EXAMINING THE ELL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCES OF GENERAL EDUCATORS WITH ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS: A NARRATIVE RESEARCH STUDY USING SCHÖN’S THEORY OF THE REFLECTIVE PRACTITIONER

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Christopher L. Celozzi

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Abstract

This narrative research study explored how general education teachers describe their ELL professional development experiences. Specifically, this project revealed general educators’ reflective practices in terms of how they translated completed professional development training into the learning environment of their own classrooms. The theoretical framework that guided this study was Schön’s (1987) theory of the reflective practitioner. In particular, the concepts of reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action were used to frame the study. Eleven educators from one PK-12 public school district in Massachusetts participated in the study. The researcher collected data through semi-structured interviews with participants via video conferencing software. Inductive and deductive analyses were used to develop thirteen themes within three categories. From the findings, five conclusions were drawn. First, teachers were better equipped to identify and respond to student needs as a result of their professional development training. Second, teachers acknowledged that professional growth and development occurred as a result of their professional development training. Third, teachers employed reflective processes to facilitate planning, problem-solving, and assessment and aid in future implementation. Fourth, teachers recognized the impact that the professional development training had on the learning environment of their classrooms. Fifth, the professional development training offered a platform for reflection, collegial support, feedback, and collaborative learning. Findings from this research present a number of implications for practice at the local, state, and national levels of education. These implications include collaborative educator training, development of preservice partnerships, and updated standards of accountability and assessment.
Keywords: English language learner, English as a second language, learning, multiculturalism, multicultural education, limited English proficiency, professional development, reflection, reflection-in-action, reflection-on-action, reflective processes, student learning, and teachers of ELL
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Chapter 1: Introduction

_Multiculturalism_ is a broad term and one that is not easily encompassed in a uniform definition. Definitions of multiculturalism are guided by underlying beliefs that the various cultures in a society warrant equal respect, sociocultural differences should be acknowledged and valued, and all individuals should be encouraged and empowered within an inclusive environment (Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992). The term _multicultural education_ is similarly broad, and the definition varies depending on the particular curriculum or pedagogical focus (Gorski & Covert, 2000). However, multicultural education is based on the concept of an equitable educational experience for every student (Gorski & Covert, 2000). As such, for the purposes of this study, multicultural education is recognized as “a progressive approach for transforming education that holistically critiques and addresses current shortcomings, failings, and discriminatory practices in education” (Gorski & Covert, 2000, p. 2).

Multiculturalism is comprised of a variety of cultural, religious and racial characteristics, which are demonstrated through diverse values, behaviors and language (International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions [IFLA], 2013). Statistics predict that by the year 2030, approximately 40% of the U.S. student population will be classified as English language learners (ELLs) (Buczynski & Hansen, 2010). ELLs are defined as “those students who are not yet proficient in English and who require instructional support in order to fully access academic content in their classes” (Ballantyne, Sanderman, & Levy, 2008, p. 2). This term may also reference students who have not completed certain state proficiency assessments and are classified as “limited English proficient” (Ballantyne et al., 2008, p. 2). Even students who have successfully
tested as English language proficient may still require varying degrees of classroom support (Ballantyne et al., 2008). This is especially the case with accessing and utilizing complex academic vocabulary (Ballantyne et al., 2008).

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, the number of students characterized as ELLs in U.S. public schools has risen from 3.7 million in 2000-2001 to 4.7 million in 2009-2010 (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). Additionally, statistics demonstrate that “the number of students who required instruction in ESL [English as a second language] increased 51% between the 1997 and 1998 school year and the 2007 and 2008 school year, from 3.5 million to 5.3 million students” (Ross, 2014, p. 87). Furthermore, “the number of school-age children (children ages 5-17) who spoke a language other than English at home rose from 4.7 to 11.2 million between 1980 and 2009, or from 10 to 21 percent of the population in this age range” (U.S. Department of Education, 2012, p. 1). The increase is particularly high in cities, where ELLs accounted for an average of 14% of total enrollment (U.S. Department of Education, 2012).

ELLs are faced with a number of challenges, such as inadequate funding, inequitable standardized testing requirements and limited instructional support inside mainstream general education classrooms (Ballantyne et al., 2008; Vang, 2006). As a result, the ELL student population must not only endure frustration and stagnated learning, but is also susceptible to increased dropout rates (Sheng, Sheng, & Anderson, 2011; Tellez & Waxman, 2010). For example, Tellez and Waxman (2010) noted a dropout rate of 40% for Mexican American ELLs in certain regions. This is particularly troubling considering that the Hispanic population in the United States “now constitutes
the largest minority population” and that “Hispanics will represent 30% of the total school population by 2050” (McIntyre, Kyle, Chen, Munoz, & Beldon, 2010, p. 334).

Despite the rapid growth of ELL students in K-12 public schools, and the significant challenges they face, general education teachers remain unprepared to meet the needs of this population. It is reported that only an estimated 12.5% of educators have had eight hours (or more) of ELL training in the past three years (Chen, et al., 2008).

According to a 2016 report by the Education Commission of the States [EDCS], “Over 30 states do not require ELL training for general classroom teachers beyond the federal requirements ELLs” (p. 1). When considering such statistics, there is an urgent need for general educators to equip themselves with the skills and abilities required to serve the ELL student population.

This chapter will begin with an overview of the problem of practice, which will be followed by the purpose of the study. Next, the research questions, theoretical framework, and research plan overview will be shared, and followed with a discussion of the significance of the study. Lastly, study assumptions, limitations and key terms will be presented.

**Statement of the Problem**

The next section provides an overview of the problem of practice. This section begins with a description of the problem, as well as a brief history and background of the topic. Finally, the section concludes with the purpose statement for the study.

**Problem of practice.** Although various populations, along with their diverse ideas and backgrounds, have always been embedded in the fabric of the United States, multicultural education remains largely uncharted, as does the widespread embrace of a
comprehensive program to facilitate the learning of immigrant populations (Ballantyne et al., 2008). Numerous social, cultural, and educational challenges hinder the academic advancement of ELLs in the United States (Ballantyne et al., 2008; Nordmeyer, 2008). These challenges include limited program funding, scarce resources, standardized assessment expectations, and inadequate teacher training and preparation (Calderon, Slavin, & Sanchez, 2011; Sheng et al., 2011; Vang, 2006).

Despite the clear need for general education teachers to meet the academic demands of this growing population, less than 13% of national educators have completed training for this particular student population (Casteel & Ballantyne, 2010). Thus, the problem of practice addressed by this study was the observed unpreparedness of general educators to combat the abundance of learning obstacles that may hinder the educational advancement of ELLs in the United States. To address the challenges experienced by ELL students in the United States, an educator professional development program should be considered in order to help meet the needs of this diverse student population (Kim, Erekson, Bunten, & Hinchey, 2014).

Professional development is defined as a facilitated learning opportunity designed to introduce knowledge, skills, or other competencies in order to improve professional practice, career growth, or job performance (National Professional Development Center on Inclusion [NPDCI], 2008). The duration and rigor of professional development training will differ according to the particular program, as will outcomes relating to formal credit, certification, or licensure (NPDCI, 2008). In education, professional development can be introduced at the national, state, or local levels and can vary from single workshop sessions to multi-semester offerings (NPDCI, 2008). Professional
development in education includes content-specific instruction that is aligned to instructional goals, curriculum resources, or learning standards (NPDCI, 2008).

In Massachusetts, professional development for English language learner education is available and required for all teachers and administrators employed in K-12 public schools. The Massachusetts Department of Education recently introduced the “Rethinking Equity and Teaching for English Language Learners” (RETELL) initiative, which seeks to further support the academic success of ELLs (MDESE, 2015b). “RETELL implements a systemic approach that includes professional development for Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) teachers designed to enable them to make rigorous content accessible to their English learners” (MDESE, 2015b). By completing the state-sanctioned RETELL professional development, educators and administrators may apply for a certification classified as an SEI endorsement (MDESE, 2015b). By doing so, the Massachusetts Department of Education is demonstrating a commitment to providing an equitable educational environment for the ELL student population beyond the requirements of the federal government (EDCS, 2016).

According to Merriam, Caffarella, and Baumgartner (2007), learning can be characterized as the construction of knowledge that is the result of an individual’s experiences. Reflection is an integral component to learning, as it is the means by which knowledge is constructed (Merriam et al., 2007). In education, these reflective experiences can manifest themselves within a classroom environment and professional development seminar, promoting knowledge construction and consequent understanding (Pitsoe & Maila, 2013). Existing literature on professional development reveals limited research on the role of reflective practice in shaping educators’ experiences and how this
may influence teachers’ subsequent ELL perspectives and practices. Reflective practice can be defined as “the process of learning through and from experience towards gaining new insights of self and/or practice” (Finlay, 2008, p. 1). Although some research has indicated that reflective practice may be a useful component of professional development (Osterman & Kottkamp, 1993), there remains a lack of research on how educators’ reflective practices relating to professional development training may be incorporated into the learning environment of their own classrooms. Research in the area of reflective practice and professional development could prove useful for an improvement of current training programs. The research could also benefit in the development and organization of future offerings for pre and in-service educators, both within districts and university preparation programs.

Over the course of this section, the problem of practice for this study was detailed. The section began with a description of the problem, as well as a brief history and background of the topic. In the next section, the purpose statement of the study will be discussed.

**Purpose Statement**

The U.S. Department of Education reported that by the year 2030, ELL students will comprise an estimated 40% of the total K-12 public school enrollment (Chen, Kyle, & McIntyre, 2008). The population of ELL students grew 51% from 1996 to 2006, with an approximate student enrollment of 5.1 million (Galguera, 2011). For the 2012-2013 academic year, the U.S. Department of Education estimated that approximately 4.85 million ELLs were enrolled in K-12 public schools, which would represent nearly 10% of the total student population (Migration Policy Institute, 2015). Speaking on the rise of
this student population, Casteel & Ballantyne (2010) noted, “The rapid increase of this student population will require the preparation and support of teachers to effectively meet the linguistic and educational demands of ELLs” (p. 19).

Further, there is a need for deeper investigation of the merit of existing training programs (Milnes & Cheng, 2008; Vang, 2006). In fact, Kibler and Roman (2013) argue that “Professional development, a critical need for practicing teachers of ELLs, is understudied in relation to other aspects of teacher education” (p. 189). Future consideration of this topic must not only encompass the challenges faced by English learners, but also focus on the best-practice instructional strategies utilized to maximize their skills and abilities (Kim et al., 2014; Sheng et al., 2011).

To achieve this cohesion, Milnes and Cheng (2008) recommended professional development training to increase integrated instructional practices among mainstream educators, in addition to providing insight into the nuances of linguistic development. Educators must be trained to identify and utilize instructional practices that will advance the academic development of ELL students, providing them with a favorable educational environment in which they can thrive. As Borg (2011) stated, “Our understandings of the impact of language teacher education on practising teachers’ beliefs remain incipient and the issue merits much additional empirical attention” (p. 371). By gaining an improved understanding of how professional development may influence teacher beliefs and practice, educators can better support the instructional requirements of this rapidly increasing student population (Welsh & Newman, 2010).

To aid in this development, reflective practice has been shown to be a useful tool (Wieringa, 2011). Reflective practices may be facilitated through professional
development by allowing practitioners to become aware of their performance (Osterman & Kottkamp, 1993). By doing so, educators can use that awareness to evaluate, adjustment and improve (Osterman & Kottkamp, 1993). This is due to the fact that reflective practice may support one’s ability to use experiences to link knowledge and practice (Pitsoe & Maila, 2013). As a result, teachers may have a better understanding of their strengths and deficiencies, which may promote improvement and development (Pitsoe & Maila, 2013).

Therefore, the purpose of this narrative research study was to explore how general education teachers describe their ELL professional development experiences. Specifically, this project sought to reveal general educators’ reflective practices in terms of how they translated completed professional development training into the learning environment of their own classrooms. In doing so, this research will offer a deeper understanding of general educators’ perceptions, beliefs and instructional practices following ELL professional development training.

This section detailed the purpose statement of the study. In the next section, the research questions will be detailed, and the rationale for selection will be discussed.

Research Questions

My problem of practice is an observed unpreparedness of general educators to combat the abundance of learning obstacles that may hinder the educational advancement of English language learners in the United States. With the challenges experienced by English language learner students in the United States, a comprehensive professional development program should be offered in order to best meet the needs of this diverse student population.
The research questions were framed within a qualitative approach. The overarching research question that guided this study was “How do general education teachers describe their ELL professional development experiences?”

One secondary question served to uncover the reflective processes that occurred during their experiences:

(a) How do general education teachers describe their experiences of reflecting on and translating their ELL professional development training into practice in their classrooms?

These research questions were designed in order to gauge general educators’ perspectives of professional training and determine the reflective processes that occurred during their experiences. The next section will detail the theoretical framework selected to guide this project.

**Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework that guided this study was Schön’s (1987) theory of the reflective practitioner. According to Dewey (1910), reflection can be defined as a process of contemplation or consideration that may derive deeper insight or understanding of knowledge and its supporting grounds, generally employed to find a solution to a problem. Regarding the concept of reflective practitioner, Schön (1987) posited, “When practitioners respond to the indeterminate zones of practice by holding a reflective conversation with the materials of their situations, they remake a part of their practice world and thereby reveal the usually tacit processes of worldmaking that underlie all of their practice” (p. 36).
Schön’s (1987) theory was appropriate for this study, as it facilitates an understanding of teacher reflection, action, and practice in the classroom and how such behavior may have been influenced by professional development experiences. The concepts of reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action were the two reflective processes applied when attempting to understand the “how” of educators’ experiences in translating their ELL professional development training into practice in the classroom.

**Reflection-in-action.** Schön described the concept of reflection-in-action as “what a good teacher does as she tries to make sense of a pupil’s puzzling question, seeking to discover, in the midst of a classroom discussion, just how that pupil understands the problem at hand” (Schön, 1995, p. 30). Reflection-in-action is knowledge or understanding about a particular practice that is recognized while in action, captured in the expression “thinking on your feet” (Schön, 1989, p. 7). The foundation of a practitioner’s knowledge consists of three parts: ideas of past experiences (types), theories-in-action (rules), and deciding on a course of action (appreciative systems) (Schön, 1989). The reflection-in-action process is driven by the integration of these three components in order to reach a desired outcome (Schön, 1989).

According to Schön (1987), reflection-in-action promotes learning through “constructing and testing new categories of understanding, strategies of action, and ways of framing problems” (p. 39). Furthermore, reflection-in-action can be characterized as a situational response, or set of action strategies where the practitioner “subjects them to critical analysis and perhaps also to restructuring and to further on-the-spot experiment” (Schön, 1995, p. 31). Through reflection, an individual can observe and critique “the tacit understandings that have grown up around the repetitive experiences of a specialized
practice, and can make new sense of the situations of uncertainty or uniqueness which he may allow himself to experience” (Schön, 1989, p. 6).

**Reflection-on-action.** Reflection-on-action allows individuals to explore their action after an incident (Schön, 1983). This appraisal can be facilitated through the use of recordings, documentation review, or speaking with a mentor or supervisor (Schön, 1983). Schön writes, “As [inquirers] frame the problem of the situation, they determine the features to which they will attend, the order they will attempt to impose on the situation, the directions in which they will try to change it” (p. 165). Participants employing this process can develop questions and ideas pertaining to future activities. With reflection-on-action, participants are able to gain a better understanding of their experiences, which allows for individual improvement and development (Smith, 1994). Smith concludes that “It is here that the full importance of reflection-on-action becomes revealed. As we think and act, questions arise that cannot be answered in the present” (p. 150). Therefore, this practice is integral for a complete experience of acknowledgment, gaining insight, and fostering creative practice (Smith, 1994).

In utilizing the processes of reflection-in-action and reflective-on-action, the researcher was able to examine multiple facets of participant experience and practice. Both reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action are responses to an uncertain or confusing situation, in which the primary goal of the practitioner is to improve the situation (English, 2007). Each process offers a unique method to do so, with reflection-in-action characterized by a more reactive response focused on maintaining continuity, whereas reflection-on-action deals with altered implementation or action based on a post-action realization (English, 2007). By employing both processes, there was a more
complete understanding of how teachers’ translated their ELL professional development into the learning environment of their classrooms.

Research implications. Due to the use of participant reflective interpretation and experiential assessment, Schön’s (1987) theory of the reflective practitioner was applicable to this research study. Additionally, the data collection method of interviews allowed for a greater opportunity for participant reflection, due to the in-depth analysis and evaluative nature that participant interviews allowed (Creswell, 2013). This was particularly apparent while examining participant attitudes and beliefs pertaining to professional development or situations when the experience of the individual was significant. Schön’s (1987) theory allowed for a proper determination of how a learner makes meaning following certain experiences. This insight was valuable in assessing a change in educator perception and practice following ELL professional development training. Furthermore, Schön’s (1987) theory offered a platform to examine the attitudes and beliefs of educators who work with ELL students and how these perceptions and subsequent instructional practices may have been altered through practitioner reflection. Lastly, Schön’s (1987) theory informed the research questions by employing the reflective processes of reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action to uncover and illuminate the challenges teachers faced following the professional development. By doing so, greater insight was offered into how the professional development may have impacted their beliefs and subsequent practice.

Over the course of this section, an overview of the selected theoretical framework was offered, in which the suitability of Schön’s (1987) theory of the reflective
practitioner was examined. The next section will contain an overview of the research plan.

**Overview of Research Plan**

This research was completed by employing a narrative approach using a qualitative design. The participants were from one public PK-12 school district in Massachusetts. Eleven participants were interviewed via online conference software.

When this study uses the term *participants*, they are defined as elementary and secondary generalist licensed teachers per Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education standards (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2016b). In Massachusetts, all academic PreK-12 teachers are licensed as general educator teachers (MDESE, 2016b). While some teachers receive additional licensure in core-subjects (also known as content-areas), they can still be referred to as general education teachers (although in specific instances, they may also be referred to as core-subject generalists) (MDESE, 2016b). For the purpose of this study, from this point onward, participants will be referred to as general education teachers. This definition and interpretation was confirmed through a conversation with a Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education representative in the Office of Educator Licensure via telephone on December 1, 2016.

Data collection was achieved through semi-structured interviews with 11 general education teachers to describe their ELL professional development experiences. The researcher used transcribed participant interviews, interview notes, and a researcher journal for data collection. Data was collected and analyzed simultaneously during each phase. The interview process consisted of three stages, commencing with an initial in-
take interview with a purposeful sample to validate that they met the study criteria, gather demographic information, and to arrange for the interview. The second stage involves one-on-one digitally recorded interviews with participants using semi-structured questions. The final stage involved sharing the interview transcript with participants to provide them with an opportunity to reflect, enhance, respond, and/or validate their narrative.

The data analysis process employed both inductive and deductive methods. Data analysis was achieved through a combination of manual coding as well as the use of coding software (MaxQDA). To enhance trustworthiness, the transcriptions were emailed to the participants, and the coding process involved an inter-rater reliability method. Five conclusions were drawn from the findings of this study.

**Statement of Significance**

Addressing this problem has significance at the national, state and local levels. At the local level, the growing ELL student population is being affected by the lack of sufficient and specialized instructional support, as demonstrated by the 15.7% of ELL students who dropped out in 2014 (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2015b). In the researcher’s district, the large number of students classified as ELLs makes such training a priority. Milnes and Cheng (2008) stated that although content comprehension and language development should occur simultaneously, many teachers do not share or practice such beliefs. This is partly attributed to the intimidation felt by many mainstream teachers in developing adequate learning strategies for ELL students (Milnes & Cheng, 2008). Language development should not be the sole responsibility of ESL/ELL specialists, but rather should involve all classroom subject-
area instructors (Milnes & Cheng, 2008). Furthermore, there should be collaboration between mainstream teachers and specialists regarding content delivery, instructional practices, and assessment design for ELL students (Milnes & Cheng, 2008).

At the state level, education departments are attempting to implement protocols to adequately prepare educators to meet federal requirements (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2016; Rhode Island Department of Education, 2015). Recently, the Massachusetts Department of Education introduced the “Rethinking Equity and Teaching for English Language Learners” (RETELL) initiative, which seeks to further support the academic success of ELLs (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2016). The implementation of a comprehensive ELL teacher training program is a necessary and overdue component in adequately preparing educators for today’s multicultural learning environment and surging ELL student population.

At the national level, “professional development to address the needs of English Language Learners, particularly for schools with increasing numbers of ELLs, is of critical importance in the performance measures for schools as mandated by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001” (Friend, Most, & McCrary, 2009, p. 55). Vang (2006) claimed that despite the legislative decrees, there has been little progress in developing strategies to aid teachers in narrowing the ELL achievement gap. Although there are federal laws mandating the availability of certain services, there are no universal guidelines or protocols concerning identification, instruction, or assessment of ELL students (Calderon et al., 2011).
This study could inform practice through number of ways. First, by offering insights into how professional development should be implemented to make it an efficient and effective experience for general education teachers. Next, by providing input on district and state implementation to maximize participation and favorable outcomes. Finally, by encouraging discussion on current standards concerning ELL student expectations and teacher accountability.

This study could inform theory through an examination on the merit of reflection as it pertains to facilitating knowledge, and educator growth and development. Specifically, by considering the uses of reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action as tools for learning through experience. Furthermore, the study could inform how professional development training and continued teacher education may benefit from employing the highlighted reflective processes.

This section provided an overview on the significance of the research problem, and highlighted its impact at the local, state and national levels, as well as the potential impact on practice and theory. The next section will address the assumptions that guided this study.

**Assumptions**

This study was guided by the following assumptions:

1. Learning is based on experience
2. Reflection is an integral component of learning and development
3. Learning and reflection are mutually inclusive
4. Participants will share their experiences and perspectives openly with the researcher
Limitations and Delimiters

Limitations of this research are as follows:

1. The entire sample was drawn from the same district, with K-12 teachers participating.
2. Singular data collection method. This was due to concerns regarding district policy for teacher observations in the classroom.
3. Does not capture entire professional development experience, only learning up to point of interview.
4. Limited time for building rapport with participants, based on single interview of 45-60 minutes. This was compensated through introductory email and follow-up exchanges, as well as sharing of transcript following the conclusion of the interview.

For this research study, the delimiters were:

1. English language learner professional development in Massachusetts.
2. General education teachers who had completed the training within the past 6-12 months
3. Focused only on teacher experience.
4. Interviews were conducted for 45-60 minutes via online conferencing software.

This section listed the limitations and delimiters. The next section will highlight key terms used over the course of this study.

Key Terms

This section defines the key terms used throughout this study.
*English as a second language:* An alternative designation for ELL or multilingual students. The term also refers to programs, methodology, or curriculum utilized for English language instruction (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

*English language learner:* An individual “who has limited ability in speaking, reading, writing, or understanding of the English language, and whose native language is a language other than English; or who lives in a family or community environment where a language other than English is the dominant language” (U.S. Department of Education, 2016, para. 2).

*Learning:* “A process that brings together cognitive, emotional, and environmental influences and experiences for acquiring, enhancing, or making changes in one’s knowledge, skills, values, and worldviews” (Merriam et al., 2007, p. 77).

*Limited English proficiency:* The state of not yet achieving state standards relating to English language proficiency among English language learners (Ballantyne et al., 2008).

*Multicultural education:* “A progressive approach for transforming education that holistically critiques and addresses current shortcomings, failings, and discriminatory practices in education” (Gorski & Covert, 2000, p. 2).

*Multiculturalism:* The belief that the various cultures in a society warrant equal respect, that sociocultural differences should be acknowledged and valued, and that all individuals should be encouraged and empowered within an inclusive environment (Sue et al., 1992).
**Professional development:** A facilitated learning opportunity designed to introduce knowledge, skills, or other competencies in order to improve professional practice, career growth, or job performance (NPDCI, 2008).

**Reflection:** The process of contemplation or consideration that may derive deeper insight or understanding of knowledge and its supporting grounds, generally employed to find a solution to a problem (Dewey, 1910).

**Reflection-in-action:** Knowledge or understanding about a particular practice that is recognized while in action (Schön, 1989).

**Reflection-on-action:** A process in which individuals have an opportunity to explore their action after a particular incident (Schön, 1983).

**Reflective processes:** The stages of thought or contemplation initiated by consciously exploring or reflecting upon an experience (Jasper, 2003).

**Sheltered English immersion:** An English language learning process in which all instruction, curriculum, and presentation is delivered in English. The program is specifically designed for students who are learning the language (Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 2016).

**Student learning:** “The knowledge, skills, and abilities that a student has attained at the end (or as a result) of his or her engagement in a particular set of higher education experiences” (Council for Higher Education Accreditation, 2003, p. 5).

**Teachers of ELL:** Teachers who teach English language learners, Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) students, English as a Second Language (ESL) students, English to Speakers of Other Language (ESOL) students, or limited English proficient (LEP) students.
This section defined the key terms used over the course of this study. The next section will provide a summary of the chapter.

**Summary**

This chapter has introduced the problem of practice concerning inadequacy in ELL education for teachers, and its significance at the local, state and national level. This study sought to address this problem by focusing on a central research question—How do general education teachers describe their ELL professional development experiences?, and one subquestion—How do general education teachers describe their experiences of reflecting on and translating their ELL professional development training into practice in their classrooms?—through the lens of Schön’s (1987) theory of the reflective practitioner. The next chapter reviews the literature related to this study.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this doctoral thesis project was to explore how general education teachers describe their ELL professional development experiences. Specifically, this project sought to reveal general educators’ reflective practices in terms of how they translated completed professional development training into the learning environment of their own classrooms.

This chapter begins by discussing issues in ELL instruction, teacher preparedness for working with ELL students, and professional development for ELL instruction. Those sections are followed by an examination of three strands of literature: professional development, the work of Schōn as it pertains to reflective practice, and adult learning. The final section summarizes key points.

To conduct this literature search, education and academic databases (EbscoHost, ERIC, and ProQuest) were searched using several key words and phrases: English language learner, English as a second language, learning, multiculturalism, multicultural education, limited English proficiency, professional development, reflection, reflection-in-action, reflection-on-action, reflective processes, student learning, and teachers of ELL.

The Context of Instruction for English Language Learners

English language learners face a number of social, cultural, and educational challenges that may hinder their academic advancement. Sheng et al. (2011) examined the literature pertaining to ELL student retention and detailed the biggest risk factors for
this growing student population. The primary factors that may impact ELL retention rates include English proficiency level, socioeconomic status, and cultural differences.

ELLs are traditionally educated in general education classrooms, which creates limitations related to instruction, the testing environment of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) Act of 2001, and the inclusionary model itself. Sheng et al. (2011) indicated the need for improved inclusion programs that are specifically geared towards the unique characteristics of ELL students and made a number of recommendations to improve this problem. Sheng et al. (2011) noted the critical parts in achieving this goal, “To close the achievement gap between ELL students and English-proficient students, research has indicated the necessity to improve education for English as a second language (ESL)/bilingual teachers and to provide content-area teachers with training in working with ELL students” (p. 102).

Among such suggestions on how to achieve this outcome, the authors advocated for a more vigilant approach to teacher training and professional development, in which cultural awareness and sensitivity are emphasized (Sheng et al., 2011). Also, they argued for increased funding to meet such requirements, regardless of current ELL student enrollment (Sheng et al., 2011). As Sheng et al. (2011) asserted, “Teachers who are aware of cultural differences are more likely to adapt pedagogy to meet the needs of ELL students and help them succeed in school” (p. 102).

This section provided an overview on the context of instruction for English language learners. The next section will discuss the instructional limitations that ELL students face.
**Instructional limitations.** Soto-Hinman (2011) stated that ELL students spend less than 2% of their learning time on the development of oral language. When ELL students do speak in school, their responses are typically confined to one or two words (Soto-Hinman, 2011). This method of oral language development is inadequate for English acquisition and the comprehension of subject-area content (Soto-Hinman, 2011). Alonso (2013) noted that language and content are equally important for supporting ELL academic success. In this regard, it is the onus of content teachers to develop the necessary skills to foster the learning of all students. Teachers must be aware of not confusing a student’s academic ability with their linguistic fluency. As a result, teachers should be cognizant of the linguistic needs of ELL students, which would influence content delivery and mainstream instruction (Alonso, 2013).

**Standardized testing expectations.** The current state of education has further complicated education for ELL students. In NCLB, student assessment standards and achievement expectations are equally applicable to the ELL (Chen et al., 2008). Regarding NCLB legislation, Vang (2006) stated, “The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) gives an educational model that benefits only those who are at the top of the academic scales” (p. 25). As Roy-Campbell (2012) noted, although NCLB has legally required schools to employ highly qualified educators, the legislation did not include stipulations concerning the preparedness of content-area educators for ELL instruction.

