers are unaware of these facts they might assume that students are "lazy" and do not want to learn. Conducting inquiry focused teachers' attention more specifically on observing and conversing with students. These conversations helped teachers understand students

better and provided opportunities that supported the individual learning needs of students. Bella explained:

What I've learned about ELLs is that they do want to learn and do wanna be better but the problem is that their outside life isn't the same as yours and mine. They don't have a stable home, their parents are working two jobs or they have one parent who has to work a million jobs so nobody's home. They [ELLs] are by themselves and that makes a big difference in their academics.

(Bella: Interview)

Similarly, Jessica learned that most of her ELLs did not have adult supervision to support homework tasks and that she needed to create an environment of learning within the school so that any homework she gave them was explicitly explained to them and could be accomplished independently. Amy also valued in-school opportunities for students through her focus on conferring with students. She learned that conversations were a great way for her to develop a relationship with her students that facilitated their academic growth. She learned to understand students as individuals as well as readers. Conferring helped her focus on what they were learning, what they liked to read, and what kinds of books would peak their interest and accelerate their reading habits. Conversations also increased students' knowledge and comprehension of the English language. For example conversation helped students understand unusual structures, such as idioms, in the English language.

In the same way, Sarah noticed that providing students opportunities to interact with peer-tutors established a comfort zone where students gained confidence to participate more in their ESOL groups as well as in their mainstream classrooms. Having regular conversations with students helped teachers develop a relationship that further paved the way to increase students' learning. Bella developed a relationship of

understanding and trust with her students and explained that such a relationship motivated students to learn.

They need . . . to have that relationship because if you show them you care they're gonna work that much harder for you. A lot of them are immigrants or their parents are immigrants. They are afraid and it's harder for them to trust [people they interact with] and when they see that I am on their side, it helps them learn.

(Bella: Interview)

She learned that building a relationship of trust based on regular conversations that she had with students established a connection that supported their academic growth.

Participants explained that inquiry showed them that teaching is not only about increasing students' knowledge but also about understanding students as whole individuals.

Research Sub-question (b) How and Why do Teachers Believe the Study Changed their Thinking and Practice?

The inquiry studies that began with exploring a felt tension teachers experienced provided important learning experiences for the five participants. Three themes that explain how and why teachers learned from inquiry included: (a) teacher learning is supported by systematic data collection and analysis; (b) teachers learn to accept responsibility for student learning and used effective practices; and (c) teachers became empowered to be proactive about instructional decision-making.

Theme One: Teacher Learning is Supported by Systematic Data Collection and Analysis

The systematic nature of the practitioner inquiry cycle makes it imperative for teachers to methodically study their practice as they explore an area of teaching they feel needs improvement. Systematic data collection and analysis led to substantive insights for each of the five participants. The process of collecting and analyzing data

proved to be an important contributor to enhancing teachers' understanding about their practice and its relationship to student learning. From systematic data collection and analysis (a) teachers saw the precise growth in student learning, and (b) teachers began to question assumptions they had made about their practice or students' language proficiency levels.

Teachers saw the precise growth in student learning

By analyzing data collected to answer their wondering, participants gained a better understanding of how well students were progressing. This helped them identify gaps in their practice that needed to be addressed in order to move students forward effectively. For example, analysis of the observational notes of students' oral, written, and reading errors showed Elaine that she needed to focus on the language development of her students more specifically and that she was not addressing their language needs as effectively as required. Similarly, informal interviews with teachers made her more aware of her internal tension and led to a shift in her inquiry from guiding other teachers to explicitly exploring her own efficacy as an ESOL teacher. Before the inquiry she was convinced that she had enough knowledge to recognize the language needs of her students and mentor other teachers. Although her professor had previously suggested that she explore the inner tension related to her effectiveness in addressing the needs of her students, it was systematic data analysis, and not the urging of her professor, that forced her to address the disconnect she was experiencing.

Engaging in the inquiry process helped Elaine to systematically study her practice and understand what was working well and what needed improvement based on the knowledge she gained from analyzing the data to look at the progress students were making. Elaine learned that careful observation of her own practice and what students

were or were not learning helped her understand the relationship between her teaching and their learning. She explained the changes she made to her practice based on this learning:

I think a lot of it is more my own sense of continuing to dig deeply and learning more about how to address language through reading instruction. I also know that in my note taking I notice more about what students are doing. My decision-making is somewhat changed but also I recognize more when I make those language decisions, whereas I didn't recognize it so much before. My changes are more in exploring further the relationship between my background knowledge with [Marie] Clay [and] my new knowledge in the work of Yetta Goodman.

(Elaine: Interview)

By systematically analyzing her teaching as well as the kinds of errors her students were making, Elaine learned that she had been too focused on developing the reading skills of her students and had not paid enough attention to developing their English language. She saw that she needed to establish a better balance between teaching reading and teaching language by specifically planning to address language development *before* rather than *during* a lesson when the need arose, as she had done previously. With evidence from the data, she acknowledged that she could no longer assume that her teaching of ELLs was effective and understood the importance of systematically observing what students were learning by analyzing data such as note-taking, journaling, and interviews with teachers.

Elaine also began to make connections between her previous knowledge of the work by Marie Clay and her new knowledge of the work of Yetta Goodman with ELLs. She found a connection between Yetta Goodman's work with diverse learners and her own growing interest in focusing on teaching ELLs that was not addressed in Clay's work. As a result of analyzing the data, she began to address language learning more

deliberately and continued to observe students' behavior and her own instruction more specifically.

Elaine's case shows that data analysis provides opportunities for looking analytically at instruction in a way that is transparent and forces teachers to see what they may be reluctant to otherwise address, such as Elaine's unwillingness to explore her efficacy which had been previously suggested by her professor. Systematic data analysis was also noted as a powerful way for each of the other participants to make connections between their teaching and student learning. Amy explained that "data-driven instruction" was the key word for her because the data helped her provide differentiated instruction in areas where students needed it. She learned that inquiry was a valuable tool because it showed the exact growth her students were making; this was not always visible to her before engagement in the inquiry. She learned that when teachers engage in continuous and systematic data analysis they can see students' learning and provide differentiated instruction where necessary.

The data served as a guide for teachers to see the exact growth students were making. They were no longer able to simply assume that all students were learning or that their instruction was effective because the data provided evidence of the effect of their teaching on students' learning and growth. Teachers saw where students were struggling, where they needed support to succeed, and this helped teachers in making informed instructional decisions such as what to teach, when to move students to the next level, and when to re-teach a skill or re-group students. Amy explained:

"Well, [the data] I gathered from them [showed me] what they needed [to learn] and that is what I taught. So I didn't go, "OK, we're all learning Chapter One today." It was like if they already knew it, then they passed it,

and did the next thing they needed to learn. It was never redundant for them . . . and I could differentiate."

(Amy: Interview)

Amy was able to provide focused, differentiated instruction that helped her move students forward quickly and purposefully. Prior to the inquiry she could not always see the growth her students made; therefore, she did not have the confidence to provide them with scaffolding where it was needed or to move them forward. The data served as evidence and supported her decision-making.

Similarly, Jessica explained that teachers may become too busy in their daily routines and that if they do not deliberately collect and analyze data to study the effectiveness of their instruction, they miss the opportunity to make necessary changes to their practice. She explained how the data collection and analysis, coupled with critical reflection, led to connecting student learning to improved teaching.