As a result, the established procedural norms that are in place to measure success may actually serve to stagnate ELL educational progress and development (Roy-Campbell, 2012). Furthermore, this broadened emphasis on standardized testing results
and the subsequent professional refocusing has altered the concept of meaningful instruction, resulting in practices aimed at raising test scores (Roy-Campbell, 2012).

In one study concerning ELL achievement on standardized assessments, Lee (2012) asserted, “Research suggests that immigrant English learners score lower on standardized tests, graduate from high school at lower rates and drop out at higher rates than their native English-speaking peers” (p. 66). Opponents have criticized this generic, ‘one size fits all’ approach to education and questioned the merit of utilizing such tests to validate student learning (Lee, 2012). Although such assessments are ideally offered to validate teacher instruction, such policies undermine the education of this at-risk student population (Vang, 2006). As stated by Hamann and Reeves (2013), “Although No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2002) has directed more attention to the academic performance of English language learners (ELLs) and former ELLs than ever before, it has not necessarily improved that performance” (p. 81).

Educators have responded in different ways to the additional urgency created by NCLB (Kim et al., 2014). Concerned about standardized testing accountability, they feel additional pressure for ELL students to speedily pursue English literacy (Bowers, Fitts, Quirk, & Jung, 2010). In addition, the policies are leaving teachers confused and discouraged when attempting to reconcile accountability with differentiated needs of ELL students (Chen et al., 2008).

In some instances, school administrators seek standardized test exemption for some ELL students, fearing the negative impact their participation may have on the overall school scores (Vang, 2006). Murakami (2009) asserted that standardized testing procedures hinder educators’ willingness to celebrate student diversity. This idea is
rooted in school leaders advocating for instructional strategies that may promote standardized assessment scores, but stifle cultural identity, individualism, and creativity (Murakami, 2009).

Another detriment of standardized testing is the type of learning that these assessments evaluate. Standardized tests emphasize memorization and recitation rather than new knowledge acquisition and application (Vang, 2006). The difficulties experienced by ELLs often have more to do with content presentation than academic ability (Misco & Castaneda, 2009). Regarding ELL struggles and educator preparedness, Hamann and Reeves (2013) stated, “ELLs’ current relative lack of success illustrates, then, that key educators have lacked needed information and skills to serve ELLs well, that they have lacked the will to serve ELLs as well as other students, and/or that the current arrangement of most school systems inhibits many ELLs’ prospects” (p. 85). Therefore, the current model of holding ELLs accountable for standardized testing outcomes is not conducive in determining their actual academic abilities. The next section will highlight the inclusionary classroom model, which is utilized by the majority of school districts when delivering education to ELL students.

Inclusionary classroom model. Compounding the issue that standardized testing expectations present in ELL education, some general education teachers struggle with the inclusionary classroom model. In most states, ELLs are educated in mainstream, or general education classrooms (often referred to as an inclusionary classroom setting). (Reeves, 2006). This can create difficulty for the general education teacher, particularly if they are not prepared to meet the needs of their ELL students.
When some general education teachers are confronted with the inclusionary model, Lee (2012) stated, “Too often, the work of educating English learners is seen as the sole responsibility of the ELL or bilingual staff in a school” (p. 68). In contrast, in a report cited by Pardini (2008), collaboration—specifically, the collaboration between the mainstream, content-area teachers and their ELL/ESL counterparts—has proven to be the most useful feature in promoting the success of ELL students at Saint Paul Public School District in Saint Paul, Minnesota. The district’s success in closing the achievement gap between ELL and non-ELL students has also been attributed to a variety of strategies employed by the ELL department (Pardini, 2008), including the implementation of an individualized, needs-based approach to student instruction (Pardini, 2008).

With the varying viewpoints on who should take responsibility for the education of ELL students, also comes the issue of educator assumptions underlying classroom practice. English’s (2009) analysis of teacher responsibility concerning ELL instruction revealed that educator assumptions can impact classroom practice. Misconceptions from mainstream teachers may include equating linguistic mastery with cognitive ability, a reluctance to introduce content material prior to fluency, and the degree of supplemental support to be provided (English, 2009). Therefore, effective professional development should not only focus on knowledge intended to increase instructional competency, but also serve to overcome any biases that may impact ELL student learning (English, 2009).

The context for which ELL students necessitate additional instructional support is clear. The knowledge of many mainstream teachers and the environment of many inclusionary classroom settings are inadequate. As a result, ELL students are suffering the consequences of such shortcomings. The increased significance of standardized
assessment results only serves to further complicate the situation, with many
administrators seeking to disqualify ELL students from testing due to concerns over
school rankings and evaluations (Vang, 2006). Compounding the issue is the fact that the
instruction delivered in preparation for testing does not encourage true integration, but
instead favors rapid assimilation (Lee, 2012). Educators must be trained to identify and
utilize instructional practices that will advance the academic development of ELL
students, providing them with a favorable educational environment in which they can
thrive.

This section offered a context of instruction for ELL education and instruction.
Over the course of this section, a discussion of the educational environment and
corresponding expectations for the ELL student and general education teacher were
discussed. The next section provides a discussion on teacher preparedness and aptitude
regarding English language learner education and instruction.

**Preparedness in Teaching English Language Learners**

With the increasing ELL student population in U.S. public schools, it is vital that
teachers have adequate skills and abilities to meet their needs. Yet, many general
education teachers remain unprepared to meet the learning needs of a culturally diverse
student population (Lucas, Villegas, & Freedson-Gonzalez, 2008). The next section will
examine educator preparedness in teaching English language learners.

Kose and Lim (2010) commented, “Enhancing teachers’ multicultural
competencies and expertise is one important component of this larger agenda, especially
as teaching is considered the most important factor in student achievement” (p. 395).
Although research has indicated that ELL growth is facilitated through concurrent
language development and content instruction, many mainstream teachers lack the knowledge or ability to accommodate such strategies (Milnes & Cheng, 2008). Such instructional deficiencies may be traced to teacher attitudes and perceptions regarding ELL education (Milnes & Cheng, 2008).

In their study of teachers’ perceptions concerning ELL education, Karabenick and Noda (2004) found a lack of confidence among most participant educators. Furthermore, they uncovered a discrepancy in several knowledge areas pertinent to second language acquisition, including pedagogical and instructional techniques (Karabenick & Noda, 2004). Similarly, a study by Durgunoglu and Hughes (2010) to determine preservice teacher self-efficacy concerning ELL instructional preparedness and confidence revealed that most teacher participants felt unprepared to meet ELL needs. Additionally, participants’ measured knowledge of ELL pedagogy was severely lacking, with a score of 25% on the knowledge assessment (Durgunoglu & Hughes, 2010). Highlighting the lack of educator confidence regarding ELL instruction, Durgunoglu & Hughes (2010) note, “The pre-service teachers clearly articulated they did not feel prepared to educate the ELL students they would encounter in their mainstream classrooms” (p. 39).

In a similar study, Polat (2010) evaluated the differences between preservice and in-service educator beliefs and competency surrounding ELL instruction. Polat’s (2010) investigation into factors contributing these beliefs “clearly indicate that content area teachers are in grave need of theoretical and practical education to support language and academic needs of diverse learners” (p. 238).

The nature of educator unpreparedness extends beyond content deficiencies. Webster and Valeo (2011) stated that current educator programs are deficient in training
relating to both content and language development. These voids in training can cause a multitude of problems, including teachers feeling unprepared to teach ELLs in mainstream classrooms. This includes skills pertaining to curriculum integration, assessment development, and the provision of adequate instructional support (Webster & Valeo, 2011). Due to the lack of ELL training, general education teachers do not have the aptitude required to meet the needs of ELL students. As a result, Webster and Valeo (2011) advocated for mandatory coursework for ELL education.

Roy-Campbell (2012) asserted that all content teachers should be prepared in strategies relating to English acquisition instruction and advocated preservice training and professional development to meet such needs. To accomplish this goal, Roy-Campbell recommended (2012) “Teachers must provide rich language experiences, wide exposure to vocabulary in meaningful contexts, and concrete strategies for helping build vocabulary from the new words they learn” (p. 188).

Karabenick and Noda (2004) asserted that districts must offer professional development to address the challenge of properly instructing ELL students. This is especially the case in districts with limited funding, as hiring additional staff who are ESL certified is not a feasible financial option. Soto-Hinman (2011) agreed that, ultimately, it should be the responsibility of the district or school to provide a development program to increase educator knowledge and improve ELL instructional strategies. As Misco and Castaneda (2009) noted, “The burgeoning population of non-native speakers makes instructional adaption legally and morally imperative to provide all students with meaningful learning experiences” (p. 182).
With the increase of the ELL student population in the United States, it is essential that teachers develop the knowledge, skills and abilities necessary to address the needs of this student population. In the inclusionary, mainstream classroom, ELLs receive instruction from general education teachers (Reeves, 2006). Teacher training is integral for the development of ELL student skills, and their ability to thrive in a self-contained, mainstream classroom (Ross, 2014).

This section examined the literature concerning teacher preparedness for ELL education and instruction. As the literature demonstrated, many educators lack the skills and training necessary to meet the needs of the growing English language learner student population (Sheng et al., 2011; Soto-Hinman, 2011). While statistics illustrate a need for ELL professional development, many educators remain ill-equipped to accommodate such requirements (Milnes & Cheng, 2008). The research suggests that learning effective strategies and techniques for aiding ELL development should be of paramount concern for educators, administrators and districts across the country. The next section will explore the literature regarding professional development training within the field of education.

**Professional Development Related to English Language Learners**

As discussed above, experts agree that professional development for teachers of ELL students is needed. This section examines ELL professional development, including teacher perceptions of it, characteristics of ‘effective’ training, reported positive impact, and perceived shortcomings.

**Teacher perception.** A lack of proper training can not only impact teacher preparation and instructional aptitude, but also alter attitude and perception of ELL
education. Hismanoglu (2010) investigated English language teacher perceptions regarding professional development and sought to identify effective professional development strategies. Revealingly, Hismanoglu (2010) reported that “while the majority of English language teachers (84%) consider professional development as an important part of their profession, only 22 of them stated that they give enough importance to their own professional development” (p. 994). The findings of the study revealed that most participants recognized the value of professional development. However, only 30% identified strategies involving collaborative practices (such as peer-coaching, mentoring, team teaching, teacher portfolios, and in-service training) as important (Hismanoglu, 2010). The lack of collaboration in professional development offerings has proven to be an obstacle, primarily because such strategies promoting collaborative practice remain unpopular (Hismanoglu, 2010).

In a study based on teacher perception of ELL education, Batt (2008) addressed the greatest impediments to educating ELLs and the facets of professional development that must be adjusted to remedy these issues. According to the survey, 39% of participants did not believe that all staff members in their school were highly qualified to deal with ELL education (Batt, 2008). When participants were asked about perceived challenges to educating ELLs, 20% cited the lack of required knowledge and skills (Batt, 2008). Other challenges included a lack of confidence in addition to a lack of understanding of diversity and multicultural teaching (Batt 2008). Batt (2008) determined that teacher perceptions were influenced by a deficient knowledge of multicultural education and the strategies necessary to educate multicultural students. Furthermore, staff members felt that professional development was not accessible (Batt, 2008). Despite
the desperate need for qualified ELL educators in U.S. public schools, most content-area
teachers remain woefully unprepared to meet the academic needs of this growing student
population (Lucas, Villegas, & Freedson-Gonzalez, 2008).

Borg (2011) examined the impact of an in-service professional training program
on teacher perceptions regarding language teaching and learning (Borg, 2011). The
findings revealed that the Diploma in English Language Teaching to Adults (DELTA)
training course altered educators’ previously held notions concerning language teaching
and learning, particularly regarding teacher awareness and lesson planning (Borg, 2011).
These findings supported literature that suggested a positive impact on professional
development and subsequent teacher perception.

Chen et al. (2008) described a professional development program intended to
assist K-12 teachers in developing effective instructional strategies for ELLs. One of the
main tenets of the program was the inclusion of the families of ELLs to aid in their
academic progress (Chen et al., 2008). Therefore, teachers were guided by the belief that
increased family participation would increase the academic success of the ELL student
(Chen et al., 2008). Through their communication and collaboration with families,
teachers were able to better connect instruction to the student’s background knowledge
(Chen et al., 2008). Conversely, a study by Pettit (2011) determined that teachers who
received ELL training “were significantly more positive about teaching ELLs than those
teachers who had not had these experiences” (p. 2).

Based on the cited studies, it can be determined that teacher perception may
influence responsiveness to professional development offering. In turn, this may impact a
teacher’s propensity to engage with ELL students. These factors may influence a
teacher’s willingness for, and response to, professional development intervention, as well as their likeliness to incorporate learned skills and strategies (Karabenick & Noda, 2004). Therefore, investigating teacher attitudes are crucial when examining ELL instruction, as this factor may influence enthusiasm and motivation to improve instructional practices (Friend, Most, & McCrary, 2009). Finally, teacher perceptions may influence responsiveness to professional development offerings, along with a propensity to engage with ELL students (Karabenick & Noda, 2004). This may dictate both teacher willingness and response to professional development intervention, as well as tendency to incorporate learned skills and strategies (Ardasheva & Tretter, 2012).

**Characteristics of ‘effective’ ELL professional development.** With the merit of ELL professional development programs having been examined in the previous section, the next section will focus on what constitutes ‘effective’ training. Casteel and Ballantyne (2010) asserted that professional development is an integral factor in promoting ELL success and achievement through a transformation of teacher practices, perceptions, and student outcomes. They maintained that the success of professional development is contingent upon how it is presented to the educator. Based on their review of the literature, Casteel and Ballantyne (2010) cited five principles that must be present for effective professional development: building on previous foundations and knowledge, engaging participants as learners, providing practice and feedback, including self-assessment of participants’ skill development, and measuring participants’ progress based on student performance, behavior, and achievement.

Ballantyne et al. (2008) maintained that ELL training should be mandated at the university level (preservice), with the inclusion of field experiences to put knowledge
into practice; however, for educators who are already employed (in-service), a professional development program should be implemented that focuses on standards according to context, process, and content (Ballantyne et al., 2008). The authors further defined these categories, with recommended components that included creating learning communities, utilizing research-based practices, ensuring equity, and encouraging family involvement (Ballantyne et al., 2008). Supporting this notion, Nordmeyer (2008) stated that effective professional development should include a collaborative learning process between instructors and participants while focusing on discipline-related content.

Molle (2013) also discussed the general aims of professional development training, indicating that it offers an excellent opportunity for educators to develop the necessary skills and required tools to meet the needs of ELL students. Such professional development programs should aim at improving teachers’ instructional practices for ELL students and focus on method, content, and participation (Molle, 2013). A successful professional development program must focus on educator responsibility in providing ELL support, rather than the perceived weaknesses of ELL students (Molle, 2013).

For effective professional development related to ELL, certain content should be included. White, Makkonen, and Stewart (2010) listed the following essential elements: recognizing and supporting diversity, differentiating instruction, selecting appropriate materials, knowing second language theory and strategies, promoting effective communication between students and families, and evaluating the linguistic abilities and development of students.

Galguaera (2011) argued that teachers must be prepared to facilitate certain outcomes for ELL students, of which the most important is increasing academic language
proficiency. With this in mind, Galguera (2011) indicated that the content of professional
development programs should focus on improving language awareness through the
examination of form and structure rather than simply meaning. Galguera (2011) asserted
that teachers must have a practical understanding of academic language, which is
acquired through experiential pedagogy. This will provide teachers with the experience to
observe various language functions within an academic context, which will increase
pedagogical knowledge as it pertains to language and content delivery (Galguera, 2011).
This is an integral component in the development of language, as Galguera (2011)
stressed, “We must rely on approaches that emphasize awareness of teacher knowledge
and its relationship to teaching behaviors as well as language use for academic purposes
in all its forms” (p. 93).

Milnes and Cheng (2008) also focused on the content of language acquisition.
With that understanding, teachers may begin to effectively integrate such knowledge into
content mastery and analyze student development through appropriate assessment
(Milnes & Cheng, 2008). Furthermore, best practice strategies include an emphasis on
vocabulary knowledge and development, detailed reading instruction, cooperative
learning methods, and an integrated curriculum design encompassing language, literacy,
and content (Calderon et al., 2011). The authors added that “teachers who work with
English learners found professional development most helpful when it provided
opportunities for hands-on practice with teaching techniques readily applicable in their
classrooms, in-class demonstrations with their own or a colleague’s students, and
personalized coaching” (Calderon et al., 2011, p. 114).
Faculty collaboration for shared design and utilization of such practices is particularly crucial for ELL student success (O'Hara & Pritchard, 2008; Pardini, 2008). Staff cooperation ensures sufficient resources and support to foster ELL learning, in addition to increasing interaction (O'Hara & Pritchard, 2008). In doing so, educators are promoting an interdependent learning community, while providing a platform to share best-practices and strategies. (Musanti & Pence, 2010; O'Hara & Pritchard, 2008).

Other researchers have addressed considerations and practices to be included in ELL-related professional development. Misco and Castaneda (2009) cited four main considerations that should be acknowledged by mainstream educators of ELLs: developing empathy, building acquisition comprehension, employing curriculum adaption, and supporting literacy skills. Furthering this concept, Li (2013) highlighted four practices that should be employed when working with ELL students in order to improve learning: “increasing comprehensible input, encouraging social collaboration, relating to the real world and providing supportive learning environments” (p. 217). According to Li, these four practices must be utilized by skilled educators who are adequately trained at incorporating such methods and strategies. Haneda and Wells (2012) presented four slightly different principles to promote the capabilities of ELL students: providing consistent opportunities to practice the target language, building on students’ previous experience, developing engaging content, and emphasizing improvable goals. Hamann and Reeves (2013) advocated a realignment of previously held notions that will ultimately lead to collective accountability and support for ELL academic success. In addition, guided, focused, and consistent professional development training
should be offered to further develop educators’ skills and ELL instructional practices (Hamann & Reeves, 2013).

The research from the last 15 years indicates that effective professional development must encourage faculty input, promote collaboration, and facilitate reflection. Experts have recommended a number of research-based methods for teachers to provide appropriate and effective ELL instruction. For example, ELL students may learn a language more effectively when their background knowledge is stimulated, or they are encouraged to explore personal experience (Haneda & Wells, 2012). Effective professional development will result in increased knowledge, improved instructional capacity, and linguistic understanding that should ultimately result in student learning (Milnes & Cheng, 2008; Misco & Castaneda, 2009).

An adequate and worthwhile professional training program should include many features. Any professional development must be readily available to all faculty and staff, and occur at an on-site location within the district (McIntyre et al., 2010). Instructionally, a program must inform teachers of practices aimed at increasing vocabulary acquisition, promoting literacy skills, and strengthening curriculum comprehension through improved content delivery (Galguera, 2011; Misco & Castaneda, 2009). However, the training must not only focus on content development and differentiated instruction, but also on how to encourage and support a diverse environment within the classroom (and school) (White et al., 2010). This aspect may also be accomplished through increasing ELL family participation and communication, which is an essential component of creating a diverse school community (White et al., 2010).
This section detailed what characteristics contribute to ‘effective’ professional development training. As discussed, an effective professional development program will be comprised of many components, including promoting faculty input, presenting instructional and content-area competencies, and increasing collaborative action among school stakeholders. The next section will offer an examination of a number of empirical studies demonstrating the positive impact of professional development.

**Empirical studies showing the positive impact of professional development.**

Several empirical studies have noted the effectiveness of specific ELL professional development programs. These studies have employed quantitative, qualitative, and mixed method approaches.

Among quantitative studies, O’Hara and Pritchard (2008) analyzed one professional development training program offered as a result of California legislation requiring ELL teacher training for both preservice and current educators. Here, the authors noted the necessity of professional development, both to facilitate faculty collaboration in regards to incorporating best instructional practices and to ensure that adequate support and resources were being offered (O’Hara & Pritchard, 2008). The findings revealed a significant knowledge increase in every measured standard of development, including technology, instructional strategies, student assessment, and cultural-social integration (O’Hara & Pritchard, 2008). It was also revealed that another important aspect of any successful training program is faculty ownership (O’Hara & Pritchard, 2008). In allowing faculty input and designing a program centered around their interests and inquiries, there will be an increased investment in its success (O’Hara & Pritchard, 2008).
Ross (2014) studied the impact that an educator professional training program may have on teacher self-efficacy regarding student achievement. The study revealed a positive correlation “between teachers’ participation in professional development and their heightened sense of effectiveness with student engagement, classroom management, and instructional practices when teaching ELL students” (Ross, 2014, p. 97).

A study conducted by Buysse, Castro, and Peisner-Feinberg (2010) further demonstrated that professional development training resulted in an advancement of teachers’ ELL instructional practices. Additionally, students made considerable gains on phonetic skills (Buysse et al., 2010).

Calderon et al. (2011) cited evidence of educator improvement following biweekly professional development training that focused on eight strategies of ELL instruction: “planning, student engagement, vocabulary building and fluency, oral language development, reading comprehension, parental support and involvement, and reflective practice through portfolio development” (p. 114). Participants in the study credited student success to the strategies acquired during the professional development training, which was held in sessions of approximately 6 hours per month (Calderon et al., 2011).

Among qualitative studies, Welsh and Newman (2010) detailed the progression of an eighth-grade science teacher following an ELL professional development training, which consisted of a 1-year program designed to improve instruction of reading, writing, and listening skills for ELL students (Welsh & Newman, 2010). Prior to the professional development intervention, the participant noted that any such training was either “minimal or nonexistent” and indicated, “I knew how to teach, but I did not know how to
teach ELLs” (Welsh & Newman, 2010, p. 144). Following the completion of professional development, the participant noted, “If content teachers are offered such training, their competence and confidence in teaching ELLs will rise” (Welsh & Newman, 2010, p. 144).

Musanti and Pence (2010) conducted a longitudinal qualitative study to determine the impact of the Collaboration Centers Project, a 3-year professional development program aimed at improving the ELL instructional practices of in-service educators, and improved ESL practices. Their findings revealed the benefit of conducting such training in a collaborative environment, which resulted in a shared identity through the creation of a learning community (Musanti & Pence, 2010). As a result of the group interaction and interdependence, the confidence and knowledge of the individual educators increased, as did their ability to implement ELL-oriented instructional strategies (Musanti & Pence, 2010). Musanti and Pence (2010) asserted that professional development can improve teacher instruction and positively influence student learning; however, this process cannot occur in isolation, but instead must be the product of a collaborative environment. These processes promote an educator’s ability to foster peer relationships, which may facilitate reflective practice concerning teaching, learning, and knowledge construction (Musanti & Pence, 2010).

He, Prater, and Steed (2011) employed mixed methods in their examination of a single district-level program. With participants comprising 22 teachers (9 ESL, 13 content-area) who had completed 46 hours of professional development over the past year, they gauged the impact of the training on both teachers and students. The findings revealed increased ESL knowledge and positive feedback (86%) from educators, as well
as improved student English language proficiency examination results compared with the prior academic year (He et al., 2011). Regarding the promise of professional development training, He et al., (2011), stated “The positive feedback from teachers and enhancement in ESL student English proficiency test scores are encouraging results that indicate the effectiveness of the first-year professional development sessions” (p. 14).

Other studies have considered the long-term retention of content taught during professional development programs. Goldschmidt and Phelps (2010) examined the impact of professional development through the California Professional Development Institutes initiative, which is aimed at increasing teacher content knowledge and pedagogical development. Results revealed a significant knowledge growth among educators between the pretest and posttest. Knowledge was retested 6 months following the completion of training. Results showed that although teachers made significant knowledge gains during the professional development training, such gains were not permanent; “in other words, they [participants] appeared to have forgotten some of what they learned and . . . practical classroom experience and follow-ups did not solidify knowledge acquired during the summer” (Goldschmidt & Phelps, 2010, p. 435).

Other relevant studies addressed the impact of ELL preservice training or specific ELL strategies. A study conducted by Zhang and Stephens (2013) revealed that an educator preservice training program improved educators’ knowledge and skills pertaining to ELL instructional strategies. In particular, educator knowledge increased regarding ELL proficiency, oral and written language, and the ability to distinguish between students’ linguistic and academic capabilities (Zhang & Stephens, 2013).
Ardasheva and Tretter (2012) examined the use of language learning strategies and how ELL educators perceived their usefulness. Additionally, they sought to identify how similarly ELL students and teachers would rate the highlighted strategies (Ardasheva & Tretter, 2012). The findings indicated a high rate of language learning strategy use among ELL students and teachers (Ardasheva & Tretter, 2012). Regarding the rating of particular strategies, teachers tended to rank the strategy’s effectiveness more toward the higher level, whereas students consistently rated the strategy’s effectiveness in the medium range (Ardasheva & Tretter, 2012). Regarding the propensity of teachers to consistently use skills acquired during professional development, Ardasheva and Tretter, (2012) noted, “The teachers’ strong awareness of LLS [language learning strategy] effectiveness, on the other hand, suggests that the participating teachers are likely to commit to explicit LLS instruction, once they have had PD [professional development] on LLS instruction techniques” (p. 574).

As indicated by the aforementioned studies, professional development can provide an educator with the necessary methods to foster ELL student growth and achievement (Musanti & Pence, 2010; Welsh & Newman, 2010). Active involvement in a state-sanctioned, district sponsored training may promote the skills and practices of teachers with ELL students (O’Hara & Pritchard, 2008). The outcome of such training can be beneficial for teacher development and student performance (He et al., 2011). The next section will detail the shortcomings in professional development analyses.

**Shortcomings in analyses of professional development.** The previous section reviewed several studies showing the positive impact of ELL-related professional development. Nevertheless, even with the abundance of resources devoted to professional
development training, evidence detailing program effectiveness remains inconclusive—despite the fact that “teacher professional development is widely viewed as the most promising intervention for improving existing teacher quality” in the NCLB era (Goldschmidt & Phelps, 2010, p. 432).

Calderon et al. (2011) asserted that the correlation between professional development and student learning has often been overlooked and undervalued. This issue can be attributed to differing levels of classroom implementation and inconsistent measurement of student outcomes (Calderon et al., 2011). Such problems can be remedied through direct observation and well-defined evidence of student learning (Calderon et al., 2011).

Contributing to the dilemma in evaluating professional development is the inadequate training received from brief or sporadic professional development seminars that fail to promote the knowledge and skills necessary to educate ELL students (Reeves, 2006). McIntyre et al., (2010) affirmed two shortcomings were the sporadic presentation, as well as lack of participant input, “Educators recognize the futility of one-shot workshops, or even a series of workshops, if teachers have little or no ownership in the professional development sessions, and the sessions are removed from the actual work of teaching” (p. 336). Reeves (2006) argued that due to a historical failure of such one-shot professional development sessions, a new method must be developed for preservice and in-service training. She noted a number of misconceptions regarding second language acquisition (Reeves, 2006). Among such misconceptions include the amount of time necessary for full acquisition and the discouragement of continued first language use to promote second language fluency (Reeves, 2006).
As evidenced, English language leaner proficiency and achievement may increase through an accessible and comprehensive English language leaner professional development program (Musanti & Pence, 2010). Such a program must consider the challenges faced by English language learners and employ the best-practice strategies utilized to maximize their skills and abilities (Misco & Casteneda, 2009; Li, 2013). Any professional development program must be consistent, and identify short and long term objectives in order to determine success (Reeves, 2006). Desired outcomes would include procedures to evaluate the effectiveness of training and implementation (Welsh & Newman, 2010; Calderon et al., 2011).

The preceding section examined a number of areas pertaining to professional development, including teacher perception of training, characteristics of ‘effective’ professional development, reported positive impact and program shortcomings. The next section will detail professional and career development literature from outside the realm of education. This will serve to highlight certain aspects of professional development in more general terms to glean insights relevant to this study.

**The Importance of Professional and Career Development**

The previous section detailed the merit of professional development programs within the education field. Several researchers in different fields have highlighted the need for employees to take ownership of their careers and their professional development. The concept of professional and career development will now be explored outside of the education realm, in organizations situated in the healthcare, business, military and legal professions.
Lofton (2012) examined career attitudes and developmental relationships among healthcare professionals. Integral to this study was the understanding of how individuals meet their developmental needs (Lofton, 2012). Lofton sought to determine the link between employees’ career attitudes and employer-sponsored career development. Also examined were how employees’ attitudes may be influenced by changes in the modern work environment, which now requires continuous learning and development (Lofton, 2012).

Lofton (2012) also sought to understand the concept of the protean career, described as “a career based on self-direction in the pursuit of psychological success in one’s work, as an important aspect to one’s development” (p. 73). The protean career contrasts with the organizational career, or a traditional progression of sequential jobs within an organization. In this regard, the protean career serves as a type of employee-employer understanding that is based on trust and mutual commitment (Lofton, 2012). Employees’ career outlook influences both their motivation and desire to seek development (Lofton, 2012). As such, workforce development and learning are integral components of the labor-management relationship, particularly in a unionized environment (Lofton, 2012).

To facilitate employee development, certain skills are necessary during the learning process. Lofton (2012) several components that will facilitate the learning process, among them, “These competencies are identity growth, which is related to learning through to self-reflection and self-learning, and increased adaptability” (p. 77). Therefore, professional development seems to be an integral component of the modern organization, driven by employees’ continued desire to improve their skills and abilities.
As such, one of the primary objectives of workplace learning should be to provide viable, accessible opportunities for those who need it (Lofton, 2012).

Donner and Wheeler (2001) examined the importance of career planning and development in the nursing field and detailed a model that facilitates such growth. As the perspective of the nursing profession has shifted towards viewing it as a lifelong career, Donner and Wheeler (2001) emphasized the need to support nurses, both in practice and professional development. This shift has prompted a desire to provide continuous development programs that meet health needs, incorporate standards of practice, and successfully establish the nursing field as a respected, credible profession (Donner & Wheeler, 2001). Therefore, a career vision must be developed and a career plan must be crafted.

To accomplish this goal, Donner and Wheeler (2001) presented a five-phase professional development strategy. The five phases include scanning one’s environment, self-assessment, vision creation, strategic career plan development, and self-marketing (Donner & Wheeler, 2001). Donner and Wheeler (2001) presented “a focused professional development strategy that helps nurses take greater responsibility for themselves and their careers and prepare for ever-changing political, social, health care and workplace environments” (p. 81). By focusing on employees’ professional development, organizations can align themselves with the needs of employees and satisfy the perceived responsibilities demanded of a modern workplace. In this regard, Donner and Wheeler (2001) noted that it is the onus of educators, professional organizations, and employers to ensure that individuals have the necessary tools and skills to successfully manage their careers. In doing so, employers and organizations can ensure a productive
integration of career planning and professional development opportunities (Donner & Wheeler, 2001).

Hedge, Borman, and Bourne (2006) detailed the transformation of the U.S. Navy regarding employee requirements and professional growth. They assessed five competency areas: professional development, certifications and qualifications, job performance, personal development, and leadership. As a result of the transformation, workers are taking a more active role in career ownership and are more cognizant of matters pertaining to career management and advancement (Hedge et al., 2006). Although career development may be viewed as a responsibility of the individual, it remains in the best interest of the organization to facilitate such opportunities to increase employee motivation and satisfaction (Hedge et al., 2006). When an organization takes on responsibility for employee professional growth, a mutual benefit may be achieved. Hedge, Borman, and Bourne (2006) indicated that outlets for career management can better facilitate an organization’s need for adaptation by fulfilling employees’ needs for experience and developing skills.

Barnett and Bradley (2007) investigated the link between organizational support for career development and subsequent employee career satisfaction. They stated that the evolving nature of professional organizations has led to the emergence of a new type of employer-employee contract: that of reciprocal obligation. Organizations apply the contract by providing employee support for continued career development opportunities, which should in turn allow the organizations to better attract and retain employees (Barnett & Bradley, 2007). Barnett and Bradley (2007) suggested that organizations that “promote the individual benefits associated with career management behaviours and
encourage employees to engage in these behaviours, may experience most success in facilitating employee career satisfaction” (p. 633).

Townsend, Sheffield, Stadnyk, and Beagan (2006) conducted a qualitative study on the influence of workplace policy concerning continued professional development in the field of occupational therapy. The authors noted that although professional development opportunities offer an enticing recruitment and retention benefit, little is known about the correlation between workplace policy and employee participation. The findings of the study indicated that organizations are at a disadvantage without a definitive policy on professional development or continued education for employees, as “the absence of explicit workplace policy on continuing professional development is an implicit policy of no support that structurally disempowers a profession to advance its competence” (Townsend et al., 2006, p. 107).

Furthermore, this study demonstrated the importance of an organization providing growth opportunities (Townsend et al., 2006). Similar to Pinnington (2011) and Barnett and Bradley (2007), Townsend et al. (2006) advocated a mutual employer-employee effort. This goal can be accomplished with collaboration between the organization and professionals to assess professional development options and program structure (Townsend et al., 2006). Townsend et al. (2006) noted that although employees should take responsibility for their own continued learning, a more equitable approach may be achieved through a cooperative employer-employee effort.

King (2009) employed Mezirow’s theory of transformative learning to frame an examination of the correlation between worker perception and training knowledge and practice. King (2009) detailed the pressing demand for the continued education of new
workers, related to the ever-developing job requirements of the field, the need to be informed of technological innovations, and expanding cultural fluency and communication (King, 2009). The findings of the study revealed that training programs benefit from a learner-centered approach that utilizes collaborative learning techniques, employs democratic processes, and enables learner voice (King, 2009). Such an approach to professional development may positively impact worker satisfaction and attitude, as well as promote workplace communication and problem solving (King, 2009). The results of the study also suggested that the impact of professional development may transcend an employee’s professional life (King, 2009). When speaking of a professional’s likelihood for a continued pursuit of self-development, King (2009) noted “Specifically, when adult learners see that learning applies to their individual lives, they become more invested in and take greater responsibility for their learning” (p. 71).

Pinnington (2011) examined early stage employees in the legal profession in an attempt to assess their understanding of competence development and career advancement. The literature suggests that firms are facing difficulties pertaining to employee retention and administration (Pinnington, 2011). The legal profession still has a traditional hierarchical structure, rife with social and political constrictions that ensure employees remain dependent on their particular organization to achieve career advancement (Pinnington, 2011). Professional groups (such as those employed in the legal field) are characterized as ‘protean careerists’ (Pinnington, 2011). Further defining this group, Pinnington (2011) stated “Proteans are said to be flexible, value freedom, believe in continuous learning, and seek intrinsic rewards” (p. 444).
Pinnington’s (2011) findings indicated that employees in professional service firms sought continued opportunities to develop skills and abilities that would contribute to career maintenance and advancement. Furthermore, Pinnington (2011) asserted that organizations are not solely responsible for seeking opportunities for growth and development, but such opportunities could be identified through a cooperative effort from various stakeholders. Ultimately, “policy makers, practitioners, and academic researchers all have roles to play in assisting people at an early stage in their career to reflect on their existing expertise, assess current work practices, and develop and pursue strategies for competency development and career advancement” (Pinnington, 2011, p. 461).

Over the course of this section, various aspects of professional development outside the education realm were examined. As evidenced, professional development has proved a useful method of employee learning and skill advancement outside of the field of education (King, 2009). Similarly to the professional development research in education, Townsend et al. (2006) found that professional development is most effective when it is a collaborative process between employer and employee. Hedge et al., (2006) cited the positive motivational impact it can have on employee performance and satisfaction. Finally, Pinnington (2011) referred to employees reflecting on their existing expertise as part of the professional development process. In the next section, the work of Schön as it relates to reflective practice will be discussed.

**Schön’s Reflective Practice**

This section details the work of Donald Schön, with a specific focus on his theory of the reflective practitioner (Schön, 1987). The section highlights the origins of his
approach, provides an examination of research that has employed his model, and offers a critique of his work.

**Roots: A Progressive view of individualized education and the ELL context.**

The Progressive education movement emerged in the late 19th century, in response to the perceived deficiencies in the educational system of the time (Elias & Merriam, 1995). Although the roots of the movement can be traced to the ideas of the Enlightenment thinkers of Europe, the doctrine gained prominence in its American form amidst the teachings of John Dewey (Elias & Merriam, 1995). Dewey’s publications gained national (and later international) distinction, buoyed by his beliefs that advocated for widespread educational reform (Elias & Merriam, 1995).

The term *Progressive education* refers to the philosophy advocating an alternative to the traditional methods and instructional practices of education (Elias & Merriam, 1995), with an increased focus on critical thinking skills, experience-based projects, collaborative learning, and reflection (Misco & Castaneda, 2009). This Progressive view centers on the notion that an effective educator must consider a child’s background to facilitate growth, learning, and achievement through personalized curriculum delivery (Elias & Merriam, 1995). Effective instruction may help control or decrease the anxiety of the ELL student, which may act as an obstacle to language learning (Lucas, Villegas, & Freedson-Gonzalez, 2008).

Progressive educator George Counts revealed immigrant student struggles as early as 1922, citing the uncompromising nature of schools refusing to meet their needs (Tellez & Waxman, 2010). Dewey (2001) believed in utilizing a student’s background knowledge and the practice of reflection to facilitate curriculum comprehension.
Additionally, the Progressive ideal of developing an individualized approach to student learning, in addition to the inclusion of the community in the educational process, may also prove beneficial for an ELL student’s growth (Dewey, 2001). Borrowing from Progressive tenets, there are a number of strategies that can be implemented to facilitate ELL learning and comprehension.

Among the most important is the ability to apply a student’s background knowledge and past experiences to the curriculum (Misco & Castaneda, 2009). By creating a connection with something familiar, a student is able to build upon the concept and make further (and deeper) inquiries into the topic (Misco & Castaneda, 2009). In doing so, connections are made and context is established, which allows for an increased understanding for additional content information (Misco & Castaneda, 2009).

Dewey also believed that there was an overemphasis on strict assessments, and their subsequent results, which made for a generic and impersonal approach to education (Elias & Merriam, 1995). Dewey fostered the conviction that a child’s nature should ultimately guide and fulfill his or her individualized learning experiences (Elias & Merriam, 1995). The essence of development should not be the ability to select random trivia or facts, but rather the acquisition of knowledge that is molded by personal realizations (Elias & Merriam, 1995).

Buoyed by these Progressive beliefs, professional development began to evolve. The traditional hierarchical classroom model with seemingly limited instructional application would be replaced by seminars that facilitated self-directed, collaborative, and inquiry-based learning (Johnson, 2006). The result was a more hands on, student driven approach to education, which emphasized experience, engagement and reflection. The
next section will detail the work of Schön as it relates to reflective practice, which can be viewed as an extension of these early Progressive ideals.

**Schön’s reflective practice.** Many of Schön’s beliefs were seemingly influenced by Dewey (2001), particularly as they relate to experience, interaction, and reflection. As a result, these teachings have been incorporated into professional development programs (Butke, 2003). Specifically, Schön’s (1987) notion of reflective practice has proven to be an integral component of professional development programs, as “it involves thoughtfully considering one’s experiences as one makes the connection between knowledge and practice, under the guidance of an experienced professional within one’s discipline” (Pitsoe & Maila, 2013, p. 215). Reflective practice allows teachers a vehicle “to think about what, how and why they do reflect” (Pitsoe & Maila, 2013, p. 211). In doing so, this process promotes a deeper understanding of individuals’ teaching methods and may facilitate an improvement in their overall future practice.

Furthermore, reflective practice offers teachers the opportunity to observe routine action and gain a greater appreciation for the learning needs of their students (Pitsoe & Maila, 2013). This can be accomplished through reflection-in-action, a four step process consisting of problem-setting, reframing, intervention, and evaluation (Schön, 1983). Problem-setting involves the teacher being aware of particular issue, while reframing occurs as a method of viewing the problem from a different perspective (Schön, 1983). Intervention occurs when a practitioner attempts to solve the problem using the new approach, while evaluation is the assessment of the intervention’s effectiveness (Schön, 1983). Consequently, there seems to be a correlation between educator professional development and reflective practice. As Clarke noted (1995) “the effect of professional
development upon classroom teaching is governed by a number of factors, one being the ability of teachers to be reflective about their practice” (p. 243). These opportunities may manifest themselves within the professional development training itself, within the classroom environment, or at a later time and place through reflection-in-action or reflection-on-action.

With reflection-in-action, this may be demonstrated by an impromptu adjustment during a student activity, or a refocusing due to a classroom distraction or disruption. The practitioner will do so in the moment, tapping into their knowledge to create and implement an appropriate reaction. Reflection-on-action allows individuals to explore their action after an incident (Schön, 1983), without disruptions to time, flow, and activity when stopping to reflect on a particular incident in the moment. Resources such as recordings and document review, as well as individuals such as mentors or supervisors, assist in this appraisal. With reflection-on-action, participants can gain better understand their experiences, which allows for improvement and development (Smith, 1994).

This section offered an overview of Schön’s theory, particularly as it relates to professional development. As demonstrated, reflective practices are an integral part of teacher development and growth, both inside and outside of the classroom environment. The next section will highlight research associated with Schön’s work.

**Associated research.** This section will highlight research associated with Schön’s work. Rayford (2010) cited Schön’s theory to frame an examination of administrators’ and teachers’ perceptions of reflective practice, as well as their perceived professional practice as it relates to reflective practice. Of this link, Rayford (2010) affirmed, “Schön
(1983), to whom reflective practice theory is mainly attributed, claimed that the actions of practitioners are based on inherent knowledge” (p. 9). Reflective practice may provide a method for individuals to compare their own practices with those of established professionals, enabling practitioners to identify similarities and remedy perceived deficiencies (Rayford, 2010).

Zwozdiak-Myers (2009) examined the existing literature and research regarding the multiple components and perspectives associated with the concept of reflective practice. From this investigation, a conceptual framework was developed to represent the dimensions of reflective practice exercised by the participating student teachers. When placing reflective practice within the context of professional development, Zwozdiak-Myers (2009) stated, “When reflective practice is positioned at the core of professional development, engagement in the process implies that student teachers enter the realm of research into their own practice” (p. 20).


In a study by Butke (2003), the relation between reflection and practice was investigated. Butke (2003) examined how choral teachers used the reflective process to understand and produce change within their practice, using the work of Dewey and Schön
to frame her study. By employing reflective practice, practitioners were able to employ a variety of instructional tools and actions to improve their practice (Butke, 2003).

Bunton (2013) used Schön’s reflective process to gain perspective on practices and collaboration in music education and production. In describing the reflective process following a project, Bunton (2013) employed critical reflection to identify both strengths and weaknesses within the method. Bunton (2013) asserted that viewing past situations through the lens of a ‘reflective practitioner’ allowed for greater insight to improve skills and technique for future application, noting “Reflection-in-action has enabled me to define my creative process in a step-by-step process” (p. 108).

Kuswandono’s (2013) study examined the learning and professional identity of preservice teachers at a university, particularly as it related to experience and learning meaning-making through reflection. Kuswandono (2013) affirmed that Schön intended to enable the individual greater insight (and subsequently, ability) to become a more effective professional. This can be accomplished through the process of reflection-in-action, which allows practitioners an immediate platform to remedy an arising issue (Kuswandono, 2013). Regarding reflection-in-action, Kuswandono (2013) stated, “Schön argues that professionals may not be able to work effectively if their knowledge remains tacit. They need to be able to identify in order to solve problems and he described this as a process of reframing” (p. 32).

Finally, Barnes (2013) employed Schön’s (1987) theory to guide the study of student teacher mentoring experiences. This study explored the role of reflective processes between student teachers and their mentors during early childhood preparation programs. Barnes (2013) utilized Schön’s concepts of reflection-in-action, reflection-on-
action, and reciprocal reflection-in-action to frame the examination. One of the points cited in the selection of Schön’s (1987) theory was that it provided the opportunity to view reflection in a variety of ways within the classroom environment (Barnes, 2013). This is particularly useful in a classroom setting, where the platform for interaction is both frequent and authentic. Barnes (2013) indicated that Schön “concept of reflective processes provides a framework for understanding how reflection occurs during those interactions” (p. 23).

As shown, Schön’s work has been used a foundation for many purposes. These uses include gauging educator perspective shifts in relation to completed professional development, and framing interactions within student practicums and preparation programs. By employing Schön’s work, an experience could be examined in-depth, using reflection as a catalyst to achieve that purpose. The next section will highlight limitations for Schön’s work, and divergence from his theory.

**Limitations and divergence.** Dewey’s impact on Schön is not without its limitations (Butke, 2003). Comparing the work of Schön and Dewey, Butke (2003) stated, “Schön’s emphasis on uncertainty, intuition, and value judgments differs from Dewey’s more Western emphasis on sequential logic and rationality in reflective thought” (p. 29). This can be further illustrated in Schön’s beliefs concerning embedded knowledge and situational context, specifically as it pertains to its impact on understanding. On this matter, Schön further disagreed with Dewey, as he claimed “that knowledge, embedded within and gathered from the context of the school, can generate and develop an understanding of practice” (Zwozdiak-Myers, 2009, p. 38). This
sentiment can readily applied to professional development, where situational context is integral to educator comprehension and development.

Furthermore, Schön cited Piaget and Glasersfeld for the constructivist direction of his theory, while criticizing Dewey for his lack of constructivist perspective (Kinsella, 2006). Schön’s concept of reflective practice is heavily influenced by constructivist ideals (Kinsella, 2006). This is apparent through Schön’s emphasis on individual meaning derived through cooperation, engagement and interaction, as well as highlighting the importance of experience. For this reason, “those interested in understanding Schön’s work would do well to consider constructivism as it relates to reflective practice and continuing professional education” (Kinsella, 2006, p. 277). This link to constructivism will be examined further in the next section.

The influence of the early Progressive thinkers is prevalent in the work of Donald Schön, where experience, interaction and reflection are utilized to gain knowledge and insight. Subsequently, these methods have proved useful and relevant for ELL instruction (Misco & Castaneda, 2009; Pitsoe & Maila, 2013). The influence of these ideas is obvious when discussing the over-emphasis on standardization or the importance of individualized instruction based on student ability, background and interest (Dewey, 2001).

Research has also noted that language instruction may be encouraged by tapping into a student’s interests, as instruction consisting of repetition and content may not engage students (Misco & Castaneda, 2009; Tellez & Waxman, 2010). These ideas and strategies are important factors for promoting student growth, particularly content understanding and vocabulary acquisition (Misco & Castaneda, 2009). Such methods
could be beneficial when introduced in professional development training programs for educators. This fact is also apparent in the studies that have utilized Schön’s theory as a foundation for their own research, doing so through multiple contexts within the field of education.

Over the course of this section, the work of Schön as it relates to reflective practice was examined, which included an overview of the origins of his approach, an examination of research that has employed his model, and a discussion of limitations and divergence. The concept of professional development also relates to adult learning. In the next section, literature pertaining to adult learning will be discussed.

**Adult Learning**

There are many veins of thought to consider when defining the concept of learning. Merriam et al. (2007) characterized learning as the construction of knowledge derived from an individual’s experiences. Through the constructivist lens, the process of reflection is integral to learning, as it is the catalyst in which knowledge is constructed (Zafar, 2014). These ideas relate to this study as Schön’s theory offers an opportunity to examine the reflective processes that promote knowledge construction and learning. For participants, these reflective experiences took place within a classroom environment and professional development seminar, capturing perceptions within each context. Schön’s theory also provides a framework to understand how knowledge acquisition and learning through reflection may occur during these instances. The next section will detail the constructivist perspective, as well as its relevance to learning and reflection within Schön’s theory.
Constructivism. As noted by Zafar (2014), constructivism is derived from constructionism, with the notable distinction based on constructivism’s emphasis on the individual’s meaning rather than the collective interpretation. Elaborating on this concept, Zafar (2014) stated, “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” (p. 77). Within this perspective, subjective reality is constructed through interaction, engagement, and cooperation. Fenwick (2003) asserted that the constructivism approach is a product of experience reflection, where new knowledge is the result of a particular acknowledgment.

In education, constructivism can manifest itself in a variety of concepts, including experiential, transformational, and situated learning, as well as communities of practice (Merriam et al., 2007). In these models, the constructivist approach serves as an individual’s aspiration to generate understanding from a particular situation or event (Merriam et al., 2007). During this process, “constructivists foster critical reflection on students’ assumptions and assess learners’ prior experiential learning” (Merriam et al., 2007, p. 171).

The link between constructivism and Schön’s beliefs are apparent. This includes an emphasis on individual meaning, fostered through a collaborative and experiential environment. This concept can be applied to both student and educator experience within a classroom environment. This notion can also be observed through a professional development context, particularly where collegial interaction and support are components. The next section will detail additional experiential learning models can be associated with Schön’s beliefs on learning, experience, and reflection.
**Experiential learning.** Kolb’s (1984) experiential learning model involves a four-stage cycle that emphasizes the importance of experience. This cycle comprises concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation (Kolb, 1984). Additionally, there are four distinct learning styles: diverging, assimilating, converging, and accommodating (Kolb, 1984).

To capitalize on tacit knowledge building, one must be mindful that experiential learning is a process and resist the urge to focus solely on any concrete outcomes (Kolb, 1984). Additionally, individuals should be cognizant of the interaction between themselves and the environment, subscribing to a type of information exchange or transaction with their surroundings (Kolb, 1984). Integral to this idea is the process of reflective practice, which allows for a deeper examination and subsequent understanding of a situation. Supporting this belief, Harriger (1994) asserts, “Adult students have a wealth of life and work experiences to use as a resource for learning. Life experiences become the hooks or hangers, so to speak, for new experiences and new learning” (p.174).

Similar to the components that characterize Progressive beliefs on learning for early education students, Illeris provides a model for adult learning. Illeris’s model emphasizes the importance of interaction and acquisition for adult learning. Illeris (2007), who asserted that experience facilitates knowledge and skill acquisition, stated, “Acquisition typically has the character of a linkage between the new impulses and influences and the results of relevant earlier learning—by which result obtains its individual mark” (p. 22). In this regard, Illeris’s (2007) model seems to overlap with the notion of reflective practice, as both emphasize prior experience and knowledge...
acquisition. In Illeris’s (2007) model, reflection is present within the cognitive dimension, in which connections between experience and reality are promoted. In turn, the learner may be able to construct meaning from these experiences and craft abilities and functions to combat challenges (Illeris, 2003). This belief seems to mirror Schön’s notions of reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action, which are tools employed to remedy issues by utilizing experience and reflection.

Brookefield (1986) presented an adult learning model that paralleled many of Schön’s beliefs. In Brookfield’s (1986) model, he highlighted six principles that may facilitate adult learning: voluntary participation, collaboration, mutual respect, praxis, self-direction, and critical reflection. Speaking of Brookfield’s link with Schön concerning adult learning, Rayford (2010) stated, “he discovered that the principles in facilitating adult learning were linked to Donald Schön’s beliefs about reflection practice theory, specifically reflection-in-action” (p. 9).

Furman and Sibthorp (2013) detailed the experiential method of education and learning, citing the work of Dewey (1910), as well as Piaget and Inhelder (1970). At the foundation of this approach is the ability to activate a student’s prior knowledge with the introduction of new concepts, in addition to focusing on group interaction to promote engagement (Furman & Sibthorp, 2013). The authors detailed a variety of Progressive-informed experiential teaching and learning techniques, including problem- and project-based learning, cooperative learning, service learning, and reflective learning (Furman & Sibthorp, 2013).

The work of Schön is apparent in a number of experiential learning approaches. For Kolb (1984) model, this is apparent in the emphasis on both interaction and reflection
in order to gain a deeper understanding of one’s surroundings and the situation. Illeris (2007) encouraged the learner to derive meaning from experience, and use new knowledge and ability to overcome obstacles. Brookefield (1986) encouraged collaboration and reflection to facilitate adult learning, both tenets of Schön’s theory. Furman and Sibthorp (2013) promoted a number of Progressive-styled approaches to maximize learning as well, further validating reflection as a useful tool for growth and development.

Over the course of this section, a number of experiential learning theories were detailed, particularly as they related to the work of Schön. The next section will highlight self-directed learning models, and their link to reflective processes that are relevant to this study.

**Self-directed learning.** Self-directed learning models share many similar characteristics of experiential approaches. Merriam (2001) noted that one of the goals of self-directed learning should be to develop an ability to reflect on one’s knowledge and subsequently create a type of autonomy in the pursuit of future growth. As Merriam (2001) stated, “A self-directed learner can engage in independent projects, student-directed discussions, and discovery learning” (p.10). This belief seems to extend beyond the work of Schön in order to create an independent, self-sufficient method of learning that is promoted through reflective practices.

Douglass and Morris (2014) used focus groups to determine participant perception of what constituted and hindered self-directed learning. The participant group comprised 80 university students, separated into eight focus groups, with data collected via questioning conducted through peer facilitation (Douglass & Morris, 2014). The
findings of the study revealed three themes pertaining to self-directed learning, namely what factors were student controlled, what factors were faculty controlled, and what barriers were placed by administration (Douglass & Morris, 2014). As Douglass and Morris (2014) asserted, “While students must play the primary role in this effort, faculty and administrators must support them by creating an environment conducive to this endeavor” (p. 23). The results of this study mirror the experiential models espoused by Kolb (1984) and Illeris (2007), in that understanding interaction, and one’s environment, are necessary components for bypassing challenges and facilitating growth.

Finally, regarding professional development or continuing education programs, Froman (1994) stated that workplace learning should be designed to provide individuals with the knowledge and skills required to improve performance. Any individual development should also advance the overall mission or goal of the organization (Froman, 1994). Advancing this notion, Wlodkowski and Ginsberg (1995) noted, “Intrinsic motivation is elicited when people know they are competently performing an activity that leads to a valued goal” (p. 236). This motivation and drive may characterize an individual’s pursuit for self-directed learning, which can be supported and encouraged through employer support (Hedge et al., 2006).

As discussed, self-directed learning models share many similar characteristics with experiential approaches, particularly as they relate to knowledge construction through reflection. Integral to this belief is one’s ability to reflect on new knowledge in order to take charge of their future growth and development. Furthermore, self-directed learning can be promoted through interaction and an in-depth understanding of your
environment. This last characteristic is specifically important in removing barriers to for achieving goals.

This section examined self-directed learning models and the link to individual reflection on growth, development, and overcoming challenges. The next section will detail the role of reflection in learning.

**The role of reflection in learning.** This section will discuss the role of reflection in learning. Merriam et al. (2007) asserted that the goal of reflection should be the ascertainment of deeper insights that will influence future action. Every revelation should be followed by a cycle of reflection, discourse, and planned intervention to continuously improve. “The learner must critically reflect on his or her experience, talk with others about his or her new worldview in order to gain the best judgment, and act on the new perspective” (Merriam et al., 2007, p. 137).

Mezirow (1990) asserted that the significance of adult learning should be utilizing reflection to improve an individual’s current situation. The nature of transformative learning “is the process of becoming critically aware of how and why our presuppositions have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand, and feel about our world” (Mezirow, 1990, p. 14). Transformative learning can be facilitated through Mezirow’s (1990) seven levels of reflection:

1. Reflectivity: One’s awareness of a perception, habit, behavior, or experience and ability to describe it
2. Affective reflectivity: The cognizance of one’s own thinking and actions
3. Discriminant reflectivity: Analyzing the reasoning behind one’s perceptions and reactions
4. Judgmental reflectivity: The realization that each individual values judgment about perceptions

5. Conceptual reflectivity: One’s ability to critique and improve his or her own actions and skills

6. Psychic reflectivity: The recognition that one judges others based on limited information

7. Theoretical reflectivity: An alteration of one’s assumptions, which ultimately results in the transformation of perspectives

In utilizing this method, individuals are able to reflect on past experiences and make meaning of their present condition.

Furman and Sibthorp (2013) asserted that reflective techniques are not limited to child learners, but apply to adults as well. Such techniques are well suited to adult learners due to their abundance of life experiences, motivation for continued growth and development, and incentive to transfer knowledge into their professional fields (Furman & Sibthorp, 2013). This research seemingly supports Merriam et al.’s (2007) views on experience and reflection, where reflective learning is characterized as “one of the main ways in which educators have structured learning from experience” and “focuses on helping learners make judgments based on experience related to primarily complex and murky problems” (Merriam et al., 2007, p. 185). Similar ideas include the importance of interaction in facilitating knowledge transfer, with the authors advocating for a community of practice approach to foster cooperation and knowledge sharing (Merriam et al., 2007).
The aforementioned approach posited by Merriam et. al (2007) shares many similarities with Schöns’s theory. Namely, the goal of reflection should be the gaining of knowledge and insight to positively impact future action. For Schöns, this is apparent through both reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action, particularly as it concerns acting on one’s new perspectives. Mezirow’s (1990) seven levels of reflections share many similarities with Schöns as well, notably the characteristics of reflectivity, conceptual reflectivity, and theoretical reflectivity. This can be observed through the awareness of one’s perceptions, behaviors and beliefs (reflectivity), one’s ability to evaluate and improve actions and skills (conceptual) and finally changing one’s assumptions (and subsequently perspectives) (theoretical).