We get so busy and so overwhelmed with the paper work and the day-to-day kinds of things, that I think if you don't actually sit down and write it down [data such as journaling, taking notes] you have a tendency to gloss over a few things. When you actually have to sit down and say, "OK, this is working, this isn't working, how about if I try this instead?" I think it just makes you a better teacher.

(Jessica: Interview)

It was the systematic analysis of data that helped teachers pinpoint gaps in their instruction. When teachers saw which instructional practices increased the learning of students, they improved them or modified them and continued to facilitate student growth. The data analysis process proved to be a powerful way for teachers to gain a better understanding of their teaching and its effects on student learning. In general, based on their learning, teachers regarded inquiry as a more valuable form of

professional development (PD) as compared to formal PD trainings because it helped them improve their practice. Bella explained:

I find that the inquiry project is better PD . . . [because when] you take your [formal] PD back to the classroom, if you don't know how to incorporate it, you end up not using it. So that's one of the things I don't like and then with the inquiry, I feel like I can improve on everything! I do. Oh yes! I feel these inquiry projects you could almost get carried away with the data--what you do, what you don't do, how you do it. It kind of gets a little bit muddy until you really fine-tune it.

(Bella: Interview)

The inquiry process helped teachers to slow down, analytically observe what they were doing in terms of their teaching and look critically at the effect of instruction on students. Jessica described how she connects the process of data analysis and thinking critically about her practice to her learning. "[In inquiry] when you sit down and actually analyze it [data] and you do a little bit of self-reflection, it makes you pinpoint strengths, weaknesses, and makes you fine-tune things." When teachers systematically think about the impact of their teaching, they see both their strengths and weaknesses and are thus able to make necessary changes to their instruction to improve what they do. They believed that this knowledge and change was vital to increase their efficacy as teachers.

Teachers began to question prior assumptions

Inquiry led teachers to explore their previous assumptions. Some teachers questioned their prior assumptions about their practice. Others questioned prior assumptions about the language proficiency of their ELLs. Three participants learned they had made inaccurate assumptions about the effectiveness of their practice. Elaine realized that her belief about herself as an effective ESOL teacher who was ready to mentor her co-teachers was in question when she began to analyze data such as

informal interviews with her co-teachers. Bella questioned what it meant to hold high expectations for ELLs and Jessica questioned the use of the Word Wall as effective in enhancing students' vocabulary. Two participants, Elaine and Amy discovered they had made inaccurate assumptions about their students' language proficiency.

Teachers learned to question assumptions about their practice: As is apparent in the discussion above, Elaine came face-to-face with her strengths and shortcomings when she systematically analyzed data she had collected. She discovered she had made certain assumptions about her role as an ESOL teacher. Elaine started her inquiry journey assuming that she knew enough about addressing the language needs of ELLs to guide other ESOL teachers on how to make instruction comprehensible for students. As she collected data she began to experience an inner tension related to this prior assumption about her efficacy as an ESOL teacher. Initially she began to see that she had not focused on teaching language purposefully by balancing content objectives with language objectives as outlined by the SIOP model of instruction (Echevarria et al., 2008). However, as she began to systematically study her language instruction by exploring materials for providing differentiated instruction available at her school, she saw not only her shortcomings as an ESOL teacher but also her strengths. She explained:

From having participated in this particular inquiry I saw that I wasn't giving myself enough credit as a language teacher. I realized that I had to dig deep and look more closely at my own behaviors to figure out what I was and wasn't doing, and that in the process I was discovering that I was doing more than I thought I was and also that I wasn't doing as much as I could.

(Elaine: Interview)

Analyzing data collected for her inquiry helped develop the practice of carefully studying not only what her students were learning but also systematically looking at her own

teaching. As a result she was able to better understand and make connections between her role as a reading and language teacher and find a balance between the two.

In the same way, from systematically analyzing data, Bella learned to question what it meant to hold high expectations for ELLs. She learned that it was not sufficient for teachers to expect ELLs to excel or simply desire that they make progress. Teachers must convey high expectations for students and carefully structure instruction so it shows them how they can meet those expectations.

Bella came in with the assumption that if teachers related high expectations, students would meet those expectations. She also noted that in general, teachers held high expectations for ESOL students and handed them vocabulary words assuming they would be able to understand, learn, remember, and use the words correctly, in the absence of focused instruction that supported their learning. Her inquiry showed that when teachers demonstrate confidence in the ability of their students to learn and meet higher levels of achievement along with instruction that is structured to help them achieve those standards, students make gains and use their learning abilities in a meaningful way. By providing structured instruction to support students' development of Tier Two vocabulary, Bella confirmed her assumption that ELLs will succeed academically when high expectations are conveyed to them, with specific support on how to meet them. Conveying high expectations with structured instruction on how to achieve them provided the necessary "push" for ELLs to learn complex vocabulary and use it accurately. She explained that,

[i]f you make'em reach here [uses her hand to gesture a low bar] they'll only go there. If you make it higher you can tell if they can reach it or not and I think that's the issue that we have. Too many ELLs – just because they don't speak English that doesn't make them dumb, it just makes them

unable to communicate in English – but they can do the work. You just have to push them a little bit harder and believe it, they can do it and give'em the confidence and I think when you do that . . . they really do it for you.

(Bella: Interview)

Similarly, Jessica assumed that the Word Wall that was a mandated element of her classroom was contributing to her students' vocabulary development. She had never explored how to make it an integral part of her classroom. As she began to question the purpose and function of a Word Wall, it enabled her to change from an inert "bulletin board" to an interactive "Living" Word Wall that increased student learning. Relying on systematically collecting and analyzing data, she saw that it had previously been a "Dead" Word Wall and that she had wasted her time even by putting up words because students did not even look at them. Exploring the use of the wall in a way that allowed students to interact with it made her assumptions apparent to her. The data showed her the success of the "interactive" Wall as opposed to the "inert" Wall, when the size of the wall began to increase suddenly and she found herself struggling to find space to accommodate all the words students were contributing. She explained:

Oh! We were scrunching them in. I mean, it got to the point where there just wasn't enough space and we were just –I'd have to move these around, it started off with just being here [one corner] and then . . . it went all across and I had to move them [alphabets A, B, C . . . indicating words listed] over there, and so this year I think I have T's starting here [on a new wall] and it goes all the way down . . . it's just massive now.

(Jessica: Interview)

Questioning assumptions they had made about their practice alongside collecting data to study the outcome of a change in their practice showed teachers the value of inquiry in questioning taken-for-granted practices in their classroom. The data provided evidence of practices teachers used in their classroom and showed that they did not need to assume their instruction was as effective as they had initially assumed.

Teachers learned to question assumptions about students' language

proficiency: By using the Record of Oral Language, an assessment tool that provided explicit data about each student's control of oral language structures, Elaine learned that she had made inaccurate assumptions about the language proficiency of her students. Elaine noticed that two students in particular whom she had been working with showed less control than other students over simple language structures such as repeating a simple sentence after the teacher, as well as with vocabulary. For example after analyzing the data, she realized that Keith, who had been working at a higher instructional level than the other students, was able to do so only because he was relying heavily on visual rather than on semantic cues. This knowledge helped her question her earlier assumption about his high instructional level and understand that in order to support his language development, she would need to provide support in sentence structure and vocabulary. From the data, Elaine was able to see the causal factors she had not had the clarity to see prior to using the Record of Oral Language assessment tool.