There are many different veins of adult learning, which are heavily influenced by constructivist ideals pertaining to experience, reflection and knowledge creation (Fenwick, 2003; Zafar, 2014). Such highlighted methods include experiential and self-directed learning, both of which highlight the importance of reflection in the process of knowledge creation (Merriam 2001; Merriam, Caffarella and Baumgartner, 2007). Therefore, the work of Schöns regarding reflective processes has influenced adult learning practices, including professional development programs (Pitsoe & Maila, 2013; Rayford, 2010).

This section discussed the concept of adult learning, while detailing different strands of learning, continued education, and the role of reflection in the learning process. The next section will offer a summary of aforementioned research, highlighting the key points discussed over the course of the literature review.

Chapter Summary
The need for educator professional development to improve ELL instructional practices is clear. The knowledge of many mainstream teachers and the environment of many inclusion classroom settings are inadequate, and ELL students are suffering the consequences of such shortcomings (Batt, 2008). The increased significance of standardized assessment results only serves to further complicate the situation, with many administrators seeking to disqualify ELL students from testing due to concerns over school rankings and evaluations (Vang, 2006). However, many of the ELL students who do participate in standardized achievement exams are sadly unprepared, as both the style and content of the assessments are not conducive to their abilities (Vang, 2006).

Compounding this issue is the fact that the instruction delivered in preparation for testing does not encourage true integration, but instead favors rapid assimilation (Lee, 2012). Educators must be trained to identify and utilize instructional practices that will advance the academic development of ELL students, providing them with a favorable educational environment in which they can thrive.

Professional development is a proven method for employee learning and skill advancement, both inside and outside the field of education (King, 2009; Musanti & Pence, 2010). Professional development is a form of adult learning, which has been heavily influenced by constructivist ideals pertaining to experience, reflection, and knowledge creation (Fenwick, 2003; Zafar, 2014). Such highlighted methods include experiential and self-directed learning, both of which highlight the importance of reflection in the process of knowledge creation (Merriam, 2001; Merriam et al., 2007). Therefore, the work of Schön regarding reflective processes (namely reflection-in-action)
has influenced adult learning practices, including professional development programs (Pitsoe & Maila, 2013; Rayford, 2010).

In the education realm, ELL proficiency and achievement may increase through an accessible and comprehensive ELL professional development program (Musanti & Pence, 2010). Such a program must consider the challenges faced by ELLs and employ the best-practice strategies utilized to maximize their skills and abilities (Li, 2013; Misco & Castaneda, 2009). Any professional development program must be consistent and identify short- and long term objectives to determine success (Reeves, 2006). Such aims would include procedures to evaluate the effectiveness of training and implementation (Calderon et al., 2011; Welsh & Newman, 2010).

An adequate and worthwhile professional training program should include many features. First, it must be readily available to all faculty and staff and preferably be held at an on-site location within the district (McIntyre et al., 2010). Next, the training must focus not only on content development and differentiated instruction, but also on how to encourage and support a diverse environment within the classroom and school (White et al., 2010). This aspect may also be accomplished through increasing ELL family participation and communication, which is an essential piece in creating a diverse school community (White et al., 2010).

Instructionally, a program must inform teachers of practices aimed at increasing vocabulary acquisition, promoting literacy skills, and strengthening curriculum comprehension through improved content delivery (Galguera, 2011; Misco & Castaneda, 2009). Faculty collaboration for shared design and utilization of such practices is particularly crucial for ELL student success (O’Hara & Pritchard, 2008; Pardini, 2008).
Staff cooperation ensures sufficient resources and support to foster ELL learning, in addition to increasing interaction (O’Hara & Pritchard, 2008). Through such cooperation, educators are promoting an interdependent learning community, while providing a platform to share best practices and strategies (Musanti & Pence, 2010; O’Hara & Pritchard, 2008). Karabenick and Noda (2004) asserted that teacher attitudes are imperative when examining ELL instruction, as this factor will ultimately influence enthusiasm and motivation to improve instructional practices. Finally, teacher perceptions may influence responsiveness to professional development offerings, along with a propensity to engage with ELL students (Karabenick & Noda, 2004). This may dictate both teacher willingness and response to professional development intervention, as well as a tendency to incorporate learned skills and strategies (Karabenick & Noda, 2004).

ELL instruction has also been influenced by the influence of the early Progressive thinkers, which is prevalent in the work of Donald Schön, where experience, interaction, and reflection are utilized to gain knowledge and insight (Misco & Castaneda, 2009; Pitsoe & Maila, 2013). The influence of these ideas is obvious when discussing the overemphasis on standardization or the importance of individualized instruction based on student ability, background, and interest (Dewey, 2001). Research has also noted that language instruction is further promoted by summoning a student’s interests, as instruction based solely on content and repetition may become boring for the student learner (Misco & Castaneda, 2009; Tellez & Waxman, 2010). These concepts and strategies are integral components in fostering ELL content comprehension, vocabulary growth, and academic development (Misco & Castaneda, 2009). The benefits of such
methods should be acknowledged and included in any professional development training program for educators.

Thus, as the research indicates, learning effective strategies and techniques for aiding ELL students should be of paramount concern for educators, administrators, and districts across the country. The purpose of this narrative research study was to explore how general education teachers describe their ELL professional development experiences. Specifically, this project sought to reveal general educators’ reflective practices in terms of how they translated completed professional development training into the learning environment of their own classrooms.

This chapter discussed key issues in ELL instruction, teacher preparedness for working with ELL students, and professional development for ELL instruction. Additionally, three strands of literature were examined: professional development, the work of Schön as it pertains to reflective practice, and adult learning. The next chapter will present the methodology used during this research.
Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this study was to explore how general education teachers describe their ELL professional development experiences. Specifically, this project sought to reveal general educators’ reflective practices in terms of how they translated completed professional development training into the learning environment of their own classrooms. The overarching research question that guided this study was “How do general education teachers describe their ELL professional development experiences?”

One secondary question served to uncover the reflective processes that occurred during their experiences:

(a) How do general education teachers describe their experiences of reflecting on and translating their ELL professional development training into practice in their classrooms?

These research questions were designed in order to gauge educator perspectives of professional training and determine the reflective processes that occurred during their experiences.

The study addressed a problem of practice: an observed unpreparedness of general educators to combat the abundance of learning obstacles that hinder the educational advancement of ELLs in the United States. With the challenges experienced by ELL students, a professional development program should be offered in order to best meet the needs of this diverse student population.

This chapter outlines the methodology used to conduct this study. It begins by discussing the approach taken, with sections on research paradigm, research design, and research tradition. Next it provides information on the participants and study context,
followed by detailed methods for data collection and data analysis. The chapter closes with a discussion of efforts to increase the study’s trustworthiness and comply with ethical requirements.

**Research Paradigm**

Due to Schön’s (1987) emphasis on knowledge development through an individual’s experience and reflection, the interpretivist viewpoint was a suitable research paradigm. To explore the nuances of teachers’ mental lives, the interpretivist paradigm has become increasingly popular (Johnson, 2006). Guiding questions have examined what has influenced teacher education and how the field has come to perceive how teachers learn and work.

Interpretivism arose as a reaction to the positivist method of thought and is based on the belief that there is not an unquestionable truth to be found, but rather an ever-changing and differing perspective based on the subject(s) being studied (Butin, 2010). Central to this framework is the idea that no absolute truth exists to be discovered, as each individual, group, or culture will offer a differing frame of reference (Butin, 2010). Rather than attempting to distinguish the validity of each viewpoint, the researcher instead focuses on obtaining an accurate examination and assessment of the offered perspective (Butin, 2010).

**Research Design**

The purpose of this study was to explore how general education teachers describe their ELL professional development experiences. Specifically, this project sought to reveal general educators’ reflective practices in terms of how they translated completed
professional development training into the learning environment of their own classrooms. A qualitative research method was appropriate for this study because it allowed for in-depth analysis through participant interviews (Creswell, 2013). Interviews examined participants’ interpretation and beliefs that molded a particular experience. Furthermore, a qualitative approach was used to reveal educators’ reflective practices in terms of how they translated completed professional development training into the learning environment of their classrooms. Lastly, a qualitative method was employed to better comprehend, through in-depth questioning and subsequent analysis, how educator experience may shape practitioner inquiry (Creswell, 2013).

**Research Tradition**

According to Creswell (2013), a narrative research method is best suited when seeking to collect the stories and experiences of a group of individuals. “These stories may emerge from a story told to the researcher, a story that is co-constructed between the researcher and the participant, and a story intended as a performance to convey some message or point” (Creswell, 2013, p. 71). This focus contributes to the context of a story, which is necessary to frame the narrative within a specific place or situation (Creswell, 2013). For the purpose of this study, the specific ‘situation’ was the participant professional development experience.

Utilizing the narrative approach, the researcher may be able to uncover aspects of a participant’s identity or self-perception (Creswell, 2013). Additionally, the narrative research method allows for a collaborative effort between participant and researcher, as interaction may facilitate the story being told (Creswell, 2013). The narrative method allows an individual to make sense or meaning out of an event or experience, providing a
platform to transform knowing into telling (Sandelowski, 1991). Additionally, reflection is an integral part of the narrative method, as it allows an individual to look back on their experiences and evaluate their current standing (Johns, 2010). In doing so, one can gain insights into their journey and develop an appropriate course of action for a desired outcome (Johns, 2010). As such, a narrative research approach using qualitative methods was appropriate for this research, which investigated educator experiences following a professional development program.

This study has employed a narrative research methodology in order to encompass the story and experience of individual educators following the completion of a professional development training program. The next section will provide an overview of the study site and participant selection.

**Site and Participant Selection**

The previous section outlined the research approach used for this study, as well as the rationale for its selection. The next section will provide an overview of the study site, as well as the process of participation recruitment and selection.

**Site description.** The organization that served as a focus for this study was a public school district in Massachusetts, located in a suburban community of approximately 28,000 residents (City Data, 2015). Based on information from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (2015a), this PK-12 school system consists of one high school, one middle school, five elementary schools, and one early learning center, with an estimated enrollment of 4,460 students. The student body is 85.8% white, 3.7% Hispanic, 5.1% Asian, and 1.9% African American (with the remaining ethnicities being characterized as Native American, Native
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, or multirace/Non-Hispanic). Although ELLs account for 2.52% of the student population (with 116 students classified as ELLs in December 2014), this represents a 314% increase from ELL enrollment in 2003 (DeMelia, 2014). The district is administered by one superintendent, one assistant superintendent, seven principals, and five assistant principals, while employing 280 teachers and support personnel.

This district was selected after successfully establishing consistent contact with the district Superintendent and receiving access permission. Prior to the selection of this district, a number of other school districts in the state were contacted, however did not progress due to no response, losing contact shortly after, or receiving unfavorable responses due to union concerns or other issues (such as research already being conducted within these districts). Although the selected district has a small ELL population (when compared with the larger cities in the state), there were favorable circumstances to conduct this research in this school system. There are approximately 275 families within the district who speak a non-English language at home, with 21 different languages being represented (DeMelia, 2014). The ELL student numbers in this district are expected to rise throughout the academic year (DeMelia, 2014).

**Participant recruitment and access.** This study adhered to all requirements of the Northeastern University Institutional Review Board. Access to the site was approved through correspondence with the site gatekeeper, the district superintendent. The gatekeeper was asked: *Have you collaborated with researchers before?* and *Would you be willing to participate in a study in the near future?* Participants were recruited from this public school district on a voluntary basis through a listserv request facilitated by the
site contact, the superintendent, along with the ELL director (see Appendix A). After initial email contact with potential participants, an introductory phone call was arranged to verify that they met the study criteria.

Purposeful (criterion) sampling (Creswell, 2013) was used to select study participants, employing the following criteria: (1) taught in the public school district for 3 or more years; (2) completed a district-sanctioned ELL professional development program within the last 6 to 12 months; (3) currently has at least one ELL student in the classroom for at least 2 or more years. Participants could have varying degrees of ELL instructional experience.

As explained in Chapter 1, when this study uses the term participants, they are defined as elementary and secondary generalist licensed teachers per Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education standards (MDESE, 2016b). In Massachusetts, all academic PreK-12 teachers are licensed as general educator teachers (MDESE, 2016b). Therefore, for the purpose of this study, participants will be referred to as general education teachers.

Thirteen individuals responded to the request, one of whom was disqualified for not meeting the study criteria. Another participant never confirmed an interview time, and multiple attempts to schedule were unsuccessful. The other 11 respondents were interviewed for this study.

Ten of the participants were female, and one was male. Overall, the study participants were representative of the overall school district pool as reviewed by gender, ethnicity, age, and education. Table 3.1 offers a brief demographic description of study participants and the school district overall.
Table 3.1
Comparison of Participant and District Demographic Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Study participants (N = 11)</th>
<th>Total population of district teachers (N = 280)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td>91% Female (10)</td>
<td>78% Female (219)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9% Male (1)</td>
<td>22% Male (61)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td>73% White (8)</td>
<td>98% White (274)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0 Other</td>
<td>0.012% Hispanic (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>27% Data not available (3)</td>
<td>0.007% African-American (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.004% Asian (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td>27% 25-34 (3)</td>
<td>6% Under 26 (16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9% 35-44 (1)</td>
<td>20% 26-32 (55)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>27% 45-54 (3)</td>
<td>17% 33-40 (48)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9% 55-64 (1)</td>
<td>26% 41-48 (72)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>27% Data not available (3)</td>
<td>17% 49-56 (49)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>12% 57-64 (35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2% Over 64 (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education level</strong></td>
<td>18% Bachelor’s degree (2)</td>
<td>Data not available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>55% Master’s degree (6)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>27% Data not available (3)</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Data Collection**

Semi-structured interviews served as the primary source of data collection. These interviews were researcher led, occurred at a predetermined time and place, and were digitally recorded. Although the researcher had a set of guiding questions, participant responses directed the interview (Hatch, 2002). This allowed the researcher to delve deeper into participant responses while acquiring in-depth information (Hatch 2002). Using multiple interviewees was useful in ensuring information validity, as participant responses (different data sets) can be compared against each other (Meyer, 2001).

The data collection method was piloted prior to participant interviews. In order to achieve this, a pilot interview was conducted in order to test the interview method, question clarity and equipment. Two pilot volunteers were used: both faculty peers, with one interviewed in person, and one via the GoToMeeting online video conferencing
platform. Pilot participants were asked to assess interview question clarity. Slight modifications of the interview protocol were made following the pilot interviews.

After their response to the invitation, teachers were contacted by phone or email, and an initial intake interview was conducted to validate that they met the study criteria, as well as to gather demographic information and schedule the study interview. The one-on-one interviews were conducted with each participant through GoToMeeting online video conference platform using the attached interview protocol (Appendix C). Table 3.2 displays the interview questions, inquiry purpose, and link to Schön. A researcher journal was used during the interviews to facilitate organization, note emerging themes, capture interview context, gain additional detail, and provide further insight.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview question</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Link to Schön</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Can you please provide me with a brief description of your background? How did you enter the education profession? How did you come to work in this particular school? | Allow participants to present a professional narrative and offer insight into their career trajectory. | Reflection-on-action
|                                                                                   | Explore, appraise, acknowledge experience, and gain insight.                                       |                                |
| Can you discuss the ELL professional development opportunities that are currently offered in the district? | Allow participants to detail past professional development offerings as well as offer an assessment of professional development availability. | Reflection-on-action
|                                                                                   | Explore, appraise, acknowledge experience, and gain insight.                                       |                                |
| Can you discuss your experience working with ELLs prior to PD training?           | Allow participants to provide a professional context, develop narrative.                           | Reflection-in-action
|                                                                                   | Problem-setting, intervention, and evaluation.                                                    |                                |
| What do you think are some of the biggest challenges in teaching ELLs? Did your approach to these challenges change after PD training? If so, how? | Allow participants to develop their narrative, as well as reflection upon their professional development experiences. | Reflection-on-action
<p>|                                                                                   | Sense-making, explore, appraise, acknowledge experience, and gain insight.                        |                                |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview question</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Link to Schön</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In what ways, if any, did your perspectives of teaching ELLs change as a result of professional development training?</td>
<td>Allow participants to reflect upon the progression of their perspectives and beliefs and evaluate the influence of professional development in shaping those beliefs.</td>
<td>Reflection-on-action Sense-making, explore, appraise, acknowledge experience, and gain insight.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a result of professional development training, what knowledge, if any, did you gain about ELLs or ELL instruction?</td>
<td>Allow participants to reflect upon their professional development experience as it pertains to their knowledge growth and understanding of student instruction.</td>
<td>Reflection-in-action Intervention and evaluation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Based on your experiences during professional development training, what changes have you made in your teaching practice?</td>
<td>Allow participants to examine the influence that professional development has had on their instructional practice.</td>
<td>Reflection-in-action Problem-setting, reframing, intervention, and evaluation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has PD training influenced your classroom management? If so, how? Learning environment? If so, how?</td>
<td>Allow participants to examine the influence that professional development has had on their classroom environment</td>
<td>Reflection-on-action Sense-making, explore, acknowledge experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can you tell me about a specific instance when you introduced an instructional practice from PD training that worked well?</td>
<td>Allow participants an opportunity to provide a professional context, as well as present a specific PD intervention technique.</td>
<td>Reflection-on-action Explore, appraise, acknowledge experience, and gain insight.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can you tell me about a specific instance when you introduced an instructional practice from PD training that didn’t work as anticipated? Adjustments?</td>
<td>Allow participants to present a description of specific issues, subsequent interventions, and strategy evaluation.</td>
<td>Reflection-in-action Problem-setting, intervention, and evaluation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In what ways, if any, did participation in ELL professional development highlight the needs of ELL learners that you might not have been aware of prior to training?</td>
<td>Allow participants to explore the role that professional development may have had on their cognizance of the instructional needs of students.</td>
<td>Reflection-in-action Problem-setting, reframing, intervention, and evaluation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In reflecting upon your overall professional development experience, can you tell me how you think this may have influenced your own learning and development as a teacher?</td>
<td>Allow participants to examine the impact that completed professional development training may have had in their development as an educator.</td>
<td>Reflection-on-action Sense-making, explore, appraise, acknowledge experience, and gain insight.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview question</td>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>Link to Schöon</td>
</tr>
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<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>What changes, if any, would you make to your completed professional development training?</td>
<td>Allow participants to evaluate the completed program, as well as offer any recommendations that they feel may improve future training.</td>
<td>Reflection-in-action Evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you have any final thoughts regarding your PD training or educating ELLs that you would like to share?</td>
<td>Allow participants an opportunity to present any final thoughts, suggestions, or insights.</td>
<td>Reflection-in-action Evaluation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interviews lasted 45 to 60 minutes. All interview sessions were digitally recorded and transcribed, with transcription completed by a professional transcription service that follows industry standards regarding data security. The final phase involved sharing the transcribed interview with participants to provide them with an opportunity to reflect, enhance, respond to, and validate their narrative.

**Data Analysis**

Data analysis was conducted using inductive and deductive methods. Data analysis was a three-step process involving data reduction, data display, and drawing and verifying conclusions (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). Data analysis was completed through a combination of manual coding as well as the use of coding software.

Data from narrative research can be analyzed in many ways (Creswell, 2013). This study pursued a thematic analysis, delving into participant responses derived from interview transcripts (Riessman, 2008). The researcher followed protocols for data organization, description, classification, interpretation and visualization (Creswell, 2013).

Data organization and management was accomplished by hand (notebook) and computer (Microsoft Word and Excel files). This phase involved a repeated reading and
reviewing of participant transcripts and field notes. The researcher developed analytic memos, and marked notes in the margins of transcripts and field notes. Next, data description was achieved through a line by line review of interview transcripts, and using in vivo coding to assign labels to the data. In vivo coding was employed in order to describe information with the exact words or phrases used by participants (Creswell, 2013). The frequency of initial codes were documented in order to identify repeated ideas, and help further refine and reduce data (Creswell, 2013; Miles et al., 2014). Interpretation, or making sense of the data, was accomplished through the process of developing and refining codes, and the formation of emergent themes and categories (Creswell, 2013). Data classification was achieved via data reduction methods, or aggregating codes for commonality (Creswell, 2013). Representation of the data was accomplished through charts and tables created from Word processing files and Excel spreadsheets.

Transcriptions and field notes were reviewed by the researcher prior to coding. Transcripts were read, summarized, and coded with notes written in margins. Digital recordings were played back, and additional notes were made in the researcher journal. The data analysis process involved a combination of hand-coding as well as the use of coding software to verify codes from the transcribed interviews, completing in two cycles, known as first-cycle coding and second-cycle coding (Saldàña, 2013).

**First-cycle coding.** First cycle coding involved multiple reviews of interview transcriptions. Transcripts were reviewed line by line, in order to affix an in vivo code to the data. Next, the transcripts were reviewed and affixed with initial coding labels. For this research study, both initial coding and in vivo coding were employed as first-cycle
coding methods, with each process described as “appropriate for virtually all qualitative studies, but particularly for beginning qualitative researchers learning how to code data” (Saldaña, 2013, p. 91). Additionally, Saldaña (2013) asserted that novice researchers often employ in vivo coding due to its security and ease of use. Saldaña (2013) noted that when coding interview transcripts, a combination of different methods may be utilized, therefore explaining the amalgamation of the two cited methods.

One of the primary purposes of initial coding is to uncover processes, or actions associated with cause or consequence (Bennet, 2016). After first cycle coding of the interview transcripts was completed, the data were categorized. At this point, data were sorted and categorized based on coding results (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Following the labeling of data, these codes were grouped together based on conceptual similarity. The clustered codes were placed into initial conceptual categories based on congruency, and displayed on an Excel worksheet (Bennet, 2016).

According to Rubin and Rubin (2012), similar excerpts from each interview should be categorized into a unified document for accessible viewing and comparison. The categories was reviewed and reflected on prior to theming the data (Saldaña, 2013). Files were created based on similar content and were reviewed and summarized to seek collective responses and uncover any new information (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Through this iterative process, a continual review of data was accomplished, with analytic memos placed at various points during transcript reviews to offer additional reflection and insight (Saldaña, 2013).

**Examination through coding software.** Following first cycle coding, the data were examined using qualitative data analysis software, MaxQDA. This program allowed
the researcher to locate and organize material, and aided in the theming and
categorization process. This step was done to further validate and compare themes within
the completed first cycle of manual coding.

Second cycle. Next, the second cycle of coding (or recoding) began. The intent of
second-cycle coding is a further examination of the coded data, which requires a
reorganization and recategorization of information (Saldaña, 2013). Focused coding was
employed as the second-cycle coding method, due to its descriptive and comparative
properties relating to the generated categories (Saldaña, 2013). In this regard, focused
coding served as a valuable method to identify similar concepts and themes among the
data (Saldaña, 2013). Additionally, focused coding complements the initial coding
process, as it “enables you to compare newly constructed codes during this cycle across
other participants’ data to assess comparability and transferability” (Saldaña, 2013, p.
217). The result should be a seemingly more honed and focused data product, or
recategorization and retheming, which is the overall purpose of second-cycle coding
(Saldaña, 2013). This is necessary to accomplish a complete understanding of the data,
build evidence, and create conceptual coherence (Miles et al., 2014).

During second-cycle coding, transcriptions were reread, categories and themes
were related to the primary research question, and data were entered into a Microsoft
Word document. Additionally, the transcribed interviews were placed in a Microsoft
Excel spreadsheet, where response summaries were further reviewed and developed. This
step offered a thorough thematic analysis of the data. “Thematic analysis or the search for
themes in the data is a strategic choice as part of the research design that includes the
primary questions, goals, conceptual framework and literature review” (Saldaña, 2013, p. 177).

**Analytic memos and researcher journal.** To achieve additional credibility and a deeper analysis of the transcribed interviews, the researcher created analytic memos. As noted by Saldaña (2013), the use of analytic memos is useful in the content analysis “because they permit detailed yet selective attention to the elements, nuances, and the complexities . . . and a broader interpretation of the compositional totality of the work” (pp. 53-54). As noted above, during the interview process, a researcher journal was used to document thoughts, facilitate categorization, and note emerging themes, trends, and conclusions, and this information was used during the analysis process.

Table 3.3 summarizes the stages of the data analysis process, and a coding sample chart is included in Appendix D.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First-cycle coding</td>
<td>Initial coding</td>
<td>Organize and categorize data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In vivo coding</td>
<td>Create initial groupings and themes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second-cycle coding</td>
<td>Focused coding</td>
<td>Reorganize and recategorize information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Further identify concepts and themes among the data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Create a more honed and focused data product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coding software</td>
<td>Qualitative data</td>
<td>Further validate and compare themes with the completed first round of manual coding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>analysis software</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>program: MaxQDA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interrater reliability</td>
<td>Coding consistency</td>
<td>Enhance reliability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>check</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional methods</td>
<td>Analytic memos</td>
<td>Capture data nuances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Researcher Journal</td>
<td>Allow for broader interpretation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Trustworthiness**
Creswell (2013) detailed a number of validation strategies that aid in establishing trustworthiness during a study. The trustworthiness of this study was accomplished through member checking, use of a researcher journal, peer review, coding consistency check, triangulation, appropriate instrumentation to minimize threats to internal validity, and clarification of researcher bias.

**Member checking.** This method of ensuring trustworthiness is an additional appraisal of the research process by another individual (Creswell, 2013). To enhance trustworthiness for this study, transcriptions were emailed to the participants, allowing them an opportunity to validate their narrative. Of the 11 participants contacted, nine emailed back confirming receipt, but otherwise offering no additional changes, questions or suggestions.

**Researcher journal.** To capture the nuances of ongoing research, a researcher journal was employed. This contributed to transparency, as the journal offered a source of documentation and review of research processes and researcher practices (Ortlipp, 2008). A researcher journal was used during the interviews to facilitate organization, note emerging themes, capture interview context, gain additional detail, and provide further insight.

**Peer review.** During the initial review of findings, a colleague was enlisted to evaluate the consistency of a preliminary draft of the findings. No modifications were made as a result of the peer review. To further enhance reliability, a coding consistency check was completed, as described in the next section.

**Coding consistency check.** To enhance reliability, a coding consistency check was conducted with a peer to reveal any inconsistencies among the data. This process
was used to evaluate data consistency during researcher coding. The intent of this process is to compare the coded transcripts for agreements and consistencies (Armstrong, Gosling, Weinman, & Marteau, 1997). This method of interrater reliability was accomplished by sending a transcript to a peer to code (Schreier, 2012) and comparing the coded transcripts for agreement (Armstrong et al., 1997). It was clear that saturation was reached when there were no longer any new emerging themes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

**Triangulation.** Creswell (2005) discussed a process called triangulation to ensure validity in qualitative research. In order to do so, different sources of data are cross-referenced for similarities (Johansson, 2003). According to Vissak (2010), employing triangulation “reduces the respondent bias, provides additional information, increases support for the researcher’s conclusions, and may lead to new questions that can be answered in later research” (p. 380). During this study, triangulation was accomplished through a cross-case analysis of the participants’ responses, which led to the verification of emergent themes.

**Minimizing threats to internal validity.** To minimize threats to internal validity, Creswell (2005) noted that an evaluation tool must provide consistent results while being free from error. Essentially, participants of similar backgrounds and circumstances should reflect similar results (Creswell, 2005). A reliable instrument does not guarantee valid results; however, reliability must be present as a precondition for validity (Creswell, 2005). A researcher may achieve validity only with reliability or the ability to make a rational inference from a data set (and the corresponding sample) (Creswell, 2005). In this instance, the development of an appropriate measurement tool, such as an interview
protocol, survey instrument, or questionnaire, is vital. For this study, this was accomplished through an interview protocol based on Schön's (1987) theory of the reflective practitioner (see Appendix C).

**Clarification of researcher bias.** A researcher must strive to assume an objective, unbiased role, with the study free from any personal or moral beliefs. I reflected on my subjectivity to be cognizant of any biases or assumptions that could arise during the course of the research (Machi & McEvoy, 2009) and, in doing so, was able to monitor such beliefs throughout the research process (Machi & McEvoy, 2009). To aid the reader in considering any possible bias, I provide a positionality statement below.

**Positionality statement.** My initial curiosity for this topic could be traced to my experience as a bilingual dual citizen. This interest was furthered during my professional career, where I formerly served as a secondary educator. During my tenure as a middle school teacher, select educators in each department and grade level were certified under Department of Education guidelines for the education of ELLs (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2016b). For my department, I was the fully certified grade-level educator, licensed in accordance with state standards in sheltered English immersion instruction.

My background and personal experiences have both piqued and informed my interest on this topic. Although personal connections may improve the interest and rigor of research, one must be mindful of avoiding any potential bias. As Machi and McEvoy (2009) asserted, “By rationally identifying and confronting these views, you can control personal bias, opinion, and preferred outcome, and can become open minded, skeptical, and considerate of research data” (p. 19). I recognize the importance of providing
educators with the skills and knowledge base necessary to properly educate ELL students, while understanding the difficulties encountered when trying to do so with little guidance and support.

**Ethical Issues**

A researcher must consider a study’s potential ramifications while maintaining strict participation and privacy protocols and conducting research that is free from deception (Creswell, 2013). These goals were accomplished in this study by conducting research in strict adherence to institutional review board rules and procedures (Creswell, 2013). Appropriate steps included receiving informed consent, guaranteeing participant confidentiality, minimizing site disruption, and removing undue risk (Creswell, 2013).

Therefore, after receiving proposal approval and authorization from the university institutional review board, information was provided regarding study purpose, anticipated time spent, and what may be gained. Upon receiving final site permission and access, the relevant documentation was provided. Prior to the interviews, participant consent forms were administered, in which participant rights, confidentiality protocols, and associated risks and benefits were outlined and participant signature were obtained (Appendix B).

As noted by Saldaña (2013), “Ethical issues of varying magnitudes arise in virtually every study with human participants” (p. 47). Although such problems may be unavoidable, the potential of occurrence can certainly be decreased. The researcher attempted to be “rigorously ethical” by respecting both participants and data (Saldaña, 2013). Regarding data collection, this entailed not omitting results that could be unfavorable to one’s study (Saldaña, 2013).
Ethical practices extend to data organization and storage methods (Creswell, 2013). All participant interview sessions were audio taped and transcribed. Observation notes and associated documentation (as well as any duplicate copies) were electronically and nonelectronically securely stored while observing participant privacy and anonymity by using pseudonyms (Creswell, 2013). Nonelectronic transcript copies and other hardcopy information and documentation were stored in a safe, secure location away from public access (Creswell, 2013). Electronic data were stored on a password-protected computer, with all files backed up with a storage device placed in a separate, secure location. Access to data was limited to the researcher, and data will be destroyed after the expiration of the stipulated time period determined by federal guidelines.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has outlined the methodology selected in this examination of how ELL teachers describe their professional development experiences. This qualitative, narrative-based study employed an interpretivist viewpoint. Using purposeful sampling, 11 participants were chosen from a single district and participated in semi-structured interviews with an interview protocol. Analytic memos and a researcher journal were used throughout the process, and two cycles of coding were employed to analyze the data. A number of measures were used to increase the trustworthiness of the study, and ethical guidelines were followed to protect participants. The next chapter presents the findings.
Chapter 4: Research Findings

This chapter reports on the findings from the study to gain insight into the ELL professional development experiences of general educators from the same school district. The first section focuses on the context of the narrative study to provide a description of the particular traits of the school district and the professional development approaches used. The next section includes brief vignettes of the participants drawn from their responses to the interview questions. Next, the descriptive analysis is shared, which summarizes and defines the themes and categories derived from the coding. The 13 themes from the cross-category analysis are then discussed. The chapter concludes by sharing findings and summarizing key insights organized as a response to the research questions. The overarching research question that guided this study was “How do general education teachers describe their ELL professional development experiences?”

One secondary question served to uncover the reflective processes that occurred during their experiences:

(a) How do general education teachers describe their experiences of reflecting on and translating their ELL professional development training into practice in their classrooms?

These research questions were designed in order to gauge educator perspectives of professional training and determine the reflective processes that occurred during their experiences

Contextual Description
This narrative study took place at a school district in Massachusetts with approximately 4,460 students, almost 86% of whom are white. The district is suburban, with a town population of about 28,000. In Massachusetts, the growing ELL student population is being affected by the lack of sufficient and specialized instructional support, as evidenced by the 15.7% of ELL students who dropped out in 2014 (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education [MDESE], 2015b). To remedy this troubling statistic, the state has attempted to implement protocols to adequately prepare educators to aid ELLs in reaching their academic potential (MDESE, 2015b).

The ELL professional development available for educators and administrators in Massachusetts was already detailed in Chapter 1. As described by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (2013):

The new SEI endorsement course is 45 hours in length, some of which is online, and covers topics such as socio-emotional and socio-cultural considerations for instruction of ELLs; second language acquisition and English language development; and sheltered English immersion, in particular best practices for delivering academic content in a fashion that is accessible to ELLs (p. 7). After successful completion of the course, future adherence to licensure renewal requires an additional 15 professional development points in SEI or ESL, with each point equivalent to an hour of training (MDESE, 2015b).

**Participant Vignettes**

All 11 participants’ initial experiences with ELL professional development occurred as a result of the state-mandated training. Ten of the 11 participants’ initial
experiences with ELL students occurred due to student placement within their classroom. The remaining participant’s initial experience with an ELL occurred during her time as a substitute teacher. Participants reported time, resources, support, professional knowledge, and student background and ability as the biggest challenges in educating ELLs.

This section reports on the participants’ backgrounds and professional development experiences. The vignettes were developed using the data in an iterative process: reviewing the researcher’s field notes during and following each interview, relistening to the audio recording of each participant interview, and conducting a broad review of the transcripts with the goal of ascertaining the overall story line of each educator’s professional development experiences. All names are pseudonyms. Notes of participants’ responses to each interview question appear in Appendix H.

**Amy.** Amy held a master’s degree in special education and was in her 13th year of teaching after taking a hiatus to raise children. Amy had been at her current school for 9 years and taught seventh-grade special education. Her initial experience with ELL students occurred when they were placed in her substantially separate classroom, qualifying due to disability and ELL needs. She recalled, “You’re it, so to speak. You’re the teacher that takes on those children.”

Amy took the SEI course following a participation mandate from the state. She credited the professional development training with increasing her awareness, confidence, and instructional preparedness, stating, “I think it’s an overall awareness that comes with the knowledge that you gain in the course.” Amy also discussed the constructive influence the training had in helping her identify and address student needs.
She also noted the 45 hour time commitment of the training, recommending this aspect be revisited for future offerings.

When speaking of the training structure, Amy cited the collegial support network that the seminar promoted. In this regard, Amy stated, “It opened doors to talk to people about how I was approaching students. Or if I have a student who’s attending the ELL classes in the school district’s support, it has opened a huge door to allow me to talk to the instructor.”

**Diane.** Diane graduated with a degree in elementary and special education and had been teaching in the district since 1986. Diane currently taught fifth grade (all content areas) and completed professional development training through the state-sanctioned SEI program. Diane’s initial experience with ELL students took place when an ELL student was placed in her classroom:

I do remember my very first student, and he was just a sponge that absorbed everything that I was teaching him. He was from Brazil, and it was a really positive experience to see his progress in that year. Not all my students have been like that, a very positive initial experience.

Diane recognized the professional development training as aiding the creation of a “learning community” within her classroom. Diane indicated that the training had increased awareness, preparedness, and empathy for ELL students. This translated into a more inclusionary classroom environment, with Diane noting, “I think by thinking about the fact that you’re helping all your students with these strategies, it makes even the ELL student feel like they’re part of your class.” Diane identified the professional development training as a “positive experience” that promoted reflection as a teacher,
stating, “It made me reflect on what I was doing and how the kids responded.” She noted the time commitment of the seminar as something she would recommend changing for future implementation.

**Martha.** Martha began her career in education as an elementary paraprofessional, working for 10 years before receiving middle school and elementary certification. She is now certified for grades 1 to 12 and was teaching second grade (all content areas) at the time of the interview. Martha took the SEI course offered through the mandated Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Her initial experience with ELL students occurred during her second year of teaching, when two ELL students were placed in her classroom. At the time, Martha had no special training for educating ELL students and relied heavily on a colleague with ELL teaching experience. Martha commented on the experience:

I thought I was doing the best I could at the time without having any training. I did better than I would have if I didn’t have her support and some guidance from her. Obviously, our ESL [English as a second language] staff was great. I would talk to them and try to get input from them. It was tough to find some time sometimes for us to get together and meet and discuss the kids . . . just with our ESL staff over a couple different schools, so that was challenging to be able to set up some time so that I could bounce some things off of them.

Martha credited professional development training for an improvement in identifying and meeting student needs, as well as appreciating the importance of background knowledge. While discussing being better equipped to meet student needs,
Martha stated, “Now, what I’ve learned is there’s so much I didn’t know and now I would be able to help him out so much better than I was at the time.” Furthermore, Martha felt as though the training improved the overall environment of the classroom, while increasing her confidence, awareness, and preparedness for ELL students. Martha called the seminar a “positive experience” and noted how the training structure provided her with opportunities for reflection and collegial support. Regarding the support component, she stated:

I also liked that we had a group of people who were very invested. . . . The two people I worked with are phenomenal teachers and they were invested in what we were doing, so it was really nice to have that little learning community that we had, which I liked that.

**Rebecca.** Rebecca served as a substitute teacher prior to becoming a full-time sixth-grade English teacher at her current school. She was inspired to become a teacher by her mother, who served as an ESL teacher in the same district. Rebecca received SEI professional development as a new hire.

Rebecca’s initial experience with ELL students came during her time as a substitute teacher, where she was often frustrated due to her lack of skills and training. She recounted the experience as follows:

When I was subbing, it was difficult because I didn’t know how to reach the students who didn’t speak English. It made me feel like I wasn’t doing a very good job when I was teaching because I wasn’t reaching every student. As a teacher, you want to reach every single student.
Rebecca reported that the professional development training aided her in identifying student needs, as well as appreciating the importance of background knowledge for instructional purposes. Rebecca described the training as a “positive experience” and noted that the seminar provided her with increased confidence, awareness, preparedness, and empathy. Regarding preparedness, Rebecca shared:

The training made me feel like I could actually do something to help them. I felt pretty helpless beforehand because I didn’t know how I could help or if what I was doing was even helping. After the professional development, I felt like I knew more what I was doing, and if something didn’t work, then I had a different strategy.

Rebecca also commented that the strategies in the training helped to create an improved learning environment, utilizing terms such as “common ground,” “more comfortable,” and “great for students,” while noting, “The ELL is more likely to share and participate in class.”

Nancy. Nancy majored in education and later received a master’s degree in education. After teaching at a private school for a few years, Nancy entered the business world, working for an educational publishing company. Nancy returned to teaching after having kids, where she served as a paraprofessional before becoming recertified as a classroom teacher. For the past 8 years, Nancy has been a second-grade teacher (all content areas) for an integrated classroom. Due to recertification requirements, Nancy participated in the state-sponsored SEI course.
Nancy stated that her initial experience with ELL students occurred “purely because they were put into my classroom.” She referred to her initial experience with ELL students as “a sink-or-swim proposition.”

Nancy credited the training with helping her identify and provide for student needs, while increasing peer interaction and fostering an improved learning environment. In this regard, Nancy reported:

It’s just all the ways to have the kids working together and talking about things and much more cooperative learning and peer work and sharing. Just having a community of learners and not just me being the teacher but them all helping each other.

Nancy stated that the training increased her preparedness and noted numerous useful strategies learned over the course of the training. Structurally, Nancy referred to the training as a “positive experience,” while crediting the course with providing opportunities for support and reflection. Regarding the concept of reflection, Nancy stated, “It made me dig deep and think about, ‘Okay, where are my problem areas? Where do I have difficulty reaching these kids who maybe can’t read or who maybe don’t have the vocabulary?’”

Elaine. Elaine had worked in the district for 4 years, taking time off to raise kids and returning to the profession. At the time of the interview, she taught first grade, all content areas. Elaine took the SEI professional development training due to the state’s requirements.

Elaine’s initial experience with ELL students was the result of “having one placed in my classroom.” Elaine noted:
So, again, it’s a little tricky. At the original start of this class, it was required that you had to have an ELL child in your class in order to take this class because you are required to go back and teach what you learned that week in your class to your student and then report back about it.

Elaine stated that the training helped her identify student needs and understand the importance of background knowledge for instructional support. Elaine credited the strategies learned during the training with improving the learning environment of the classroom and allowing for increased peer interaction, noting, “I think all kids are benefiting from it, to be perfectly honest.” Elaine indicated that the training led to increased confidence, awareness, preparedness, and empathy for students. She used terms such as “eye-opening,” “more confident,” and “taking it for granted,” while stating, “I think now we have the tools; we’re given a gift by taking this course to continue that learning in the classroom when we have them.” Finally, Elaine referred to the training as a “positive experience,” while also noting the considerable time commitment required.

**Jen.** As an undergraduate, Jen double majored in musical theater and English literature. After acting for several years, she began working as a math tutor and took the necessary licensure for teaching high school mathematics. She had been teaching high school math at her current school for over 10 years. Jen had taken the ELL professional development training via the “tailored course through the state.”

Jen’s initial experience with ELL students began early in her career, when she “had a few English language learners here and there in class.” Jen cited her lack of
training and inexperience in ELL education, stating, “At that point, they weren’t really on my radar, even. For the most part, they were good students, but I didn’t have a lot of training or knowledge. I think I was just trying to keep my head above water.”

Jen reported an increased ability to identify and provide for student needs, as well as recognize the importance of background knowledge following professional development training. She credited the training with providing her with increased confidence, awareness, and instructional flexibility. Regarding modifications, she stated, “I really felt empowered to modify my test or provided a diagram with a word problem where I would have done that on English-only students. Again, it made the content accessible.” Jen said the training was a “positive experience,” while noting the significant time commitment and workload that it necessitated. She commented:

I think that I have learned a lot, and I know that over the next few years as I try more and more things, I think that will get better. . . . I definitely have the confidence that now I can teach ELL students. . . . Before I think [I] just didn’t really know what to do at all. I think that’s helpful.

Maria. Maria worked in the business world for 15 years. After opting to take a package during a period of voluntary layoffs, she went back to school for teaching. Maria had worked in the district for 9 years, working at two different schools during that timeframe. She currently served as a fifth-grade teacher, responsible for all content areas except science. Maria took the required SEI professional development training offered by the state to receive the SEI endorsement.
Maria’s initial experience with ELL occurred when ELL students were placed in her classroom, and she noted that her exposure to these students was limited: “Over the past 7 years since I’ve been here, I’ve probably had four ELL students, and they’ve all been kind of Level 5. They haven’t been severe; they haven’t been Level 1 or 2.”

Maria reported an increased ability to recognize the importance of background knowledge following professional development training. Addressing a student’s background knowledge and differentiated instruction, she stated:

I’ve learned some good tips, and when they talk about where they’ve come from, things hit you like background knowledge . . . or they need more vocab in the content area. I think areas like that, yes, I think about it more.

Maria also credited the training with increasing awareness and preparedness. When speaking of strategy implementation, Maria noted:

I probably do it more because that is one reason I think it’s good to take professional development. It kind of puts it in the front of your brain again, things that you forget to do after a while. It’s kind of gotten me back into doing more of those strategies.

Maria spoke simultaneously of the training’s importance and the significant time commitment it necessitated:

I’m not one of those that don’t want to attend classes at all. I’m always trying to do that; I do all the technical things that are on the weekends. It’s just the amount of time of this class. Otherwise, I think professional development is crucial. I think everybody should have to do it.
Sarah. Sarah began her career in education as a substitute teacher and initially viewed the job as “glorified babysitting.” After receiving her Massachusetts certification, she applied for an open English position at a local high school and taught high school English at that school for the past 9 years. Sarah taught all grade levels with the exception of freshmen.

Sarah completed the SEI professional development course mandated by the state. “Primarily, right now, the ELL kind of professional development is the SEI course. I don’t have a ton of opportunity outside of that that I have been afforded.”

Sarah’s initial experience with ELL students occurred about 6 or 7 years ago when a student was placed in her classroom:

He definitely wasn’t fluent, but he could communicate with me verbally pretty well. I was frustrated and unaware before having him that we weren’t allowed to give him translated versions of things. Legally, we weren’t allowed to do that, so I felt a little lost. I felt that I couldn’t teach him the best that I could because of the language barrier. I guess I was unprepared, as a good way to say it, but he was great.

Sarah reported that the professional development training improved her ability to identify and provide for student needs, stating, “I think it maybe opened my eyes to new techniques and strategies for the right ELL.” Sarah also credited the training with increasing peer interaction within the classroom: “I think that opened some line to communication with the other kids.” Additionally, Sarah reported an increased awareness following the training seminar, asserting, “I think I gained or deepened my awareness that we’re not necessarily prepared.”
Overall, Sarah viewed the training as a positive experience, stating, “I enjoyed it. I got a lot out of it.” Regarding the training structure, Sarah mentioned the significant time commitment that the training required, while recognizing the importance of the training itself: “I think it’s important that we address the ELL community and their needs, and the fact that it’s growing. . . . I think it’s important that we’re addressing this community that needs to be educated as well as anyone else is educated.” Speaking of the time commitment, Sarah used phrases such as “family commitments,” “obligations,” and “it’s tricky to navigate.”

**Joseph.** Joseph knew he wanted to pursue a career in science education from the time he was a high school student. He entered college with the desire to become a physics teacher. After finishing his coursework in education and physics, he started to work at his current school almost immediately. Joseph has served as a high school physics teacher for the past 9 years. He completed ELL professional development through the district-approved SEI program, which resulted in the SEI endorsement. Regarding his initial experience with ELL students, Joseph stated, “They just ended up getting placed in my class. It was just luck of the draw, I guess you could call it.”

Joseph credited the professional development training with better equipping him to identify and meet student needs, stating, “Before the training, most of the adjustments, . . . I would essentially just give them a free pass on it.” Following training, Joseph reported that his instructional preparedness increased:

> I definitely changed after my training. One of the things that I learned was how to break assignments down a little bit more. . . . It’s helped me to factor in more visual aids. . . . Those things have helped me and I think helped my students a lot.
Joseph identified the professional development training as a “pretty positive experience,” stating, “I think there was a lot of really good ideas and information presented in it.” Regarding the training structure, Joseph mentioned the significant time commitment involved, stating, “I personally think that the time should be a little bit shorter, because I know that my attention span starts to go out the window after about 2 hours.”

Lisa. Lisa majored in English and secondary education as an undergraduate and earned a master’s degree in English. Prior to her current role as a high school English teacher, Lisa served as a sixth-grade English teacher for 7 years in the same district. Lisa took the SEI course offered by the state. Prior to training, Lisa noted the difficulty of instructing ELL students: “I definitely did not feel prepared to work with them, and their grades reflected that.”

Lisa’s initial experience with ELL students came during her years as a middle school instructor, prior to professional development training:

She, luckily for me, had been in the country for a long time and also, since she was so young, she had picked up the language pretty easily. The only difference in my instruction was the one-on-one time I spent with her. She would ask me questions about grammar and vocab, and I would sit down with her. We’d also meet after school, because that was something she wanted to do. That was informal and not based on any training I’ve had. It was just what I knew about teaching.

Lisa reported that the professional development training allowed her to recognize the importance of background knowledge for student instruction. Prior to training, Lisa reported, “I think some of the biggest challenges is the difference in background knowledge and not knowing what they already come knowing and what they need help
with.” Following training, Lisa noted an improvement in providing additional details to supplement background knowledge, stating, “I will be focusing a lot more on explaining key details in the background knowledge that they need to understand the story. “

Lisa also reported that training strategies have increased peer interaction within the classroom, resulting in an improved learning environment, or community. In this regard, she noted:

I think that it’s enhanced the sense of community in my classroom. Since we do more small group work, I’ve seen the kids open up more, come out of their shells more, definitely. They seem more comfortable socially with their peers. It’s just more like engaged and there’s more energy in the room.

Additionally, Lisa credited the training with increasing her confidence, awareness, and preparedness for instructing ELLs. She also discussed improved instructional flexibility:

This course has really been a savior because I just feel so much more competent and confident. I have more tools in my tool kit. It’s helped me to feel I have more tricks up my sleeve. That I have more flexibility and more of a range in terms of the craft of teaching. I don’t sit for long periods of time thinking: Okay, I have my content but how am I going to make it engaging? I feel like I have these go-to strategies I can use. It definitely helped me develop as a teacher. In a fairly short amount of time, I feel much better at my job.

A further outcome of the training was an increased empathy to the challenges faced by ELL students, with Lisa acknowledging, “I think I have a better understanding of the anxiety that comes with being an ELL. I didn’t really get that before.” Overall,
Lisa said the training was a positive experience: “I feel really fortunate that I’ve been able to collect this information at this time in my career.”

**Overview of Data Analysis**

The data analysis process employed both inductive and deductive methods highlighted by Saldaña (2013), Merriam and Tisdell (2016), and Miles et al. (2014). Overall, data analysis was a three-step process involving data reduction, data display, and drawing and verifying conclusions (Miles et al., 2014). Data analysis was achieved through a combination of manual coding as well as the use of coding software.

The researcher analyzed data collected through transcribed participant interviews, interview field notes, and the research journal. The data were aligned with the primary research question. The research journal was kept to track progress, as well as note any feelings, reflections, or additional thoughts. Reflective notes and memos were made in the margins of the interview field notes (Creswell, 2005). Per the iterative process, a continual review of data was accomplished, with analytic memos placed at various points during transcript reviews to offer additional reflection and insight (Saldaña, 2013). Data were organized and displayed through the use of Microsoft Word and Excel programs.

Participants’ transcripts were reviewed line by line, with possible categories and themes created based on the coding result. A spreadsheet was created, and responses based on similar content were reviewed and summarized an additional time to seek collective responses and uncover any new information (Saldaña, 2013). First-cycle coding revealed 33 emergent themes, and similar groupings based on shared characteristics were created. Following a thematic analysis, an additional round of coding was utilized to identify similar concepts and themes among the data,
resulting in a further refinement of codes into themes (Saldaña, 2013). Further data
reduction and code combination led to clearer conceptual integration, and emergent
themes were organized and documented in an Excel spreadsheet. At the conclusion
of this process, the interview data were examined using MaxQDA software to further
validate and compare themes with the completed first round of manual coding, in
addition to providing a condensed visual display. Data were extracted from
MaxDQA to an Excel spreadsheet. This display allowed the researcher to efficiently
view response context through concise participant, key word, sentence, or paragraph
groupings (see Appendix G).

During second-cycle coding, codes were further refined, rethemed, and regrouped
in an effort to move to deeper data description, classification and interpretation. This
method of clustering is employed to move codes from lower to higher levels of groupings
(Miles et al., 2014). The 33 original themes were reduced to 13, and further refinement
and regrouping occurred by clustering similar segments of codes together into similar
groups (see organization in Appendix F). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) noted that
categorization should be responsive to the research purpose and serve as a guide to the
research questions. As such, the three constructed categories were considered in relation
to the research questions.

Deductive analysis was accomplished through a cross-case analysis of the
participants’ responses, displayed in an Excel spreadsheet. This analysis allowed for a
comparison of participants’ responses to identify patterns, relationships, and
comparisons. According to Miles et al. (2014), deductive coding can be employed to
verify themes developed through the inductive approach.
Table 4.1 defines the three categories used for the themes: learning environment, professional growth, and training structure. The categories were based on the primary research question, “How do ELL teachers describe their professional development experiences?,” and the subquestion, “How do general education teachers describe their experiences of reflecting on and translating their ELL professional development training into practice in their classrooms?”

Table 4.1
*Category Definitions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning environment</td>
<td>Participants recognized the impact that the professional development training had on their classroom learning environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional growth</td>
<td>Participants acknowledged the result that the professional development training had on their instructional practice, strategy implementation, and overall vigilance relating to their role within the classroom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training structure</td>
<td>Participants evaluated the overall organization and administration of the professional development training experience.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2 links the 13 themes with their corresponding category. A label for each theme is accompanied by an actual participant phrase that serves as further characterization. A more in-depth associated example from the participant transcripts is also included. Emergent themes were verified with a cross-category analysis of codes from participants’ interview responses (included as Appendix E).

Table 4.2
*Theme Examples*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Learning</td>
<td>Needs: “Now I know how to help them”</td>
<td>“It also did really help him. By adjusting practice to better meet his needs, I ended up actually helping everyone, in hindsight, but I definitely think that it helped him.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>environment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Background knowledge: “Took for granted”</td>
<td>“As far as explaining what words mean and not assuming that they have background knowledge on the topic that I’m teaching, it really makes me slow down and go back and make sure everyone has some common ground before we start.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Peer interaction:</td>
<td>“It’s just all the ways to have the kids working together and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Background</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knowledge</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
The next section offers a detailed description of each theme, as well as selected examples from participants’ interview responses.

Presentation of Themes
Learning Environment Theme 1: Needs—“Now I know how to help them.”

Eight out of the 11 participants mentioned that the professional development training helped them meet student needs. In these instances, meeting needs was classified as providing the student with support as a result of the professional development training. Participants discussed this component of the training, which consisted of highlighting differentiated instructional practices, varied assessments, and recognition of student levels. In addition, such responses were usually associated with greater student comfort, as well as academic and social successes. Amy stated:

I just think it made me a better teacher by awakening me to what was sitting in front of me with student groups or the student body and all the possibilities of ways to tap their needs and tap their interests so that you can get more confident in what they’re learning and be able to give back to what they’re learning and not just be a failure at it or think they’re a failure at it. (Amy)

Similarly, Martha explained, “It also did really help him. By adjusting practice to better meet his needs, I ended up actually helping everyone, in hindsight, but I definitely think that it helped him.” When elaborating on how the professional development training provided support to meet student needs, Martha offered the following, “I feel like I’ve filled my toolbox with some really great skills that I can now pull out when I have an ELL student and try to best meet their needs and best help them become proficient.”

Elaine spoke of the importance of meeting student needs and the importance of the training in accomplishing that goal:

Again, you want to meet the needs of all your students in your classroom. And although it’s a small population which other teachers struggle with taking such a
course, it takes a long time, it is an extremely large amount of work during the school year, I think that it’s imperative. (Elaine)

Table 4.3 presents participants’ responses for the theme ‘needs’ along with associated codes. Please note that not all participant responses relating to this theme were included, and the table only contains a demonstrative sample.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Illustrative examples</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amy</td>
<td>I just think it made me a better teacher by awakening me to what was sitting in front of me with student groups or the student body and all the possibilities of ways to tap their needs.</td>
<td>Better teacher Awakening me Tap their needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martha</td>
<td>It also did really help him by adjusting practice to better meet his needs.</td>
<td>Adjusting practice Better met needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jen</td>
<td>I think that right now what I’m changing based on what I perceive a student need is really coming in the form of assessment.</td>
<td>Changing Perceive student need Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah</td>
<td>I think it’s important that we address the ELL community and their needs.</td>
<td>Address ELL community Needs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Learning Environment Theme 2: Background knowledge—“Took for granted.”** Six out of 11 participants mentioned the importance of providing background knowledge during instruction, a practice illuminated through professional development training. In these instances, participants cited their professional development training as aiding their recognition of gaps in student background knowledge, as well as the importance of providing necessary background knowledge for a particular task or assignment. Additionally, participants mentioned their ability to provide necessary assistance to remedy a perceived inadequacy in background knowledge.

Maria spoke of the large gaps in background knowledge that teachers must be prepared for when instructing ELL students:
They don’t have the background from first grade. They don’t even know about the pilgrims, so when we’re trying to teach building on that background knowledge, it’s huge, and they don’t have it. Even in the other areas. . . . Math, same thing: they don’t have the background that the rest of these kids have. They may have learned it completely differently. (Maria)

Lisa spoke of an improved recognition in observing deficiencies in background knowledge:

I will be focusing a lot more on explaining key details in the background knowledge that they need to understand the story. I’ll spend a lot more time talking about key terms, focusing on the different tier vocabulary. That’s something I definitely didn’t understand before my professional development. (Lisa)

Jen spoke of the challenges when facing ELLs without adequate background knowledge:

I had a student in my class for literally 1 day who was Level 1, no English whatsoever; they have no idea of his educational background, and I couldn’t get him to do anything. It was only 1 day and his schedule changed and I didn’t have him again. I’m still worried about situations like that where I’m not sure where that’s going to go. (Jen)

Table 4.4 presents samples of participants’ responses for the theme ‘background knowledge’ along with associated codes.