In a similar way, Amy learned that she had assumed that students who were working on the same reading level had the same reading proficiency. As she began to systematically collect and analyze data related to their reading proficiency levels, she discovered that in reality the students' progress varied, which enabled her to provide differentiated instruction more suited to their needs. She learned to question the assumption that she could base instruction on a general assessment of "level" as determined by their placement in a specific reading group, and that her instruction was

more effective if she based it on data to assess the exact progress students were making.

Theme Two: Teachers Learn to Accept Responsibility for Student Learning and Used Effective Practices

The second theme that emerged across the five inquiry studies shows that as teachers participated in inquiry, they took responsibility for student learning by analyzing closely their own instruction and its relationship to student learning. As they did this, they identified practices that did not support students' learning effectively and instead used practices that increased learning. Participants either planned an intervention or modified it and discovered ways to shape learning successfully. For example, Amy and Sarah planned an intervention to study the effects of conferring and peer-tutoring while Bella and Jessica modified how vocabulary was taught and Elaine studied the effectiveness of her instruction on student learning.

Accepting responsibility for student learning

Elaine accepted responsibility for student learning by making content comprehensible in ways that supported the language development of her students. She learned the importance of understanding the relationship between student learning and an equitable education for ELLs. She realized that when teachers fail to present content in ways that are clear for ELLs and that help them grow, and when teachers are unaware of the level of their students' learning, students are denied access to equitable learning opportunities. Elaine also learned that teachers need to present material in ways that students will understand; otherwise they may not learn. She discovered that presenting material in ways that ensured comprehension had been a challenge for her as well as her co-teachers because of the extra time and effort that was required. The

inquiry helped her realize this gap in her practice and she highlighted the significance for teacher educators and leaders to realize this as a gap so they could better support ESOL teachers in addressing the needs of ELLs in ways that were effective and did not feel like a burden. She explained:

I think that what I knew already was that teachers knew they had this responsibility, but it was a lot to take on. It was like they know they have this responsibility to make instruction comprehensible for these kids [ELLs], but the time and the effort that is necessary is a struggle for them just as it was and can still be for me, and that with their plates as full as they are, it's a real challenge. I think that we as educators and teacher leaders need to find a way to help support these teachers in doing that because in order to find that equitable support for ELLs, teachers are going to have to accept that responsibility. Helping them to do it in a way that it doesn't feel like it's just adding more burden to their already overflowing plates is key, and how we're going to do that is a huge challenge.

(Elaine: Interview)

Elaine took responsibility for students' learning by carefully watching what they were doing, the kinds of errors they were making, and what they were learning, and by drawing a causal relationship between her teaching and their learning. As a consequence she learned that as the teacher, it was her responsibility to present material to students in a way that was comprehensible to them and not their responsibility to learn what she wanted them to know. Prior to the inquiry she had focused heavily on teaching content and developing students' reading skills, anticipating that students' language would develop simultaneously. The inquiry made this apparent and she realized that she needed to take responsibility for what her students were not learning and specifically scaffold their learning. In doing this, she realized that when teachers take responsibility for supporting the learning of ELLs, they increase the learning of ALL students. As she explained:

I've been speaking to teachers about the importance of their role in . . . carefully watching what kids are doing and the [instructional] decisions they [teachers] are making and the importance of understanding why they're making those choices. Why they're exhibiting the behaviors that they're exhibiting and opening themselves to realizing it's their responsibility, that why and what the kids are doing, and not the kids' responsibility to understand what they [teachers] want them to see and understand. So it's making these shifts – mainstream kids vs. ELLs, to our responsibility to all kids.

(Elaine: Interview)

The other four participants also demonstrated their comprehension that teaching students in ways that increase learning is the responsibility of teachers. Sarah articulated her commitment to ESOL students and her motivation for making content comprehensible for them when she explained, "Well, *that's my primary responsibility* – ESOL kids. Our ESOL kids are such a huge part of our population, they count strongly!"

These participants accepted responsibility for enhancing the learning of ELLs instead of assigning reasons for students' low academic achievement to outside factors such as the home environment, limited English language proficiency, and prior learning experiences. By systematically and carefully observing their teaching and its effects on what students were learning or were not learning, they explored and created practices that contributed positively to student learning. For example, Bella was quick to spot that teaching eight vocabulary words each week that were not reviewed, did little to develop students' command over new words. Instead, she used strategies that ensured students learned in meaningful ways. She was able to make learning new words an "ingrained" process so that students not only recognized them, but remembered, understood and used them, both in their conversations as well as in their written work. Like Elaine, she also alluded to time and effort as a challenge for teachers to meaningfully accept responsibility for students' learning. The pressures teachers face, such as standardized

tests, at the same time that they are required to manage other responsibilities, result in their rushing through instruction without investigating its impact on student learning. She explained:

[Learning from inquiry] just backed up what I was doing, that sometimes you teach things in a certain way, like a word by itself – like what it means, but you have to tell students how you use it. Sometimes we kinda forget that as teachers we say, "What other thing can fit here?" and move on. So it doesn't stay in their system, so they can't say how to say "fun" other than as "fun" because they never really learn how to because they don't know it can be "exciting" and "adventure," it can be "thrilling." They [students] don't know that because it's not emphasized, it's just kinda pushed through.

(Bella: Interview)

Along with Bella, Jessica and Sarah also expressed concern about students' performance on standardized tests, which points to the disconnect between what ELLs know and what they are expected to know as assessed on tests. As they engaged in inquiry, participants became aware of their responsibility in closing this gap for ELLs so that in addition to learning the curriculum, enhancing their comprehension, reading fluency and writing skills, students could successfully demonstrate their learning on standardized tests. As a result of the inquiry, not only were participants able to increase student learning as evidenced by their performance in class activities but also saw substantial gains in students' scores on standardized tests.

Using effective practices for ELLs

As part of accepting responsibility for students' learning, teachers made decisions to use practices that increased student learning. As opposed to passively accepting and repeating practices and assuming they were effective, teachers observed, identified and altered instruction that did not contribute meaningfully to student learning. Instead they replaced them with effective practices that supported learning.

For instance, Elaine took responsibility for developing the language of students as she began to balance content and language objectives more purposefully. She learned the value of planning for language as well as content as described in the SIOP model that had not become fully evident to her during her graduate program (Echevarria et al., 2008). She explained:

Once I recognized and started really thinking about it, I was bringing in more. I was pulling out more, like pictures to show, concept words or examples of different vocabulary. I was thinking more about language transfer and language interference and was finding myself thinking . . . and I found myself using a lot more tools with the language support than I had been before.

(Elaine: Interview)

She took responsibility for explicitly addressing the needs of ELLs and thereby enhancing her own learning related to effectively teaching ELLs. Similarly, the other four participants tried strategies that are supported in the literature as effective practices for ELLs. For example, they used games, synonyms/antonyms, motions, a word wall, real life objects, an iPad, and pictures to increase student learning (Peregoy & Boyle, 2005; Wagstaff, 1999). As a result, teachers found that students responded with unprecedented enthusiasm for the new strategies they introduced. For instance, Jessica described the success of the Word Wall

[The Word Wall] just exploded and all of a sudden it was like I couldn't keep up with these sheets they were finding them in their work . . . I found it almost got to the point where every time I turned around there would be a line, so I said "guys, write it on a Post-it note and put it up there." It almost got to be an obsession. They were obsessed with words. It was almost like a word obsession, they were so excited about it.

(Jessica: Interview)

What had started as a "Dead" Word Wall that no one paid any attention to became an interactive Wall that students were obsessed with. Jessica assigned the reason to her

efforts to actively involve students in their learning, encouraging them to make suggestions about how they wanted to use the Word Wall, and contributing words they read in books to add to the Wall. Similarly, Sarah noticed her students became more focused when they were reminded that their peer-tutors would be arriving to work with them soon and greeted them with excitement.

Additionally, teachers learned the importance of communicating high expectations. Bella explained that part of taking responsibility for the education of students means setting high standards with reasonable expectations so that students achieve target goals. She learned that when teachers let students know that teachers believe they can learn and attain a higher level of achievement, it motivates them to learn.

Bella suggested that ELLs are frequently not "pushed" hard enough to achieve a higher level. She alluded to teachers in general having low expectations of ELLs and watering down the curriculum by holding off on more advanced vocabulary because, they argue, ELLs do not know basic words such as a "cup", "mug," and "glass." However, she learned that students are motivated to meet high standards when teachers present information in ways that is clear to them, when students know what is expected of them, and have sufficient guidance about how they can achieve those goals. Bella was successful in relating to her students that she believed they could achieve the targets she had set for them.

Likewise, Sarah took responsibility for enhancing her students reading fluency by creating a comfortable space where they could learn. She learned that when the affective filter is lowered and ELLs are provided a "comfort zone" that makes them feel it

is safe to learn, where they have opportunities to interact with above-grade-level peers, who come to their "comfortable" environment, it increases their learning:

Their affective filter dropped. I mean a stranger, a stranger could walk in and see it. So it was really cool to see them be able to be comfortable and have so-called outsiders in these big kids come into their world and just see the difference in their behavior with these big kids compared to their behavior with their grade level peers in their classrooms.

(Sarah: Interview)

Although Sarah had focused on enhancing the reading fluency of her students, she noted that an unintended consequence of her study was increased level of comfort and confidence that created the environment necessary for supporting students' language development. She discovered that by providing students an environment where their physical and linguistic differences were not as apparent as they were in the mainstream classroom increased their willingness to participate in class discussions. Most peer-tutors were from diverse backgrounds, i.e., Hispanic, African American, Asian and Caucasian. Although the importance of a low affective filter in developing language is stressed in teacher education programs, Sarah used this knowledge and saw its practical implication on students' learning, albeit unintentionally.

Theme Three: Teachers Became Empowered to be Proactive About Instructional Decision-Making

The third theme shows that as a result of active engagement in transforming instruction and creating opportunities for student learning, teachers perceived inquiry to be an effective tool for empowering them to make important instructional decisions and shaping their own learning. All teachers endorsed this. Both Amy and Sarah described it as "taking learning into my own hands:"

I love that inquiry is there so that I can become a better teacher. I can help my students better. I'm glad I finally found it, 'cause I was getting frustrated, I was asking for it, I was going, "How do I find out about this? I want to learn

this, where do I go to find this? Oh! They don't have that course right now." Now it's like I can do it [inquiry] on my own and I know how to go about it, just taking learning into my own hands, not, this is done for me. I don't have to wait for someone to give it to me, I'm the cheerleader.

(Amy: Interview)

In comparison to formal PD, teachers believed that inquiry enabled them to investigate an area of felt concern and that, in turn, led to creating strategies that transformed their instruction and increased student learning. Teachers stressed that formal PD is not always available in an area of concern to the teacher, and that most PD that teachers receive is of little use to them once they go back to their classrooms. Sarah and Amy explained that this was because available PD may not be relevant for immediate application in the classroom. Elaine explained, "[You go] back to your schools and you see that it's a hit and miss kind of application of whatever PD is being given, even the best of, and it's frustrating." Bella stated that most PD consists of one-shot programs that are not followed by in-class support for teachers and they end up not being used. Jessica was the only participant who felt that both formal PD and inquiry had their own benefits, whereas Elaine expressed her disappointment with the PD provided for ESOL teachers in Maple County. According to her, the training provided through the County was "compliance oriented," and did not focus on developing curriculum and instruction for ESOL students, but only offered courses required for ESOL endorsement or certification. She felt these courses did little to prepare teachers to address the needs of ELLs effectively. She expressed her disappointment:

Our ESOL department has never been very proactive, I think, in connecting ESOL to other content areas. I think that they've approached ESOL strictly from a language learning aspect and compliance [perspective] and the courses that they've offered in the District have been strictly for endorsement and certification.

(Elaine: Interview)

Additionally, Sarah shared her frustration with the ESOL aspect of her graduate program because she felt it did not provide her with authentic learning experiences to prepare her to teach ELLs successfully.

However, teachers felt inquiry was a ready tool that enabled them to take learning into their own hands and overcome the gap in providing effective instruction for ELLs. Sarah described the inquiry experience as breaking away from the tradition where teachers follow instructions and are trained by others, including researchers, teacher educators, and administrators. She valued the inquiry experience because it gave her ownership of her learning by making apparent the important role she played as a "professional" who could take learning into her hands and make important instructional decisions based on evidence from research *she* conducted in her classroom. The inquiry enabled her to identify and explore an area of felt tension *she* experienced, and once identified, search for a solution that would best address the individualized needs of her students rather than have experts tell her what a possible solution would be. She explained:

It's [instruction based on learning from inquiry] individualized instruction. I care more about it because it's mine – this is mine! I'm the one saying what's important to me, I'm saying what I need, I'm a professional. I am a professional and I know what I'm doing and I think too often people in education – there's always somebody else telling you what to say, what to do, what is best – exactly best, and what's working with me this year with these kids may not be what works for me next year with those kids because they are different.

(Sarah: Interview)

Teachers saw inquiry as a valuable tool that provided the teacher with structures and tools to assess and address the individual needs of students within the context of their unique classrooms. It served to counter to the one-size-fits-all PD model that makes the

distinctiveness of the individual learning context invisible. It is this quality of inquiry that creates powerful PD for teachers working with ELLs, because it offers them a tool to study the individualized needs of diverse students and to provide differentiated instruction. Elaine shared her hope that inquiry would continue to be championed. "One of my biggest hopes is that teachers will continue to embrace inquiry and the support will be there to continue embracing it because I think it's so powerful." Inquiry helped teachers discover best practices for students based on their individual needs. With the rapid change in student demographics, inquiry becomes a valuable means for teachers to discover best practices that support effective teaching to address emerging problems.

Conclusion

This chapter drew across the inquiry studies of the five participants in this study and presented key findings. First, a discussion of the questions and problems teachers addressed and conclusions they drew was presented. Second, a discussion of teachers' beliefs about what they learned from inquiry and how it changed their thinking and practice was supported by three themes: (a) teacher learning is supported by systematic data collection and analysis; (b) teachers learn to accept responsibility for student learning and use effective practices; and (c) teachers became empowered to be proactive about instructional decision-making. The next chapter presents a summary of this study and discussion of the findings.