Table 4.4
*Theme: Background Knowledge*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Illustrative examples</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Martha</td>
<td>Also, how much background knowledge they may have in their L-1, taking into consideration when we go do writing . . . but maybe they have some background knowledge in L-1 that we could draw out or draw upon.</td>
<td>Background knowledge Taking into consideration Draw out/upon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebecca</td>
<td>As far as explaining what words mean and not assuming that they have background knowledge on the topic that I’m teaching, it really makes me slow down and go back and make sure everyone has some common ground before we start.</td>
<td>Explaining words Background knowledge Makes me slow down Common ground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elaine</td>
<td>In the writing especially, which is very difficult for ELL children, . . . they didn’t have a lot of that background knowledge about what these activities even were.</td>
<td>Very difficult Background knowledge Makes activities challenging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>They’re missing the background knowledge that some of these kids have, for instance in social studies, science, any of those academic areas. . . . That’s a challenge; background knowledge is a challenge.</td>
<td>Missing background knowledge Challenge</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Learning Environment Theme 3: Peer interaction—“Peer work and sharing.”**

Four out of 11 participants mentioned the impact that professional development training had on peer interaction in the classroom. In these instances, peer interaction was classified as increased participation, cooperative learning, and social communication. As a result, participants associated these actions with increased motivation and engagement. Participants spoke of the benefit of incorporating such collaborative strategies within their classrooms:

As I said, fully half my class is special needs, so all those ways that the kids can gently support each other and work together and bring each other along, the very same strategies that you use for ELLs are just really good classroom practices for the special needs kids, which all of us have, multiple kids. . . . A lot more collaborative learning, a lot more use of those very specific strategies. (Nancy)
Elaine echoed the benefit of such strategies, stating, “They give you different strategies to help them exist with other children that they haven’t played with before, talked to before, or done anything in the classroom with before.”

Of the increase in peer interaction, Sarah offered the following:

It was more of a meet-and-greet interaction type of thing, which I think is really important for the ELLs, because I think they can be isolated and isolate themselves, and it’s just isolating in general to not speak their language. I did that, which I thought was great, even for my higher-level ELL at the time. She still wasn’t super open or friendly or chatty with any of the other kids in the class, and I think that opened some line to communication with the other kids. (Sarah)

Participants also indicated that the strategies increased energy and motivation, with Lisa noting, “They seem more comfortable, more socially with their peers. It’s just more like engaged and there’s more energy in the room. Like I said, I think they’re more motivated now, because of the strategies I’ve learned.”

Table 4.5 presents examples of participants’ responses for the theme ‘peer interaction’ along with associated codes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Illustrative examples</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nancy</td>
<td>It’s not just best practices. It’s just all the ways to have the kids working together and talking about things and much more cooperative learning and peer work and sharing.</td>
<td>Kids working together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cooperative learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Peer work/sharing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elaine</td>
<td>I definitely use their peers, and one of the biggest things I’ve noticed was how sometimes other kids don’t interact with them as much and vice versa. . . Strategies we learned from this class explained to you how to match them up without making it awkward, without making them stand out.</td>
<td>Definitely use their peers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Better peer matching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Not awkward</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Won’t stand out</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sarah: It was more of a meet-and-greet interaction type of thing, which I think is really important for the ELLs, because I think they can be isolated and isolate themselves, and it’s just isolating in general to not speak their language. I did that, which I thought was great. . . . I think that opened some line to communication with the other kids.

Lisa: They seem more comfortable more socially with their peers. It’s just more like engaged and there’s more energy in the room.

Learning Environment Theme 4: Learning community—“All kids are benefiting.” Six out of 11 participants mentioned that the professional development training led to the creation of a learning community within the classroom. This term is associated with student behavior that is conducive to inclusion for all students. Corresponding to this idea, participants noted how the training strategies and techniques benefited all students in the classroom, not only the ELLs.

Speaking of the benefit the training had for all classroom students, Diane stated, “I know [strategies] in this SEI class that are specifically for English language learners, they benefit all the kids. They’re really just good teaching practices, and giving you some fresh ideas to use with all your students.” Lisa offered a similar take, saying, “I feel like it’s benefited everybody in the room, everyone. I’ve enjoyed being able to make my class more collaborative, and that’s helped our sense of community and I just think it made the class more enjoyable and engaging.”

Likewise, Nancy recounted:

It’s just all the ways to have the kids working together and talking about things and much more cooperative learning and peer work and sharing. Just having a
community of learners and not just me being the teacher but them all helping each other. (Nancy)

The element of cooperative learning also fostered a sense of inclusion among the students and helped combat feelings of isolation that ELL students may experience.

Like I said, some of them are really good for everyone, and it’s good for my ELL students to see everyone participating and using these strategies. It builds the classroom community. It makes everyone inclusive. If we’re all using these same strategies, it doesn’t make my ELL students isolated. It definitely brings them in and everyone is using the strategy and gives them a sense of community, I would say. (Martha)

Table 4.6 presents participants’ responses for the theme ‘learning community’ along with associated codes. As with the other tables, not all participant responses relating to this theme were included, and the table only contains a demonstrative sample.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Illustrative examples</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Diane       | I know [strategies] in this SEI class that are specifically for English language learners, they benefit all the kids. They’re really just good teaching practices, and giving you some fresh ideas to use with all your students. | Class benefits all the kids  
 Good teaching practices  
 Fresh ideas                                    |
| Martha      | Some of them are really good for everyone and it’s good for my ELL students to see everyone participating and using these strategies. It builds the classroom community. It makes everyone inclusive. | Good for everyone  
 Everyone participating  
 Builds classroom community  
 Everyone inclusive |
Professional Growth Theme 1: Confidence—“I feel a lot more confident.” Six out of 11 participants mentioned a feeling of increased confidence following professional development training. This feeling was associated with competence within the role of the teacher, particularly relating to skill set, as well as the ability to provide adequate instruction and support. As Amy shared,

I think that’s given me a lot of support and confidence in approaching them.

When they say, did you look at the scores or this, I know what that says. I can think that this is what I need to know, and that opens that door immensely. (Amy)

The feeling of confidence was linked to the professional development training:

More and more things that it will be really helpful and I definitely have the confidence that now I can teach ELL students. . . . Before I think [I] just didn’t really know what to do at all. I think that’s helpful. (Jen)

Finally, participants spoke of having confidence in their abilities to reach all students, not just a particular type of ELL. Rebecca stated,

I think that I feel a lot more confident as a teacher that I can reach each student and not just the ones that want to learn, or the ones who speak really well, or write really well, or are really motivated. (Rebecca)

Table 4.7 presents sample participant responses for the theme ‘confidence’ along with associated codes.
Table 4.7
Theme: Confidence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Illustrative examples</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amy</td>
<td>I think it changed in that it gave me some confidence and validation of what I was doing in that sense. It opened doors to talk to people about how I was approaching students.</td>
<td>Gave confidence/validation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Opened doors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martha</td>
<td>I think it made me more confident where I was a little bit nervous about that they’re not going to understand me or how am I going to get them to just basically get some of that mixed language, get some of those skills.</td>
<td>Made me more confident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Not going to understand me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mixed language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebecca</td>
<td>I think that I feel a lot more confident as a teacher that I can reach each student and not just the ones that want to learn, or the ones who speak really well, or write really well, or are really motivated.</td>
<td>A lot more confident</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Reach each student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jen</td>
<td>More and more things that it will be really helpful and I definitely have the confidence that now I can teach ELL students. . . . Before I think [I] just didn’t really know what to do at all. I think that’s helpful.</td>
<td>Really helpful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Have the confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Teach ELL students</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Professional Growth Theme 2: Awareness—“Opened my eyes.” Nine out of 11 participants mentioned a feeling of increased awareness following professional development training. Participants indicated being more aware of instructional strategies and techniques, as well as being increasingly open-minded to the struggles that many ELLs may encounter. As Rebecca noted, “This class really opened my eyes to all the strategies that we can use in order to help our ELL.”

Amy recounted:

I think for any teacher, . . . it just brings a new awareness of tools and strategies, and regardless of how good you are as a teacher, you should get tools and strategies. You get used to or comfortable always using the same old tools. This made an awareness of, “Oh, I hadn’t used that in awhile. Why aren’t I using that strategy? Why can’t I use that?” Just because people think that’s an elementary strategy doesn’t mean you cannot use it in middle school or high school. I think
the overall awareness of you’ve got to use a lot of tools, got to have a lot of tools
in your pocket and strategies ready to go, and don’t forget some of the old ones
that you haven’t used in awhile, or modify it and make it appropriate for the age
you’re working with. (Amy)

The feelings of awareness also permeated participants’ instructional delivery, with
Diane sharing, “All the training that I’ve had has made me more aware of how I’m
teaching something.”

Sarah stated that the training illuminated the fact that she was not adequately
prepared to deliver ELL instruction earlier:

I think I gained or deepened my awareness that we’re not necessarily prepared,
. . . That when we have an ELL in our class, we’re doing the best that we can, and
we flail along a little bit, and we’re trying for them and they’re trying for us . . .
but, I don’t know if they’re getting what they could be getting. You know what I
mean? If they’re learning as much as they could, they should be learning. (Sarah)

Table 4.8 presents sample participant responses for the theme ‘awareness’ along
with associated codes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Illustrative examples</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amy</td>
<td>I think for any teacher . . . it just brings a new awareness of tools and strategies, and regardless of how good you are as a teacher, you should get tools and strategies.</td>
<td>Brings new awareness Tools and strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diane</td>
<td>All the training that I’ve had has made me more aware of how I’m teaching something.</td>
<td>Made me more aware How I teach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebecca</td>
<td>This class really opened my eyes to all the strategies that we can use in order to help our ELL.</td>
<td>A lot of opportunities Opened my eyes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jen</td>
<td>I don’t know if I would’ve even tried that before because it seems so backwards but somehow just works really well</td>
<td>Finding more freedom Opened my mind</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
for her, so I think by finding more freedom and how I assess and ... I don’t know, I think it just opened my mind to trying lots of different things.

Professional Growth Theme 3: Preparedness —“Tools in my toolkit.” Nine out of 11 participants mentioned an increased level of preparation following professional development training. Participants revealed an increase in knowledge pertaining to instruction and assessment, as well as a greater use of relevant resources and materials. Typically, participants indicated being more prepared to assess and deliver instruction to a variety of ELL levels. Regarding differentiated instruction, Maria said, “I don’t know, it’s mostly different activities that I can do with the kids that help the English language learners and again lots of differentiation.”

Some related a stronger preparedness to an improvement in student performance, with Lisa indicating:

I definitely did not feel prepared to work with them, and their grades reflected that. I feel a lot more prepared now. There are some challenges that I foresee in the future when I work with an ELL student again. (Lisa)

Some participants felt that the feeling of preparedness equated to additional resources and alternative assignments:

If you ask a question and the kiddos’ answer isn’t what you were expecting or not what you had been teaching on a task list, that you can pull one of those tool strategies out of your basket and try to apply that, or you can always have that at the back of the lesson as the alternative. You have an alternative lesson, so to speak. Being prepared and having alternative tools is really important. (Amy)
For some participants, the feeling of ‘preparedness’ replaced prior feelings of ‘helplessness,’ with Rebecca sharing:

I felt pretty helpless beforehand because I didn’t know how I could help or if what I was doing was even helping. After the professional development, I felt like I knew more what I was doing, and if something didn’t work, then I had a different strategy. If that strategy didn’t work, I could use a different strategy. I just felt more prepared. I didn’t feel hopeless like I felt at the very beginning before I had any training. (Rebecca)

Table 4.9 presents some of the participants’ responses for the theme ‘preparedness’ along with associated codes.

Table 4.9
*Theme: Preparedness*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Illustrative examples</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Martha</td>
<td>I think there will be more support and you’ll have more access to resources, and I think that is going to be beneficial, obviously, for our ELL students. That’s something that I definitely felt that sometimes I just wasn’t sure what to do.</td>
<td>More support; More access to resources; Beneficial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebecca</td>
<td>I felt like I knew more what I was doing, and if something didn’t work, then I had a different strategy. If that strategy didn’t work, I could use a different strategy. I just felt more prepared. I didn’t feel hopeless like I felt at the very beginning before I had any training.</td>
<td>Knew more what I was doing; Had a different strategy; Felt more prepared</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elaine</td>
<td>So, again, we support all the kids in our classroom and I wouldn’t have known how to do that. I mean, you think you do and you think “I got all these strategies because I’m a teacher,” but to meet those specific needs, I don’t think I would have been doing that.</td>
<td>Support all the kids; Wouldn’t have known how; Additional strategies; Meet specific needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lisa</td>
<td>I definitely did not feel prepared to work with them, and their grades reflected that. I feel a lot more prepared now. There are some challenges that I foresee in the future.</td>
<td>Did not feel prepared; More prepared now; Future challenges</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Professional Growth Theme 4: Empathy—“Puts you right in their shoes.”**

Four out of 11 participants mentioned an increased empathy following professional development training. Participants referred to having a greater understanding of the challenges ELLs may face within the classroom. Additionally, some participants indicated a compassion for the academic and social challenges the ELL may encounter. Lisa shared, “I think I became more empathetic to how many challenges there are that I don’t see or think about, having never been in that position.”

Some participants put themselves in the position of their ELL students:

I think that when you see on your roster that you have a few ELLs, you go into, not panic mode, but you keep trying to think how it will affect your day and how it will affect your classroom. Hearing about other students, other ELLs, and other teacher experiences, you realize that it’s really scary for them too and it’s not about you. It’s about them and their learning. (Rebecca)

Elaine recounted a training activity that mirrored the frustration that ELLs may face:

And the class definitely gave us articles to read in different languages and that was one of the things, “Did you understand it?” ... “No” ... “How did you feel?” You felt frustrated, you felt annoyed, you shut down, you stopped reading, you’re not listening to the teacher anymore. So it puts you right in their shoes, for you to understand “Oh my gosh, these poor kids. They can’t do this and it’s not their fault.” (Elaine)

Table 4.10 presents examples of participants’ responses for the theme ‘empathy’ along with associated codes.
Table 4.10

Theme: Empathy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Illustrative examples</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rebecca</td>
<td>Hearing about other students, other ELLs, and other teacher experiences, you realize that it’s really scary for them too and it’s not about you. It’s about them and their learning.</td>
<td>Other ELL students Realize it’s really scary Not about you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diane</td>
<td>I probably took them more for granted, just assumed they knew what I was talking about, or that they just knew how to write something out, or how to read it.</td>
<td>Took them for granted Assumed they knew</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elaine</td>
<td>So it puts you right in their shoes, for you to understand, “Oh my gosh, these poor kids. They can’t do this and it’s not their fault.”</td>
<td>Puts you in their shoes Helps you understand It’s not their fault</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lisa</td>
<td>I think I became more empathetic to how many challenges there are that I don’t see or think about, having never been in that position.</td>
<td>Became more empathetic Many challenges Never been in position</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Professional Growth Theme 5: Flexibility—“More tricks up my sleeve.” Two out of 11 participants mentioned greater flexibility and instructional freedom following professional development training. This concept is associated with student accommodation, assessment, and teaching practice. Jen stated, “I’m finding much more flexibility in accommodating students with word banks or definitions or providing again, providing a diagram where one wouldn’t be provided in a word problem to help them or to ask.”

The feeling of personal freedom and flexibility also led to greater comfort delivering content. In this regard, Lisa spoke of having the ability to make the content more engaging:

It’s helped me to feel I have more tricks up my sleeve. That I have more flexibility and more of a range in terms of the craft of teaching. I don’t sit for long periods of time thinking: Okay, I have my content but how am I going to make it engaging? I feel like I have these go-to strategies I can use. (Lisa)
Table 4.11 presents participant responses for the theme ‘flexibility’ along with associated codes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Illustrative examples</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jen</td>
<td>I’m finding much more flexibility in accommodating students with word banks or definitions or providing, again, providing a diagram where one wouldn’t be provided in a word problem to help them or to ask.</td>
<td>More much flexibility, Accommodating students, Providing diagrams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lisa</td>
<td>That I have more flexibility and more of a range in terms of the craft of teaching. I don’t sit for long periods of time thinking: Okay, I have my content but how am I going to make it engaging?</td>
<td>I have more flexibility, More range, How to make engaging?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Professional Development Theme 1: Positive experience—“Invaluable.”** Eight out of 11 participants mentioned that the professional development training was a positive experience, or otherwise associated with improving an aspect of their role. This could include an overall enjoyable experience due to the training structure or realizing a positive benefit of the training content. Participants noted areas of improvement that included learning new strategies, classroom management techniques, and instructional development.

Martha stated, “It was great, invaluable. I actually enjoyed the course, I did. So that was a great opportunity.” Similarly, Nancy reported, “I felt so positive about it. I loved the course. I know all of us did. . . . It was a really great experience.”

Diane noted how the training prompted her to try different things: “I’m not sure I would make any changes. It was a lot of work, but it was good. It made me try new things in the classroom.” Lisa credited the training with aiding in her progression as a teacher:
It definitely helped me develop as a teacher. In a fairly short amount of time, I feel much better at my job. I feel really fortunate that I’ve been able to collect this information at this time in my career. (Lisa)

Table 4.12 presents participants’ responses for the theme ‘positive experience’ along with associated codes. As with other tables, not all participant responses relating to this theme were included, and the table contains only a demonstrative sample.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Illustrative example</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diane</td>
<td>I’m not sure I would make any changes. It was a lot of work, but it was good. It made me try new things in the classroom.</td>
<td>Wouldn’t make changes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A lot of work but good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Made me try new things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martha</td>
<td>It was great, invaluable. I actually enjoyed the course, I did. So that was a great opportunity.</td>
<td>Invaluable/great</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Enjoyed the course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Great opportunity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph</td>
<td>Overall, I found it to be a pretty positive experience.</td>
<td>Pretty positive experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lisa</td>
<td>It definitely helped me develop as a teacher. In a fairly short amount of time, I feel much better at my job. I feel really fortunate that I’ve been able to collect this information at this time in my career.</td>
<td>Helped develop as teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Feel much better at my job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Feel really fortunate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Professional Development Theme 2: Reflection—“It made me dig deep and think.”** Three out of 11 participants mentioned that the professional development training facilitated reflection. This concept can be described as evaluating instruction, developing refinements, and implementing adjustments. Diane stated, “It made me reflect on what I was doing and how the kids responded.”

Such reflection could occur during or after classroom activities. Martha noted the process:

I think I enjoyed it because I learned something and I applied it, and that reflected practice. . . . Having some new things in the toolbox was probably the best part of
Learning about a strategy and then applying it and that practice to get into learning, applying, and then reflecting. (Martha)

The process of reflection also aided in strategy selection and implementation:

It made me dip deep and think about, “Okay, where are my problem areas? Where do I have difficulty reaching these kids who maybe can’t read or maybe don’t have the vocabulary? What are some of my problem areas?” and then from there I would try to pick those strategies that would support that. (Nancy)

Table 4.13 presents participant responses for the theme ‘reflection’ along with associated codes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Illustrative examples</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diane</td>
<td>It made me reflect on what I was doing and how the kids responded.</td>
<td>Made me reflect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>How did kids respond?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martha</td>
<td>That’s why I like having the kids reflect: How do you think it went? This new strategy that we haven’t tried before, what do you think?</td>
<td>Having the kids reflect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>What do you think?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nancy</td>
<td>It made me dig deep and think about, “Okay, where are my problem areas? Where do I have difficulty reaching these kids who maybe can’t read or maybe don’t have the vocabulary?”</td>
<td>Made me dig deep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Where are my problems?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Where do I have difficulty?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Professional Development Theme 3: Support—“Teachers learn from teachers.” Three out of 11 participants mentioned receiving or giving support during professional development training. This concept included having an opportunity to discuss, learn, and grow with colleagues. Some participants likened the process to that of a learning community, which was fostered through the curriculum and content of the training course.
Amy shared the benefit of learning from other teachers: “Teachers learn from teachers, whether it’s the instructor who is the expert on a topic or the person sitting next to you.... I think that it’s given me a lot of support and confidence in approaching them.” Other participants echoed this sentiment, with Nancy stating:

I loved the time to get together with other teachers and talk about strategies and implement strategies. We don’t have a lot of that time in our district, just time to talk with colleagues and to learn new things and then go back and try those new things. I loved that. (Nancy)

Some participants likened the process to that of a ‘learning community’:

I also liked that we had a group of people who were very invested, which was nice. Like I said, the two people I worked with are phenomenal teachers and they were invested in what we were doing, so it was really nice to have that little learning community that we had, which I liked that. (Martha)

Table 4.14 presents participant responses for the theme ‘support’ along with associated codes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Illustrative examples</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amy</td>
<td>Teachers learn from teachers, whether it’s the instructor who is the expert on a topic or the person sitting next to you who’s got Johnny right in front of him.</td>
<td>Teachers learning from teachers Learning from past experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martha</td>
<td>The people I worked with are phenomenal teachers and they were invested in what we were doing, so it was really nice to have that little learning community that we had, which I liked that.</td>
<td>Phenomenal teachers Invested Little learning community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nancy</td>
<td>I loved the time to get together with other teachers and talk about strategies and implement strategies.</td>
<td>Love time to get together Talk strategies/implementation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Professional Development Theme 4: Time—“I don’t have time for it.” Seven out of 11 participants mentioned time when discussing the professional development training. Participants expressed dissatisfaction with the course duration, as well as with the amount of time required to complete assignments outside of the training. Some participants suggested an abbreviated offering or a reduction in the required coursework, such as Diane: “I guess if anything, if something was to be changed, it might be less time.”

Sarah shared the difficulty of taking the class with other commitments: “Personally, for myself, it was hard for me to get there because of family commitments and 3 hours every Monday for like 14 weeks or something like that.” Other participants recognized the benefit while discussing the large time commitment:

I say this all the time: I’m more than happy to take any kind of professional development that they offer and try a strategy in my class. I actually like that; I don’t mind going to class myself. This is a college course. I didn’t want to take a college course. I have two kids; I don’t have time for it. (Maria)

Table 4.15 presents a selection of participant responses for the theme ‘time’ along with associated codes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Illustrative examples</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amy</td>
<td>I felt like, at times, we didn’t have the time to do that or we had to keep on task.</td>
<td>Didn’t have time  Had to keep on task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diane</td>
<td>I guess if anything, if something was to be changed, it might be less time.</td>
<td>Less time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>This is a college course. I didn’t want to take a college course. I have two kids; I don’t have time for it.</td>
<td>College course  Don’t have time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Key Findings

Based on the themes presented above, four findings emerged.

1. Participants’ identification and response to student needs. Prior to training, teachers indicated that they had a difficult time identifying student needs or felt unable to meet them adequately. Participants indicated that after completing professional development training, their ability to identify and provide support for the needs of students had improved. Participants cited improvement in recognizing gaps in background knowledge and providing appropriate remediation.

2. Participants’ view of the learning environment of their classrooms. Participants reported improved peer-to-peer connection, in the form of increased participation, sharing, and group work. This cooperative learning result was due to the collaborative strategies learned and implemented through the offered training. In some instances, participants compared these developments to the creation of learning communities.

3. Participants’ view of their development as a teacher. Most participants mentioned an improvement in teaching method, skills, and preparation. Participants also cited improved content delivery and knowledge of differentiated instruction following professional development training. Participants mentioned that this perceived teaching progression positively impacted their confidence levels, as well as their ability to empathize with their students. In this regard, participants relayed a greater sense of empathy to the challenges experienced by ELL students.
4. Participants’ overall professional development experience. Participants viewed the professional development training as both a necessary and meaningful opportunity. Most participants characterized the training as a positive experience and associated it with collegial feedback and support. This collegial feedback was often associated with some aspect of reflection. This could be demonstrated through a conversation with a colleague regarding instructional strategies, and then the participant reflecting on how to incorporate such practices into their own classrooms. One common critique of the training was that it was too time consuming. Some recommended the offering be shortened in the future.

Summary

This study explored how general education teachers describe their ELL professional development experiences. Specifically, this project sought to reveal general educators’ reflective practices in terms of how they translated completed professional development training into the learning environment of their own classrooms. The data analysis indicated that the professional development training impacted the participants in many ways. Participants viewed the training as offering an empathetic perspective into the lives of their ELL students and allowing them to better anticipate and accommodate students’ needs. The participants also credited the training with their own progression as educators, noting the use of learned skills and instructional practices. As a result, participants noticed a more cooperative and inclusive learning environment, with increased peer interaction that benefited all students. Finally, participants viewed the training in a positive manner, but indicated that future offerings should note the amount of time required for completion.
The data analysis revealed that within the three categories of learning environment, professional growth, and training structure, there were 13 themes: needs, background knowledge, peer interaction, learning community, confidence, awareness, preparedness, empathy, flexibility, positive experience, reflection, support, and time.

Table 4.16 summarizes evidence from interview transcripts, interview field notes, and the researcher journal to respond to the primary research question—How do ELL teachers describe their professional development experiences? and one subquestion—How do general education teachers describe their experiences of reflecting on and translating their ELL professional development training into practice in their classrooms?

Table 4.16
Research Question Response

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Interview transcript</th>
<th>Field notes</th>
<th>Researcher journal</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amy I think it changed in that it gave me some confidence and validation of what I was doing in that sense. It opened doors to talk to people about how I was approaching students or if I have a student who’s attending the ELL classes in the school district’s support, it has opened a huge door to allow me to talk to the instructor. She was always nice and open, don’t get me wrong, but it’s given me, I’m better at understanding an approach on what I need to ask when I see her, and others, not just this teacher. There’s several teachers that I can now go to and ask that are the ELL teachers for our school district.</td>
<td>• Mentioned “awareness” at various times</td>
<td>• Participant was eager to share ELL experiences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• New knowledge was linked to better appreciation of ELL family/family life</td>
<td>• Spoke of ELL identity and family pride/cultural issues</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Strategies supplemental to instruction, helpful to all students</td>
<td>• Positive outlook on training while critical of certain structural aspects (time, expectations)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How do ELL teachers describe their professional development experiences?

How do general education teachers describe their experiences of reflecting on and translating their ELL professional development training into practice in their classrooms?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Interview transcript</th>
<th>Field notes</th>
<th>Researcher journal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Diane       | I know in this SEI class that are specifically for English language learners, they benefit all the kids. They’re really just good teaching practices, and giving you some fresh ideas to use with all your students. | • The training has benefited all students  
• Reflective processes activated through professional development  
• Felt the course was worthwhile/positive experience | • Observations on ELL social integration and the role of gender in ELL social behavior |
| Martha      | We don’t have much in the way of English language learner opportunities in our district quite yet. I was able to take the sheltered English emergent course that they’re offering now . . . so I was able to take that this year. It was great, invaluable. I actually enjoyed the course. | • Strategies useful to entire classroom  
• Background knowledge important  
• Vocabulary emphasized  
• Active participation/peer-to-peer learning  
• Reflection increased  
• Enjoyed course | • Participant is certified in grades 1-12  
• Initial ELL experience was bolstered by ELL-certified colleague  
• Spoke of reflection-on-action |
| Rebecca     | We learned so many things, like changing the vocabulary around the words that you wanted them to learn, or cut and grow, or think-pair-share, trying to get them comfortable in the classroom. Those are all things I hadn’t thought of. For some of these students, this is the first in an English-speaking school and it’s very intimidating for them. They’re terrified, a lot of them. That’s something I didn’t think of before the professional development. | • Instructional preparedness increased  
• Common ground; introducing new lesson  
• Strategies promoted classroom management  
• Student interaction/confidence  
• Empathy  
• Growth must continue | • Participant’s mother is a ESL teacher in the same district  
• Spoke of a need to “direct the training” in order to create its effectiveness  
• Recognized the training as having a positive impact on her teaching/improving her practice |
How do ELL teachers describe their professional development experiences?

How do general education teachers describe their experiences of reflecting on and translating their ELL professional development training into practice in their classrooms?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Field notes</th>
<th>Researcher journal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Nancy       | I love that course. As much as it was so much work and we were glad to see it end in that respect, the demands of it were tremendous, but I felt like I learned so much. It’s not just best practices. It’s just all the ways to have the kids working together and talking about things and much more cooperative learning and peer work and sharing. Just having a community of learners and not just me being the teacher but them all helping each other. | • ELL family buy-in
• Class collaboration
• Active learning through peer-to-peer assistance
• Strategies benefit all students
• Disorganized seminar
• Although overwhelming, characterized positively | • Participant has a diverse professional background
• The training facilitated self-reflection
• Described the training as a positive experience while critiquing certain aspects (organization, time commitment) |
| Elaine      | I think it makes you more confident to teach these children. It’s not as hands off. You don’t rely so much on the ELL teacher in the building to just take them for their half hour each day that they get. I think a lot of teachers do rely on them to teach them their sight words, to teach them vocab, to teach them how to read and what math is and all this. I think now we have the tools, we’re given a gift by taking this course to continue that learning in the classroom when we have them. | • Eye-opening
• “Awareness” multiple times
• Student understanding not recognized
• Culture!
• Background knowledge
• Cooperative effort in class now
• Burdensome/disorganized training | • Large gap between first ELL cohort and recent students
• Recognized merit of training, while criticizing some structural aspects (time, organization, workload) |
| Jen         | I think that I have learned a lot and I know that over the next few years as I try more and more things, I think that will get better. More and more things that it will be really helpful and I definitely have the confidence that now I can teach ELL students. . . . Before I think [I] just didn’t really know what to do at all. I think that’s helpful. | • Modifications made easier
• Productive learning environment
• Many positive effects on personal learning/development
• Better equipped | • Post-training more focused on language development
• Eager to contribute to larger picture of ELL education
• Very complimentary towards training |
How do ELL teachers describe their professional development experiences?