CHAPTER 6 DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Overview of the Study

The increasing language diversity in schools across the United States suggests the need for professional development (PD) efforts that support teachers to effectively teach ELLs. Research points to a teaching force that is insufficiently prepared to teach linguistically diverse students (Gándara et al., 2005; Karabenick & Noda, 2004; Menken & Antuñez, 2001; Téllez & Waxman, 2006) and are unaware of fundamental issues related to students' second language development (Karabenick & Noda, 2004). As evident from state and national assessments, the challenge for teachers and teacher educators to address the underachievement of ELLs has never been greater as more ELLs are included in mainstream classrooms (Fry, 2007). This study, therefore, attempted to explore ways to deal with the necessity to prepare teachers to successfully address the learning needs of linguistically diverse students. Research further indicates that little is known about teacher learning from practitioner inquiry with ELLs (Nevárez-La Torre, 1999; 2010). Therefore, this study investigated the perspectives of ELL teachers concerning what they learned about ELLs and their own practice from engaging in an inquiry on issues they identified and explored.

The over-arching research question that guided this dissertation was how teachers of ELLs perceived practitioner inquiry had influenced their perspectives and practice related to teaching ELLs. The areas of inquiry for this research included the kinds of questions teachers addressed in their inquiry studies, and how they believed their inquiry experience shaped their thinking about teaching ELLs or their practice. The study used qualitative methods of data collection and analysis and employed

constructivism as the epistemological stance to understand how participants made meaning of their studies as they co-constructed their inquiry experiences during the individual interview with the researcher (Crotty, 1998).

Criterion sampling was used to recruit five female participants from Maple County School District who had completed a cycle of inquiry with one or more ELL(s) in the academic year 2009-10 and who were willing to share their inquiry stories. The data consisted of individual interviews, artifacts such as teachers' inquiry write-ups, students' written work, test scores, and pictures, electronic mails, and researcher's field notes. Each teacher participated in one 60 to 90 minute individual interview that provided the opportunity for eliciting rich data on their inquiry experience. Both structural narrative analysis and thematic analysis, used simultaneously as data analysis methods, served to triangulate the findings.

Findings from the structural analysis provided useful insights about the backgrounds of teachers, how they came to engage in an inquiry, what kinds of questions they posed, and how they learned from their experiences. These findings suggested that participants began the inquiry by identifying a problem related to teaching ELLs in general, and questioning existing practices that were ineffective. They conducted their inquiries to increase the vocabulary or reading fluency of their students, plan for second language learning, explore outcomes of conferring with ELLs or study the effects of peer partnerships. In the process, they either modified their practice to study the effects of diverse instructional strategies on students' learning or studied their own practice as ELL teachers. All participants learned to use systematic data collection and analysis to see what and how students were learning and where they were

struggling. This helped them provide support where it was needed to move students forward more quickly and effectively, and to better understand their own instructional practices. Based on what they learned from the inquiry, participants questioned prior assumptions about their practice, about the language proficiency of their students, or what it meant to communicate high expectations for ELLs. All participants concluded their studies with a commitment to further inquiry.

Results of the thematic analysis highlighted three themes that indicated inquiry supported teacher learning by enabling teachers to (a) systematically collect and analyze data; (b) accept responsibility for student learning and the use of effective practices; and (c) become empowered to be proactive about instructional decision-making. The findings further indicated that teachers increased their knowledge of ELLs and were successful in increasing their performance, as tested on students' written and oral work, as well as increased teachers' perceptions of students' performance on written and oral work.

Discussion of Findings

In addition to presenting an overview of this study, the purpose of this chapter is to connect the findings of this study to the literature discussed in Chapter Two and present conclusions drawn from the study to highlight (a) what teachers learn about teaching ELLs; (b) what the study suggests about inquiry as Professional Development (PD); and (c) implications of this study for researchers and PD leaders.

What did Teachers Learn about Teaching English Language Learners?

Findings indicated that participants made several discoveries based on their inquiries that were related to teaching ELLs. It is important to note that their discoveries reflect what is stated in the ELL literature as fundamental for effectively teaching ELLs

(Echevarria et al., 2008; Gandara et al., 2005; Krashen, 1982; Minaya-Rowe, 2006; Peregoy & Boyle, 2005). That is, their inquiries led them to stronger implementation of foundational pedagogy for ELLs, but did not lead them to develop innovative strategies. As they explored a "felt personal tension" about their practice and investigated issues related to teaching ELLs, participants learned that they were not addressing students' language development as needed for their academic growth. Subsequently, they drew conclusions about their instruction and about teaching ELLs.

First, they learned that they needed to pay specific attention to developing vocabulary because of its importance in developing students' reading, writing, listening and speaking skills (August, Carlo, Dressler & Snow, 2005; Wong Fillmore & Snow, 2000). ELLs with limited vocabulary face difficulties comprehending grade level texts as compared to their English-only peers and are at more risk of being identified as learning disabled (August et al., 2005; Wong Fillmore & Snow, 2000). Teachers learned that it is the teachers' responsibility to provide exposure to language in a vivid way that increases students' academic and basic vocabulary by increasing students' understanding of word formations, cognates, and patterns in academic and everyday language to enrich their vocabulary (Wong Fillmore & Snow, 2000).

Second, teachers learned that modifying instruction, specifically identifying instructional methods, and providing language modifications, made language comprehensible for ELLs so that they would understand how to use it. This included teaching with specific directions and presenting material in multiple ways, such as through gestures, pictures, visuals, and motions that provided background information or clues to the meaning of words, as well as by using games. Echevarria et al. (2008)

suggest that in addition to using a variety of strategies ELLs need "explicit instruction, careful modeling, and scaffolding" (p.97) to understand content. They need *declarative* knowledge that explains what the strategy is; *procedural* knowledge that explains how they can use it; and *conditional* knowledge that helps them to understand when and why specific strategies can be used (Echevarria et al., 2008).

Participants also became more convinced of the value of communicating high expectations for students to succeed by using intellectually challenging activities (Minaya-Rowe, 2006; Mohr & Mohr, 2007; Peregoy & Boyle, 2005). According to Krashen's "*Input Hypothesis*" (Peregoy & Boyle, 2005, p.55), teachers who support students in acquiring a second language present content to ELLs that is not only "comprehensible" (Peregoy & Boyle, 2005, p. 55) but also challenging at a level that is slightly above their present level of second language proficiency. Krashen represented this as $i + 1$, where i indicates the input (or content that is being taught) while $+1$ stands for the challenging level that is slightly beyond the learners' proficiency level.

Third, participants understood the importance of providing students with a safe and comfortable environment with a low affective filter in facilitating their learning (Gándara et al., 2005; Krashen, 1982; Peregoy & Boyle, 2005). Teachers created learning environments that lowered the affective filter and that were inclusive of ELLs, engaged in practices, such as one-on-one conversations and conferring, that helped them to learn about their ELL students. Gaining a better understanding of the ELLs, including their prior learning experiences and academic interests, they understood how to modify their instruction to meet the individual learning needs of the ELLs. Research on second language learning and teaching suggests providing an environment with a low "affective

filter or social-emotional variables" (Peregoy & Boyle, 2005, p. 56) that fosters second language acquisition. Krashen (1982) suggests that the most significant affective variables that support second language development are "low-anxiety learning environment, student motivation to learn the language, self-confidence and self-esteem"(p.56). This means that when students are provided with an environment where they feel comfortable both socially and emotionally, where they are encouraged to learn, and when their self-confidence and self-esteem are positively supported, they are more likely to learn a second language.

Fourth, they learned the importance of authentic conversations in building relationships necessary to understand ELLs as students as well as individuals in the context of their home environments and communities, and to promote learning (Gándara et al., 2005). Having regular conversations helped teachers understand the challenges and struggles that hamper ELLs' academic success, and fostered a relationship of trust between teachers and students that helped teachers support the successful learning of ELLs. The literature on second language development and teaching ELLs places strong emphasis on the role of conversations as a basis for literacy development, as well as for learning both inside and outside school (Echevarria, 1995; Wong Fillmore & Snow, 2000). The importance of teacher-student interaction in building relationships between students and their teachers has been supported in the literature (Coady et al., 2011; Cholewa, 2009; Cummins, 2000). Positive student-teacher relationships form the basis of effective practices in schools and can have a positive impact on the academic growth and behavior of students, particularly when students and teachers come from diverse social, cultural or linguistic backgrounds

(Cholewa, 2009; Cummins, 2000; Ryan & Patrick, 2001). Engaging in dialogue allows students an opportunity to share ideas and contribute to a learning environment where they can shape their own learning as teacher-student relationships are developed (Cholewa, 2009). Conversations provide a way to expand on students' academic, personal, social and cultural experiences in an academic context, and develop a community of learners (Cholewa, 2009). Regular conversations between teachers and ELLs can further build relationships of trust and care that support learning, because human relationships are at the heart of teaching and learning and can significantly impact student success or failure in school (Cholewa, 2009; Cummins, 2000). When students feel that teachers care for them and believe in their ability to succeed, they are more likely to perform well as compared to when they believe the reverse is true (Cummins, 2000).

The current study adds to the dearth of literature on the effect of practitioner inquiry on the PD of teachers of ELLs (Nevárez-La Torre, 1999, 2010). Teachers in this study explored and implemented practices to increase the learning of ELLs as a result of their inquiry studies. What was most interesting was that these are foundational practices recommended in the literature as effective pedagogy for ELLs, knowledge that teachers had most likely encountered in teacher education or in PD they had previously. These findings raise questions about the teacher preparation and PD experiences related to teaching ELLs that participants had received prior to their engagement with inquiry. Assuming teachers had been exposed to these foundational instructional concepts previously, it seems they had not understood the real value of the practices suggested in the literature for ELLs until they explored and discovered them through the inquiry

process themselves. Findings from this study indicate that the initial practice of teachers was not consistent with research based practices for ELLs. At the beginning of the study, teachers were not using effective practices or were using them in ways that did not increase student learning effectively. However, their learning from inquiry moved them closer to practices recommended for ELLs.

What Does the Study Suggest About Inquiry as Professional Development?

All participants in this study were either ESOL endorsed, certified, both, or had taken several graduate level courses developed for teachers of ELLs. This means that they had studied research on ELLs and effective ELL pedagogy. Nevertheless, they were not using very basic elements of pedagogy recommended in the literature. Inquiry helped them begin to incorporate basic components of ELL pedagogy. Therefore, this study suggests that academic coursework and experience teaching ELLs alone may be insufficient to prepare teachers to teach ELLs successfully (Gandara et al., 2005). They also need authentic experiences related to teaching ELLs and continuing PD experiences that allows them to be proactive in exploring and studying their own practice and its relationship to what students are learning.

Although findings from this study are modest, nevertheless they contribute to filling the gap in research on effective PD and its relationship to student learning (Guskey & Yoon, 2009; Wayne et al., 2008). Conclusions based on the data from this study highlight teachers' perceptions of increased student learning from their inquiry studies. As they explored their practices, participants increased their knowledge of effective pedagogy for ELLs that led to an increase in what students were learning as documented in the data the teachers collected. Research on effective PD suggests the need for rigorous, high quality research that illuminates the relationship between PD,

change in instructional practice, and improvement in students' learning (Guskey & Yoon, 2009; Wayne et al., 2008).

Consistent with findings from prior research, this study supported inquiry as job-embedded PD that was useful for educators in adapting new instruction and material to their unique classroom contexts (Guskey & Yoon, 2009). In support of inquiry as effective PD, teachers generated activities based on the "careful adaptation of varied practices to specific content, [and] process," (Guskey & Yoon, 2009, p. 497). As a result they increased their knowledge and understanding of successfully teaching ELLs.

Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) present three conceptions of teacher knowledge. First, *knowledge-for-practice*, refers to formal knowledge and theory that is developed by experts for teachers to implement in their classrooms. Second, *knowledge-in-practice*, is generated when teachers analyze and explore knowledge based on their practice to study how it informs future pedagogical decisions they make. Third, *knowledge-of-practice*, is produced when teachers look at their schools and/or classrooms as places for investigation as they use the knowledge produced by experts for interrogating and interpreting their practice. Both *knowledge-in-practice* and *knowledge-of-practice* present a framework for conceptualizing practitioner inquiry for PD for teachers. The most powerful teacher learning occurs when teachers generate research-based practices that link theory to practice, blur the lines between teacher research and expert research, and challenge the notion of what constitutes knowledge, evidence, and acceptable research (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993, 1999). As such, *knowledge-of-practice* makes evident the relationship between teacher learning and student learning and prepares teachers to be successful with all students, including

those from diverse linguistic, socio-economic, and cultural backgrounds (Borko et al., 2008; Caro-Bruce et al., 2007; Cochran-Smith & Demers 2008; Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2008; Desimone, 2009; Feiman-Nemser 2008; King, 2008).

It appears that teachers in this study had received *knowledge-for-practice* from the teacher education programs that they had but were not using it effectively. It was from the systematic investigation of their practice during the inquiry that they gained *knowledge-in-practice* that enabled them to address the needs of ELLs more effectively (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993; 1999). Only one participant, Elaine, showed that she was moving toward *knowledge-of-practice*. She reported that she could clearly make connections between the *knowledge-for-practice* that she had gained during her graduate coursework and through PD with the *knowledge-in-practice* that she had generated during the inquiry. The other participants generated *knowledge-in-practice* but had not yet made thoughtful connections to the literature. They re-discovered and began to use basic knowledge necessary to teach ELLs successfully as they became aware of fundamental issues related to students' second language development, such as the need for explicit development of vocabulary in meaningful ways (Karabenick & Noda, 2004; Wong Fillmore & Snow, 2000). Teachers explored and re-discovered specific pedagogy for ELLs, such as the value of repetition, building relationships, and lowering the affective filter, and effective pedagogy for all students, such as using the Word-Wall interactively.

Further, the study provided empirical support to show that when teachers engage in inquiry they increase opportunities for authentic professional learning that helps them use practices that are effective in increasing student learning in meaningful ways

(Guskey & Yoon, 2009; Wayne, et al., 2008; Webster-Wright, 2009). Results of this study support inquiry, as PD that moves away from simply instructing teachers, toward PD that provides opportunities for *authentic* professional learning (Kennedy, 1998; Webster-Wright, 2009). Contrary to the assumption that well-developed PD programs with good facilitators will result in professional learning and a change in professional practice (Wayne, et al., 2008; Webster-Wright, 2009), results indicated that when teachers become proactive in their own learning and explore issues they identify, they create opportunities for their own learning. Engagement in inquiry provided teachers with experiences based on genuine tasks situated in real life contexts. They continued to learn as professionals who co-constructed knowledge actively engaged in their learning (Webster-Wright, 2009). As such, they generated research that is holistic, based on perspectives of professionals who work in contemporary contexts (Webster-Wright, 2009). The results also draw attention to the intricate link between teacher learning and student learning. As teachers explored problems and modified their instruction, they noted increased student learning, which further supported their understanding of effective pedagogy for students.