How do general education teachers describe their experiences of reflecting on and translating their ELL professional development training into practice in their classrooms?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
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<th>Field notes</th>
<th>Researcher journal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>I’ve probably just incorporated some of the activities. When I say activities, they go over Four Corners, Numbered Heads, different reading strategies. I probably do it more because that is one reason I think it’s good to take professional development. It kind of puts it in the front of your brain again, things that you forget to do after a while. It’s kind of gotten me back into doing more of those strategies.</td>
<td>• Perspective change minimal with background knowledge exception&lt;br&gt;• Differentiation understanding increased&lt;br&gt;• No management impact&lt;br&gt;• Training is necessary&lt;br&gt;• Format needs improvement</td>
<td>• Participant seemed skeptical of professional development offering&lt;br&gt;• Unsure of training influence for many factors&lt;br&gt;• Critical of training structurally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah</td>
<td>I think it maybe opened my eyes to new techniques and strategies for the right ELL. Like I said, sometimes, they are either too far on one end of the WIDA scale for these techniques to be useful for them, but also I think I took some of the 7 steps to learning vocabulary; I’ll never forget. We did our 7 steps, like I said, it would have been absurd, but if I paired that down and altered it and changed it and tweaked it to fit my needs in my classroom, it would then make sense and I was able to use techniques and strategies like that; just kind of tailored to fit what I was doing.</td>
<td>• Unsure of perspectives’ impact&lt;br&gt;• Awareness/preparation influenced&lt;br&gt;• Practice did not change&lt;br&gt;• No management impact&lt;br&gt;• Differentiation to need&lt;br&gt;• Peer communication improved&lt;br&gt;• Continue professional development</td>
<td>• Frequently mentioned ELL state-mandated assessments/scoring scale&lt;br&gt;• Consistently mentioned need for applying appropriate strategy/practice to corresponding student level</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How do ELL teachers describe their professional development experiences?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Interview transcript</th>
<th>Field notes</th>
<th>Researcher journal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Joseph      | Overall, I found it to be a pretty positive experience. I think there was a lot of really good ideas and information presented in it. It was a little bit more targeted towards elementary than I would have liked to have seen, teaching high school. | • Perspective impact minimal  
• More visuals!  
• More check-ins  
• No impact on management  
• Too much homework/less time | • Noted that nuances of the English language present difficulty for ELLs  
• In an initial experience he was unaware of deficiencies in his own communication  
• Found the training to be a positive experience, but suggested grade-level-specific groupings for future offerings |
| Lisa        | The only opportunity I’ve had has been taking the SEI course. I’ve been in that course since February. It’s been taught by Dr. [Name removed], who is the principal at the middle school, [Name removed]. I worked under her for awhile, so I’ve been in that course. It’s actually been really helpful. I don’t have any ELL students currently, but I had two last semester and I definitely did not feel prepared to work with them, and their grades reflected that. I feel a lot more prepared now. There are some challenges that I foresee in the future when I work with an ELL student again. | • Empathetic  
• Nuances of ELL learning  
• Instructional practices changed  
• Student empowerment  
• Confidence increased  
• Better prepared with more flexibility  
• Need refreshers | • Participant was positive about training experience  
• Training helped her better understand of the language learning process  
• Very positive training feedback |

This chapter reported on the findings from the study to gain insight into the ELL professional development experiences of general educators from the same school district.
Chapter 5 discusses conclusions based on the findings presented in this chapter. It also discusses how the findings align with Schön’s theory of the reflective practitioner, presents practical implications, and offers suggestions for future research.
Chapter 5: Conclusions and Implications

The purpose of this chapter is to present interpretations and conclusions based on the findings of this study. This chapter discusses potential implications for theory and practice and opportunities for future research. The chapter concludes with a summary of the research, as well as the researcher’s reflective thoughts regarding English language learner (ELL) professional development for educators.

Conclusions

Five conclusions emerged from this study of how general education teachers describe their ELL professional development experiences:

1. Teachers were better equipped to identify and respond to student needs as a result of their professional development training.
2. Teachers acknowledged that professional growth and development occurred as a result of their professional development training.
3. Teachers employed reflective processes to facilitate planning, problem-solving, and assessment and aid in future implementation.
4. Teachers recognized the impact that the professional development training had on the learning environment of their classrooms.
5. The professional development training offered a platform for reflection, collegial support, feedback, and collaborative learning.

Conclusion 1: Teachers were better equipped to identify and respond to student needs as a result of their professional development training. Participants stated that after completing professional development training, their ability to identify
and provide support for the needs of students had improved. Prior to training, teachers reported that they had a difficult time identifying student needs or felt unable to meet them adequately. The data analysis indicated that participants demonstrated a greater comfort recognizing student levels and improved their content delivery and knowledge of differentiated instruction following professional development training.

This conclusion was supported by evidence from participant transcripts. For example, Amy noted that the professional development helped her become a better teacher: “I just think it made me a better teacher by awakening me to what was sitting in front of me with student groups or the student body and all the possibilities of ways to tap their needs.” When speaking of her experiences with a particular student after training, Martha referenced the professional development: “It also did really help him by adjusting practice to better meet his needs.”

This sentiment can be supported by Schön’s (1987) theory as practitioners are able to measure performance and gain knowledge through reflection. Although participants did not use terminology associated with Schön’s theory of the reflective practitioner, the researcher identified a number of instances where the process occurred. In this regard, both the concepts of reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action were apparent, as teachers gained knowledge or understanding about a particular practice that was recognized during or after instruction. Reflection-in-action helped participants recognize a need while in the moment, during a lesson or student interaction. Reflection-on-action informed participants’ understanding post-incident, during lesson or activity evaluation, or other realization that may occur after instruction or interaction.
These findings are similar to what was discovered during the literature review. Zhang and Stephens (2013) noted the benefits that professional development may have in allowing teachers to recognize the nuances in identifying students’ linguistic and academic capabilities. In this study, the majority of participants reported an improved ability to understand the specific needs of differing levels, as well as how to provide customized instruction based on these diverse abilities. Associated with this improvement, the findings support the literature that suggests that professional development training impacts teacher awareness and instructional planning (Borg, 2011).

Additionally, the participants cited the biggest challenges they faced prior to professional development training, with responses indicating an overall unpreparedness or lack of resources. Robiero (2013) stated, “Teachers themselves have expressed their dissatisfaction with the lack of resources and the feeling of unpreparedness to teach ELLs” (p. 104). Following professional development training, participants cited improved practices relating to content management and instructional delivery, as well as being able to devise appropriate strategies to meet students’ needs.

Furthermore, participants cited improvement in recognizing gaps in background knowledge and providing appropriate remediation. Additionally, teachers felt better prepared to implement instruction that promotes interaction, collaboration, and social and academic progress. These findings support literature that suggests that “quality PD [professional development] could increase teachers’ ability to produce higher gains in ELLs in English academic oral language proficiency and pre-literacy skills at elementary grades, thus, to offset the initial disadvantage when they first entered school” (Tong, Luo, Irby, Lara-Alecio, & Rivera, 2015, pp. 18-19).
Conclusion 2: Teachers acknowledged that professional growth and development occurred as a result of their professional development training. The interpretation of the data supports the conclusion that participants felt a sense of professional growth and improvement following professional development training. Within the category of ‘professional growth’ and the themes of confidence, empathy, and flexibility, participants spoke of their development and progression as educators. The data relating to this conclusion showed that participants cited improvement in recognizing gaps in background knowledge and providing appropriate remediation.

Participants mentioned that this perceived teaching progression impacted their ability to empathize with their students. For example, Lisa recognized a newfound appreciation for the daily struggles of ELL students, noting, “I think I became more empathetic to how many challenges there are that I don’t see or think about, having never been in that position.” These findings support the literature that suggests that “by understanding the realities of their lives and sharing deeper understanding of ELLs, it is possible for both ELL teachers and regular teachers to refine their perceptions of such students” (Khong & Saito, 2014, p. 221). Further supporting this conclusion, a study by Zhang and Pelttari (2014) discovered that participants grew to empathize with students, the challenges they face, and how time is necessary to overcome such obstacles. In their study, participants acknowledged the time, assistance, and instruction necessary for ELLs to learn effectively (Zhang & Pelttari, 2014).

The data showed that participants reported an increased flexibility in accommodating ELL students following professional development training. For example, Jen referenced the additional materials she utilized in accommodating ELL students: “I’m
finding much more flexibility in accommodating students with word banks or definitions.” In this regard, Sheng et al. (2011) asserted that teachers who become familiar with cultural differences are more likely to adapt instruction to aid ELLs to achieve success. Alonso (2013) cited the connection between teacher recognition of linguistic need and subsequent content delivery and instruction. When describing the main considerations of effective ELL instruction, curriculum adaption and empathy were cited (Misco & Castaneda, 2009).

Lastly, the data revealed that participants felt an increase in confidence following professional development training. Participants reported this confidence in different scenarios. For example, some participants reported an increased confidence when confronted with the challenges of ELL instruction, noting that they had the ability to meet those challenges following training. Rebecca spoke of how such confidence led to more effective communication with students after training: “I think that I feel a lot more confident as a teacher that I can reach each student and not just the ones that want to learn, or the ones who speak really well, or write really well, or are really motivated.”

Other participants described confidence relating to the knowledge gained of new instructional strategies and practices. Jen noted the change in confidence positively impacting her instruction, asserting, “I definitely have the confidence that now I can teach ELL students. . . . Before I think [I] just didn’t really know what to do at all.” In Welsh and Newman’s (2010) study, participants found that both competence and confidence rose as a result of professional development training. Similarly, Musanti and Pence (2010) revealed that confidence and knowledge increased as teachers’ abilities to implement ELL-related strategies improved.
This conclusion is supported by Schön’s (1987) notion that practitioners are able to reveal tacit processes and facilitate sensemaking through reflection and reflective conversations (reflection-on-action). Reflection-on-action may occur independently, or facilitated through communication with the instructor or colleagues. This allows participants to consider different approaches to issues, or modification of strategies and instruction. Participants in this study were able to make meaning of classroom situations and instructional techniques that derived from professional development training. In doing so, participants recognized their own professional growth and development that occurred as a result of the training.

Conclusion 3: Teachers employed reflective processes to facilitate planning, problem-solving, and assessment and aid in future implementation. The interpretation of the data supported the conclusion that teachers employed reflective processes to facilitate planning, problem-solving, and assessment and aid in future implementation. Participant insights were facilitated through the processes of reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action (Schön, 1987). Examples of participant responses to reflection included reframing of inquiries, adjustments to directions, or curriculum revisions.

Participants reported reflection within the context of the classroom, both during and after instruction. For example, Nancy noted reflection taking place regarding her instructional deficiencies, stating, “It made me dig deep and think about, ‘Okay, where are my problem areas? Where do I have difficulty reaching these kids who maybe can’t read or maybe don’t have the vocabulary?’” Diane said it helped her gauge student
reactions during instruction, noting, “It made me reflect on what I was doing and how the kids responded.”

Although discussed within the realm of student needs, background knowledge was also influenced by the reflective processes (Misco & Castaneda, 2009). When students are able to make a connection to a past thought, lesson, or experience, they are able to delve deeper into the topic. In doing so, the students may discover a context that might have otherwise gone unidentified. These connections may allow individuals to gain greater insight and better understanding of the subject (Misco & Castaneda, 2009).

Similarly, Peercy, Martin-Beltrán, Silverman, and Nunn (2015) found teachers from different backgrounds and disciplines who “participated together in the same instructional event, experienced student learning within the space of that shared occurrence, and reflected together on what students struggled with—and what they learned” (p. 54).

During the interviews, participants described how they adjusted practice while implementing strategies learned during the professional development training. The processes used by participants to make adjustments during instruction are typified in Schön’s (1987) reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. This was particularly evident when describing implemented strategies that “did not work as well as anticipated” and had to be adjusted either during instruction or postinstruction reflection.

The situational response of reflection-in-action was detailed by several participants. Evidence of reflection-in-action may be demonstrated through the adjustments that participants made during instruction, either during a particular activity or learned strategy. These adjustments may have occurred during a lesson or activity, and pertained to learning environment or classroom management.
For example, Maria described one role-play activity as a “disaster”:

They’re in fifth grade, and what I found was they weren’t really understanding the role, they were in their groups, they weren’t mature enough . . . to figure it out, and I didn’t do enough modeling to help them figure it out. I just stopped in the middle of the activity and said, “Okay, let’s stop here,” and I modeled with a group . . . and then we went back to it and then it worked better. I think that strategy needs to [be] practiced way more than me just throwing it at them. I think we need to talk about it more and do one role and then the next time do another role. After you’ve done that a few times, then you can hand out the different roles in the group, but it definitely needed more modeling and practicing. (Maria)

In the above instance, the participant employed an on-the-spot adjustment that is indicative of reflection-in-action. According to Schön (1995), learning is promoted through the subsequent period of on-the-spot retesting of strategies and a reframing of problems. By observing and critiquing, the participant can make better sense of a situation or acquire a deeper understanding of an issue (Schön, 1989).

Reflection-on-action offered participants an opportunity to examine an incident or experience following its conclusion. In this sense, reflection-on-action served as a postincident appraisal by the participant. For example, Martha discussed postinstruction adjustments following the implementation of a strategy that was not considered successful:

Basically, I did a lot of support. I did a lot of walking around, especially with my ELLs, just making sure that I was there for support, saying, “Okay, do you understand what you just read? What’s your role?” Kind of clarifying their roles for them and making them understand what their job was within the group. I think
that was definitely, I just needed to keep walking around and meeting with each group, and that did help. I think just being there, especially the groups that needed a little bit more support, which was one [of] my groups with an ELL in it. She was, actually understood her role, and I checked in with her and she was fine.

..Then I had another group with one of my students that had some learning disabilities, and it was a little challenging for her to be able to participate, but just going back and forth between those two groups really helped. (Martha)

The participant reported a period of self-evaluation and reflection that offered greater insight on her practice. In this instance, the participant adjusted activity implementation during the activity, representing reflection-in-action. By doing so, participants were able to facilitate individual growth and development (Schön, 1995).

**Conclusion 4: Teachers recognized the impact that the professional development training had on the learning environment of their classrooms.** The data supported the conclusion that participants reported improved peer-to-peer connection, in the form of increased participation, sharing, and group work. Participants’ attributed this cooperative learning environment to the collaborative strategies learned and implemented through the training. This conclusion was also supported through the inclusionary environment that was reported as a result of learned professional development strategies. Data from participants’ responses consistently mentioned the positive impact such practices had on the learning environment within the classroom.

This conclusion was supported by evidence from participant transcripts. When speaking of the newly learned strategies, Sarah stated, “I think that opened some line to communication with the other kids.” Similarly, Rebecca noted, “I think that it’s made
them more comfortable to talk because they see they’re sharing, then the ELL is more likely to share and participate in class.” Participants also shared how the training strategies and techniques had a positive influence on the overall classroom learning environment. For example, Lisa noted the positive impact it had on all students in the classroom, not just the ELLs: “I feel like it’s benefited everybody in the room, everyone. I’ve enjoyed being able to make my class more collaborative, and that’s helped our sense of community, and I just think it made the class more enjoyable and engaging.”

Ross (2014) found a positive connection between professional development training and the subsequent learning environment of participants’ classrooms. This improvement was characterized by improved student engagement, instructional competency, and classroom management (Ross, 2014). The data demonstrated that following professional development training, participants reported a similar experience within their classrooms. Some participants likened the developments in their classrooms to the creation of ‘learning communities’ and used this term to describe the new collaborative environment. The findings corresponded to a study conducted by McCrary, Sennette, and Brown (2011), who found that “the general education teacher who can apply differentiated knowledge and skills to meet the needs of their ELL students will effectively teach all of the students in the ever increasingly diverse classroom” (p. 116).

**Conclusion 5: The professional development training offered a platform for reflection, collegial support, feedback, and collaborative learning.** The data drawn from interview responses supported the conclusion that participants viewed the professional development training as both a necessary and meaningful opportunity. Most participants characterized the training as a positive experience, and mentioned instances
of reflection occurring as a result. Furthermore, those participants who described the training in a positive manner also associated it with collegial feedback and support. In some of those instances, participants mentioned a learning community.

For example, Nancy applauded the opportunity that the training provided to collaborate and learn from peers: “We don’t have a lot of that time in our district, just time to talk with colleagues and to learn new things and then go back and try those new things. I loved that.” Similarly, Martha heaped praise on her peers and appreciated the chance to interact with them during the training: “The people I worked with are phenomenal teachers and they were invested in what we were doing, so it was really nice to have that little learning community that we had, which I liked that.”

The literature supports these findings of peer-to-peer support within the training. As Nordmeyer (2008) noted, effective professional development should involve a collaborative process between participants. Tran (2014) stated, “It is within this situated environment that teachers benefit from the shared learning experiences to feel more efficacious in the classroom” (p. 108). The data revealed that participants noted the benefit they received from sharing a platform for feedback with their fellow teachers. Many were appreciative that the training led to an exchange of knowledge and best practices. Such feedback ultimately translated to an improved confidence in instruction.

The data also demonstrated the use of reflection as a useful resource during the professional development training. Although such instances were not referred to using Schön’s terminology, there were several instances where this process occurred. Furthermore, required assignments during professional development can also be considered a form of reflection-on-action. This is represented during reflective
assignments given during the professional development, such as implementing a specific strategy and evaluating its effectiveness. These reflective processes gave teachers an opportunity to modify practices, develop content, and problem-solve social issues that may arise in the classroom. Peer interaction (among teachers) is an example of reflection-on-action, as experiences are discussed, evaluated and modified accordingly for future action. Reflection may be part of an assignment, opportunities for collegial sharing and instructor-participant one-on-one sessions may prove a useful addition to the current coursework. This may include directed discussion, planning and instructional collaboration.

In these instances of colleague engagement, reflection-on-action is apparent as the participant is discussing methods of teaching, or evaluating and critiquing some aspect of practice. For example, Martha noted how the training was conducive to collaborating with peers and reflecting on those conversations:

I think I enjoyed it because I learned something and I applied it, and that reflected practice. . . . Having some new things in the toolbox was probably the best part of it. Learning about a strategy and then applying it and that practice to get into learning, applying, and then reflecting. (Martha)

In associated literature, Merriam et al. (2007) discussed the importance of collaborative learning and peer discussion to acquire the greatest benefit from the reflective cycle. This was evident in the support of communities of practice, where knowledge transfer is facilitated through interaction, cooperation, and knowledge sharing (Merriam et al., 2007). Participant responses revealed the use of similar terminology, likening the training experience to a “little learning community.”
The importance of a collaborative professional development training environment as a platform for reflection and growth was mentioned by Musanti and Pence (2010). Such an environment may serve as a catalyst for reflective processes and knowledge construction (Musanti & Pence, 2010). The result is the creation of a learning community, characterized by the creation of a shared group identity (Musanti & Pence, 2010). The data from the findings supported the notion that group interaction and collaboration promoted individual participant confidence, knowledge, and instructional competence.

**Implications for Theory**

This research was framed utilizing Schön’s (1987) theory of the reflective practitioner. The results of this study indicated that reflection is a valuable tool for understanding the knowledge gained through professional development training. This understanding is facilitated through the practices of *reflection-in-action* and *reflection-on-action*, which were employed when attempting to understand the “how” of educators’ experiences in translating their ELL professional development training into practice in the classroom.

*Reflection-in-action* was accomplished through participants’ making sense of situations while in the midst of a lesson or activity. The reflection involved a type of ‘think on your feet’ response or ‘on-the-spot’ realization that may have allowed the participant to construct new understanding of a situation (Schön, 1987). This process was guided by the creation and use of knowledge, which allowed the practitioner a platform to review and evaluate the situation. This idea was mirrored by Wieringa (2011), who wrote that the *reflection-in-action* process is driven by the creation and utilization of
practitioner knowledge. In correspondence with Schön’s (1987) theory, the end result was the participant making better sense of the situation or experience.

For reflection-on-action, participants were able to make sense of a classroom incident or issue after it occurred. As Schön (1983) noted, these evaluations can be facilitated through a number of methods, including feedback from a mentor or supervisor. In the case of this study’s participants, reflection was encouraged by colleagues and the training instructor. Upon such reflection, participants were able to develop ideas relating to the improvement of a particular lesson or activity, which was tweaked and implemented at a later time. The result of this process was a greater insight into the implemented strategy or activity, which aided in teacher development through realized solutions. This notion is supported by Pitsoe and Maila (2013), who noted the importance of collegial discussion and peer feedback:

In teacher education context, reflective practice implies that the teacher examines his/her own teaching methods in the light of how well students are learning, determining in collaboration with colleagues or coaches how to improve one’s practice, examining the results of an intervention and making any necessary changes. (p. 211)

Supporting Schön’s theory, the literature suggests that professional development training and teacher education could benefit from formalized guidance on reflective practices (Clarke, 1995; Crandall, 2000). Over the course of this study, the use of reflection highlighted the challenges that teachers faced in educating ELLs and aided in the development of remediation strategies. Schön’s (1987) theory allowed for an examination into how participants made sense and meaning of their training experiences.
In employing this theory, the researcher was able to delve deeper and explore participant attitudes and perceptions both before and after training. As a result, practitioner reflection revealed a better understanding of how the training influenced participant beliefs and subsequent instructional practices.

Table 5.1 displays the key findings and their link with Schön’s theory of the reflective practitioner. Over the course of the data analysis, participants revealed the use of reflection in modeling, planning, and implementing new strategies. Participants also cited adjustments during instruction (reflection-in-action) and following instruction (reflection-on-action). Reflection occurred on an individual basis within the context of participants’ classrooms, as well as during the professional development training with peers. Data from participants’ responses are also displayed to provide examples.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Key findings</th>
<th>Link to Schön’s theory of the reflective practitioner</th>
<th>Participant data</th>
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<tr>
<td>Conclusion 1: Teachers were better equipped to identify and respond to student needs as a result of their professional development training.</td>
<td>Reflection-in-action is driven by the creation and utilization of practitioner knowledge. In correspondence with Schön’s (1987) theory, the end result was the participant making better sense of the situation or experience.</td>
<td>“I just stopped in the middle of the activity and said, “Okay let’s stop here,” and I modeled with a group, probably have the reading selection and then we went back to it and then it worked better.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion 2: Teachers acknowledged that professional growth and development occurred as a result of their professional development training.</td>
<td>The reflection-in-action process is driven by the creation and utilization of practitioner knowledge. The outcome is the participant making better sense of the situation or experience (Wieringa, 2011).</td>
<td>“Learning about a strategy and then applying it and that practice to get into learning, applying, and then reflecting.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion 3: Teachers employed reflective processes to facilitate planning, problem-solving, and assessment and aid in future implementation.</td>
<td>“In teacher education context, reflective practice implies that the teacher examines his/her own teaching methods in the light of how well students are learning, determining in collaboration with colleagues or coaches how to improve one’s</td>
<td>“It made me dig deep and think about, ‘Okay, where are my problem areas? Where do I have difficulty reaching these kids who maybe can’t read or maybe don’t have the vocabulary?’”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key findings</td>
<td>Link to Schön’s theory of the reflective practitioner</td>
<td>Participant data</td>
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<td><strong>Conclusion 4:</strong> Teachers recognized the positive impact the professional development training had on the learning environments within their classrooms.</td>
<td>For reflection-on-action, participants were able to make sense of a classroom experience after it occurred (Schön, 1983). The process is integral for a complete experience acknowledgment, gaining insight, and fostering creative practice (Smith, 1994).</td>
<td>“I think by thinking about the fact that you’re helping all your students with these strategies, it makes even the ELL student feel like they’re part of your class. . . . It made me reflect on what I was doing and how the kids responded.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conclusion 5:</strong> The professional development training offered a platform for reflection, collegial support, feedback, and collaborative learning.</td>
<td>Professional development training and teacher education could benefit from formalized guidance on reflective practices (Clarke, 1995; Crandall, 2000).</td>
<td>“I also liked that we had a group of people who were very invested. . . . The two people I worked with are phenomenal teachers and they were invested in what we were doing, so it was really nice to have that little learning community that we had.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5.1 illustrates the processes of reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. The process is initiated by participant experience and is followed by an observation, realization, and subsequent evaluation through the process of reflection-in-action or reflection-on-action. Upon reflection, new knowledge of the particular experience or problem is gained, and a new understanding is achieved. The learning outcome of the participant is then implemented in the form of a new experience.
Implications for Practice

Findings from this research present a number of implications for practice. These implications are relevant to the local, state, and national levels of education. This section offers an overview of the implications at varying levels of education, as well as potential outcomes for practitioners.

At the local level, districts and schools may benefit from encouraging teachers to assist in the planning of ELL professional development, along with urging departments of education to allow for a larger input into training programs. By allowing for faculty input, gauging participant interests, and addressing specific inquiries, ownership in the program’s success will increase (O’Hara & Pritchard, 2008). This was apparent in participants’ discipline- and age grouping-specific desires, as well as suggestions relating to content presentation and training structure. By having input, teachers can reap the
benefits of a truly collaborative learning environment, where shared knowledge and best
practices are openly discussed among participants (Tran, 2014).

At the state level, colleges and universities may seek a partnership with state
departments of education to promote preservice teacher training programs. The literature
cited a lack of knowledge, a lack of preparedness, and a general insecurity among
preservice teachers when tasked with instructing ELL students in mainstream classrooms
(Durgunoglu & Hughes, 2010). As a proactive recommendation, universities should
incorporate ELL professional training into teacher preparation programs, so young
educators will be equipped with the necessary skills prior to embarking on their
professional paths. The literature supports the need to extend such training to preservice
teacher preparation programs, as many preservice teachers feel unprepared to face the
challenges ELL instruction may present (Ballantyne et al., 2008).

At the national level, the results of the study may indicate a need to reexamine
legislation that may unfairly assess teacher accountability and ELL student expectations.
This is apparent when considering standardized assessments and ELL student
performance. The current reliance on standardized testing may inhibit the success of
ELLs and may serve as a counterproductive obstacle to their growth and development
(Hamann & Reeves, 2013; Roy-Campbell, 2012). This is particularly the case when
achievement expectations are equally applicable to ELL students and testing focuses
predominantly on memorization rather than new knowledge acquisition (Chen et al.,
2008; Vang, 2006).

Therefore, it should be the responsibility of districts and schools to provide
adequate professional development training before teacher accountability can be
measured against ELLs’ academic success (Kim et al., 2014). Participants discussed the pressure that accountability presents in the current educational climate, as well as the difficulty ELL students have building certain skill sets. A reevaluation of this generic ‘one-size fits all’ approach may be necessary to provide ELLs with an equitable alternative to the current arrangement.

Finally, the results of this study suggest that professional development has a positive impact on the development of teacher knowledge as it relates to instructional practice. This knowledge has offered teachers the opportunity to better understand and appreciate the needs of ELL students. The results from this study indicate that professional development training offers teachers the opportunity to learn and implement a variety of instructional practices tailored to the learning needs of ELLs. As a result, the implementation of these practices has had a positive impact on the learning environment of classrooms and could potentially lead to improved student outcomes.

**Future Research**

The purpose of this doctoral thesis project was to explore how general education teachers describe their ELL professional development experiences. Specifically, this project sought to reveal general educators’ reflective practices in terms of how they translated completed professional development training into the learning environment of their own classrooms. Although there is developing literature on educator professional development for ELL instruction, there are several opportunities for future research. This section details suggestions for further investigation.

This study focused on one mandatory, state-sanctioned professional development offering in Massachusetts. In this study, the entire sample was drawn from the same
district, with only K-12 teachers participating. One limitation of the study could be the singular data collection method. This was due to concerns regarding district policy for teacher observations in the classroom. Future studies could employ teacher and classroom observations when such practices are allowed by district policy.

Additionally, future research may wish to focus on comparative studies for multiple professional development offerings. These trainings could comprise state-approved offerings, in-house teacher-developed seminars, or a combination of both. Comparing preservice and in-service programs may also prove worthy of examination. A comparative analysis would allow a juxtaposition of the two trainings, which may serve to better illuminate the strengths and weaknesses of each.

Finally, future research may wish to employ a longitudinal study of teachers’ professional development experiences. In doing so, a researcher might have the ability to gain an understanding of how knowledge and perspectives may be shaped over time (Creswell, 2013). A researcher may also gain the benefit of establishing causal relationships between professional development training and subsequent practices (Creswell, 2013). Utilizing a longitudinal study may also help the researcher establish the existence of any long-term changes relating to participant perception and practice (Creswell, 2013).

**Practitioner Reflections**

This research was motivated by a professional desire to improve educator practice. As an instructor and administrator working within international education, the researcher pursued this topic of examination to improve the quality and effectiveness of educator professional development trainings. In doing so, it is the hope of the researcher
that progress can be made in equipping educators with the necessary skills to facilitate ELL student success.

The problem of practice that was investigated over the course of this study was an observed unpreparedness of educators to combat the abundance of learning obstacles that may hinder the educational advancement of ELLs in the United States. With the challenges experienced by ELL students, a comprehensive professional development program should be offered and assessed to best meet the needs of this diverse student population. The findings of this study demonstrate that ELL professional development training may provide a valuable tool in achieving this purpose.

The findings of this study have offered a number of insights that have informed the view of the problem of practice. First, teachers should be viewed as partners, or stakeholders, in the professional development experience. Framing the training as a collaborative process may promote participant investment in the seminar, improve morale, and increase interest. Next, to increase flexibility and participant buy-in, a flexible training schedule should be developed. This may include utilizing in-service days, adding additional time for professional development, or introducing an online component to ease the additional burden of training during the school year.

Additionally, trainings should seek to arrange participants based on grade level or content-area assignments. This may prove useful in building a collegial support system, while facilitating collaboration regarding instructional strategy, content delivery, and classroom management. Furthermore, such an arrangement may foster the creation of a learning community based on the sharing of similar experiences and encourage reflective practice.
Finally, districts and education departments should coordinate and promote partnerships with universities and colleges to arrange preservice trainings for education majors. Doing so may ease the burden of additional coursework upon entering the profession, in addition to increasing initial competency and preparedness. It is the researcher’s sincere hope that this investigation will be used to advance the academic potential and success of ELL students.

Summary

The purpose of this doctoral thesis project was to explore how general education teachers describe their ELL professional development experiences. Specifically, this project sought to reveal general educators’ reflective practices in terms of how they translated completed professional development training into the learning environment of their own classrooms. Over the course of this study, five conclusions emerged: (1) teachers were better equipped to identify and respond to student needs as a result of their professional development training; (2) teachers acknowledged that professional growth and development occurred as a result of their professional development training; (3) teachers employed reflective processes to facilitate planning, problem-solving, and assessment and aid in future implementation; (4) teachers recognized the impact that the professional development training had on the learning environment of their classrooms; and (5) the professional development training offered a platform for reflection, collegial support, feedback, and collaborative learning. These conclusions were revealed by the data analysis process and were supported by the concepts espoused by Schön’s (1987) theory of the reflective practitioner.
In its effort to gain a deeper understanding of the professional development experiences of ELL teachers, this narrative study contributes to the literature on ELL professional development for educators. Additionally, this study offers insight into how professional development may influence the perceptions, beliefs, and practices of ELL educators. Further, this study contributes to literature examining reflective processes, as the results indicated that reflection is a valuable tool for understanding the knowledge gained through professional development training.
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professional development to student development. *Literacy Research and Instruction, 49*(4), 334-351.


Wieringa, N. (2011). Teachers’ educational design as a process of reflection-in-action: The lessons we can learn from Donald schön’s the reflective practitioner when studying the professional practice of teachers as educational designers. *Curriculum Inquiry, 41*(1), 167-174.


Appendix A: Introductory E-mail

Hello,

My name is Chris Celozzi and I am a currently a doctoral student at Northeastern University. The purpose of my research project is to explore how ELL teachers describe their professional development experiences.

I am interested in interviewing teachers about their ELL professional development experiences. This would take approximately 45 to 60 minutes and can be conducted in-person at any location you choose, or if you prefer, via phone or conference meeting software.

First, I would like to make sure that you match the criteria for my doctoral thesis. Have you:

1. Taught in this public school district for 3 or more years?
2. Completed a district-sanctioned ELL professional development program within the last 6 to 12 months?
3. Currently have at least one ELL student in your classroom for at least 2 or more years?

If you meet the criteria for participation and would like to volunteer, please e-mail me at my Northeastern email address (celozzi.c@husky.neu.edu), and I will contact you with further information. You will then be provided with an informed consent document, and arrangements will be made for the interview, where we will go through the consent form before beginning.

If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me via email (celozzi.c@husky.neu.edu) or telephone (508 498 6179). You may also contact Dr. Margaret Gorman, the principal investigator, at m.kirchoff@neu.edu, or by phone (202 425 7111).

Participation is entirely voluntary. You will not be contacted again requesting your participation.

Thank you, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Christopher Celozzi

Email: celozzi.c@husky.neu.edu
Phone: 508 498 6179

Principal Investigator:
Dr. Margaret Gorman Kirchoff
Email: m.kirchoff@neu.edu
Phone: 202 425 7111
## Informed Consent Form

**Northeastern University, College of Professional Studies**

**Name of Investigator(s):**
Dr. Margaret Gorman, Principal Investigator  
Christopher Celozzi, Student

**Title of Project:**
Examining the Professional Development Experiences of Educators with English Language Learners: A Narrative Research Study Using Schön’s Theory of the Reflective Practitioner

### Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study

We are inviting you to take part in a research study. This form will tell you about the study, but the researcher will explain it to you first. You may ask this person any questions that you have. When you are ready to make a decision, you may tell the researcher if you want to participate or not. You do not have to participate if you do not want to. If you decide to participate, the researcher will ask you to sign this statement and will give you a copy to keep.

### Why am I being asked to take part in this research study?

I’m asking you to participate in this study because you are a K-12 educator who has met the following criteria:

- Taught in the selected public school district for 3 or more years
- Completed a district-sanctioned ELL professional development program within the last 6 to 12 months
- Currently has at least one ELL student in their classroom for at least 2 or more years

### Why is this research study being done?

The purpose of this doctoral thesis project is to explore how ELL teachers describe their professional development experiences.

### What will I be asked to do?

If you decide to take part in this study, we will ask you to participate in an interview regarding your ELL professional development experience and subsequent classroom practice.

### Where will this take place and how much of my time will it take?

The interview will last approximately 45 to 60 minutes and can be conducted in person at any location you choose, or if you prefer, via phone or conference meeting software. Interviews will be digitally recorded and shared with the participant following transcription in order to verify responses.

### Will there be any risk or discomfort to me?

There is no foreseeable risk or discomfort.
**Will I benefit by being in this research?**

There will be no direct benefit to you for taking part in the study. However, the information learned from this study may help others learn more about the impact of currently provided ELL professional development training and subsequent educator practice. Potential benefits to others may include an improvement in professional development training programs, as well as practitioner instruction based on the insights provided by this study.

**Who will see the information about me?**

Your part in this study will be confidential. Only the researchers on this study will see the information about you. No reports or publications will use information that can identify you in any way or any individual as being part of this project.

Each participant will be assigned a pseudonym prior to the arranged interview, and in all subsequent reference will be identified by the assigned pseudonym only. The participant will be asked to use only first names regarding any persons mentioned over the course of the interview, and will be instructed not to identify the research site by name. Any portion of the interview used in the research will contain a pseudonym for persons mentioned by the participant. Locations will be identified by general characteristics rather than by name. With the exception of a professional transcriber, the researcher will be the only person to have access to the data.

All participant interview sessions will be audio taped and transcribed. Transcription will be completed by a professional transcription service (Rev) that will follow industry standards regarding data security. Non-electronic transcript copies, signed consent forms, and other hard copy information and documentation will be stored in a safe, secure location away from public access. Signed consent documents will be stored for 3 years following the conclusion of the study and maintained in a locked, secure file cabinet within a private residence with access limited to the researcher. Electronic data will be stored on a password-protected computer, with all files backed up with a storage device that will be stored in a separate, secure location.

In rare instances, authorized people may request to see research information about you and other people in this study. This is done only to be sure that the research is done properly. We would only permit people who are authorized by organizations such as the Northeastern University Institutional Review Board to see this information.

**What will happen if I suffer any harm from this research?**

This study includes minimal risks to participants. Participants will have already completed professional development training and are at no risk of reprisal in the program for sharing their experiences.

No special arrangements will be made for compensation or for payment for treatment solely because of participation in this research.
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<tr>
<th>Can I stop my participation in this study?</th>
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<tr>
<td>Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You do not have to participate if you do not want to, and you can refuse to answer any question. Even if you begin the study, you may quit at any time. If you do not participate or if you decide to quit, you will not lose any rights, benefits, or services that you would otherwise have as an employee at [Name] Public School District.</td>
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<th>Who can I contact if I have questions or problems?</th>
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<tr>
<td>If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me via email (<a href="mailto:celozzi.c@husky.neu.edu">celozzi.c@husky.neu.edu</a>) or telephone (508 498 6179). You may also contact Dr. Margaret Gorman, the principal investigator at <a href="mailto:m.kirchoff@neu.edu">m.kirchoff@neu.edu</a>, or by phone (202 425 7111).</td>
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<th>Who can I contact about my rights as a participant?</th>
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<tr>
<td>If you have any questions about your rights in this research, you may contact Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection, 490 Renaissance Park, Northeastern University, Boston, MA 02115. Tel: 617.373.4588, Email: <a href="mailto:n.regina@neu.edu">n.regina@neu.edu</a>. You may call anonymously if you wish.</td>
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<th>Will I be paid for my participation?</th>
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<td>You will receive no compensation for your participation.</td>
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<th>Will it cost me anything to participate?</th>
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<td>There are no costs to the participant.</td>
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<th>Is there anything else I need to know?</th>
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<td>There is no additional information to disclose.</td>
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<th>I agree to take part in this research.</th>
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______________________________  __________________
Signature of person agreeing to take part  Date

______________________________
Printed name of person above

______________________________  __________________
Signature of person who explained the study to the participant above and obtained consent  Date

______________________________
Printed name of person above
Appendix C: Interview Protocol

- Can you please provide me with a brief description of your background? How did you enter the education profession? How did you come to work in this particular school?

- Can you discuss the English language learner professional development opportunities that are currently offered in the district?

- Can you discuss your experience working with English language learners prior to professional development training?

- What do you think are some of the biggest challenges in teaching English language learners? Did your approach to these challenges change after professional development training? If so, how?

- In what ways, if any, did your perspectives of teaching ELLs change as a result of professional development training?

- As a result of your professional development training, what knowledge, if any, did you gain about English language learners or English language learner instruction?

- Based on your experiences during professional development training, what changes have you made in your teaching practice?

- Has professional development training influenced your classroom management? If so, how? Do you feel as though the training has influenced the overall learning environment of your classroom? If so, how?

- Can you tell me about a specific instance when you’ve introduced an instructional practice from your professional development training that worked well?

- Can you tell me about a specific instance when you introduced an instructional practice from your professional development training that didn’t work as anticipated? How did you go about making adjustments?

- In what ways, if any, did participation in ELL professional development highlight the needs of English language learners that you might not have been aware of prior to training?

- In reflecting upon your overall professional development experience, can you tell me how you think this may have influenced your own learning and development as a teacher?

- What changes, if any, would you make to your completed professional development training?

- Do you have any final thoughts regarding your professional development training or educating English language learners that you would like to share?
Appendix D: Coding Sample Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RQ: How do ELL teachers describe their professional development experiences?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Question: Do you feel as though the professional development training has influenced the learning environment of your classroom? And if so, how?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participant 3</strong></td>
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</table>

In what ways, if any, did participation in ELL professional development highlight the needs of ELL learners that you might not have been aware of prior to training?

| **Participant 5** | I think it highlighted them just in terms of best practices that we should be using with all our kids. She just showed us some really good strategies that every single kid can benefit from, so in that way I was so grateful for it. |
| | • Highlighted best practices  |
| | • Presented useful strategies  |
| | • All students benefit  |
| | • “I was so grateful for it”  |

| **Participant 6** | But it opens your eyes to exactly what they’ve experienced and what their parents have experienced because when it comes down to it, you’re meeting with their parents... usually with a translator and the ELL teacher and not really realizing what’s important to the parents. These parents, some of them are very different from the other kids’ parents in the class. |
| | • “Opens your eyes”  |
| | • Meeting parents  |
| | • Translator  |
| | • Increased empathy  |
| | • Recognizing parental concerns  |

As a result of professional development training, what knowledge, if any, did you gain about English language learners or English language learning instruction?
**RQ: How do ELL teachers describe their professional development experiences?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Participant 3 | Oh, a variety. I think just definitely just the strategies; the reciprocal teaching. . . . We do think pair share anyway, but in just how to adjust some of those strategies that I was already using to better meet the needs of my ELL students, I would say, would be definitely something that I’ve gotten. Again, really delving into the background.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | • Multiple ways  
• Utilizing strategies  
• Supplementing practices  
• “To better meet the needs”  
• Background                                                                                   |
| Participant 9 | I think I gained or deepened my awareness that we’re not necessarily prepared, . . . that when we have an ELL in our class, we’re doing the best that we can, and we flail along a little bit, and we’re trying for them and they’re trying for us; but, I don’t know if they’re getting what they could be getting. You know what I mean? If they’re learning as much as they could, they should be learning.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | • Increased awareness  
• Lack of preparation  
• Students could be “getting more”  
• “We flail along a little bit”  
• Learning                                                                                     |

**Has the professional development training influenced your own learning and development as a teacher? If so, how?**

| Participant 1 | You need to have a refresher on ways to approach students and develop your lessons and tools. I just think it made me a better teacher by awakening me to what was sitting in front of me with student groups or the student body and all the possibilities of ways to tap their needs and tap their interests so that you can get more confident in what they’re learning and be able to give back to what they’re learning and not just be a failure at it or think they’re a failure at it.                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | • Need “refresher”  
• New tools/lessons  
• “Made me a better teacher”  
• Increased awareness  
• Helps focus on student needs/interests  
• “Get more confident”  
• Failure                                                                                       |
| Participant 7 | Oh, my goodness. In a million ways, I don’t even think that I fully recognize everything I’ve learned yet. . . . I really had no knowledge of any of my ELL earlier in my career or, for example, this year, I feel like I knew very little about them. . . . Now, I feel like I’ve talked to them. I have learned about where they came from, why they came here, what’s important to them. Even those conversations we had early in the course opened up, these students became people to me. That sounds awful—of course, I know they’re people—but they stopped being like the quiet English-only student who never talk to you all year; it’s like you never knew them.                                                                                                                                                                                                 | • Multiple ways  
• Not recognized  
• No early career knowledge of ELLs  
• “knew very little about them”  
• Personal connection  
• Learn student background  
• Increased communication  
• “Students became people”  
• Improved student-teacher relationship  
• “Like you never knew them”                                                                 |
## Appendix E: Emergent Theme Cross-Case Display

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### Appendix F: Theme/Category Organization

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<td>Tap their needs</td>
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<td>ELL community and their needs</td>
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<td>Took their background for granted</td>
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<td>Not assuming they have background knowledge</td>
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<td>Everyone has common ground</td>
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<td>Missing background knowledge</td>
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<td>Definitely use their peers</td>
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<td>Better peer matching</td>
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<td>Opened line of communication</td>
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<td>More socially with their peers</td>
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<td>All kids are benefiting</td>
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<td>Sense of community</td>
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<td>More inclusive</td>
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<td>Good for everyone</td>
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<td>Class more collaborative</td>
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<td>I feel a lot more confidence</td>
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<td>Made me more confident</td>
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<td>I definitely have the confidence</td>
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<td>Opened my eyes</td>
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<td>Opened my mind</td>
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<td>Tools in my toolkit</td>
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<td>Toolbox wasn’t as full</td>
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<td>More access to resources</td>
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<td>Felt more prepared</td>
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<td>Puts you right in their shoes</td>
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<td>Became more empathetic</td>
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<td>Never been in that position</td>
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<td>It’s not their fault</td>
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<td>Assumed they knew</td>
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<td>Never been in that position</td>
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<td>More tricks up my sleeve</td>
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<td>I have more flexibility</td>
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<td>Feel really fortunate</td>
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<td>Helped develop as a teacher</td>
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<td>It made me dig deep and think</td>
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<td>Made me reflect</td>
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<td>Teachers learning from teachers</td>
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<td>Love time to get together</td>
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## Appendix G: MaxQDA Data Extraction Sample

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<td>Needs</td>
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<td>Needs</td>
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<td>Needs</td>
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<td>Needs</td>
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<td>Interview 2</td>
<td>Reflection</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interview 2</td>
<td>Needs</td>
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</table>
## Appendix H: Interview Question Notes

### Participants 1 to 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview question</th>
<th>Amy</th>
<th>Diane</th>
<th>Martha</th>
<th>Rebecca</th>
<th>Nancy</th>
<th>Elaine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Background</strong></td>
<td>7th grade inclusion</td>
<td>5th grade</td>
<td>2nd grade</td>
<td>6th grade/English</td>
<td>2nd grade</td>
<td>1st grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Current role 9 years</td>
<td>Special ed</td>
<td>Former para</td>
<td>Switched majors</td>
<td>Business world</td>
<td>4th-year teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PD opportunities</strong></td>
<td>SEI course</td>
<td>“SEI program that the state is offering”</td>
<td>DESE SEI course</td>
<td>State-mandated SEI course</td>
<td>“State-sponsored SEI course”</td>
<td>Course “required by our state”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Initial ELL experience/ pre-PD</strong></td>
<td>“Randomly”</td>
<td>“One was put in my classroom”</td>
<td>2nd year of teaching</td>
<td>“As soon as I was hired I automatically got the training”</td>
<td>Placed in classroom: “It was a sink or swim proposition”</td>
<td>“Having one placed in my classroom”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pre-PD adjustments</strong></td>
<td>“Prior to professional development, I hadn’t really thought about it”</td>
<td>“Strategic with partnerships”</td>
<td>Vocabulary in context</td>
<td>Support from ESL teacher mother</td>
<td>“We would pick and choose when those kids could afford to miss a lesson”</td>
<td>Adapt lesson with their own experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ELL challenges</strong></td>
<td>Uncertainty of whether you are reaching a student</td>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>Resources and support</td>
<td>Determining student need</td>
<td>“Finding the time”</td>
<td>Different background levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More awareness of various levels</td>
<td>“We’re getting pretty high numbers”</td>
<td>Lack of background knowledge</td>
<td>Modifying instruction</td>
<td>Bolstered family support</td>
<td>Diverse learners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perspective change post-PD</strong></td>
<td>“It made me more aware of the absolute necessity to teach vocabulary”</td>
<td>More awareness of student vocabulary development</td>
<td>Increased confidence</td>
<td>Increased feeling of preparedness</td>
<td>Greater awareness</td>
<td>“Eye opening”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More aware of different background levels</td>
<td>Increased practices</td>
<td>Strategies help all students</td>
<td>Bolstered family support</td>
<td>Increased confidence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ELL/ELL instructional knowledge post-PD</td>
<td>Better understanding of culture and family life</td>
<td>Informed assessments</td>
<td>Importance of ELL background appreciated</td>
<td>“I need to slow down as a teacher”</td>
<td>“Putting them in situations where they’re comfortable”</td>
<td>Took student understanding for granted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-PD changes</td>
<td>Increased repetition</td>
<td>“All the training that I’ve had has made me more aware of how I’m teaching something”</td>
<td>Focused on importance of vocabulary</td>
<td>Set realistic expectations</td>
<td>More collaborative learning</td>
<td>Instructional rechecking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom management</td>
<td>“My classroom management style has always been an active classroom”</td>
<td>Unsure of management impact</td>
<td>Unsure of management impact</td>
<td>“Absolutely”</td>
<td>“Not so much classroom management”</td>
<td>“Yes and no”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning environment post-PD</td>
<td>Having an alternate plan or lesson</td>
<td>Benefits all students</td>
<td>“Absolutely”</td>
<td>Improved learning environment</td>
<td>More active learning</td>
<td>All kids are benefiting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Successful PD instructional strategy</td>
<td>Using art to encourage learning</td>
<td>Seven steps</td>
<td>Partner reading</td>
<td>Think-pair-share</td>
<td>Reciprocal teaching</td>
<td>“Cookies”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Complements language</td>
<td>Cut and grow activity</td>
<td>Promotes academic discussion and listening</td>
<td>Students share with more confidence</td>
<td>Specific roles</td>
<td>Increased student comprehension</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Supplements learning</td>
<td>Challenged students</td>
<td>Made students speak</td>
<td>Made students more confident</td>
<td>“Everybody can understand it”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unsuccessful PD instructional strategy</td>
<td>Introducing writing is difficult</td>
<td>Circle activity</td>
<td>Reciprocal reading</td>
<td>RAFT strategy</td>
<td>None cited</td>
<td>Cumulative project</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Overwhelming</td>
<td>Students lacked attention</td>
<td>Bad groupings</td>
<td>Combine steps for future implementation</td>
<td></td>
<td>Unrealistic lesson</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Introduction could be improved</td>
<td>Reflected during activity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Too little time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highlight ELL needs post-PD</td>
<td>Increased awareness</td>
<td>Increased self-reflection</td>
<td>“I would say taking background into consideration”</td>
<td>Increased empathy</td>
<td>Best practices highlighted</td>
<td>Understanding student background</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>New tools and strategies</td>
<td>Increased awareness</td>
<td></td>
<td>Don’t panic</td>
<td>Good strategies that all kids can benefit from</td>
<td>Increased empathy</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Make modifications</td>
<td>“I probably took them more for granted”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Opens eyes</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Teaching more in-depth</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Celebrating culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal learning and development</td>
<td>Good refresher</td>
<td>“I’m always looking to learn something new”</td>
<td>Increased reflection</td>
<td>“Helped me slow down as a teacher”</td>
<td>“Learn by doing”</td>
<td>Benefits the needs of all students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I just think it made me a better teacher”</td>
<td>Shared learned strategies</td>
<td>More strategies</td>
<td>“Explain more clearly”</td>
<td>Tie instruction to something relevant</td>
<td>“I would have done so much more”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More confidence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes to PD training</td>
<td>Boring material</td>
<td>“It made me reflect”</td>
<td>“Training was excellent”</td>
<td>Important to continue growth</td>
<td>Disorganized training</td>
<td>Too burdensome</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Better organization</td>
<td>Decrease time</td>
<td>More strategies</td>
<td></td>
<td>Overwhelming at first</td>
<td>Disorganized materials</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Expand the course</td>
<td>“It’s a big commitment”</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Final thoughts</td>
<td>Class very demanding</td>
<td>Class benefits all students</td>
<td>Changed attitude</td>
<td>No final thoughts offered</td>
<td>“It was a really great experience”</td>
<td>“I don’t think I have anything else that I can share”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Understand the need and benefit</td>
<td>“It makes the ELL student feel like they’re part of your class”</td>
<td>“It was definitely something that I ended up enjoying”</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants 7 to 11
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Question</th>
<th>Jen</th>
<th>Maria</th>
<th>Sarah</th>
<th>Joseph</th>
<th>Lisa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Background</td>
<td>High school math/theater major</td>
<td>5th grade teacher</td>
<td>High school English 9th-year teacher</td>
<td>High school physics Immediately after bachelor’s</td>
<td>High school English Former 6th-grade teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PD opportunities</td>
<td>State “tailored course”</td>
<td>Required ELL/SEI endorsement course</td>
<td>State-mandated SEI course/additional workshops</td>
<td>DESE approved SEI course</td>
<td>State-mandated SEI course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial ELL experience/pre-PD</td>
<td>“Early in my career, I had a few English language learners here and there”</td>
<td>Very few in previous years “I have one level 5 now”</td>
<td>“Probably 6 or 7 years ago; . . . I was unprepared”</td>
<td>“They ended up getting placed in my class”</td>
<td>Had ELL student placed during years as middle school teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-PD adjustments</td>
<td>“I’m not certain I made many accommodations” Clarify/restate</td>
<td>Tried to accommodate “Took a lot of my time”</td>
<td>Simplify assignments “They didn’t require the higher-level thinking and analysis”</td>
<td>“I would essentially give them a free pass” “Do what you can”</td>
<td>“I had taken upon myself”/ internship, neighboring university Studied Spanish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELL challenges</td>
<td>Content area-specific “Daunting and overwhelming”</td>
<td>Missing background knowledge Time and effort</td>
<td>“To try and cater to their needs while not ignoring the rest of the class”</td>
<td>“We take language skills for granted” Lack subtleties</td>
<td>Reading comprehension Difference in background knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perspective change/post-PD</td>
<td>Views changed after initial phases of training</td>
<td>“Not much really” “Things hit you like background knowledge”</td>
<td>Unsure of impact on perspectives</td>
<td>Unsure of impact on perspective Has “a little bit of a better idea” how to help</td>
<td>“I think I became more empathetic to how many challenges there are”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELL/ELL instructional knowledge post-PD</td>
<td>Differentiated learning objectives Acknowledging levels within the levels</td>
<td>Increased understanding of different levels Differentiation</td>
<td>“Deepened awareness” “Not necessarily prepared”</td>
<td>Reinforced that ELLs are not special ed Using visuals for processing</td>
<td>“I didn’t really understand how people learn another language” Academic language vs. social language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Question</td>
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<td>Sarah</td>
<td>Joseph</td>
<td>Lisa</td>
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</table>
| Post-PD changes     | • Increased strategy implementation  
• Increased flexibility and accommodation options  
• More freedom in assessments  
• “Puts it in the front of your brain again” | • Incorporated more activities and strategies  
• Allowed customization to ELL student need  
• Opened peer communication  
• “Generally speaking, overall teaching practice I wouldn’t say has changed” | • More frequent student check-ins  
• Improved due to strategies | • More strategy implementation, collaborative learning  
• Small group work | |
| Classroom management | • No impact on classroom management | • No impact on classroom management | • No impact on classroom management | • No impact on classroom management | • No impact on classroom management  
| Learning environment post-PD | • Increased buy-in/participation  
• More productive learning environment | • Incorporate more strategies  
• 7 steps vocabulary lesson  
• Increased interaction | • Students more involved in class  
• More comfortable  
• Improve morale | • Students more involved in class  
• More comfortable  
• Improve morale | • Improved due to strategies |
| Successful PD instructional strategy | • Word problem  
• Strategy promoted conversation | • Partner reading  
• Formatted strategy  
| | | | | | |
| Unsuccessful PD instructional strategy | • Think aloud  
• Didn’t introduce properly  
• Didn’t provide enough time/warning | • Role activity | • Think-pair-share  
| | | | | | | Too nervous/anxious | | |
| Highlight ELL needs post-PD | • Realize all are responsible for educating ELLs  
• Opened mind to other issues | • Unsure of impact  
• “I was unaware of rules and the laws”  
• Highlighted need for balance | • Clarified language difficulties  
| | | | | | | Increasing background knowledge  
| More time on vocabulary | | | | | |
| Personal learning and development | • “In a million ways”  
• Increased awareness, communication, personal connection  
• Promoted relationships  
• “It feeds the instructional side” | • Important to get refreshed  
• “Professional development is crucial” | • Realization of increased ELL enrollment every year  
• “I need to teach them just like all of my students”  
| | | | | | | More cooperative strategies  
| More tools in toolkit  
<p>| More flexibility | | | | | | | “I just feel so much more competent and confident” | |</p>
<table>
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</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Changes to PD training | • More realistic to teachers’ schedules  
• Change format | • “Much less intrusive”  
• Decrease time commitment | • Grade-level groupings for PD training  
• Less time | • Less time  
• A lot of homework | • Follow-up workshops  
• “Refresher” |
| Final thoughts | • “I feel much more equipped to educate these students, which is awesome” | • No final thoughts offered | • “I’d like to continue the conversation, continue the discussion, continue the professional development on it” | • “Overall, I found it to be a pretty positive experience”  
• Future classes should target high school more | • “I just think it would be good to have an ongoing training to work with this group” |

*Note: DESE indicates Department of Elementary and Secondary Education; ELL, English language learners; PD, professional development; SEI, sheltered English immersion.*