Implications

In addition to adding to previous knowledge on practitioner inquiry, PD and PD for ELLs, this study also presents implications for research and practice in these areas. A discussion of implications for PD leaders is presented followed by implications for researchers.

Implications for Professional Development Leaders

The study suggests implications for PD Leaders that include inquiry as a valuable tool for increasing authentic professional knowledge, inquiry as a valuable tool for

understanding ELLs, the need for integrating research and inquiry, and disseminating knowledge gained from inquiry studies.

Inquiry as a valuable tool for increasing authentic professional knowledge

Findings from this research are notable because they support prior empirical studies that confirm the benefits of inquiry, such as encouraging teachers to look deeply at their practice with the goal of transforming it, increasing student learning by gaining a better understanding of their students, and becoming aware of the cause and effect relationship between their instruction and student outcomes (Ermeling, 2010; Swanson & Finnan, 1996). Therefore, this study suggests that practitioner inquiry can be used as a valuable tool for increasing teachers' authentic professional knowledge that is related to their practice. It appears that ESOL teachers would benefit from inquiry that is built into their teacher education programs, as well as in ongoing PD in schools. Keeping in mind that the majority of teachers are predominantly White and monolingual with little or no exposure to diverse cultures, languages or the unique backgrounds of their ELLs, it seems that inquiry would help them explore and understand the unique needs of these students (Coady et al., 2007; Echevarria et al., 2008; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Lucas & Grinberg, 2008; Menken & Antuñez, 2001). This would further help them provide instruction specific to ELLs' needs and based on their learning from inquiry.

Inquiry as a valuable tool for understanding ELLs

Practitioner inquiry appears to be valuable in increasing teacher's understanding of their students, especially when students come from a diverse range of linguistic, cultural, and social backgrounds. This knowledge, in turn, can lead to an increase in student learning. Consistent with research indicating that effective PD helps teachers understand students from diverse backgrounds, the study suggested that conducting

inquiry provided teachers with sufficient insights to become successful with students who were not only different from their teachers in terms of their racial, cultural, social, economic, and linguistic backgrounds, but who came from different parts of the world. Inquiry, therefore, was an appropriate tool for teachers to use in order to develop a better understanding of their students' unique backgrounds, diverse ways of learning, and their lives outside of school. This study suggests that inquiry creates opportunities for teachers to discover and use appropriate teaching methods based on their understanding of their learners, and in the process, learn strategies for providing more equitable education for ELLs (Garcia, 2002; King, 2008; Nieto, 2004).

Integrating research and inquiry

Another important implication for practitioners and PD leaders can be integrating knowledge of current research with practitioner inquiry to enable teachers to understand formal knowledge and theories related to teaching so they can develop stronger pedagogy through the inquiry process. Cochran-Smith & Lytle (1999) suggest a shift from the traditional role of teachers as technicians, to teachers as researchers who draw on expert knowledge to construct practitioner knowledge. This could serve to democratize research and emancipate teachers as knowledge producers and not just consumers of knowledge. Since teachers had already studied ELL pedagogy, integration of research with practice may enable them to return to some of what they studied in the past, to look for strategies suggested to address the issues they face. This integration could enable them to combine the *knowledge-in-practice* they generate through inquiry with the *knowledge-for-practice* they received in their teacher education program and other PD they have had, and move them toward the more sophisticated *knowledge-of-practice*.

Results from the current study suggested that although most teachers were able to generate *knowledge-in-practice*, they had not yet moved towards making connections with the literature on ELLs and integrating the two. One way to support the integration of the practical knowledge teachers gain with the expert knowledge generated by expert researchers could be to introduce ESOL teachers to book studies as a part of practitioner inquiry. Research shows that effective book study groups provide a forum for teachers to gauge outside knowledge on a particular topic "that can help them explore and prepare to implement new teaching practices in their classrooms" (Yendol-Hoppey & Dana, 2010, p. 59). Book studies provide opportunities for teachers to engage in conversations that can lead to improved pedagogical skills, school change, and the development of powerful learning communities by sharing ideas, building knowledge, and making decisions about improving practice (Yendol-Hoppey & Dana, 2010). Studies of research based books or articles where teachers have used effective practices successfully with ELLs would provide specific direction and knowledge for ESOL teachers to begin implementing inquiry within their classrooms and making vital connections between research and practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999). Research shows that when teachers engage in inquiry, and review books and articles to draw connections between research and practice simultaneously, they can generate new ideas to implement in their classrooms and contribute positively to their own PD (Hollins, McIntyre, DeBose, Hollins & Towner, 2004; Killion, 1999, 2002a, 2002b; Wei et al. (2009). One suggestion for reviewing books via book study groups can be to use the text, *Best Practices in ELL Instruction* (Li Guofang, Edwards & Gunderson, 2010).

Disseminating knowledge gained from inquiry studies

Another suggestion is to provide opportunities for teachers to share their findings with a wider audience. Disseminating findings from teachers' research with ELLs at forums where teachers can share their learning with other ESOL teachers, PD leaders, administrators, and graduate students can promote the use of inquiry as PD for teachers in a wider context. In addition to showcasing inquiry studies at their local schools and districts, teachers can present their work at regional and national conferences for teachers of ELLs, such as the Sunshine State TESOL or other TESOL conferences. Such opportunities would provide ESOL teachers from across the nation or state an opportunity to share ideas, collaborate, and network that can further contribute to their PD.

Implications for Researchers

As mentioned before, the findings of this dissertation are based on a small research study that involved teachers of ELLs. Further research that explores teachers' learning from inquiry with ELLs is needed to add to the limited literature base. Further research may consider the following points.

Need for comparative studies

Studies that look at the ways inquiry shapes teacher learning in comparison to how formal PD or teacher education coursework influences teacher learning are required to further understand the contributions from inquiry. Findings from this study suggest the need for further research that documents what teachers implement from PD and/or from teacher education coursework, and how that connects to the recommendations for practice from the literature. It seems important to look at this within the context of the pedagogy used in PD or coursework, so that the linkages between teacher education

and PD pedagogy and subsequent teacher practice are clearly evaluated. Such studies would also highlight the effectiveness of inquiry in comparison to formal teacher education efforts to determine the kinds of strategies that might be used to develop optimal learning for teachers.

Longitudinal studies that document inquiry with ESOL teachers

One limitation of this study was that it captured participants' learning experiences at one point in time. As such it did not capture prolonged activity which teachers engaged in over time. As learning is a continuous process, future studies that follow teachers through their inquiry journeys over time may uncover vital knowledge for PD of teachers through engagement with inquiry.

Findings from this study suggested that the knowledge participants gained as a result of their inquiries was based on what is suggested in the literature as basic pedagogy for ELLs. Further studies can follow ELL teachers engaged in inquiry over time to explore whether teachers move from discovering basic pedagogy to the more sophisticated *knowledge-of-practice* that emerges when teachers integrate research-based practices with the knowledge they gain as they explore their own practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999). Such studies may explore whether teachers begin by experimenting with increasing effectiveness in basic pedagogy, and over time become more skilled in generating practices more closely aligned with *knowledge-of-practice*.

Conclusion

This study supports practitioner inquiry for the continuous PD of teachers of ELLs that increases their understanding of working effectively with ELLs. The research indicated that inquiry addresses the changing needs of schools and classrooms in today's diverse climate. It enables teachers to study the unique needs of individual

students and the classrooms in which they study and re-discover practices that are recommended for ELLs as best practices, which they were not using prior to their learning from inquiry. The study further suggested that inquiry is an effective PD tool because it leads teachers to explore their practice deeply, transform it, increase student learning, gain a better understanding of their students, and become aware of the relationship between their instruction and student outcomes. As a result, the teachers studied herein showed a greater commitment towards accepting responsibility for what their students learn or do not learn.

APPENDIX A INTERVIEW GUIDE

Tell me a little bit about yourself. How did you come to a career in education?

How did you come to work in Maple County Schools (MCS)?

Tell me a little bit about professional development (PD) in Pinellas County. What opportunity do you have as a MCS teacher for PD?

How did you come to work with ELLs? What were your experiences?

How did you become involved in doing inquiry projects?

Describe the “wonderings” that led to your inquiry with an ELL(s) last year.

What methods of data collection did you use?

How did you analyze the data you collected?

What did you learn from the findings?

You brought some documents related to your inquiry with you. Tell me about what you brought (e.g., inquiry write-ups, raw data, and student work).

How do you believe this document/these documents relate to your findings?

Why did you engage in an inquiry on this issue, what motivated you?

In what ways, if any, did your perspectives on teaching ELLs change as a result of engaging in this inquiry?

In what ways, if any, did engagement in this inquiry illuminate the needs of ELL learners that you might not have been aware of prior to engaging in this work?

As a result of engaging in this inquiry, what specific knowledge, if any, did you gain about ELLs?

If you could go back in time and start this inquiry all over, what would you have done differently, and why?

Based on your experiences and learning from this inquiry what changes have you made in your teaching practice?

Are you engaged in an inquiry this year? If so, how has your previous inquiry shaped the inquiry you are engaged in currently?

Would you like to add anything further?

[NOTE: Individualized questions were asked as the interview progressed to probe deeper into each teacher's individual inquiries, perspectives and experiences]

Sample individualized question:

Tell me more about the Reading Recovery Training you had.

What was the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) training like?

APPENDIX B INFORMED CONSENT

Protocol Title: *The Role of Practitioner Inquiry in Professional Development of Teachers Working with English Language Learners (ELLs).*

Please read this consent document carefully before deciding to participate in this study.

Purpose of the research study:

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences and perspectives of K-12 teachers who engage in practitioner research with ELLs. Specifically, I wish to understand the nature of your inquiry studies, what you believe you learned from systematically inquiring into problems and issues related to ELL students; and how you believe the inquiry impacted your practice and understanding of the needs of ELL students.

What you will be asked to do in the study:

I request permission to interview you and to collect documents that you believe show that change in your beliefs or instructional practice occurred as a result of your inquiry study.

With your permission, interviews will be audio recorded. I also request permission to take field notes during our meeting. Only the principal investigator and advisors will have access to these audio tapes, and they will be destroyed after the study is completed. I will also ask to collect any relevant documents you feel comfortable sharing that may help me understand your perceptions of practitioner inquiry for professional development of teachers working with ELLs. No identifying information for unconsenting individuals will be recorded in the field notes or collected in the documents (like student work). And I will not ask to take photographs of you.

Time required:

No more than 90 minutes of your time will be required. This will include 15 minute warm-up before the interview and a 15 minute discussion period after the interview to build rapport.

Risks and Benefits:

There are no anticipated risks associated with your participation. However, it is expected that your own personal professional growth will benefit from your participation. Also, you will contribute to generating knowledge that will add to the understanding of practitioner inquiry for professional development of teachers working with ELLs.

Compensation:

You will receive a \$20 gift card for a book store to acknowledge your time and contribution to this study.

Confidentiality:

Your identity will be kept confidential to the extent provided by law. You will be assigned a pseudonym. The list connecting your name to this pseudonym will be kept confidential by the principal investigator. When the study is completed and the data have been analyzed, the list will be destroyed. Your real name will not be used in any report. The final results will be presented in a dissertation to fulfill the University of Florida's requirement for a PhD in education, and in education journals and magazines for possible publication.

Voluntary participation:

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. There is no penalty for not participating.

Right to withdraw from the study:

You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence. You do not have to answer any question you do not want to answer.

Whom to contact if you have questions about the study:

██████████, College of Education, School of Teaching and Learning, Norman Hall, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL.

Home address:

2901 SW 13th Street, Apt 246, Gainesville, FL 32608. Phone# ██████████

OR

Dr. ██████████, Associate Professor, PO Box 117048, College of Education, Norman Hall, Gainesville, FL 32611. Phone# ██████████

Whom to contact about your rights as a research participant in the study:

IRB02 Office, Box 112250, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611-2250; phone 392-0433.

Agreement:

I have read the procedure described above. I voluntarily agree to participate in the procedure and I have received a copy of this description.

Participant: _____ Date: _____

Principal Investigator: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX C
RECRUITMENT EMAIL

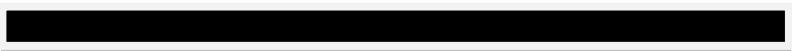
Hello,

My name is [REDACTED], and I am a doctoral student in the School of Teaching and Learning, University of Florida about to embark on my PhD dissertation research. I am interested in studying teachers who have engaged in practitioner inquiry focused on ELL students in the last year (2009-10).

The purpose of this qualitative research is to explore the experiences and perspectives of K-12 teachers who engage in practitioner research with ELLs. I wish to understand the nature of your inquiry, what you believe you learned from systematically inquiring into problems and issues related to ELL students, and how you believe the inquiry impacted your practice and understanding of the needs of ELL students, if at all.

I am seeking to interview teachers who have completed a cycle of inquiry with one or more ELL(s) in the past one year and would be willing to share their inquiry stories. You will be requested to participate in one, 90 minute, individual interview with the principal investigator and share your experiences and perspectives of practitioner inquiry with ELLs. You will also be requested to share any document(s) that you believe shows that change occurred as a result of your inquiry, for example, data collected, student work, and journals etc.

You will be presented with a \$20 gift card for participating in this research. Through this research I hope to generate knowledge that will add to the understanding of practitioner inquiry for professional development of teachers



working with ELLs.

If you are interested in participating in an interview, please reply to:



cell: 

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Doctoral Candidate

University of Florida

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Aliya Zafar was born in Kohat in the north of Pakistan. Second of four sisters, she has travelled and lived in several countries, including China, India, England, Wales, and the United States. Her travels provided her with opportunities to study and teach in international contexts. Aliya completed a Bachelor of Arts degree in English and psychology and Master of Arts in English from the Federal Government College for Women in Islamabad. She came to the United States in 2006 as a Fulbright scholar and completed a master's degree in education from the University of Florida.

Aliya received her Ph.D. in Education from the University of Florida in the spring of 2012. She has 18 years of teaching experience in K-12 settings and in higher education. Her experiences of teaching in multi-cultural contexts have encouraged her to explore issues of diversity, social equity, multi-cultural education, and teacher education. Her interests include English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), teacher education, qualitative research, critical pedagogy, and media literacy. During her education at the University of Florida, she has presented her work at several conferences, including the American Educational Research Association (AERA), National Association of Bilingual Education (NABE), Association of Teacher Educators (ATE), and Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL).