PREPARING TEACHERS TO WORK WITH ENGLISH LEARNERS: EXPLORING
THE POTENTIAL FOR TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING IN AN ONLINE
ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE FOR EDUCATORS COURSE

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ABSTRACT

The number of English language learners (ELLs) in the United States school system is growing rapidly. Much of the responsibility for teaching ELLs lies with regular classroom teachers. However, little training is being provided to help them. From a sociocultural perspective and drawing on constructive-developmental theories of adult learning and development, this study explores the potential for transformative learning in a one semester online English as a Second Language for Educators course. It is argued that if a single course is all that is required of teachers, the goal must be “transformative learning,” defined as a change in how a person knows rather than just what a person knows. The research questions were: 1) How did teacher candidates experience the online ESL for Educators course, and what roles did their background and prior experiences play? 2) What shifts in thinking took place in their understandings about working with culturally and linguistically diverse learners as a result of their participation in the course? 3) Which course activities, according to the teacher candidates, contributed to transformational shifts in thinking, and what role did the online learning environment play? Drawing from both qualitative and quantitative data, the study describes in depth the experiences of six adult learners (four females and two males ranging in age from late 20’s to early 50’s), including their backgrounds, prior experiences, teaching context and
life circumstances during the time of the study, reported changes in understandings about linguistic diversity based on course participation, and epistemological tendencies (sources of authority, senses of self, ways of knowing). The data revealed evidence of shifts in thinking about the education of ELLs, which often emerged as a result of their participation in the field experiences. However, the results also suggest that this particular learning context was not ideal for fostering development and transformational learning. This study calls into question the reasonableness of expecting a one semester online course such as this to adequately prepare educators to work effectively with ELLs. Issues for course and program revision are explored.

The form and content of this abstract are approved. I recommend its publication.

Approved: Mark A. Clarke
DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my husband Rob, my three children: Zach, Chloe and Olivia, and my parents: Steve and Michele. Rob is my best friend and without his continued support and encouragement, I would not have been able to do this work. Zach, Chloe, and Olivia inspire me every day to work hard, keep smiling, and enjoy every precious moment along the way. And finally, I could not have done any of this without my parents who have shown me the value of education throughout my life and have supported me in countless ways over the years. Without them, I would not be doing what I love to do today.
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### LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

1. ALP  
   Alternative Licensure Program

2. CLD  
   Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Learner

3. ELA  
   English Language Acquisition

4. ELD  
   English Language Development

5. ELL  
   English Language Learner

6. ESL  
   English as a Second Language

7. IT   
   Instructional Technology

8. LATS 
   Language Attitudes of Teachers Scale

9. LDE  
   Linguistically Diverse Education

10. SCI 
    Sheltered Content Instruction

11. SIOP 
    Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol

12. TC  
    Teacher Candidate

13. TELP 
    Teacher Education Licensure Program

14. TESOL 
    Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Andres\(^1\) arrived to the United States with his family a few months ago. He lived his previous nine years in Guadalajara, Mexico. His parents decided to bring him to the United States for a better life, but so far he does not understand what is so great about this place. He recently started attending third grade at his new elementary school. Not many people speak Spanish in his new school and he has only learned a few words in English from watching television in Mexico. He feels extremely out of place and does not know what to expect. Every day so far, his teacher has put him in a corner and has given him paper and crayons. How is he supposed to learn English, or anything for that matter, if he sits in the corner coloring while the rest of his classmates are engaged in learning activities? But what can he say? It is as though his teacher has no idea what to do with him.

Ana completed her teacher education licensure program last year and is in her first year of teaching at a local elementary school. They talked about differentiating instruction in her teacher education courses, but she quickly realized that she had no idea what that would actually entail. There were 25 students in her class: four had special needs, three were gifted and talented, three were students with limited English proficiency, and the remaining 15 had varying levels of abilities and background knowledge. How was she supposed to adequately and effectively teach them all? In addition, the prescribed curriculum and additional constraints put on her by the school district were intense and came as a great surprise to her. Ana went into teaching because

\(^{1}\) All names used in this document are pseudonyms
she loved kids and wanted to help them learn. She began the year with great enthusiasm and energy, but that was quickly fading away only to be replaced by exhaustion and anxiety. She was overwhelmed. And on top of everything, a new kid named Andres just showed up who does not speak any English at all. Her licensure program did not include any training on how to work with linguistically diverse students. She has no idea what to do with him. Until she figures it out, she is going to have him sit in the corner and color so at least he is doing something.

In order to help Andres, we must first help Ana. With the growing number of culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD)\textsuperscript{2} learners in the United States school system, it is not a matter of if, but when teachers will be faced with how to help them learn. Between 1980 and 2009, the number of school-age children (ages 5-17) who spoke a language other than English at home increased from 4.7 to 11.2 million, which is an increase from 10 to 21 percent of the population in this age range (NCES, 2010). The children of immigrants constitute around 20\% of the K-12 student population, which is projected to more than double within the next 20 years (AACTE, 2002). In Colorado, there are more than 100,000 students in grades K-12 who are labeled as English learners (CDE, 2010). This population has grown by 250\% since 1995, while the overall K-12 population in Colorado has grown by only 12\%. English learners now comprise 10\% of Colorado’s K-12 population and the numbers continue to grow (CDE, 2010).

More and more teachers are working with English language learners (ELLs), but little training is being provided to help them work effectively with that population of

\textsuperscript{2} Culturally and linguistically diverse learners is used interchangeably with English learners, English language learners and linguistically diverse learners
students (deJong & Harper, 2005). In a report from the National Center for Education Statistics (2002), only 12.5% of teachers reported having received more than eight hours of professional development specifically related to English language learners (ELLs). As a result, in these times of rapidly changing demographics, preparing teachers for diverse classrooms is more than just a challenge; it is a duty (Milner, 2010).

That duty of providing pre-service teachers with the rigorous preparation necessary to meet the modern demands of education is the responsibility of teacher education programs (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Darling-Hammond, Chung, & Frelow, 2002). When it comes to serving ELLs, the most common model is ‘pull-out,’ which leaves the majority of the responsibility of educating ELLs to grade-level mainstream teachers (Karathanos, 2010). As teacher educators, then, it is our responsibility to help prepare all teachers to work effectively with their ELLs; not just the English language development (ELD) teachers.

Study Setting

The linguistically diverse education (LDE) program at a mid-size university in the mountain-west region of the United States has one course that is specifically designed to do just that. It is called English as a Second Language (ESL) for Educators and is geared towards pre-service and in-service elementary and secondary teachers. The course is offered both on campus and online every semester (fall, spring and summer). This study focused on the online version. ESL for Educators is required at the graduate level and is an elective at the undergraduate level, which means that not all teacher candidates (TCs) who earn their teaching credentials from this university will have received training on
how to work effectively with linguistically diverse learners. For those that do, however, the program strives to make the course as effective as possible.

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of this study was to explore the potential for transformative learning (a change in not just what a person knows, but how a person knows) in the online ESL for Educators course over the course of one semester. In addition, I sought to learn how the six teacher candidates that participated in the study experienced the course and what changes took place in their thinking about linguistically diverse education as a result of their participation in the course.

Through the collection of both quantitative (questionnaires and surveys) and qualitative (open-ended questions on questionnaires, interviews and written reflections) data, I explored the answers to those questions, paying careful attention to the course activities that appeared to contribute most to their shifts in thinking. The results of the study suggest that in fact, each participant made sense of their experiences differently. The way in which they made sense of those experiences were influenced by their sociocultural histories, life circumstances, and epistemological tendencies, such as sources of authority, senses of self and meaning-making systems, or ways of knowing.

Contribution of Study

An in-depth study of this nature offers insights into the effectiveness and limitations of a single semester, online, teacher education course that prepare educators to work with English language learners. The results lend themselves to implications for course design and program design. For example, incorporating a developmental focus
throughout the course and program will better assist teacher educators to meet the teacher
candidates where they are and provide appropriate supports and challenges to help them
get to where they can be (Drago-Severson, 2004).

Overview of Chapters

In Chapter 2 I lay the foundation of the study by introducing my theoretical
framework and literature review, which I approach from a sociocultural perspective. I
describe the constructive-developmental theories of adult learning and development from
which I draw, address concepts of identity, and acknowledge the roles of experience and
reflection. Chapter 3 describes the methods I used in the study, including the research
questions, site and participants, as well as the methods of data collection and analysis. In
Chapter 4 I present the findings and interpretations of the study, aligned with my research
questions, for the six focal participants as a group. Chapter 5 takes an in-depth look at
each participant as well as the instructor, and presents information about their
backgrounds, experiences, beliefs and understandings about linguistic diversity, reported
changes as a result of their course participation, and specific reactions to course activities.
In addition, I discuss evidence of epistemological tendencies, such as sources of
authority, senses of self, and ways of knowing. Finally, in Chapter 6 I present an
overview of the study and discuss the results, offering insights and implications for
course and program design, and offering areas for future research.
CHAPTER 2
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Learning and Development Goals for Course

To ground this study in theory and related literature, it is important to first provide a brief introduction to the goals of the course itself. Based on my own experiences of the course, I have outlined the overarching goals of ESL for Educators, which are to: (a) increase the teacher candidates’ level of knowledge about culturally and linguistically diverse teaching and learning, (b) help teacher candidates gain a sense of efficacy to effectively work with culturally and linguistically diverse learners, (c) provide opportunities for TCs to broaden their perspective about the way they know, understand and make sense of culturally and linguistically diverse education, and (d) make a positive impact on the ELLs in the TCs current or future classrooms. It is important to note that these goals are not represented in the syllabus. The course goals and objectives as outlined in the course syllabus (see Appendix I) are based more on informational learning. Suggestions for the revision of the course syllabus to reflect the unwritten goals of the course are discussed in chapter 6.

One of the development goals for ESL for Educators, which is not found in the syllabus, but is indicated by the course instructor, is to help the teacher candidates take on new perspectives, specifically the perspectives of the culturally and linguistically diverse learners in their current and/or future classrooms. The ability to take on another’s perspective is an indication of a more advanced level of development (Drago-Severson, 2004; Kegan, 1982). For the TCs who do not already demonstrate that developmental ability, the course is designed to create opportunities for them to get there by challenging
and supporting them through field assignments, online discussions, and reflections, which are all key components of the online course.

Theoretical Framework


Sociocultural Perspectives

To better understand the teacher candidates’ learning, experiences and practice, it is important to consider the sociocultural histories of the TCs, the activities in which they engage, the contexts in which they learn and work, and the previous experiences from which they draw (Johnson, 1994; Johnson & Golombek, 2003; Lantolf, 1993; Teague, 2010; Vygotsky, 1978). In this study I explored the process involved in the TCs’ shifts in thinking and how specific aspects of the course contributed to those shifts in thinking and/or development of new understandings.
Vygotsky (1978) viewed development at two levels: actual development, or what one can do independently, and potential development, or what one is able to do with more “expert” assistance. The difference between these two developmental levels constitutes the zone of proximal development (ZPD). Basically, “children grow into the intellectual life of those around them” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 88). I view this notion of “growing” as applicable to adult learners as well, such as those who participated in this study. The course attempted to provide guidance within the teacher candidates’ ZPD by creating opportunities for them to engage with more knowledgeable perspectives, such as those provided by the instructor, their readings, their discussions with peers, their engagement in course activities, and their reflection of those experiences (Ball, 2000; Teague, 2010).

It is important to note that the TCs were not passive recipients of information, but rather active participants in the process. By engaging with new ideas and perspectives, the goal was for the teacher candidates to be better able to challenge pre-existing assumptions, take on new or broader perspectives, and develop new understandings about ELLs and the education of ELLs. I approached all data collection and analysis through a sociocultural lens with those goals in mind.

Constructive-developmental Theory

The theoretical framework for this study was based in part on the foundations of constructive-developmental theories of adult learning and development. Constructive-developmental theory draws on the notions of constructivism, “the idea that people or systems constitute or construct reality; and developmentalism, the idea that people or organic systems evolve through qualitatively different eras of increasing complexity.
according to regular principles of stability and change” (Kegan, 1994, p. 199).

Constructive-developmental theory, then, looks at the transformation over time of how we construct meaning. Basically, the way we construct our meaning will determine how we see the world around us and therefore, how we operate within it.

Ways of Knowing and Transformational Learning

At the heart of transformation is a *way of knowing* (Kegan, 2000). A way of knowing can also be referred to as an epistemology, a level of development (Drago-Severson, 2004), or a frame of reference (Mezirow, 1997). A way of knowing refers to how we view the world around us and how we make sense of our experiences in that world. As people develop, their ways of knowing adapt, or transform, to align with their new worldview.

Transformational learning “attends to the deliberate efforts and designs that support changes in the learner’s form of knowing” (Kegan, 2000, p. 48). A key component of transformative learning is “epistemological change (change in how we make meaning), not just change in behavioral repertoire or quantity of knowledge” (E. W. Taylor, 2008, p. 7). Therefore, since “genuinely transformational learning is always to some extent an epistemological change” (Kegan, 2000, p. 48), I looked for evidence of epistemological change in the data I collected from the study participants.

*Perry’s Scheme of Intellectual Development.* Perry (1970, 1981) conducted extensive studies over a span of fifteen years of college-aged men at Harvard in an attempt to learn about their cognitive processes and intellectual development. He sought to understand how they made sense of their experiences, or in other words, their ways of
knowing. Based on what he learned, Perry proposed that college students pass through predictable, sequential stages of epistemological development. He posited that the students move from viewing “truth” in terms of right and wrong (dualism) to being able to recognize multiple, conflicting versions of “truth,” which represent legitimate alternatives (multiplicity, relativism, commitment).

Perry’s scheme of intellectual development was helpful to me in my analysis of the ways in which people constructed knowledge as well as what they took as their sources of authority. In some cases, I found evidence of dualistic thinking. However, I also found evidence of more advanced cognitive development as demonstrated by participants’ abilities to take on the multiple perspectives of others.

Women’s ways of knowing. As a follow-up to Perry’s work, Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986) conducted a study with a similar purpose, but instead of focusing on men, they focused on women. The research team interviewed 135 women of widely different ages, life circumstances, and backgrounds in an attempt to understand how they made sense of their experiences. Belenky and colleagues proposed five epistemological perspectives from which women know and view the world: silent knowledge, received knowledge, subjective knowledge, procedural knowledge, and/or constructed knowledge. Briefly, silent knowers exhibit total dependence on external authority. In essence, they experience themselves as mindless and voiceless. Received knowers view themselves as capable of receiving and reproducing knowledge from external authorities but not capable of creating knowledge on their own. Subjective knowers conceive of truth and knowledge as personal, private, subjectively-known or intuited. Procedural knowers rely on objective procedures for obtaining and
communicating knowledge. Finally, *constructed knowers* view all knowledge as contextual and value both subjective and objective strategies for knowing, and see themselves as creators of knowledge.

Four out of the six participants in this study were women and therefore, the women’s ways of knowing framework outlined by Belenky and her co-researchers (1986) was useful in helping me better understand the women participants in my study and how they made sense of their experiences. It is important to note that the proposed ways of knowing are frameworks for meaning-making that evolve and change; not personality types that are relatively permanent.

*Drago-Severson and becoming adult learners.* Drawing from Perry’s (1970, 1981), Belenky et al.’s (1986) and Kegan’s (1982, 1994) frameworks for epistemological development, Drago-Severson (2004) and her research team conducted a study of 41 adult learners enrolled in a 14-month adult basic education course across three different sites: a community college site, a family literacy site and a workplace site. In her study, Drago-Severson focused on three of Kegan’s ways of constructing reality, or ways of knowing, found to be most prevalent in adulthood: *instrumental*, *socializing*, and *self-authoring* ways of knowing. Evidence was found to support transformational learning, as 50% of course participants demonstrated a developmental change in their way of knowing (e.g. from instrumental to socializing; from socializing to self-authoring) after the 14-month course as determined by the research team.

The research team found it remarkable that half of the study participants experienced transformational learning, or “a qualitative shift in one’s understanding of
oneself, the world, and the relationship between the two” in such a short time (Drago-Severson, 2004, p. 22). This was a phenomenon that I explored with the participants in the current study. By examining the ways in which the diverse adult learners enrolled in the course made sense of their experiences I was able to find evidence of transformational shifts in thinking among some participants.

_Baxter Magolda and self-authorship._ Also building on the work of Kegan (1982, 1994) and Belenky et al. (1986), Baxter Magolda (2001) began a longitudinal study of 101 first-year college students to better understand their intellectual development. However, she realized she had focused too narrowly on intellectual development and expanded the focus of the study to include participants’ sense of their identity and their relationships with others. The study described here focuses on the 39 participants that remained in the study throughout their twenties.

Baxter Magolda (2001) posited that an important part of becoming the author of one’s life is the transition from external to internal self-definition. She argues that internal self-definition plays a central role in self-authorship and that managing external influence rather than being controlled by it is the essence of self-authorship. Making that shift and becoming the author of one’s life, however, is a developmental process. Baxter Magolda identified four ways of knowing as part of that process: _absolute knowing, transitional knowing, independent knowing, and contextual knowing._ Similar to other descriptions of ways of knowing (Belenky, et al., 1986; Drago-Severson, 2004; Kegan, 1982, 1994; Perry, 1970, 1981), these levels or stages of development begin with a need to know what the authorities think (dualistic view of knowledge); then transition to an awareness that
authorities do not have all the answers, to an acknowledgement that most knowledge is uncertain; and finally, to holding the perspective that knowledge is relative to context.

The journey toward self-authorship as outlined by Baxter Magolda (2001) revealed how three dimensions of development (epistemological, intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions) intertwine to contribute to self-authorship. Stemming from those three dimensions, Baxter Magolda proposed three driving questions for people in their twenties: ‘How do I know?’ ‘Who am I?’ and ‘What relationships do I want with others?’ Since half of my study participants were in their twenties, Baxter Magolda’s framework was helpful for me in analyzing the interview data for those three participants. It is important to note, however, that I also found evidence of similar driving questions for other participants who were not in their twenties, but due to life circumstances were in a sense “starting over.”

The Role of Prior Experiences in Adult Learning and Development

As I looked for evidence of development along the three dimensions of epistemology, identity, and relationships, I paid close attention to the role of the participants’ prior experiences. Prior experiences play a large role in adult learning and development (Dewey, 1938; Knowles, 1980; Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 1998; Mezirow, 1997). “Experience is the adult learner’s living textbook” (Lindeman, 1961, p. 10). Adults have acquired a coherent body of experience, or frames of reference, that define their life world. Similar to ways of knowing, frames of reference are the structures of assumptions and expectations through which we understand our experiences (Mezirow, 1997). They frame an individual’s points of view and influence their thinking, beliefs, and ultimately their actions (E. W. Taylor, 2008). Therefore, to better understand
teacher learning and development, it is necessary to consider the previous experiences from which teachers draw (Teague, 2010) and how they make sense of those experiences.

Kegan’s Subject-Object Relationship

Forming the core of an epistemology, or way of knowing, is the subject-object relationship (Kegan, 2000, p. 53). The subject-object relationship is a principle of mental organization (Kegan, 1994; Lahey, Souvaine, Kegan, Goodman, & Felix, 1988).

“‘Object’ refers to those elements of our knowing or organizing that we can reflect on, handle, look at, be responsible for, relate to each other, take control of, internalize, assimilate, or otherwise operate upon,” (Kegan, 1994, p. 32) whereas “‘subject’ refers to those elements of our knowing or organizing that we are identified with, tied to, fused with, or embedded in” (Kegan, 1994, p. 32). “We have object; we are subject. We cannot be responsible for, in control of, or reflect upon that which is subject” (Kegan, 1994, p. 32). What we take as subject and what we take as object can change and these shifts from subject to object (having control over something rather than it having control over us) is the most powerful way to conceptualize the growth of the mind (Kegan, 1994). This subject-object relationship was a lens through which I viewed and analyzed the data.

Identity and Learning in Practice

Inextricably linked with a person’s way of knowing is a person’s identity. I define identity in this study as “a learner’s socially negotiated sense of self in relationship to his or her environment” (Brancard, 2008, p. 36). Identity plays a large role in the process of learning, epistemological change and practice. In fact, issues of identity are inseparable from issues of practice (Wenger, 1998). They constitute a way of being in the world.

Building an identity involves negotiating the meanings of our experiences, which results
from our membership and participation in social communities (Wenger, 1998). “Because learning transforms who we are and what we can do, it is an experience of identity” (Wenger, 1998, p. 215).

Brancard (2008) provides an in-depth look at the negotiation of identities for 27 college students enrolled in a first-semester community college developmental education course. In this course they worked to improve their reading and writing of academic English and explored their goals for the future. Three-quarters of the students in the study were recent high school graduates and more than half of them were born outside of the U.S., but many had completed some schooling in the U.S.

Through interviews, classroom observations, and analysis of written data, Brancard (2008) found evidence of students’ negotiations of their identities. The students described changes in the way they saw themselves as college students, as readers, and as writers. Brancard found strong connections between shifts in students’ perceptions of themselves as college students and the activities in which they engaged during their first year of college. In addition to their engagement in the course activities, the classroom environment and the community college environment influenced the way they made sense of their experiences.

Brancard’s work helped me to frame the current study and highlighted the importance of identity and how the negotiation of identity is linked with engagement in activity to facilitate learning, growth and development. The results of Brancard’s study support the argument that experiences of identity are not just about acquiring information and skills, but more importantly about the process of becoming who we are and who we
want to be. Information by itself, removed from participation, is not knowledge. What makes information knowledge, and empowering at that, is the way in which that information can be integrated within an identity of participation (Wenger, 1998, p. 220).

Learning contexts can offer a place where new ways of knowing can be realized (Wenger, 1998). With that in mind, the teacher candidates’ participation in the online learning community had the potential to be a transformative practice and “an ideal context for developing new understandings” (Wenger, 1998, p. 215). Based on the data, I would infer that the online learning context for this particular group during this particular semester was a suitable context for the development of new understandings for some people, but not for others. I will discuss which aspects of the course lent themselves more to the development of new understandings and for whom in more detail in Chapters 4 and 5.

Learning “belongs to the realm of experience and practice. It follows the negotiation of meaning; it moves on its own terms. It slips through the cracks; it creates its own cracks. Learning happens, design or no design” (Wenger, 1998, p. 225). Learning gains its significance in the kind of person we become (Wenger, 1998). It changes our ability to participate, to belong, and to negotiate meaning. This ability is configured through our participation in social communities and practice and ultimately shapes our identities (Wenger, 1998). The learning that takes place in the online ESL for Educators course has the potential to transform the way teacher candidates think about culturally and linguistically diverse education and learners. By design, the course strives to provide TCs with opportunities to explore who they are, who they are not, and who they could become.
Field experiences. One way to accomplish that goal was through the field assignments and the reflections of those experiences. There were three field assignments built into the course (see Appendix J for more detailed descriptions of assignments). The first involved watching a panel discussion of ESL directors from four local school districts. The second was a cultural field experience, and the third was an ESL class observation and interview of the teacher. The cultural field experience asked the prospective teachers to push themselves outside of their comfort zones and attend an event or language class conducted in a language they did not speak. The purpose was to instill a sense of empathy and give them an opportunity to walk in the shoes of their ELLs and see the world through their eyes, even if it is just for a moment. An activity such as this provides the TCs with an opportunity to be able to take on a new or additional perspective.

One of the reasons for incorporating the cultural field experience into the course was that research has shown that cross-cultural experiences are necessary if pre-service teachers are to be able to transform and critically construct meaningful educational experiences for culturally and linguistically diverse students (Ference & Bell, 2004; Gay, 2002; Giroux, 1988; Nieto, 2000). Since many programs are unable to provide prospective teachers with a cross-cultural experience outside of the United States, universities provide short-term cross-cultural experiences for pre-service teachers (Bradfield-Kreider, 1999; Wiest, 1998; Willard-Holt, 2001). The cultural field assignment was this program’s version of that short-term cross-cultural experience.

In addition to cross-cultural field experiences, many face-to-face classes similar to ESL for Educators incorporate a ‘language shock’ (Karathanos, 2010) or ‘language
sensitivity’ (Dong, 2004) exercise into a class session. Typically that involves either an instructor or a guest lecturer delivering a short presentation in a language that the majority of the TCs in the class do not speak. In some cases they may ask the TCs to produce something in the unfamiliar language (e.g. take a test, complete an activity, etc.). The purpose is similar to the cross-cultural experience: to show the teacher candidates what it is like to be in a classroom without understanding the language of instruction and hopefully instill a sense of empathy for their future ELLs.

The current study focused on the online version of the course, making a ‘language shock’ activity more difficult. Therefore, the requirement was for each TC enrolled in the online course to find his or her own local event, activity, or language class to attend. This type of experience may have actually been more of a “shock” because the TCs were on their own and did not have the support of their classroom, classmates or instructor. In fact, several TCs wrote about feeling “out of place,” “left out,” and “intimidated” by the experience.

Based on written reflections, this language experience appeared to have an impact on many of the teacher candidates’ thinking and ways of knowing, but not on others’. I will report on the impact of this particular course activity, and others, on the study participants and their thinking about ELLs and the education of ELLs in Chapters four and five.

The Role of Reflection in Adult Learning and Development

In addition to field assignments, readings, and online discussions, a critical component of ESL for Educators online was written reflections on their experiences in
the field assignments and in the course overall. Reflection is an activity, along with experience, that contributes to and constitutes change, growth and development. Reflection is the process by which we make sense of the world in which we live and experience life. Reflection is fundamental to learning and developing – “without it, we would simply be bombarded by random experiences and unable to make sense of any of them” (Merriam & Clark, 2006, p. 39).

We all have our own theories; our own ways of understanding the world. Our perspectives on learning make a difference in who we are and what we do. Therefore, reflecting upon our perspectives on learning is crucial. We need to understand what our assumptions are with respect to the nature of learning itself to better understand that which informs what we do (Wenger, 1998). The data I collected assisted in the process of discovering what the TCs’ assumptions were and how those assumptions played a role in the TCs’ ways of making sense of and understanding themselves and the world around them.

This type of critical reflection is a developmental process that is rooted in experience (E. W. Taylor, 2008). Critical reflection is the kind of thinking that challenges notions of prior learning (VanHalen-Faber, 1997). Thoughtful questioning may put to the test a person’s beliefs, expectations or goals. Such reflective experiences at the pre-service level in teacher education are put in place in order to elicit changes in established beliefs held by the prospective teachers, which may lead to change in the way they think about teaching and learning over time.
Reflection is a meaning-making process that moves a learner from one experience to the next with deeper understanding of its relationships with and connections to other experiences and ideas. Dewey (1938) argues that reflection needs to happen in interaction with others (in a community), and requires attitudes that value the personal and intellectual growth of oneself and others (Merriam & Clark, 2006). For this very reason the online course required participation in online weekly discussions in hopes of establishing a greater sense of community. Through this learning community the adult learners were given an opportunity to share their thoughts, feelings and experiences and reflect upon them with each other. In addition to journal entries and written reflections, it was during the weekly discussions that instructors could potentially “see” a lot of learning take place.

In my analysis I attempted to learn why some of the adult learners enrolled in the course appeared to see the online discussions as valuable and others did not. The differing reactions were based on a multitude of factors. For example, the discussion prompts appeared to influence the potential for in-depth discussion and exploration of a topic. In addition, a person’s level of participation may have influenced what they got out of the discussions. And finally, a person’s way of knowing also appeared to influence their reactions to the online discussions and the online learning environment in general. In this study of a particular group of teacher candidates during a particular semester, I did not find evidence of a true community of learners. I will discuss the implications of the online environment in further detail in Chapters 4, 5, and 6.

Becoming critically reflective of one’s own assumptions is the key to transforming one’s taken-for-granted frame of reference, an indispensable dimension of
learning and adapting to change (Mezirow, 1997). ESL for Educators was designed so that the teacher candidates were required to self-reflect often because self-reflection is one way to achieve significant personal transformations (Mezirow, 1997). Achieving significant personal and professional transformations is what the course strives to accomplish. For detailed descriptions of each individual’s experiences and whether or not they showed evidence of transformational experiences, see Chapter 5.

Summary of Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

In sum, the adult learners enrolled in ESL for Educators, along with the instructor and researcher, were complex beings with multiple and unique roles, responsibilities, experiences, beliefs, values, identities, and goals that were constantly changing and evolving. Diversity came in many different forms: gender, age, culture, background, socio-cultural histories and experiences, and a more subtle form of diversity: level of development, or way of knowing (Drago-Severson, 2004). People’s diverse ways of knowing shaped the ways in which the participants understood their experiences both in the course and in life. Everyone made sense of his or her experiences differently; therefore, it was important to consider the adult learners’ development as part of the research study. Knowing who the learners were and where they were coming from, along with the multiple demands that were placed upon them at the time of the study, was important because of how those demands influenced the ways in which they experienced the online ESL for Educators course and their potential for transformational learning (Kegan, 1994).
The conceptual framework and literature review helped to frame my study in an attempt to understand how the adult learners in the online ESL for Educators course made sense of their experiences, their understanding of themselves, and their development as learners and current or future teachers of ELLs over the course of the semester. In Chapter 3 I describe my research method, which includes the research questions that guided the study, the research site and participants, and methods of data collection and analysis.
CHAPTER 3
METHODS

Purpose of Study

Based on prior course assessments, the linguistically diverse education (LDE) program appeared to achieve its goal of facilitating informational learning for the majority of teacher candidates enrolled in the course. However, it was unclear how often transformational learning occurred, if at all. Those who had taught the course, myself included, reported a sense that the potential existed for transformational learning to occur as a result of participation in the course, but there was no empirical evidence to support those claims.

The purpose of this study was to explore the potential for transformational learning, determine what kind of change was reasonable to expect in a group of TCs during a one semester course, and which course activities contributed most to shifts in thinking. Taking the individual participants’ sociocultural histories and contexts into consideration, I sought to discover how each of the participants experienced the course, what their beliefs and understandings were about linguistic diversity at the beginning of the course, any change that took place in their thinking as a result of their course participation, and which course activities appeared to have the greatest impact on their thinking, as well as the ability to foster transformational learning.

Research Questions

The research questions which guided this study addressed three main areas: teacher candidates’ perceptions of their experience in the online ESL for Educators course, their beliefs about working with culturally and linguistically diverse learners, and
the changes that took place as a result of their participation in the course. The roles of background, prior experience, teaching context, and the online learning environment were considered as well. The specific research questions were:

1. How do different teacher candidates experience the online ESL for Educators course?
   a. What roles do the background and prior experiences of the TCs play?
2. What changes, or shifts in thinking, take place in the understandings and/or beliefs of teacher candidates about working with culturally and linguistically diverse learners as a result of their participation in the course?
3. Which course activities, educational practices and processes, according to the TCs, contribute to transformational shifts in thinking?
   a. What role does the online learning environment play?

Research Site

Online ESL for Educators Course

The site for this study is the online ESL for Educators course, which is part of a teacher education program at a mid-sized university. The fall 2011 university enrollment was 10,183 students with 1,805 enrolled in at least one online course. This ESL for Educators course is offered every semester both on campus and online. The TCs enrolled in the online course are graduate students, some of whom are in the post-baccalaureate strand of the Teacher Education and Licensure Program (TELP: pre-service), and some of whom are in the Alternative Licensure Program (ALP: in-service, but without teaching credentials). All of the participants in the study were part of the Alternative Licensure
Program, but not all of them were teaching during the semester of the study. This course is typically taken early in the course sequence, usually in the first or second semester of the program.

The ESL for Educators course is conducted using Blackboard and meets entirely online. There are no face-to-face meetings. The option of having a face-to-face meeting is at the discretion of the instructor. No face-to-face meetings occurred during the semester of data collection. Online course activities included weekly readings (two books and several supplemental readings posted on Blackboard), weekly participation in online threaded discussions (requirements included one response to the discussion prompt and responses to at least two classmates), three journal entries (one at the beginning, one in the middle, and one at the end of the course), three field assignments (see Appendix J for descriptions), one exam, one scholarly research paper, and a final reflection paper.

I have taught the course twice (fall 2010 and spring 2011). The online instructor taught the course once (summer 2011) prior to the semester of data collection (fall 2011). I was granted full access to the online course as a Teaching Assistant during the semester of the study (fall 2011).

Research Participants

The Teacher Candidates

Of the nine teacher candidates enrolled in the course, six agreed to participate in the study, four females and two males (see table 3.1). Their ages ranged from 26-50, three in their late 20’s, one in his upper 30’s, and two in their early 50’s. All participants were enrolled in the Alternative Licensure Program (ALP) during the time of the study in
a secondary content area: three in math, one in science, one in social studies, and one undeclared. All of the participants were from the United States and spoke English as their first language. However, five of the six had some knowledge of a language other than English, and three had lived abroad at various points in their lives. Two of the teacher candidates were teaching, one was substitute teaching, and three were not in schools during the semester of the study. See table 3.1 for more information about each of the participants.

Table 3.1  Background Information as Reported by Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SOFIA</th>
<th>KATHY</th>
<th>JENNIFER</th>
<th>PATRICIA</th>
<th>STEVEN</th>
<th>ERIK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age range</td>
<td>26-30</td>
<td>46-50</td>
<td>46-50</td>
<td>26-30</td>
<td>26-30</td>
<td>36-40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content Area</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>? Social Studies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currently teaching/ subbing</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes: middle school math and drama</td>
<td>Yes: subbing secondary math and science</td>
<td>Yes: high school science</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Experience (1= novice; 5= veteran)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other languages and proficiency (1= low; 5= high)</td>
<td>Spanish (3); Korean (1)</td>
<td>Spanish (2); Spanish (1)</td>
<td>German (1); Spanish (1)</td>
<td>None reported</td>
<td>Spanish (3); Thai (3)</td>
<td>Japanese (4); Chinese (2); German (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience with/ Knowledge of other cultures (1=low; 5=high)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest in having ELLs in class (0=not interested; 5=very interested)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence/ ability in teaching ELLs (1=low; 5=high)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3.1 Cont’d

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>SOFIA</th>
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<th>JENNIFER</th>
<th>PATRICIA</th>
<th>STEVEN</th>
<th>ERIK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preparation of other coursework to teach ELLs (0=no preparation; 5=high preparation)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence in online learning (1=not confident; 5=very confident)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In a condensed timeline, the statistics on students enrolled in ESL for Educators from fall 2007 to spring 2012 reported that 68.4% have been female and 30.8% male. 77.4% reported being White and 21.8% report being Asian, Black, Hispanic, American Indian, Alaskan Native, Pacific Islander, or unknown. The average age was reported to be 31.025.

The Instructor

Eva, the instructor, was teaching the ESL for Educators course for the second time during the semester of data collection. The prior semester she taught took place during the summer session, which was a condensed version of the layout for the 16-week, full semester version of the course. Eva had been working as a full-time instructor at the same university in which the study took place for less than a year, but had extensive experience as an educator prior to joining this university. For a more detailed description of Eva, her background, teaching experience, and course experiences, see Chapter 5: Portraits.
The Researcher

I am a married mother of three young children in my mid-thirties. I grew up in a predominantly white, mid-sized suburb of Chicago and lived in the same house, in the same town until I left for college. Attending the university was my first real exposure to diversity. I studied abroad in Spain during my sophomore year, which opened my eyes to the larger world of which I was a small part. Upon earning my B.A. in the teaching of secondary Spanish, I moved to Quito, Ecuador. I lived there for two years and taught adult ESL at a local university and ninth grade English and social studies at a private, bilingual, K-12 school. It was at that point in my life when I realized that I wanted to work with English language learners.

When I returned to the U.S. from Ecuador, I taught high school Spanish for one year, but then went back to school to earn my M.A. TESOL (teaching English to speakers of other languages). While I was working on my M.A., I taught English for the university’s English language institute. That experience confirmed my interest in working with English learners.

After I earned my M.A., I decided to move to Colorado, a place I always enjoyed visiting as a child. I began working at a local university in a brand new ESL teacher education program. I was one of the first employees of the grant-funded program and was excited to be a part of it. I have been involved in one way or another with this newly-named culturally and linguistically diverse education program for the last nine years. I have seen it change and evolve over the years, similar to my own identity. Through my work at this university, I continue to learn about our local population of ELLs and continue to strive to do whatever I can to help them succeed. That is part of the reason I
am now involved in teacher training: to try and reach as many teachers as possible in the hopes of reaching as many students as possible. That is how this study came to be.

Since the ESL for Educators course may be the only course some of our local mainstream and content area teachers receive, I believe in its importance, I believe in making it as effective as possible, and I am convinced of its potential. I decided to take a step back from teaching the course to examine what was going on and how the teachers enrolled in the course made sense of their course experiences. I wanted to learn which aspects of the course were working and which ones needed to be improved upon.

This dissertation is just the beginning of what I foresee to be a long career asking similar questions. Ultimately, my interests lie with the English learners themselves and helping prepare the teachers to work with them is the first step in that process.

Data Collection

Questionnaires and Surveys

In order to answer the question of how the teacher candidates experienced this course, it was important to find out who the adult learners were, including their backgrounds and experiences. “Experience is always a starting point of an educational process” (Knowles, et al., 1998, p. 94) and connecting new learning with prior experience is an important aspect of educating adults (Merriam, 2008). Therefore, I sent out a background questionnaire to all online TCs prior to the start of class (see Appendix A). The questionnaire helped me learn more about the teacher candidates’ ‘learning past,’ which is an important part of their present and future learning (Kegan, 2000, p. 58).
The background questionnaire inquired about age, gender, prior experiences with diversity, knowledge of other languages, teaching experience, confidence in working with culturally and linguistically diverse learners, confidence with the online learning environment, and so forth. The questionnaire was a combination of Likert-scale questions and open-ended questions and served as a great way to learn more about who the study participants were.

Upon completion of the course, I sent a follow-up questionnaire with five questions on it to see what may have changed in their confidence and interest in working with ELLs and with the online learning environment. I also asked them to describe their overall feelings about how well the ESL for Educators course prepared them to work with ELLs (see Appendix E).

To further help me understand the TCs, their perceived knowledge of linguistically diverse education, and their attitudes and beliefs about linguistic diversity, I sent them two additional surveys. The first was the Knowledge of ELL Issues Survey, which was a ten question Likert-type survey adapted from Teague (2010) (see Appendix C). This survey asked the TCs to self-assess their level of knowledge about ELL issues that would be covered throughout the semester. This same survey was administered at the completion of the course to gauge perceived gains in informational knowledge.

The second survey was the Language Attitudes of Teachers Scale (LATS) (Byrnes & Kiger, 1994; Byrnes, Kiger, & Manning, 1997), which consisted of 13 attitude statements concerning language diversity (see Appendix B). The Likert-type responses were coded 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=uncertain, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree.
Some items were reverse coded (statements two, four and nine). The alpha reliability coefficient for the scale was reported at .81 by Byrnes, et al. (1997). Byrnes & Kiger (1994) reported the test-retest reliability coefficient as \( r = .72, n = 28 \). Face validity was established due to the straightforward nature of the statements that addressed linguistic diversity issues. However, I have questions about the content validity of this instrument. Based on the results of this survey, I am not convinced that it measured what it was supposed to measure: linguistic tolerance. Validity concerns will be discussed further in the results.

Since the TCs developed their belief systems long before starting this course (Pohan & Aguilar, 2001; Torok & Aguilar, 2000), it was helpful to get a sense of what their beliefs and understandings about linguistic diversity and their tolerance of linguistic diversity were upon entering the course. In addition, the LATS survey had the potential to reveal whether or not the teacher candidates held any biases, prejudices or cultural misconceptions that the instructor may have chosen to identify, challenge or address during the semester (Pohan & Aguilar, 2001, p. 160). The LATS survey was administered again at the completion of the course to help me learn whether or not the TCs reported changes in their attitudes or beliefs about cultural and linguistic diversity over the course of the semester.

Interviews

The questionnaires and surveys provided a brief introduction to the participants, but in order to learn more about them and how they made sense of their experiences, I arranged an initial interview with each participant. I met with each of them as soon as possible at the beginning of the semester. During our first meeting, I asked a few open-
ended semi-structured questions, basically an extension of their background questionnaires. Due to scheduling conflicts, three of the interviews were conducted on the phone. All interviews were recorded and transcribed.

At approximately the mid-way point in the semester, I conducted a second round of interviews with each participant. During this meeting I inquired about their experiences in the course up to that point in the semester. I looked for possible shifts in their thinking and which activities appeared to be making the greatest impact on them so far. For this round, two of the six interviews were conducted on the phone.

For the third and final interview I conducted an adaptation of the subject-object interview (Lahey, et al., 1988) to learn about the TCs’ course experiences overall and how they made sense of those experiences (see Appendix G for interview protocol). Using the subject-object interview was an effective way to accomplish this goal. I was able to conduct five of the six final interviews in person and one on the phone. Following the subject-object protocol (Lahey, et al., 1988), I provided the five participants I interviewed in person with ten index cards that contained various prompts: angry, anxious, successful, standing up for your beliefs, confused, sad, moved, surprised, change, important to me. They had 15-20 minutes to think and jot down any notes they would like on the index cards. However, many of them did not use more than about ten minutes. I sent the one phone interviewee the prompts in a word document via email, which he had the opportunity to think about before we started our phone conversation.

I assured all participants that they were in complete control of the interview by giving them the choice about which cards to talk about and which ones not to talk about. I
also made it clear that the cards were theirs and I would not read them, which hopefully put them more at ease. Throughout the interviews, I tried to keep the atmosphere friendly and comfortable.

Activity Impact Questionnaires

In addition to the background questionnaires and surveys at the beginning and end of the semester, I created two activity impact questionnaires, adapted from Brancard (2008). One was administered at the mid-way point in the semester (see Appendix D) and one at the end of the semester (see Appendix F). Each course activity was listed, including readings, online links, field assignments, journals, online discussions, and so forth. The participants were asked to rate each activity and the impact it made on them. The purpose of the activity impact questionnaires was to help determine which course activities the participants perceived as most interesting/engaging, most helpful in preparing them to work with ELLs, most helpful in understanding themselves better and/or others better, which caused them to think differently about ELLs, and to what extent.

Attached to each activity impact questionnaire was a related questionnaire to gauge their reactions to the online discussion topics. Each week’s discussion topic was listed and participants were asked whether they would keep, change, or get rid of that topic. There was a column for comments after each activity and online discussion topic listed.
Online Discussions, Assignment Write-ups and Reflections

Throughout the semester I followed the participants’ online participation via their contributions to the weekly threaded discussions and their assignment write-ups and reflections. Included in their assignment write-ups and reflections were: three journal entries (beginning, middle, and end of semester entries), three field assignment write-ups/Reflections (see Appendix J for descriptions), and a final reflection paper (end of semester). I incorporated ideas from their write-ups and reflections into the interviews as appropriate. Doing so helped me learn how the TCs were constructing their course experience as the semester progressed and helped me determine whether or not there were particular activities, practices or processes during which transformational learning occurred.

Data Analysis

I collected and analyzed data throughout the semester of data collection. I began analyzing data as soon as I got it. For the Likert-type responses to questionnaires and surveys (Background Questionnaire, Knowledge of ELL issues, LATS, activity impact questionnaires, and end-of-semester questionnaires), I entered the data into Microsoft Excel in order to use descriptive statistics in the reporting the results. Doing so provided a picture of the group of adult learners in the study and the individual participants more specifically.

As I conducted interviews and conversations, I jotted down notes and reflected on what I heard as I heard it, a process referred to as memoing (Miles & Huberman, 1994). I had all interviews transcribed and immediately read the transcriptions as I entered them
into a Microsoft Word data table, which I used as a tool for analyzing my qualitative data (LaPelle, 2004). I used open coding techniques (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) to help me identify themes and categories that emerged, which I used to create a theme codebook (LaPelle, 2004). This was a recursive process under constant revision as new themes and categories emerged.

More specifically, I used three types of categories in my analysis: organizational, substantive, and theoretical categories (Maxwell, 2005) which helped me identify information and find evidence to address my research questions. I started with organizational categories, the broad areas that I had already anticipated (e.g. prior experiences, online learning environment, course experiences, etc.). These served as “bins” for sorting my data for further analysis (Maxwell, 2005, p. 97).

Substantive categories emerged as subcategories of my organizational categories, which I did not anticipate prior to data analysis (Maxwell, 2005). The substantive categories could not be anticipated because they were taken from the participants’ own words and were descriptive in nature based on the participants’ perceptions, concepts, or beliefs (e.g. finding love, personal experience with immigration, father’s influence on views towards Hispanic students, etc.).

Based on my own interpretations of the participants’ data, I established theoretical categories that connected my interpretations of the data with my theoretical framework (e.g. subject/object stance, others’ perspective-taking, empathy, sense of self, sources of authority, etc.). I went back to the interview transcripts and re-read them in
their entirety to get the big picture of the TCs’ experiences and how they were making sense of them. This was the final step in the analysis and the most revealing.

Throughout the recursive coding process, I employed connecting strategies which helped me look for relationships among the categories and themes that connected statements into a coherent whole (Maxwell, 2005). This helped me to better understand the individual participants in the study as well as begin the process of developing a more general theory of what was going on in the course. I used the coding and connecting processes to analyze interview data as well as written data such as journal entries, assignment write-ups and reflections.

To provide an example of some of the kinds of statements in the data that helped me learn about the TCs’ learning in general and potential for transformational learning, I looked for comments such as: “I did not realize,” “I was surprised,” “I never thought about ____ in this way before,” “I learned,” “I did not know that,” and so forth. I examined the context of the statement and what brought about those particular feelings. Through analysis I attempted to discover what contributed to shifts in thinking and in what ways.

Ultimately, I sought to learn how TCs experienced the course, what their experiences meant to them, what changes took place, if any, in their thinking as a result of their participation in the course, and what activities or practices contributed to those changes. While it was beyond the scope of the study to identify where the participants fell on the subject-object continuum or what their individual stages of development, or ways of knowing were, I tried to identify certain abilities and limitations associated with their
development, tendencies towards certain meaning-making systems, and their senses of self. By conducting and analyzing the subject-object interviews and other forms of data mentioned above, I was able to infer certain aspects of the TCs’ development and epistemologies. I will discuss the findings in Chapters 4 and 5.
CHAPTER 4
SNAPSHOTS: GLIMPSES INTO RESULTS OF DATA

In this chapter I present the aggregate results and findings of the study for the group. I have organized the results around the major findings, which are aligned with my research questions. The major findings are summarized as follows:

1. The participants entered the ESL for Educators course with a wide range of understandings, beliefs and attitudes about linguistic diversity and each of them had unique experiences of the course, which were influenced by their backgrounds, prior experiences, and individual circumstances during the semester of data collection.

2. The participants developed new understandings about the education of ELLs as a result of their participation in the course.

3. The course activities that appeared to impact the participants’ thinking the most were the three field assignments, written reflections, and the readings on sheltered content instruction.

4. The reported benefits of the online learning environment were convenience, flexibility, and pacing. The reported challenges and limitations of the online environment were difficulty finding a routine and staying on track, lack of connection with classmates and instructor, fear of miscommunication, superficial and repetitive discussions, and limitations of typing versus verbalizing thoughts.
Finding One

The TCs enrolled in the online ESL for Educators entered the course with a variety of understandings, attitudes and beliefs about linguistic diversity and the education of ELLs. Because they all had a different starting point for the course as well as unique individual circumstances, each of them experienced the course in very different ways. Their experiences were influenced by a multitude of factors such as their backgrounds, prior experiences, teaching context, and epistemologies (ways of knowing, sources of authority, senses of self). For more detailed descriptions of the participants’ individual backgrounds and experiences, see Chapter 5.

Prior Understandings

Based on the results of the background questionnaire, surveys, and initial interviews, it was evident that each of the participants entered the course with a wide range of knowledge, understandings, and beliefs regarding cultural and linguistic diversity. The TCs’ levels of reported knowledge as well as their understandings and beliefs about diversity and ELLs were mediated by their prior experiences.

*Prior knowledge.* The results of the initial Knowledge of ELL Issues Survey indicated that as a group the TCs entered the course with very little knowledge of the ELL issues that would be covered in the course. They self-assessed their knowledge of ten issues related to the education of ELLs on a scale of one to five, five representing the most knowledge. The average score for each of the ten items across all six participants was 2.33, which most closely corresponded to level two (very little knowledge). However, the averages varied by participant and by topic.
As shown in table 4.1, the topics of which the TCs reported having the highest average knowledge were issues surrounding the debate on bilingual education (3.17), legal requirements for educating ELLs (2.83), and how second languages are learned/acquired (2.83). While those three topics resulted in the highest level of perceived knowledge, they most closely aligned with the descriptor “some knowledge” on the scale. The topic of which the TCs reported having the least knowledge was sheltered content instruction and how to implement it (1.33), which most closely aligned with “no knowledge.”

Table 4.1  Average (Mean) Responses to Knowledge of ELL Issues Survey by Topic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Average Across Participants</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The local ELL population</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local resources/organizations that serve ELLs/families</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal requirements for educating ELLs</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>1.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History of bilingual education in the U.S.</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bilingual program models</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issues surrounding the debate on bilingual education</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>1.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How first languages are learned/acquired</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How second languages are learned/acquired</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>1.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheltered content instruction and how to implement it</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective instructional strategies for ELLs</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in table 4.2, average responses for the individual participants varied as well. The average self-rated knowledge across the ten topics ranged from a low of 1.2 (Sofia) to a high of 3.0 (Erik). Both Sofia and Jennifer rated themselves as having “no knowledge” to “very little knowledge” on most items; while Erik and Steven rated themselves as having “some knowledge” of most topics. Kathy and Patricia fell somewhere in between rating themselves as having “very little knowledge” overall.
These results suggest that most of the topics covered in the course were new to the majority of the participants.

Table 4.2  Average (Mean) Responses of Knowledge of ELL Issues Survey by Participant

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Average (Mean) Across Responses</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sofia</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathy</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jennifer</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patricia</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steven</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>1.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erik</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>1.56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is important to note the gender difference in the response to the knowledge of ELL issues survey. The two males in the study reported having greater knowledge than the females did on the topics presented. None of the participants had engaged in formal study on the topic, but the males indicated that they had at least some knowledge of all topics while the females reported having less knowledge of the topics overall. The difference in intellectual confidence between males and females is not uncommon. Belenky (1986) and colleagues report that women have a tendency to speak more in self-doubt than men. Sociolinguist Deborah Tannen (1995) agrees by showing that while women tend to downplay their certainty, men tend to downplay their doubts. This appeared to be the case in this study.

Prior training. It is important to note that the majority of the participants had no prior coursework or preparation in teaching ELLs. In fact, five out of the six participants reported having no prior course work or training that prepared them to work with ELLs
and the one person that did report previous training (Steven) indicated that it resulted in very little preparation.

*Prior experience with other cultures.* Because the group as a whole had very little or no prior training in the area of ELL education, the knowledge and understandings that they did bring with them about ELL issues were directly related to their own personal backgrounds and experiences. Five of the six participants had spent time abroad at various points in their lives (all but Patricia) and all six of them had exposure in one form or another to a language other than English. Two of the participants (Kathy and Erik) had previously taught ESL abroad. Kathy taught ESL in Korea and traveled extensively overseas and Erik taught ESL in Japan and also lived in China and Germany. Jennifer took several trips to Mexico as a child for vacations and as an adult for mission work. And while she did not specifically teach ESL, she taught swimming lessons in English during those mission trips. Steven studied abroad in Thailand and planned to travel to Asia upon the conclusion of the semester. Overall, the TCs reported an average of 3.5 out of five with respect to their experience with and/or knowledge of other cultures (five being the greatest amount of experience/knowledge).

*Interest versus confidence in teaching ELLs.* Possibly due to their own experiences with diversity, the group overall reported a relatively high level of interest in having ELLs in their classrooms (4.33 out of five). This suggests that while the TCs entered the course with varied experience and knowledge of other cultures and diversity, they generally had a high interest in working with ELLs with the possible exception of Jennifer who reported a lower level of interest (three out of five) than the rest of the group.
As figure 4.1 illustrates, the TCs’ reported level of experience with other cultures as well as their reported level of interest in having ELLs in their classrooms was significantly higher overall than their reported level of confidence and/or ability to teach them. This lack of confidence may have been due to their lack of prior training. With the exception of Steven and Erik who rated their confidence to teach ELLs as high (five out of five), Sofia, Kathy, Jennifer, and Patricia rated their confidence much lower (ones and twos out of five). As a group overall they reported an average level of confidence of 2.67 out of five.

![Bar chart showing knowledge of other cultures, interest in having ELLs, and confidence in teaching ELLs for Sofia, Kathy, Jennifer, Patricia, Steven, and Erik.]

**Figure 4.1** Reported Knowledge of Other Cultures, Interest in Having ELLs in their Classrooms, and Confidence/Ability to Teach ELLs at the Beginning of the Semester

The results again highlight the difference in response by gender. The males report being extremely confident in their abilities and the women do not. None of the four women rated their confidence higher than a two out of five; not even Patricia who had more experience than anyone in working with ELLs. The results of this survey are in line with the common practice among women of downplaying certainty and the common practice among men of minimizing doubts (Tannen, 1995).
Prior Attitudes and Beliefs

The pre-semester Language Attitudes of Teachers Scale (LATS) (see Appendix B) and my initial interviews with each participant showed that there was some variation in attitudes regarding the role of English language instruction and the education of ELLs in general upon entering the course. It is important to present the results of the survey as one piece of the puzzle. However, it is important to note that the interview data at times conflicted with the LATS responses. Therefore, I relied more heavily on interview data for clarification because I was not convinced that this instrument accurately represented the teacher candidates’ attitudes about cultural and linguistic diversity. Appreciation for diverse cultures was not reflected in this survey.

The responses to the 13 statements on the LATS survey were added up and each participant was given an overall score. Three items were reverse coded (two, four, and nine). A higher score suggested less tolerance of linguistic diversity (Byrnes & Kiger, 1994; Byrnes, et al., 1997). The average score for the participants overall was 25.33 (SD = 8.41).

With respect to the individual participants, Kathy’s score was the lowest at 13, which was also the lowest score possible on the survey. This suggested that Kathy was extremely tolerant of linguistic diversity upon entering the course and the most tolerant out of the six total participants. The next lowest score was Patricia’s (20) followed by Sofia (24), Erik (27), and Jennifer (31). The highest score was Steven’s (37) suggesting that Steven was the least tolerant of linguistic diversity out of the group of participants (see table 4.3).
Table 4.3   LATS Scores at Beginning of Semester

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Beginning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sofia</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathy</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jennifer</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patricia</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steven</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erik</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Responses of “strongly disagree” and “disagree” on the LATS survey were associated with a greater level of tolerance for linguistic diversity. The average response across all six participants was a 1.95 ($SD = .65$) which most closely corresponded to “disagree.” This would suggest that while there was variation by response and by participant, as a group overall they were generally tolerant of linguistic diversity upon entering the course.

The responses to individual statements on the LATS offered additional insights into some of the specific attitudes toward linguistic diversity held by the participants. For example, the majority of participants, with the exception of Steven, expressed that they felt it was important for people in the U.S. to learn a language in addition to English. Sofia even enrolled in a Spanish class during the same semester she took ESL for Educators.

Five of the six participants, with the exception of Erik, indicated that they felt regular classroom teachers should be required to receive pre-service or in-service training to be prepared to meet the needs of linguistic minorities. Erik reported being uncertain about that. If they were answering honestly, this would suggest that while the ESL for
Educators course was a requirement for the TCs, most felt it was important and necessary.

All six of the participants expressed that they felt having an English learner in their class would not be detrimental to the learning of other students. This would suggest that at the beginning of the course the group overall embraced the idea of having diverse learners in their classes. Kathy’s statements reflected that belief.

When you have an ELL student pop up you have to, you *have to*, it’s unconscionable not to support that student… I mean it doesn’t matter whether you believe that someone should be in this country or not, or whatever. That child, someone put that child in your charge, and you need to do the best for that child. Steven expressed similar sentiments. “It’s a demographic of student in which we must reach. If we do not reach these students here in the United States well our future generations are only going to be declining. It’s just the way it is.” However, while Jennifer indicated on the survey that she did not think having ELLs in her class would be detrimental to the learning of the others her interview data suggest that she was not quite sure.

I thought, “Okay, well I’m going to have to work with these kids you know, to help them understand this vocabulary - you know, these words, so that they can do whatever they need to do. That would be like taking time away from the rest of the class…It’s a little confusing and difficult to sort of mentally ... I mean you’re already managing the idea of you having students who get the material and students who do not get the material, and students in the middle who are progressing, and then to add students who sort of speak English, speak English pretty well, and speak English perfectly - it’s like ‘Whoa!’ That’s a lot to take care of.

While the majority of the participants reported feeling as though the rapid learning of English should *not* be a priority for ELLs if it meant losing their native language, half of the participants were uncertain as to whether or not parents of ELLs
should be counseled to speak English with their children whenever possible. Half of the participants also expressed uncertainty about whether or not the learning of English should take precedence over learning subject matter at school. This may be due to the fact that most of the TCs had no previous training in ESL education and rated their overall knowledge of sheltered content instruction as practically nothing.

The interview data offered additional insights into the TCs’ attitudes about the importance of learning English. Erik voiced his opinion about the subject.

You’re in America, you should learn to speak English…So, if you expect to operate efficiently in this country, you need to know English. You’re perfectly fine speaking Spanish in your home or wherever you want to speak it, but you need to know English…I lived in Japan, I learned Japanese. I lived in China, I learned Chinese. I lived in Germany, I learned German. For Germans living in America, I would expect them to be interested in learning English.

Patricia revealed that at the beginning of the course her understanding was that ELLs should master English first before anything else. “I felt that <ELLs> needed more to catch up in the language before they could even attempt to understand the academic material.”

Other participants, such as Kathy, expressed less of a sense of urgency about learning English and more on the importance of embracing other cultures and languages. “We have to accept them for what they believe. We can’t force our views on them. We can explain our views to them, but we can’t force them.” She continued to say,

I remember I was very frustrated, because a lot of people were saying, ‘This is America, and they should be speaking English’. And I’m like ‘Why should they accommodate themselves to us? Why?’ We should embrace everything. There are so many nice things out there, and we try to throw it all away.
Sofia also stressed the importance of being accepting of others and not judging them based on their English language ability.

We can be very insensitive. People aren’t dumb because they don’t speak English. They’re not deaf either. It’s just frustrating...I feel kind of ... someone’s got to stick up for these people, because they can’t help it. They need to learn, and yelling at them is not going to make them learn any faster.

Summary of Finding One

Each of the participants entered this course with varying degrees of experience with other cultures and knowledge of issues surrounding the education of ELLs as well as differing attitudes about linguistic diversity. Due to their participation in the course and their individual circumstances, each of the participants experienced the course in very unique and different ways. The type of change that occurred as a result of the TCs’ course participation will be discussed in the next section.

Finding Two

Each of the six participants changed in some way through their experiences of the ESL for Educators course. While common themes of change emerged across the group of participants, the specific types of changes varied from person to person. The perceived gain of knowledge, the reported change in attitudes and beliefs, and the realizations the participants made about the education of ELLs and about themselves as educators of ELLs were unique for each individual.

Change in Reported Knowledge of ELL Issues

The results of the post-semester Knowledge of ELL Issues Survey showed a reported increase in knowledge for all six participants across all survey responses. As shown in table 4.4, Sofia assessed her level of knowledge of ELL issues at the beginning
as basically “no knowledge” overall, which resulted in the greatest reported gain (+2.6) aligning most closely with “quite a bit of knowledge.” Patricia increased as well (+2.1) followed by Kathy (+1.8), Erik (+1.4), and Jennifer (+1.25). Steven reported the lowest increase in knowledge responses across all ten items (+.50). Both his pre and post-semester self-assessment put him at “some knowledge” overall.

Table 4.4 Average (Mean) Change to Responses on Knowledge of ELL Issues Survey by Participant

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Pre</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Post</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sofia</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>.42</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>.42</td>
<td>+2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathy</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>.82</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td>+1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jennifer</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>.67</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>.64</td>
<td>+1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patricia</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>.82</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>.97</td>
<td>+2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steven</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>+0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erik</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>+1.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in table 4.5 the survey topic that showed the greatest perceived increase in knowledge for the group overall was sheltered content instruction and how to implement it (+2.42). The TCs indicated at the beginning of the semester that sheltered instruction was the topic they knew the least about. The average jumped from 1.33 (“no knowledge”) to 3.75 (“quite a bit of knowledge”). On the other end of the spectrum, the topic that resulted in the least perceived gain in knowledge for the group was how second languages are learned/acquired (+.92). The group rated themselves as having “some knowledge” of second language acquisition coming into the course (2.83) and ended up at 3.75 (“quite a bit of knowledge”) as a group overall.
Table 4.5  Average (Mean) Change on Knowledge of ELL Issues Survey by Topic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Pre</th>
<th>Post</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The local ELL population</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>+1.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local resources/organizations that serve ELLs/families</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>+1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal requirements for educating ELLs</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>+1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History of bilingual education in the U.S.</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>+1.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bilingual program models</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>+2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issues surrounding the debate on bilingual education</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>+1.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How first languages are learned/acquired</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>+1.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How second languages are learned/acquired</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>+0.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheltered content instruction and how to implement it</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>+2.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective instructional strategies for ELLs</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>+1.67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Change in Reported Level of Interest in Having ELLs in Class

Kathy, Steven and Erik, the three participants who originally rated their interest in having ELLs in their class at a five (the highest level of interest), re-rated their level of interest at fives, which indicated that they came in to the course with a high interest and left the course with a high interest in working with linguistically diverse learners.

Therefore, there was no perceived change in interest for half of the participants. As illustrated in figure 4.2, the other half of the participants did report a change in their level of interest in working with ELLs. Sofia and Patricia reported an increased level of interest (both jumping from a four to a five) and one participant, Jennifer, reported a decrease in interest with working with ELLs (changing from a five to a four). She explained that her lower interest was due to the fact that she felt unprepared to work with ELLs.
Change in Reported Level of Confidence to Teach ELLs

When asked about their confidence and/or ability in teaching ELLs, five out of the six participants reported a change in their level of confidence. Steven was the exception. Steven came in to the course extremely confident (rating his confidence at a five out of five) and left the course extremely confident (also at a five), suggesting that his perceived level of confidence did not change as a result of his participation in the course. Four out of the six participants reported an increase in their confidence and/or ability to work with ELLs: Sofia, Kathy, Jennifer, and Patricia (see Figure 4.3). However, one person reported a decrease in his confidence and/or ability to teach ELLs: Erik. This may be due to the fact that he realized the limitations of transferring his prior ESL teaching experience abroad to teaching ELLs in a history class in the U.S.
I was in Japan, I was teaching English, and for the Japanese, their English needs are different than what an ELL kid needs here in the US. I guess I kind of, sort of had that in the back of my head, but after I did the <school> visit, it really came to the front.

He mentioned that “it’s not a one size fits all” and came to the realization about the importance of acknowledging that learners’ needs are different everywhere.

Yeah, you kind of gotta think, ‘Oh, ESL is the same here, it’s the same there, it’s the same everywhere,’ but it’s not the same everywhere. The needs are different from one group of people to another. I think you need to be aware of even the difference between kids here and adults here.

Figure 4.3  Reported Change in Confidence/ Ability in Teaching ELLs

Patricia discussed her gain in knowledge and confidence as empowering. “All of the awareness has eased, or I don’t know if eased is the correct term to use, maybe empowered. I feel empowered that I know at least a good amount. I have a good toolbox now that I can start putting into action, I feel like I can do it.”
Jennifer, on the other hand, felt more overwhelmed by the amount of information presented which contributed to her decrease in confidence and interest in working with ELLs. “My interest is low because I do not feel prepared to instruct ELLs.” She also discussed feelings of nervousness about teaching ELLs.

But then, it was like, “Oh my gosh, what did I learn? I don’t know what I’m... What was that last thing that we studied last chapter, or last week?” It just felt like there was a new thought every week, and it was like I wasn’t getting more confidence, so I became more nervous about teaching ELLs by the end of the class than I was in the middle of the class.

Change in Teaching Practice: Kathy and Patricia

Kathy and Patricia were the only two participants who were teaching during the semester they took the ESL for Educators course. Implications of teaching context on course design will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 6. In talking about changes that took place as a result of course participation, it is necessary to include the changes in practice that took place for both Kathy and Patricia due to what they learned in the course. Kathy said,

My thinking has totally shifted on how you teach ELLs, and I’ve learned a lot of strategies on how you teach ELLs, and I think I would have, I think without some of those strategies, I would have done things a little differently, and I don’t think I would have been as successful.

Kathy highlighted evidence of impact on the academic growth of her ELL. “So this week I started using effective ELL strategies, and my scores just jumped...So, <Sam> was an F student and now, he’s a B student.” Not only did she see success in her ELL based on newly implemented strategies, but she saw success with the rest of the class as well.
So I have him with a buddy, I’m presenting the words in Spanish and in English, I’m doing a lot of manipulatives. And, so I’m doing a lot of things without talking with him, just showing and demonstrating, and that seems to be getting along. And the other kids seem to be getting it too from manipulatives. Manipulatives really work.

Kathy also discussed her feelings on the importance of using native language support.

I have one child who is just barely understands any English, and I try to do everything in the course in Spanish for him that I can, but I try to tell him it in English and Spanish… And then I ask him in the journal, can you please try to journal for me in English and then journal for me in Spanish? Because, I can read the Spanish, why shouldn’t I read it if I can? That would be totally ridiculous not to use that asset.

Patricia described the changes she made in her teaching practice based on what she learned in the course.

I have been able to do some things differently. I’ve really made an effort to try to know the kids on a personal level, especially those ELL kids and make sure we talk about their home life and not in an invading way, but just ‘what do you like to do when you have free time?’ kind of thing. Trying to really incorporate them in the classroom with cooperative learning strategies and making sure they are interacting with each other and not just within their group but also getting to know the other kids that are of different background in the classroom. It’s not just about them getting to know other kids, it’s about other kids getting to know them, too. So that they can go to class and really feel comfortable in that sense.

Kathy and Patricia also mentioned the role of the parents in their ELLs’ education. Kathy in particular developed new understandings about the importance of understanding the parents. “Another big thing is just really, understanding their parents, and helping them, helping them cope. I mean it can be a big change. We don’t know the reasons why they came to the United States. We don’t know what was motivating them...”

*Sharing new knowledge with other educators.* Both Kathy and Patricia discussed the importance of taking what they learned in the ESL for Educators course and sharing
that with other educators in their buildings. Patricia met with her principal and together
they conducted an in-service training for the teachers at her school during that same
semester.

It’s actually really cool, because I took Sheltered Content Instruction into the
principal at my school…And so I said, “What can we do to start implementing the
SIOP model within every classroom?” because we have such a high population of
ELL students in our school that I feel like every class should be using sheltered
content instruction. And so, he was extremely receptive to it, and he really
wanted to get something going. And so we put some books together, put a
PowerPoint together, and did a training of that model for all teachers there. It was
really cool. So now, they’re implementing language objectives. We talked about
multi-sensory instruction. So that’s been really cool. That’s where a lot of the
learning for me has taken place.

Even though Kathy did not conduct trainings at her school immediately, she saw
it as a role she would be taking on in the future. She discussed becoming an advocate for
learners with exceptional needs and felt that starting with ELLs made good sense.

I want to advocate for my children who have exceptional needs. English
Language Learners have exceptional needs; there’s many, many different
exceptional needs and reasons why children have needs. And putting it in the
perspective, starting with the ELLs at a starting point, allowed me to see a lot
more about diversity…and for my ELL students, it’s a foreign language, and we
have to realize that - that foreign language doesn’t necessarily mean foreign born.
It means that the child has some need that’s exceptional with regards to language
or social interactions, and we need to be aware of that. Something I am definitely
going to advocate for these children, because they don’t have anyone to stand up
for them…I’m not the ELL coordinator, but I feel like I am… I see that I’m going
to be doing that in my school. My principal is brand new, too, so he sees it as a
need, and he’s like so glad that I want to take that on, because he saw it as a need
and hasn’t had anybody to realize it. We have a fantastic team at my school.

Patricia also saw herself as an advocate for the ELLs in her school. “I think they need
somebody that’s going to be their advocate right now, because they’re the population that
struggles the most at our school.”
New Understandings about the Education of ELLs

*Importance of teaching both content and language.* Several participants in the study indicated that through their participation in the course, they learned the importance of teaching both content and language objectives. Erik said, “The thing I got from this course is how important it is to teach the subject matter to the child, even if they don’t quite understand the language.” Patricia stated,

Comprehensible input was probably - I mean I think that was one of the huge ideas for me to get into my head, was that anything that I present to them really needs to be comprehensible to them, so I need to make sure that I can assess their levels of content and language knowledge, and then combine those things together and make sure that I am presenting information in a way that they can understand, so that was huge.

*Role of native language.* Sofia came to the realization that the ability a student has in his or her native language will impact where they are in English.

I think that it gives me a little bit better idea of how, where they’re at in their native language, really impacts where they’re at in English, because if they don’t have the knowledge in their native language, then how can we expect the same thing in English, because that would, you know, the words are completely different, and if you don’t understand the concepts, you know, that puts you ... I think it’d be a really tough area to be in...

Patricia came to a similar realization. “The content knowledge plays into the language, because they may have some background knowledge, but they may not be able to verbalize it in English.” And while she acknowledged the importance of teaching both content and language objectives, the application of it caused her to feel overwhelmed. “Having to cover both content and language in the classroom is something that seems very overwhelming, and because I haven’t fully implemented it, I don’t know what it’s going to be like yet.”
Change in Attitudes and Beliefs

*Change in LATS scores*. The LATS was designed to measure levels of linguistic tolerance with higher scores suggesting lower tolerance (Byrnes & Kiger, 1994). See table 4.6 for changes in TCs’ scores from the beginning to the end of the semester. The three participants that changed by more than two points were Patricia (+4), Steven (+4), and Jennifer (+11). Since their scores were higher, these results would suggest that Patricia, Steven and Jennifer became less tolerant of linguistic diversity over the course of the semester. Based on interview data, I am not convinced that they became less tolerant of culturally and linguistically diverse learners; thus calling into question the validity of the instrument.

**Table 4.6 Change in LATS Scores from Beginning to End of Semester**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Beginning</th>
<th>End</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sofia</strong></td>
<td>24</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kathy</strong></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>+2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jennifer</strong></td>
<td>31</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>+11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Patricia</strong></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>+4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Steven</strong></td>
<td>37</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>+4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Erik</strong></td>
<td>27</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When the scores of the six participants were combined and averaged, they showed an average gain of 3.17 ($SD = 4.45$) (see table 4.7). This result would suggest that as a group overall they became less tolerant of linguistic diversity. Again, the results may be showing that they became more convinced of the importance of teaching English and the complex demands placed on teachers to meet the needs of CLD learners rather than that they became less tolerant.
Table 4.7 Average (Mean) LATS Scores for the Group at Beginning and End of Semester

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean Pre</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Mean Post</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Mean Gain</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Combined</td>
<td>25.33</td>
<td>8.41</td>
<td>28.5</td>
<td>10.75</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>4.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n=6)</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

The individual statements on the LATS that resulted in the greatest change were statements 6 and 11. Statement 6 reads, “The rapid learning of English should be a priority for non-English proficient or limited-English-proficient students even if it means losing the ability to speak their native language.” Sofia, Patricia, Jennifer, and Steven changed their response to be in more agreement with this statement. Sofia and Patricia went from “strongly disagree” to “disagree.” This indicates the same opinion, but the strength of it changed. Jennifer went from being uncertain to agreeing with the statement. And Steven went from “disagree” to “agree.” This may indicate less tolerance or it may show an increased awareness in the importance of teaching English.

For statement 11, “At school, the learning of the English language by non- or limited-English proficient children should take precedence over learning subject matter” Patricia, Jennifer and Erik were originally uncertain about this statement. Patricia and Erik changed their response to “disagree,” but Jennifer, on the other hand, changed her response to “agree.” Steven was the other person who changed, but he went from “strongly disagree” to “disagree.”

The LATS results suggest that the participants became less tolerant of linguistic diversity overall (Byrnes & Kiger, 1994; Byrnes, et al., 1997). Another possible explanation for the change is that those who changed their responses to appear less
tolerant may have became more convinced of the importance of learning English, more sensitive to teacher demands, and more aware of the need for professional preparation to meet the needs of their diverse learners. Based on other forms of data, such as interviews and written reflections, I would not conclude that the participants’ attitudes towards ELLs become more negative. This again calls into question the validity of the instrument and highlights the importance of the triangulation of data, which helps paint a clearer picture of the phenomena taking place. For example, in talking with Patricia in interviews I would have predicted that she had become more tolerant and aware of issues surrounding linguistic diversity, the opposite of what the LATS scores suggested (Byrnes & Kiger, 1994; Byrnes, et al., 1997). She consistently talked about important realizations she had made during the semester such as becoming an advocate and altering her teaching practice to better meet the needs of her ELLs.

I think that part of the big revelation for me so far have just been that for these ELL students I have to be thinking about the whole student and not just the language, but what else are they experiencing at home that’s affecting, what else are they experiencing in life that could be affecting where they are at right now… I think that’s been the big thing is that it’s not just the language component, but there are so many other components that are involved in their ability to retain and learn information.

Change in feelings of empathy. A few of the participants indicated that they felt a sense of empathy for ELLs or felt they could relate to ELLs in some way. It is difficult to ascertain whether or not their feelings of empathy were influenced more by course participation or other experiences. Sofia, for example, was enrolled in a Spanish class during the semester she took the ESL for Educators course. She described herself as a “Spanish language learner” and talked often about how that experience influenced her course experiences and her thinking about ELLs. “It’s just making me think about things
different, the class and having the Spanish class both I think are probably the two biggest things that have affected how I think. Because now I’m a Spanish Language Learner…”

Sofia continued to describe the connections she made between her Spanish class and the ESL for Educators class and how being a Spanish learner allowed her to better put herself in the shoes of ELLs.

<The Spanish teacher> said that she’ll be trying to explain something about grammar, and she just gets this (gestures a blank stare) from some of the students, and nobody asks questions, because she says, “are there any questions?” People don’t understand what the assignments are about. I think that’s kind of like how an English learner would feel in a regular class. They don’t quite get everything that’s going on, but you don’t want to ask a question, because then you look stupid. And sometimes, you don’t know how to form the question even. I think it’s kind of neat to be able to take both of these at the same time and see how they kind of go together.

Erik mentioned that based on his experiences abroad he, too, felt a sense of empathy for ELLs.

For me, you know, as I’ve learned, I’ve been a steady in Japan when my Japanese wasn’t very good. I’ve lived in Germany, and I didn’t speak German. So I think I have a little more empathy for kids who are in sort of the similar situation here in the United States, where certainly you’re here - not by choice, because you’re six, you’re seven, eight, nine, or whatever. But you’re expected to swim, and everyone just says, ‘well, kids learn languages fast.’ And, that doesn’t really help you.

And Steven talked about how he would be able to relate to all types of kids. He did not specifically mention ELLs, but it was implied in our conversation. “Yeah, I can relate to kids. I can relate to them. You know, gangsters, jocks, musicians, mutes, dudes, females, gays, whatever, I relate to them. ‘Cause it is what it is; you are who you are.”

Finally, Patricia reflected on her former ELLs in a new way and with a greater sense of empathy based on her new understandings.
I actually felt *sad* that as the semester went on and I had increasing awareness for the needs of these ELL students that I could look back on previous experiences and identify what I could have done better and what I you know probably should have been aware of before. But I didn’t know, and I could have helped them be more successful. So, I think that’s the first thing that really came to mind, because I just I look back on these students that I know were struggling, and at the time I didn’t know what I could do, so it’s - I guess it’s bitter sweet…I think what I’ve realized most, what has made me most sad is before I would have said, ‘oh maybe they have lots going on at home’, and ‘their parents aren’t really invested in their education,’ and maybe that’s why this is leading to this circumstance. I think that the increasing awareness allowed me to see every single component that could be involved. And their lack of success in the classroom - so not just language barriers, not just the affective issues, but everything combined - maybe the family issues, are just one small piece of it. It’s my job to assess all of those issues. And just realizing that I hadn’t been, was probably the sad part for me.

*Change in awareness of local ELL population.* The knowledge of ELL issues survey topic about knowing the local ELL population at the beginning of the course resulted in an average between “no knowledge” and “very little knowledge,” but jumped to “quite a bit of knowledge” at the end of the semester. This is important because the TCs’ assumptions were challenged about what the local ELL population consists of.

Several participants admitted that when they heard “ESL” or “ELL” they used to think “Spanish-speaking.” Jennifer said, “In my mind, I always thought of ESLs as being mainly Spanish-speaking.” And Steven agreed by stating, “The thought is ESL for Spanish.” The TCs described themselves as being “surprised” and “shocked” by the statistics of our local ELL population, to include both the numbers of ELLs as well as the number of languages represented. They learned this information largely from the first field assignment which required them to watch a panel discussion video of local ELL directors. Patricia said, “I gained a lot from the panel, because it was just - I didn’t know anything about it, and that was my first glimpse into what it was really like.” Sofia agreed,
I think mostly, the thing that had probably the biggest impact was watching the video from the panel because it surprised me. I didn’t realize that in our town we had so many English Language Learners. I really didn’t… So I just really hadn’t been exposed to it, and I was just really surprised. I just didn’t think it was that big of a need in this city.

Other participants echoed those feelings of surprise. Jennifer admitted, “I think I’ve thought a lot about Hispanic and Spanish is the native language and you hear that and it’s like wow it could be anybody. There could be any language in your room.”

Steven expressed,

It just was very surprising how many different languages are represented in <local school districts>. Those numbers were surprising. I thought they would have been a lot smaller. It was astonishing…I just never thought that the problems were that big, especially <here in town>, but they are, and they’re everywhere.

And Erik concluded, “I guess you think going into it that it’s all pretty much even. You don’t realize how divided it is, the immigrant population is in the city.”

Summary of Change

In conclusion, it was evident that each of the participants gained new understandings about the education of ELLs and some of them also showed evidence of change in their attitudes and beliefs due to their participation in the course. Most of the TCs gained confidence in teaching ELLs based on what they learned and the two who were teaching at the time were able to directly apply what they learned and with which they experienced success. However, two of the TCs decreased in their confidence because of new understandings they developed. In certain cases the participants gained a greater sense of empathy for ELLs and reflected back on their prior experiences with the new understandings and knowledge they gained over the course of the semester.
Finding Three

Based on the results of the pre and post Knowledge of ELL Issues survey, the pre and post LATS survey, the interviews and reflections, it was evident that certain course activities impacted the thinking of the TCs more than others. The aspects of the course that they reported as having the greatest impact on them were the field assignments, reflection paper, journals, and the Sheltered Content Instruction textbook (Echevarria & Graves, 2010). Overall, the course contributed to the acquisition of informational learning, a change in what a person knows, but in few instances led to transformational learning, a change in how a person knows. I will discuss transformational learning further in Chapter 6.

Activity Impact Questionnaire

Half-way through the semester the participants were asked to fill out a mid-semester activity impact questionnaire (see Appendix D). At the end of the semester they were asked to fill out another course activity impact questionnaire using the same guidelines as the first (see Appendix F). Participants rated each activity based on how interesting and/or engaging they felt it was as well as the activity’s ability to help prepare them to work with ELLs, help them to understand themselves better, understand others better, and whether or not the course challenged them to think differently about ELLs. The TCs rated the activities on a scale from zero to five, zero being not helpful/engaging and five being extremely helpful/engaging. I added up the average scores for each activity and included in table 4.8 the activities that had an average score of four or higher. Those that had an average score of four or higher, indicating activities the TCs felt had
the greatest impact on them, were: the three field assignments, the sheltered content instruction textbook, the journals, and the final reflection paper.

Table 4.8 Activities That Resulted in Greatest Reported Impact

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Mean rating</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Field Assignment 1</td>
<td>Local ELL directors panel discussion video</td>
<td>4.54</td>
<td>.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(mid-term)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field Assignment 2</td>
<td>Cultural experience in unfamiliar language</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(mid-term)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheltered Content Instruction Text</td>
<td>Textbook on sheltered instruction techniques</td>
<td>4.04</td>
<td>.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(mid-term)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journals</td>
<td>Beginning, middle and end of semester reflections</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(end-semester)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field Assignment 3</td>
<td>ESL observation and interview with ESL teacher</td>
<td>4.48</td>
<td>.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(end-semester)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final reflection paper</td>
<td>Reflection of experiences over the course of the semester</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(end-semester)</td>
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<td></td>
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</table>

Field assignments. The topic of field assignments emerged as one of the most common themes throughout the interviews. Other than a few comments that I considered negative, the vast majority were overwhelmingly positive. Patricia said in reference to the field assignments, “those were all great. I was thinking back on all three. Those were wonderful!” Sofia agreed by stating, “All the field assignments were really good.”

Field assignment one asked the TCs to watch a video of a panel discussion between four ESL coordinators from local school districts that took place the previous semester. As mentioned under finding two, the content of the video appeared to make a great impact on the thinking of the participants. The realizations they made about the local ELL population were described as “shocking,” “surprising” and “eye-opening” by many. Steven described his surprise.
Something that surprised me was watching that English as a second language panel directors’ discussion. It just was very surprising how many different languages are represented in <local districts in town>. Those numbers were surprising. I thought they would have been a lot smaller. It was astonishing.

Erik attributed a big realization he made about the importance of teaching content to the information he got from watching the panel discussion.

That was one thing I got from the panel discussion was that it doesn’t matter if you say I’m teaching history. It doesn’t matter if they learn it in Spanish, German, or French, or Russian, or whatever, as long as he knows who George Washington is and why George Washington is important. That is the important thing. And you know maybe it takes him a little while to figure it out in his native language, but as long as he gets it at the end, that’s all that matters.

Kathy discussed how she wished she had learned the information presented on the video sooner.

The thing that I learned the most from was the ... field assignment that she had us watch... the panel. That’s what I learned the most from. I said, ‘Oh, oh, how stupid, yes. It just went ping and ping and ping.’ Things have been much better since I did that... so if I had realized all that stuff ahead of time, I think <my ELL> would have been better off right now.

Patricia also discussed her feelings about the panel discussion. “I gained a lot from the panel, because it was just - I didn’t know anything about it, and that was my first glimpse into what it was really like.” And Jennifer, too, found the panel informative.

“Even the video on hearing all those ESL coordinators…that was real learning.”

Field assignment two was the cultural field assignment that required students to attend a cultural event, religious service or language class that was conducted in a language with which they were not familiar. The majority of the participants attended religious services conducted in a language other than English and most of them expressed that it was a positive and eye-opening experience for them. Several of the TCs also expressed that they were thankful for the opportunity and likely would not have done it
on their own. Sofia’s comment sums up the thoughts of herself and others. “I’m really glad that I got the opportunity to do that, because I never would have done it on my own, I don’t think. Who would? Why would we put ourselves in that kind of situation? I think it was really, it was really good.”

A common theme that emerged in the assignment reflections as well as in the interviews was that of the importance of feeling welcome in an unfamiliar situation. Often it was just one person at the service or event who made the TCs feel more welcome and hence more comfortable. Patricia described her experience at a Jewish temple and how one woman approached her and helped her to feel included when she was otherwise feeling like an outsider. Patricia took that experience and related it to her ELLs.

<ELLs> can end up being completely introverted because of <an experience of feeling like an outsider>, and that can hinder their growth. So, I think my whole assessment on that field assignment was just that it’s extremely important to make the students feel totally welcome and comfortable and a part of the classroom and that they matter.

Interestingly, Patricia revealed that she did not have those big revelations right away. It was not until she began reflecting upon it that it began to click for her.

Well, the temple was really interesting, because after I went, I didn’t really have any huge epiphanies or anything. It wasn’t until I started writing about it that I really knew what was going on. I kind of discovered, through the process, how important it is for students to feel socially and emotionally comfortable in their environment and accepted and wanted.

Similarly, Jennifer mentioned the process of writing about the experience as beneficial. “You’re going to a culture... That was a real learning experience, and writing about that was a good thing to do.”
Another common theme that emerged was that of coming to a realization that even though we are all different, deep down we are also very much the same. Sofia made that revelation after her experience at the mosque she attended. “For me, it’s like, ‘Wow! We are the same.’ I mean, I knew that, but to actually like feel that, it was really cool.”

Steven described an emotional experience he had at Russian Orthodox and Greek Orthodox churches. This experience helped Steven take on the perspective of what it might be like for someone to come here from another country and experience a language barrier.

Well, what I did is I went to a couple of churches. I went to a Russian orthodox church and a Greek orthodox church. I kind of had some spiritual experiences more than anything, but a lot of it was transcended by the language barrier. I wasn’t quite understanding what was being said, and what was being done. So, it was kind of the unspoken language that connected me to the feeling of being in these churches. I can see how that would transcend to like say a Guatemalan coming over here and watching a baseball game or baseball stadium - not understanding quite what’s going on, but just feeling the vibrations of the park, of the game, of the people. It could be very powerful; you could have a cultural experience by just being, tasting, touching, hearing... That’s what I got from those cultural experiences, that even if you are uncomfortable, or if you’re not aware of a language or a medium of some sort, there are still benefits of an experience, and that’s what I got from that more than anything.

While four of the participants expressed feeling powerful emotions as a result of their cultural field assignment experience, Erik and Jennifer expressed feelings of skepticism about its impact. For Erik, he explained that the experience felt superficial to him since he already lived abroad and lived that experience on his own for several years.

I think I would get more out of <additional time in classrooms> than, no offense, “Go observe a service in foreign language.” I’ve lived in foreign countries. I’ve lived there. I know what it’s like to be in the middle of nowhere and not really get it. I’ve got that down. I’ve got confused in another country down. I get that at home, when my wife is mad...Yeah, I’m living it... I’ve got that down, so I would rather see more class time.
While Jennifer did not have extensive experience living abroad, she described skepticism about how this experience could translate into an understanding of the experiences of ELLs. Based on what she discussed in our interview, it appeared as though she found the experience valuable on a personal level, but that it did not accurately reflect the true feelings of what it would be like to be an ELL.

That’s obviously a little more difficult to find an area that you can jump into a language that’s not your language. But then, the problem with that, of course, is that when you go to those places, generally those people all speak English. It was good, but you don’t get the true feeling of being foreign. Or a couple of you can speak to each other, and the people around you can’t speak with you at all, which is what you know ESLs are feeling when they walk into a classroom and the teacher is like “I don’t understand your language,” and the classmates are like, “I don’t know what you’re saying.” … it was a great experience, but you can feel how different it is emotionally, you’re like, “that’s nothing like what they’re going through,” but they have a bigger challenge.

The requirement for field assignment three was that each TC was to conduct an observation of an ESL class as well as an interview with the ESL teacher. For those who observed high quality instruction the experience was a great learning opportunity. For Erik, it was the experience that made the greatest impact on him during the semester.

I got a lot out of that. I got more out of that than I did in the rest of the class…. It also motivates you, too. It really fires you up. Well, for me anyway. When you see the kids and you see how they’re doing it makes me want to dive in and help, you know?

Patricia used what she was learning in class about sheltered content instruction and used it as a tool for analyzing her observation. “I gained a lot from that last observation that I did. I really tried to apply the components of the SIOP model to analyze that lesson plan, and I got a lot out of it by doing it that way.”
For Jennifer, this experience appeared to be the most positive one for her. However, she also mentioned that what she learned from her interview made her think about how much work goes into educating ELLs. “That was just, it was amazing to me how elaborate it is. I was like, ‘Wow, that’s a whole lot of work.’ That was a great eye-opening experience...I felt that was an extreme learning experience.”

Journals and reflections. Three journals were required of all TCs during the semester: one at the beginning, one at the middle and one at the end of the course. In the final weeks of the semester the TCs were asked to compile all of their journals into one final reflection paper that summarized their experience overall. According to the activity impact questionnaires, the TCs reported that the journals and final reflection paper made an impact on them. It is interesting to note, though, that the journals did not average out to a score of 4.0 or higher at the mid-term activity impact questionnaire. It was not until the end of semester questionnaire that their reported impact increased, which was also the same time they completed their final reflections.

The topics of journal entries and the final reflection paper did not come up very often in interviews. Patricia was one of very few who explicitly mentioned her feelings about journaling and reflecting. She was the one who mentioned that for the second field assignment her greatest epiphanies came out of the reflection and writing of the reflection about the experience. She also mentioned that along with the field assignments, she was getting the most benefit from the journals. Jennifer, too, indicated that writing reflections of her experiences enhanced her learning. She discussed the final reflection paper in our final interview. “I don’t mind the reflection paper because it does help you look back at what you’re doing.” She mentioned that her journal allowed her to see that she did in fact
learn something from the course. “Really through a little bit of the reflecting on my journal, I was like, ‘Oh yeah, that’s right, we did learn some of that stuff.’”

Textbook: Sheltered content instruction (Echevarria & Graves, 2010). There were two textbooks required for the course (Echevarria & Graves, 2010; Lightbown & Spada, 2006) and several articles, readings and internet links. When I asked participants about their reactions to the readings, a common response was that they had a difficult time keeping all of them straight and therefore could not remember exactly what they had read. Erik admitted, “Honestly, I have trouble sometimes keeping the other class reading separate from the ESL readings.” He was not alone. Jennifer had similar issues. “When you’re taking another course…You start blending the…You’re like, ‘wait a minute, didn’t I read that in here?’”

One of the textbooks (Echevarria & Graves, 2010), resulted in a score of 4.04 at the mid-semester activity impact questionnaire, which made the list of course activities that made the greatest reported impact. It is important to note, though, that the score for that same textbook did not make a score of 4.0 or higher at the end of semester questionnaire. This would suggest that the overall reactions to the text shifted somewhat from the middle to the end of the course. However, several students did cite that textbook as useful. Patricia, for example said, “Readings were good. I liked the Sheltered Content Instruction book probably, because I am so focused on, ‘What can I do in my classroom, now?’…The SCI book, I was like, ‘This has great stuff in it. This is really, really useful to me.’ So, I appreciated the SCI book a lot.” Steven also had positive comments about it. “I really like that Sheltered Content Instruction textbook. It’s really concise with the
ideas. It gives you general ideas, and then it kind of expounds on them a little further, but it doesn’t do it in a sense that kind of bores you.”

ESL for Educators’ Ability to Prepare TCs to Teach ELLs

In looking at the ESL for Educators course overall with the various course activities, practices and processes, TCs were asked to rate the course’s ability to prepare them to teach and/or work with ELLs. The results were somewhat split. Jennifer and Steven indicated that the course prepared them very little or only a little. Sofia and Erik reported that they felt the course prepared them well, and Kathy and Patricia reported that they felt the course prepared them very well. Since Kathy and Patricia were the two that were teaching during the semester they took ESL for Educators, this result highlights again the importance of having a relevant context to apply what one is learning.

Summary of Course Activity Impact

I would conclude based on the comments from the assignment write-ups and interviews that the field assignments overall made the greatest perceived impact on the participants. The topic of field assignments emerged more than any other course activity. The journals and final reflections along with the sheltered content instruction textbook (Echevarria & Graves, 2010) also made a greater reported impact on the TCs than other course activities.

Finding Four

Confidence with Online Learning

Based on the results of the background questionnaire, the participants were split 50/50 in their reported confidence with the online learning environment. At the beginning
of the semester Jennifer, Steven and Erik rated themselves on the lower end of the spectrum (ones and twos), indicating they had little confidence or comfort with the online learning environment; whereas the other three: Sofia, Kathy and Patricia rated themselves on the higher end of the spectrum (fours and fives), indicating that they were quite confident and/or comfortable with the online learning environment.

At the end of the semester the TCs completed a follow-up to the background questionnaire where they re-assessed and reported their level of confidence or comfort with the online learning environment. Those who reported a high level of confidence at the beginning (Sofia, Kathy, and Patricia) remained steady in their confidence, remaining at a four or a five out of five. As figure 4.4 illustrates, the remaining three participants indicated a change in their level of confidence. Jennifer and Erik reported a slight increase in their confidence while Steven reported a decrease in his confidence. He went from a one to a zero (no confidence), which is why there is no visible bar representing his end of semester report. Steven said, “I don’t think online’s for me ‘cause I’m one of those people that I want to be around people and have feedback and listen to what’s being said, state my own opinions, things like that.” He predicted from the beginning, “I don’t feel like it’s gonna be what I’m looking for.”
In addition to their level of confidence in online learning, TCs were asked whether or not they would take ESL for Educators online or on campus if given the choice to take it again. The results showed them split half and half. Kathy, Jennifer and Patricia said they would take it again online while Sofia, Steven and Erik expressed a desire to take it on campus.

For some, online was the only way they could take the class. Jennifer expressed that this format was more convenient. “I wouldn’t be able to do a class or at least not as easily. It would be more of a strain. All my complaints about it it’s to say I do like it and I’m glad that I have it.” Patricia also indicated that this was the only format that would work for her. “The one thing that’s great about online classes is that I’m able to take a
class and work. So, I really, really appreciate it for that. I wouldn’t be able to do it if it wasn’t that way.”

Online Participation

A requirement of the course in addition to the field assignments, readings, journals, and reflections was participation in online weekly threaded discussions. Each person was required to post an initial response to the weekly prompt from the instructor by Thursday evening and then respond to at least two colleagues by Monday evening. While it was beyond the scope of this study to analyze each individual online discussion post, I calculated the number of weeks out of 16 that each TC participated in order to get a sense of each participant’s level of participation in online discussions (see figure 4.5).

Kathy and Jennifer engaged in the online discussions every week, followed closely by Eva, the instructor, who only missed one week. Patricia contributed to the discussions 14 out of the 16 weeks followed by Sofia who participated in 12 out of the 16 discussions. Steven participated in eight of the weekly discussions whereas Erik only contributed to two of the weekly discussions, the least amount of participation across the six participants.
In addition to looking at the number of weeks in which each TC participated, I calculated the number of total posts each participant contributed, including the number of on time posts and the number of late posts. As shown in figure 4.6 Eva, the instructor, contributed the greatest number of posts overall as well as the greatest number of late posts. 75% of Eva’s contributions to the weekly discussions were late. Sofia, Kathy and Patricia submitted only on time posts. Jennifer contributed only one late post and the rest were on time. Erik contributed a total of only three posts, each of which was late. Steven contributed a greater number of overall posts than Erik and Sofia, but his late posts outweighed his on time posts 21 to 12.

The results show that Sofia, Kathy, Patricia, and Jennifer consistently participated, which could mean that they were more engaged or that they were more conscientious about fulfilling the requirements and getting the points. Steven and Erik did
not actively participate and appeared less engaged. There is no way to know how often they were reading the discussions, but only how often they contributed to them. Steven and Erik did not fulfill the requirements of the online discussions as assigned and therefore, did not earn the points, which negatively impacted their grades. Eva contributed many posts, but did not engage with the students in a timely manner, which resulted in a lack of TC benefit. By posting late and denying them her expertise, the instructor missed opportunities to better reach the TCs in their zones of proximal development.

![Figure 4.6 Online Participation: Number of Discussion Posts Over 16 Weeks (Total Posts, On Time Posts, and Late Posts)](image)

After I calculated each participant’s contributions to the weekly threaded discussions, I looked at the total number of views per post to see how often each post was being viewed. I averaged the totals for student on time posts, student late posts, instructor
on time posts, and instructor late posts. Figure 4.7 illustrates that student posts were being viewed more often than instructor posts and figure 4.8 shows that on time posts were being viewed more often than late posts. On average, the number of total views declined as the semester went on and contributions to the discussions made earlier in any given week were being viewed more often than posts submitted later in the week or late.

![Figure 4.7 Average Views of Posts (does not include views by researcher)]
Discussions of the Online Learning Environment

The online learning environment emerged as one of the most common themes in interviews. TCs referenced prior online courses, their current online ESL for Educators course, and also online courses in general. The nature of the comments was varied, but the negative comments outweighed the other types of comments as shown in figure 4.9. This suggests that the experience of online learning for this group of TCs was more negative than positive. The variation in responses showed that the online learning environment had many challenges and limitations. However, there were reported benefits of online learning as well.
Reported Benefits of Online Learning

Convenience, flexibility and pacing. The benefits of the online learning experience the TCs mentioned most often included convenience (e.g. not having to find a place to park on campus) and flexibility (e.g. being able to do class work at any time from any location). Jennifer, for example, also mentioned the ability to pace herself as a benefit. “I mean the benefits of having it online are certainly that you can pace yourself, you can look at it when you have time to look at it. I do like that… And so certainly it’s great for me.”

Online discussions. The online discussions received mixed reviews. For some of the TCs it was a benefit of the course. Kathy, in particular, found them helpful. “I’ve learned a lot from the online discussions. I like them, definitely. I think that they are definitely a positive part of the course.”
Reported Challenges of Online Learning

Pacing and routine. While Jennifer saw the ability to pace herself as a benefit, others struggled with the pacing aspect of the online environment. Several participants mentioned that they had a difficult time getting into a routine and keeping up with the discussions. Steven told me about his struggles with not having anyone to keep him on track.

This is where I get in trouble in discussion questions, just remembering to do them by a certain time, which isn’t hard at all. It’s just online there’s not anybody kicking you in the butt to do this stuff, so it’s kind of the mentality a little bit to put things off. So you have to battle that.

Steven attributed part of this difficulty to the online environment. “Online inherently builds in the least of effort. That’s just my opinion.”

Sofia expressed similar sentiments and felt that the flexibility of the online learning environment made it difficult for her to keep up with the work. “It’s been a little tough just in general to keep up with the responding to the posts and such…when I’m really not feeling like doing anything, I really don’t do anything.” Erik agreed when he said, “You only look at your course stuff maybe twice, maybe three times a week; for some people I think it’s easy to forget.”

One explanation the TCs gave about the difficulty of staying on track was a lack of familiarity with the online learning environment. For most this was their first or one of their first online courses. As Steven mentioned, “that’s what is concerning me is I’m not able to find a routine, to be productive, and to learn and to share with the other members of the classroom. And it’s probably because I’m not used to online classes.” Sofia, too, indicated that she was not yet in a routine. “I only started taking online classes in the
summer, so it’s not like a habit for me yet.” Erik also expressed a sense of confusion due to the fact that he was not used to this type of learning. “So it’s a little confusing, but this is the first time I’ve taken online classes. I’m sure once I start getting used to it, it gets a little bit better.”

*Online discussions.* While Kathy indicated that she found the online discussions beneficial, the other TCs expressed the opposite. Jennifer, for example, explained, “It’s just kind of an odd…I don’t always feel like what I’m reading is beneficial to my learning.” Patricia described that to her the online discussions seemed like “busy work,” were a bit repetitive and not very beneficial.

In the class it’s been, like I feel like some of the discussions have been kind of repetitive. You know what I mean? A lot of people will say sort of the same thing, and so it gets kind of dry and not very challenging. So, I would say that the discussions have been just, I don’t know, I haven’t obtained a lot from them.

Steven raised the issue of whether or not others were even reading the posts. “A lot of times, I’d read through those discussions, and it didn’t seem like anybody was paying attention to what anybody else was saying. It was just people going on and on.”

The appearance that people were not paying attention to what others were saying was a legitimate concern based on the limited number of views per post (see figure 4.7). Sofia admitted that in fact she was not always taking in what she read. “You know, online, I’m not absorbing anything.” This is useful in reminding instructors that people learn differently and not all adult learners can learn effectively through reading. We need to find ways to address the varied ways of learning and knowing.
Reported Limitations of Online Learning

The most common limitations of the online environment as reported by the TCs included lack of personal connection, the inability to distinguish one person from another, and the limitations of typing thoughts versus verbalizing them. Sofia admitted that she relies a lot on “looking at people’s faces,” something on which she could not rely in this type of environment. And Steven discussed the issue of typing. “You know I can say in 10 minutes the amount of things in the same time that I could type, and I just forget all of the typing. You know I forget all the words when I’m typing it kind of thing.” While many of the TCs and the instructor indicated that at times they had a difficult time keeping everyone and everything they said straight, Eva’s thoughts are representative of many. “As you’re reading through and responding to the different ideas, you don’t always remember exactly who did say what.”

Several of the study participants gave ideas for how to address the limitations of the online environment. Suggestions included finding a way to incorporate voice or video into the discussions or at least for the introductions. A couple of the TCs mentioned the idea of using web chats. Others, the instructor included, brought up the idea of incorporating phone calls and yet others indicated an interest in meeting face-to-face. However, university regulations state that face-to-face meetings cannot be arranged for online courses, but must remain optional.

Instructor feedback on discussion posts. Early in the semester, the majority of the TCs reported being satisfied with the amount of instructor feedback and participation. Some comments included, “<Eva> responded back to everybody this last week with really in-depth observations and comments. I think that was extremely helpful.” “I think
it’s nice to get feedback, especially you know occasionally, on your discussion post, because you aren’t sure if you’re anywhere close.” However, as the semester went on, the comments shifted slightly. Several TCs discussed that while they understood that the instructor was busy, the late postings lessened their estimations of effectiveness of the feedback. The instructor was limited by factors outside of the environment in making timely feedback. Timely feedback appeared to be an expectation of the teacher candidates enrolled in the course. One TC said,

I feel like it’s good if it’s done within the week of discussion. So like, if it’s done after the discussion week is over, it’s hard for me to go back and you know work on this week’s discussion and then go back and check the previous week’s discussion and really think about that when I’m trying to focus on this week. So, as long as the responses are within the week that is being discussed, and I’m sure that’s really difficult.

And another stated,

She was like two or three weeks behind at one point, and it’s really tough to like, well, to stay motivated and do something when that’s the case, and it’s also tough to make, to not get behind, because you don’t understand something, and then it’s like a couple weeks later, she gets back to it, but you’re already kind of past that, and you’re trying to focus on that stuff, and it’s kind of tough. But I know everybody has their lives, too!

While there were benefits, challenges and limitations of the online learning environment, Jennifer summed it up with her concluding thought. “It’s part of the world today and it’s one of the changing environments of education…we have to deal with it I guess. And learn that technology.”

Conclusion of Results

The results of the study presented in this chapter offer insights into how this particular group of teacher candidates experienced the online ESL for Educators course.
They entered the course with unique backgrounds and experiences with other cultures and a wide range of understandings, beliefs and attitudes about linguistic diversity. They reported varying degrees of confidence with teaching ELLs at the beginning of the course, which was influenced by their prior experiences with diversity.

Throughout the semester each of the participants changed in some way as a result of their participation in the course. It was evident that all six of the TCs developed new understandings about the education of ELLs which impacted their confidence and interest in working with ELLs in the future. The ESL for Educators course appeared to challenge some of the TCs’ prior assumptions about the local population of ELLs as well as how to effectively reach that group of students. Two of the participants, Kathy and Patricia, who were teaching ELLs at the time of the study, reported evidence of change in their teaching practice which resulted in positive academic growth of their students.

The course activities that appeared to make the greatest impact on their learning according to the TCs were the three field assignments (ESL directors’ panel discussion, cultural experience, and ESL classroom observation and interview). Other activities and practices that they indicated made a positive impact on them were the journals, final reflection paper, and the textbook on sheltered content instruction.

Results of the analysis of the online learning environment highlighted the challenges and limitations of this particular online course and online learning in general. There were few reported benefits of the online learning environment cited by the TCs. Most commonly mentioned were convenience and flexibility. Convenience and flexibility do not equate to effective learning or professional preparation, however. The participants
were not all actively contributing to the online discussions and the instructor was unable to provide timely feedback, which appeared to be an expectation of the TCs. The greatest challenges and limitations reported were: lack of connection, keeping up with the work, finding a routine, participating in superficial and repetitive discussions, fear of miscommunication, lack of instructor feedback, and limitations of typing versus verbalizing thoughts. The negative ways in which the participants reacted to the online environment provided evidence to support the argument that the way the online course was designed was not conducive to transformational learning experiences. We need to find ways to address those challenges and limitations. Many people take courses online because their schedules do not allow them to take courses on campus. Therefore, if this is to be their only medium of instruction, it must be revised to be more effective at fostering adult learning and development.

Overall, the results of the study reveal that there were positive aspects of the course that contributed to increased knowledge and strategies of ESL education, new understandings about linguistic diversity and the local ELL population, shifts in thinking about ELLs, shifts in thinking about themselves as educators of ELLs, and evidence of success when applied in practice. However, there were also limitations of the course that led to some of the participants feeling confused, nervous, overwhelmed, and unprepared to teach ELLs. I will discuss the implications of these results on course design in Chapter 6. In Chapter 5 I will present an in-depth description of each participant and their course experiences.
CHAPTER 5

PORTRAITS: NARRATIVES OF STUDY PARTICIPANTS

Chapter 4 presented the major findings of the research study for the six participants drawing from both the quantitative and qualitative data. With the small sample, however, it is not feasible to draw generalizable conclusions from the aggregate data presented. The strength of this study lies in the stories of the individual participants and their experiences throughout their semester in the ESL for Educators course. The content was the same for everyone, but the individuals’ experiences were as unique as the individuals themselves.

In this chapter I will describe in detail each participant, their backgrounds, teaching experience, beliefs and understandings about linguistic diversity, reported changes as a result of their course participation, and specific reactions to course activities. In addition, I draw heavily on interview data to address instances that may reveal tendencies towards particular epistemologies (ways of knowing), sources of authority, senses of self (identity), transitions, and/or subject/object stances, which will be unique for each individual.

The voices of the participants are rich and revealing as well as an integral part of my own experiences of discovery about how each adult learner experienced this course differently and what that tells us about course design. The in-depth descriptions are presented as follows: Sofia, Kathy, Jennifer, Patricia, Steven, Erik, and Eva, the instructor.
Sofia

Background

Sofia was a single mom of one young child. We met in person for all three interviews and I found her to be very open, warm, and friendly. During the time of the study Sofia was in her late 20’s and was enrolled in the alternative licensure program (ALP) for secondary math education; however she was considering switching to the teacher education and licensure program (TELP). She earned her B.S. in mechanical engineering in 2003 and recently completed her M.S. (2011) from the same university in mechanical engineering, with an emphasis in dynamic systems and controls. Sofia professed a love of learning and admitted that she would stay in school forever if someone would pay her to do so.

Sofia comes from a multicultural background. Her mother is third generation Mexican-American and her father is half Japanese and part Native American. Growing up, she heard her mom speaking Spanish and her dad speaking Japanese and Arabic, due to his job in the Air Force, but they spoke to Sofia strictly in English. When Sofia asked her mom why she did not speak to her in Spanish growing up, her mom told her that there were two reasons: first, because she did not feel as though she spoke “real Spanish” due to her lack of familiarity with certain words; and second because she did not want Sofia or her sister to speak English with Spanish accents. Sofia felt it was unfortunate because she did not feel that she had a good accent when she spoke in Spanish.

Sofia was born in Athens, Greece and attended eight different schools from kindergarten through twelfth grade, most of which were suburban and predominantly white. The schools she attended from fifth through seventh grades she described as a bit
more diverse, with a mix of white, Hispanic, Asian, Filipino, and Black students. Sofia attributed this increase in diversity to the fact that she attended a school off base. Seventh through tenth grades were spent in England, which appeared to make a great impact on Sofia. She enjoyed living there and was amazed by the cultural differences between the U.S. and England. “It’s amazing how we speak the same language, but things were so completely different there.” She also spoke about how she appreciated the way in which the people in England thought and viewed the world and how her time there continues to impact her today. “I think that living there had a lot to do with the way that I see things now.”

Despite her multicultural and multilingual family upbringing, Sofia considered herself ‘one of the white kids’ because that was the typical population of kids with whom she went to school. “My dad became an officer so we were around mostly other white kids. I say ‘other’…I’m not white (laughs) but you know I think that’s how I kind of think of myself in my head because I think I’m just American…white American because that’s what I grew up around.”

Because Sofia and her family moved around a lot due to her dad’s job in the military, she said she did not spend a lot of time with either side of the family growing up. “I didn’t get exposed to the <Mexican-American> culture as much as I would say my cousins that have lived there their whole lives.” And with respect to her father’s Japanese culture she continued to say, “I have cousins on my dad’s side who experienced a little bit more of the Japanese culture because they lived with my dad’s mom.”
In addition to living in a variety of places growing up, Sofia mentioned that she had done some additional traveling recently. In her background questionnaire she wrote, “I have travelled to Mexico multiple times in the last 5 years, to Baja California, the Yucatan, and the Pacific coast. Most of the time spent was in Baja, and all trips were for a maximum of a week at a time.”

Teaching Experience

As for teaching experience, Sofia rated herself as a novice. She had been working since 2005 as a contract engineer, but had some experience both teaching and tutoring. She taught one university course, an introduction to engineering course, and has tutored students in math and mechanical engineering (both high school and university students). The semester prior to the study she started working as a teaching assistant for an engineering analysis course where she graded papers and held supplementary instruction sessions for students twice a week. Sofia described her tutoring experiences as fun and beneficial. “I had a lot of fun last year doing it; so I figured I’d like to do it this year again…I think it’s good for me…it helps me maintain my math and it also helps me try and figure out how to explain things.”

When asked on her background questionnaire about her experience in working with culturally and linguistically diverse learners, Sofia rated her confidence as very low. She wrote, “I have essentially no experience working with diverse learners. Pretty much every student I’ve worked with has been white and middle class.” She also indicated that she had no prior training. Lack of training combined with lack of experience likely contributed to her low level of confidence.
Beliefs and Understandings about Linguistic Diversity

While Sofia rated her confidence to teach CLD learners as low, she did rate her interest in working with them much higher (four out of five). She wrote on her background questionnaire,

Although I’m sure it’s not a popular opinion nowadays, I still feel like America is a place for people from everywhere to come to seek out better opportunities for themselves and their families. This means that we as teachers need to be able to provide the best learning environment for all students, regardless of their country of origin and native language.

In addition to her expressed interest in working with ELLs, Sofia also showed a great interest in other languages. She considered herself to have an ease with languages like her father. She took five years of Spanish in school, one semester of French, and helped a college boyfriend with German, even though she never took a German class herself. During the semester of the study, Sofia enrolled in an additional Spanish class. She admitted that she was also interested in taking Russian, among other languages, but has not yet done so.

If it were possible, Sofia thought it would be “cool” to learn every language that her future ELLs may speak. Not only did Sofia show an interest and appreciation for diverse languages, she also argued that every person in the U.S. should be required to take another language. She came into the course feeling that way and left the course feeling the same way. “I do think it’s important to make everybody take another language at some point, more than whatever nonsense they require, because I think it’s good for your brain.”
Not surprisingly given Sofia’s background and experiences, Sofia’s scores on the beginning of the semester Language Attitudes of Teachers Scale (LATS) revealed that she was quite tolerant of linguistic diversity. However, on the Knowledge of ELL Issues Survey she reported having very little knowledge of ELL issues. In her initial journal entry she wrote, “My current understanding of English Language Learners is essentially nil. I know they exist, but have no experience working with them.” Possibly due to her lack of training and experience coupled with her perceived lack of knowledge, Sofia communicated at the beginning of the semester that she felt very overwhelmed, nervous and intimidated at the thought of teaching ELLs. Some of her feelings changed through her participation in the course, though, as I will discuss in the next section.

Reported Changes as a Result of Course Participation

Reflecting over the semester, Sofia reported that while she did not believe her core ideas and thinking changed significantly, she gained confidence as a result of her participation in the course. In her final journal entry she wrote, “The exposure I’ve gained through this class has helped me feel more comfortable, although I am still a little anxious. I feel like I still need to know more. I want to learn more.” And in her final discussion post she said, “I am looking forward to getting into the classroom a little more now. I honestly was a little scared at the beginning of this class, but I feel much more confident now!” In fact, when asked to rate her level of confidence and ability in teaching ELLs, she rated herself at a one out of five at the beginning of the course which jumped to a four out of five at the end of the course.

One of the reasons for this reported increase in confidence may be due to Sofia’s perceived gain in content knowledge. She assessed herself at 12 points out of 50 on the
Knowledge of ELL Issues Survey at the beginning of the semester and then 38 points out of 50 at the end of the semester. She appeared relieved to have learned that effective strategies for teaching ELLs can benefit all students. In her final reflection paper she wrote in response to her feelings of being overwhelmed, “But it did seem like there was one saving grace: many of the adaptations and modifications I would use for ELLs would equally benefit all students.” She stated this again in one of her final discussion posts and indicated that this might be the most important thing she learned in the class.

Isn’t it great that if you know how to teach ELLs, you can basically teach all students? This makes me so much more comfortable! I was freaking out a little bit at the beginning of the semester because I thought that it was going to be so difficult to add another group that needed special differentiation. But it was quite revealing to find that what we do to help ELLs will benefit other students too…This might be the most important thing I learned in this class.

Sofia reported having gained a considerable amount of knowledge and confidence, but asserted that her core thinking had not changed. The results of her LATS survey are consistent with that assertion. She only changed by one point on the LATS from the beginning of the semester to the end. I would conclude that Sofia gained informational knowledge, but did not experience transformational shifts in thinking during the semester. I will describe in further detail her responses and reactions to the various course activities and educational processes that contributed to her learning and thinking.

Specific Reactions to Course Activities

During our mid-semester and end-semester interviews, Sofia talked to me about her engagement in the course activities and her reactions to them. I pull from those
conversations as well as her assignment write-ups and reflections to paint a picture of the types of activities that appeared to have the greatest impact on her.

Sofia mentioned on multiple occasions that the first field assignment, watching the panel discussion of local ESL directors, made the greatest impression on her because the information presented was very new to her. She expressed being surprised due to her prior lack of exposure to ELLs and therefore she felt that she learned a lot about the ELLs that she may be teaching in the future. In her write-up about the panel discussion she wrote, “The main takeaways that I got were 1) content needs to be accessible to all students, 2) English proficiency testing takes a long time, and 3) the ELL population is the fastest growing student population.”

At one point in her first field assignment write-up and at one point in her mid-semester interview she hinted at being interested in possibly considering working as an ESL teacher in the future because of the great need that exists in our community, which she learned about from watching the panel discussion video. In her assignment reflection she wrote, “That is a lot of students for not a lot of teachers. It’s inspiring. I’d always thought I wanted to teach math or pre-engineering, but knowing that there are so many kids out there with such great needs…I might have a change of heart.” In her mid-semester interview she said in reference to teaching ESL, “I think it’d be a really tough area to be in, but I think it would also be really…it’d be good for me, and it would be…to be able to help people who need even more help.”

I had to take Sofia’s interest in being an ESL teacher with a grain of salt, though. She admitted on several occasions that because she loves to learn so much she is easily
swayed in new and different directions. She told me in that same interview that, “It’s like whatever I’m reading, that’s what I want to do.”

Before embarking on the journey of the second field assignment, the cultural field experience, Sofia described feeling both excited and nervous about attending an Arabic service at a local Islamic mosque. She admitted that she would not have sought out this kind of experience on her own, but she was thankful for the opportunity and glad she did it.

Well, I think that going to the mosque, too, was pretty important. I mean it was really cool. I was somewhere where I had never been before, didn’t know the culture, well a little bit because of my dad, but I went there and the guy made me feel really comfortable. I mean there were some uncomfortable parts of it, but that wasn’t related to the speaker. It was just, we’re in this room, and these guys are taking their shoes off, putting them on, and just like kind of staring, and it’s like maybe I should have put the veil over my head. I’d say that that one impacted me, too.

When I asked her about what she found most powerful about that experience, she described the religious aspect.

I think it was actually the religious part about it, which is kind of weird to me. It was very strong. I’m not a terribly religious person, so to kind of get that feeling, it was really cool. And it’s pretty cool because it’s the same feeling you get going to the church. It’s the same thing.

Since one of the purposes of the assignment was to venture outside of one’s comfort zone, Sofia wrote in her reflection that she felt as though for her, that purpose was not fully met because of the positive experience she had. “I enjoyed the event and was surprised at how comforting it was. I feel like I didn’t get the experience I was supposed to.” Part of the powerful impact for Sofia was the emotion that it invoked in her. “I was emotionally and spiritually moved by it, even though I didn’t understand
everything that was going on.” She described getting “goose bumps” and unexpectedly getting teary-eyed. “I felt very moved… So I didn’t understand what was going on, but I felt a huge rush of emotion and felt tears again in my eyes.” She continued to write,

During my experience in this field assignment, it has become more cemented in my brain that we are all the same. Regardless of from where a person comes, what religion they practice, and what their personal views of the world are, we are all the same. We want to make our livings, have our families, and love our Gods in peace.

While her time at the mosque appeared to be a positive one and resulted in a powerful emotional reaction from Sofia, she expressed feeling as though the experience did not help her to understand the experience of ELLs. To conclude her write-up/reflection, she wrote,

Due to my experience, I feel that I will need to find another means to understand the experience of ELs in our society. I think that a religious service is probably not the way for me to go. Perhaps I could go to a language class, like a Japanese class or a Russian class. Or I could try to visit areas of town where I am unfamiliar with the language. What I’d really like to be able to do is go to another country and just try getting around without the language. I think that might be the most comparable experience. However, that would take funding and time that I do not currently possess. But some day, hopefully soon, I will be able to do just that.

The third and final field assignment, the ESL class observation and interview, also invoked emotions in Sofia. She commented in our final interview that she was moved by the experience and the manner in which the students interacted with one another in the class she observed. She talked about how the students seemed like a family and that reminded her of her own family.

So when I went on field assignment three I visited the ESL class there and it was really cool. The teacher was just really nice, and she was just so good. I felt really comfortable with her. I watched two classes. The first class was the NEP class, and even though we had a couple of girls over here that spoke the same language and a couple over here, they were kind of still, even though they didn’t all speak
the same language, one of them didn’t speak any English at all, they seemed kind of like a family. Then, when I went to the LEP class, it was like even more so…It was kind of funny because they kind of reminded me of my sisters and me, you know, because we’d work together a little bit, but just one of us would go crazy, and go, because I think one of the kids was like, “Ahh!” I don’t even know what for, and then they were just working okay together again. Maybe that’s just how kids are…It’s just kind of the feeling that I got when I was sitting in the class.

In our final interview, Sofia reflected back on that experience at the high school with sadness.

I think part of it was going to the high school and just actually seeing kids, because I’m not around kids all that much, and…they’re little people. They’re not little…actually most of them are bigger than me. How many of these kids go home and don’t have anybody there with them? Because my mom was always there, and I know it’s not possible for everybody, but then I get started thinking about that stuff, and I just get sad…Just being around them, it’s like you can….maybe it’s just because kids don’t like to get dressed up to do anything. I don’t know, but it’s like some of these kids, it’s like really, there’s snow outside, and it’s like, “Why are you dressed like that?” So I don’t know if it’s that their parents don’t care, or their parents aren’t there, or they don’t have the clothes, or what. I don’t know what it is...

In her write-up of the third field assignment Sofia wrote, “This impacted me immensely. I now feel like this is something I can do.” This was one experience that appeared to increase her confidence, but as I have indicated, her level of confidence fluctuated frequently.

When I asked Sofia about the readings for the course her reactions were mixed. Not surprisingly, given her interest in languages, the readings that seemed to stand out to her involved the acquisition and learning of language (Lightbown & Spada, 2006). She was interested mostly because she could relate what she was reading to her own life.

Well, it was interesting learning how we acquire English, and language. You know, kind of looking at my son and being like, “oh yeah, well he can do that, and he can do that, and oh no, he can’t do that yet.” And just kind of seeing, and thinking about how he’s progressed. I think I know I read how second languages
are learned, but I can’t think of anything right now…I do like understanding that, you know, trying to figure it out. I think it will help me learn another language, too. You know understand how we actually acquire them.

For the readings in general, though, Sofia indicated that she did not remember or retain what she read, possibly because she did not have personal experience or a context to which she could connect that informational knowledge. She told me in her final interview,

Yeah, I need to talk. I need to listen. Reading, I don’t tend to remember as much. I mean, I can remember where a word is on a page if it’s a weird word, I can remember that. But other than that, I have to write, and talk, and listen. Reading doesn’t do much for me.

For Sofia, the three field assignments were the course activities that she reflected upon as having the most emotional and personal impact on her. Those feelings were corroborated by her responses to the course activity impact questionnaires as well. The readings with which she personally connected sparked an interest in her, and the combination of taking the ESL for Educators course along with the Spanish course caused her to gain a new perspective. “I think it’s kind of neat to be able to take both of these at the same time and see how they kind of go together.” In reference to her Spanish class, she told me,

To me, it’s not the same thing, because it’s not a language I use every day, and it probably won’t ever be a language I will use every day, and the expectations are different for my second language learning than it would be for somebody learning English here. I kind of just, it is interesting to think about how things work for them.

When prompted to discuss aspects of the course overall that caused her to think differently about ELLs or teaching ELLs, Sofia’s response was,

I think it’s been kind of a combination of things. I had never really thought about it before, so just getting the exposure to it. And then taking the Spanish class has
definitely been helping because I’m looking at it in a different way now…It’s just making me think about things different, the ESL class and having the Spanish class both I think are probably the two biggest things that have affected how I think.

What this reveals to me is that through her experiences Sofia was able to gain a new perspective and a sense of empathy for what ELLs might be experiencing. This was one of the driving goals of the course according to Eva, the instructor. She claimed that she hoped that to the extent possible, each teacher candidate would leave the course with an increased sense of efficacy and empathy.

Sofia summed up her overall experience in our final interview as “good,” but “tough.” When I asked her what she felt made it so tough, she responded, “I think I was trying to understand it a little bit better, because I guess maybe it had more of a meaning for me. I’m not sure.”

Based on her interviews and other written data it was evident that her experiences went deeper than what might have originally appeared on the surface. Not only was Sofia engaged in the participation of field experiences and other course activities along with her Spanish class, but she was also engaged in a great deal of deep personal reflection which proved to influence her course experiences.

Transition between Figured Worlds

Much of Sofia’s personal reflection came about as a result of a transition she was experiencing at the time of the study. It was clear to me that Sofia was struggling with her transition from the figured world of math and engineering to the figured world of education and teaching (Holland, Jr., Skinner, & Cain, 1998).
In our first interview Sofia revealed to me, “It’s a completely different way of thinking, you know…teaching versus engineering. It’s completely different and I think it’s going to be tough…I don’t know if I’m ever gonna feel ready.” Throughout the semester she referred to the differences in activities, processes and practices between math/engineering and education, such as the time commitment, role of textbooks and writing papers. “Before I started this program I had never read a textbook really, especially not front-to-back…I thought you just bought them to sit on your shelf and to do problems out of.”

All my engineering courses seemed to require an awful lot more time to write all the papers. But, I’d never done a research paper really. I mean we’d look at some people’s research, but most of what our papers were about were projects that we did; it’s just project write-ups. So, I mean it was a totally different write up than I’m used to doing…

In our final interview it was clear that Sofia continued to struggle with this transition.

It’s totally different. It requires a different type of thinking, and it’s not as easy, definitely not as easy. It’s all emotional and stuff (laughs). I mean it’s all subject to one’s opinion. I mean there is some science, but it’s not all science. That’s tough.

She described feeling uncomfortable and out of her element with this new figured world of education.

I am completely out of my element now, so I feel…I’m pretty uncomfortable because it’s totally different…It’s a lot more difficult, and it’s a lot more emotionally trying, you know. I’ve cried more in the last six months since I’ve started the program.

Struggles with Subject-Object Shifts

The difficulty Sofia had with separating herself from the emotional aspects of her experiences revealed to me that shifting between figured worlds led her to struggle with
the shift from *subject*, emotions having control over her, to *object*, having control over her emotions (Kegan, 1994). With a few tears in her eyes, she talked to me about feeling sad and overwhelmed. She told me, “It just seems like it’s going to be very tough. But I’m also like really weepy right now…” She admitted that her emotions were intensified that day, which may have contributed to her trouble making subject-object shifts. “I’m not really thinking about it right now, because I had such a stressful day already today. If I start thinking about it, I’ll be like, ‘Oh God, I can’t do it!’ so I don’t want to think about it today, because I know it will be bad.”

Challenging Assumptions and Sense of Self

Sofia’s transition between figured worlds played a key role in the types of changes and experiences she had during her participation in the ESL for Educators course. As part of her quest for understanding her new career path, Sofia challenged some of her previously-held assumptions about teaching. One of those assumptions concerned the amount of work and time commitment required to be a teacher.

I didn’t realize how much work it’s going to be. ‘Cause I just thought…I honestly…and this shows how naïve I am…I just thought teachers just got up there and did what they did and then that was it they just went home and that’s it…That’s why I’m scared!

In addition to challenging her assumptions about teaching in general, Sofia also challenged her assumptions about what it would entail to teach ELLs.

I’m trying to figure it out because I’m not the most creative person in the world. It’s like trying to make things more visual but still have the language be part of it, and I think that would be a challenge, and it’s going to make me have to work a lot harder at planning, more than I thought. It’s kind of, it almost feels a little overwhelming just the amount of thought that has to go into it, and how much work has to go into planning, and it’s a little overwhelming.
Part of her fear may be explained by the fact that doing a good job was important to her.

I am excited, but I wanna just do a good job, you know, ‘cause I feel it’s so important. I haven’t had very many bad teachers. I know I’ve heard a lot of people say, ‘Oh I’ve had really bad teachers’ and I think that’s what gives people this idea that teachers are lower than everybody else. But realistically they’re not. They have 4-year degrees just like everybody else just like all the other professionals and…at least 4-year degrees!

In her comment above Sofia revealed an additional assumption she held that people tend to view teachers as lower than other professionals. It is possible that this comment stemmed from her personal transition between the engineering world and the education world. It is possible that she is afraid that when she becomes a teacher she may be seen as less valuable than when she was as a contract engineer. She may be grappling with the fact that in changing careers, her sense of herself as a professional, her professional identity, would change as well.

As a woman in her 20’s, Sofia’s uncertainty about her career choice and her place in this world were in line with the driving questions typical of 20-somethings as posited by Baxter Magolda (2001): Who am I? How do I know? What relationships do I want with others? This journey of discovery for Sofia continued throughout the semester of the study. In her final journal entry she questioned whether or not she still wanted to pursue teaching at all. She expressed a feeling of being slightly “derailed.” She went on to write, “Now I want to focus more on understanding languages and language acquisition, so perhaps teaching isn’t going to be the best place for me. I’m not sure. I have again become confused about what I want to do with my life.”
In her self-exploration and shifting sense of self, Sofia often described herself in terms of self-doubt, which is a common phenomenon among many women (Belenky, et al., 1986). Pulling from the three interviews, table 5.1 shows how Sofia described herself to me.

Table 5.1 Sofia’s Descriptions of Herself

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview</th>
<th>Expression of self-doubt</th>
<th>Other expressions of self</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First interview (beginning of semester)</td>
<td>I’m not very good at history. I’m just kind of flaky. I never really thought of myself as a very creative person. I’m kind of flaky. This shows how naïve I am…</td>
<td>I am kind of a shy person. I always did well in school; it was always really easy. I’m a pretty sharing person. Sometimes I don’t stop talking. I’m chatty sometimes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second interview (middle of semester)</td>
<td>I’m not the most creative person in the world. I just get distracted too easily. I don’t like to start things. I’m not a boat rocker. I’m kind of passive. I keep to myself. I’d like to be able to do this, but I don’t know if I can. The more I learn, the more I know that I don’t know. I’m not the most positive about the stuff that’s already in here (points to head).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third and final interview (after course ended)</td>
<td>Maybe it’s a problem with me…I don’t feel like what I put out is that good. My expectations of what I should do are just way too high. I always wait to the last minute on everything. But I don’t always put out my best product under pressure, either. I’m always concerned about like, “What if nobody agrees with me?” I really don’t want to be wrong. I hate A minuses. If I were a better student I would do it. I’m moody. I don’t know if I’m going to be able to handle this. I don’t know if I’ll ever think I know enough. I don’t think I can do it. I’m just insecure of what my abilities are and what I know.</td>
<td>I tend to work better under pressure. I’m the kind of person that if I get going, I kind of won’t stop talking. If nobody agrees with me that doesn’t necessarily mean that what I think is so completely crazy. I am a little long-winded. I’m pretty good at taking tests. Because I’m kind of digital, it’s either got to be structured completely or I’ll wing it. I need to learn how to compromise.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The statements represented in table 5.1 were revealing about Sofia’s sense of self, the expectations she set for herself, and her way of making sense of her experiences. Her comments showed how she had a tendency to fluctuate based on her moods and emotions. At times she expressed confidence and an internal source of authority, whereas other times she expressed insecurity and an external source of authority. This phenomenon will be described later in this chapter in reference to her way of knowing.

Ways of Knowing and Online Learning

When it came to the online learning environment, Sofia did not consider herself a computer person, even though she assessed her confidence in online learning at a four out of five both at the beginning and at the end of the semester. She admitted that she was not very active in the online discussions and told me that while she appreciated not having to go to class and find a place to park, the most difficult part of being in an online class was reminding herself to get on the computer and do the work. Keeping up and responding to the discussion posts seemed to be the most challenging aspects of online learning to Sofia. And as shown above, Sofia described that she learns best through talking and listening rather than reading and writing.

Part of Sofia’s struggles during the semester had to do with her entrance into a new figured world, but another aspect of her struggles had to do with the disconnect between how Sofia felt she learned best and the way the online learning environment was set up. “That’s just how I learn. I learn, I think, when I listen.” It was understandable, then, that there were not many online postings that she remembered. However, there was one that stuck out to her because she was bothered by something one of her classmates
said. When I asked her if she challenged that person’s thinking, she told me that she did not like to start things and did not want to ‘rock the boat.’

I think that people are allowed to have their thoughts, and I don’t feel like I have to push mine onto other people. I’m kind of passive…I noticed what I do in the online classes, I actually talk a lot more about me than I would in person, in a group setting, because I really, I don’t want people to know that much about me. I’m kind of just, I keep to myself, but I guess just because nobody is looking at me, it’s a little easier just to say, ‘this is what happened with me or what I think’, but I’m still not quite to the point where I just want to challenge somebody on something.

Comments such as these provide insights into the ways in which Sofia thinks and makes sense of her experiences. *Ways of knowing* are frameworks for meaning-making that evolve and change (Belenky, et al., 1986, p. 155). Sofia exhibited several characteristics in common with a *connected knower* (Belenky, et al., 1986). Connected knowing is one aspect of *procedural knowing*, or the voice of reason. Connected knowers learn through empathy and have difficulty arguing with others because they can see, or at least attempt to see, their points of view. Connected knowers seek to understand rather than judge and often find themselves attached to objects they seek to understand because they genuinely care about them. I felt that Sofia genuinely cared about what she was learning about: ELLs and ESL education. It was important to her to do well for her future ELLs and she often expressed a sense of empathy and attempts to understand them and what they might be going through.

Connected and procedural knowers “feel like chameleons; they cannot help but take on the color of any structure they inhabit” (Belenky, et al., 1986, p. 129). This description seems appropriate for Sofia as she mentioned several times that she often finds herself interested in whatever it is that she is doing or reading at the time, and her
constant fluctuation back and forth between potential careers is largely mood-dependent. “I can see both sides of like everything, and I’m always on the fence…it depends on my mood.”

Connected knowers tend to view the *personality* of people with whom they interact in a group enriches the group’s understanding as a whole. Also, “connected knowing works best when members of the group meet over a long period of time and get to know each other well” (Belenky, et al., 1986, p. 119). This is consistent with Sofia’s difficulty with the online learning environment and may have impacted her potential to learn effectively under that medium of instruction. It is typically more difficult to get a sense of someone’s personality online because there are only a few months to interact and there is little opportunity to really get to know each other well.

Sofia’s tendency toward connected knowing may help to explain why the online discussion postings made Sofia anxious and nervous. In our final interview she explained,

And the thing that made me the most anxious or nervous about the whole class was the posting. Yeah, I really didn’t enjoy that at all. ‘Cause, I’m that kind of person, that if I get going, I kind of won’t stop talking. But I’m always so concerned about like, “What if nobody agrees with me?” Well, but if nobody agrees with me, that doesn’t necessarily mean that what I think is so completely crazy.

Another explanation Sofia gave for her anxiousness and nervousness about posting had to do with her own perceptions of writing and her sense of herself as a writer.

‘Cause to me, my writing has always been kind of private, ever since I was little, because I’ve written - like kept journals and stuff, but that’s always my stuff, nobody else really reads that. So when I’m writing about my thoughts and my opinions, that’s really just for me. It’s not for other people, so it’s just really tough.
These comments also suggest that Sofia may have held differing sources of authority, both internal and external, which may have also been mood-dependent. Consistent with Kegan’s (1994) socializing way of knowing, Sofia at times expressed concern for what others thought of her. She did not feel comfortable challenging others and did not want to be seen as wrong (Drago-Severson, 2004). However, Sofia also exhibited a sense of internal authority at times, more in line with a self-authoring way of knowing (Drago-Severson, 2004; Kegan, 1994). While she admitted that she did not want others to see her as wrong, she also seemed convinced that even if they did, that did not discount her opinion, meaning that what she had to say would still be valuable. She also admitted that she struggles to meet her own high expectations, rather than the expectations of others.

Summary of Sofia’s Experiences

During the time of the study, Sofia was engaged in self-reflection and undergoing a transition that led her to challenge some of her previously-held assumptions. Through her experiences with course activities as well as her experience as a Spanish language learner helped her develop new understandings about the education of culturally and linguistically diverse learners. The field assignments, due to the personal nature and emotional effect they had on Sofia, resulted in the experiences that had the greatest impact on her. At times her perceived increase in knowledge and experience appeared to result in a gain of confidence and at other times a decrease in confidence. Due to the fact that what Sofia learned was so new to her and because of her transition from the world of math and engineering to the world of education and teaching, Sofia felt outside of her comfort zone, which resulted in feelings of uncertainty, nervousness and being
overwhelmed. Overall, I would conclude that Sofia learned about herself and about how to better meet the needs of her future ELLs, but that this semester was not a transformative experience for Sofia.

Kathy

Background

Kathy is a self-described gregarious New Yorker and divorced mother of two in her early 50’s. Kathy earned her B.S. in mathematics and also took several graduate courses in math as well. In fact, she had completed nine out of ten courses required for a Ph.D. in 1995, but she stopped because her son became ill. “I’m only missing one class. I’d written most of my dissertation and my son fell horribly ill and he went into kidney failure and they didn’t expect him to make it. They told me to prepare for him to die. And he is doing great! I didn’t listen to a word they said.” When she decided to go back to school many years later in 2011 she did not remember what she had learned.

I started looking and honestly I didn’t remember anything. I would’ve had to start all over. The nine out of ten classes I had I didn’t remember hardly any of it. And I said, “I don’t a) want to take these over again and b) you have to take a test now with everything you learned so I really would have to re-learn it all. And the other thing was I really wasn’t interested anymore. I wanted something more hands-on and teaching math at the college or doing research was not really what I wanted. I love middle school and that’s where I wanted to be.

As a result, Kathy entered the alternative licensure program for secondary math education. She started taking classes for the program in the summer of 2011. Therefore, the semester of the study was her second semester in the program. Kathy was taking a total of 15 units that semester, which caused her to feel “nervous,” because in addition to taking classes and being a mom, she was a full time first-year teacher and also ran a local restaurant/bar.
Kathy considered herself “well-rounded and worldly” partly due to her exposure to diverse cultures in New York. She described growing up in a “culturally diverse, white, suburb on Long Island.”

I grew up in New York. I’m definitely a New Yorker. I had all ethnic groups all over our neighborhood. I’ve gone to Temple; I’ve gone to different faith services. I was raised Catholic. I’m Baptist now. This goes hand in hand. So I’ve learned a lot about ethnicities. I have a very ethnic palate. I can cook food from most countries. I understand at least the basics of most people’s culture…from, you know, interacting with them. And I enjoy that and I enjoy languages.

In addition to her culturally diverse upbringing, as an adult Kathy lived and traveled extensively due to her ex-husband’s job in the military. “I’ve lived in 19 states and I’ve lived in Hawaii and I’ve lived in Korea and then I’ve spent time in Japan, I’ve spent time in China, I’ve spent time in Hong Kong, Macau.”

Throughout her travels abroad, Kathy described herself as a person who acquired languages quickly and easily. “Within three weeks <of living in Korea> I had a good conversational ability where I could ask directions, I could get money at the bank, I could go grocery shopping, I could ask for discounts, I could do whatever.” She said that through her travels she was able to pick up bits and pieces of many different languages. “I have an ease with languages; so I picked it up.”

In addition to acquiring a certain level of conversational language through exposure, Kathy also had an aunt who spoke to her in Spanish growing up. “And then my aunt by marriage spoke Spanish with me since I was little so I’m fluent in Spanish.” Kathy took six years of Spanish in school as well. However, even though Kathy considered herself “fluent” in Spanish, she only rated her Spanish ability as a two out of five on the background questionnaire.
So on your form I put a two and my friend was laughing; she’s like, “a two?! You don’t understand what a two is, Kathy.” I put a one in Korean and she’s like, “you don’t understand what a one or a two is.” But in my opinion that’s what it is because a five would be a perfect native speaker in my opinion so therefore I’m a two or a one.

Teaching Experience

Kathy talked to me about the variety of teaching experience she had.

I’ve taught third grade. I’ve taught my son’s class geometry when they needed a teacher. I’ve taught college algebra for four semesters and I’ve taught physics in the high school and taught English as a second language in Korea. I’ve taught religion to middle school students, which is where my experience is with middle school students. And right now I’m teaching sixth through twelfth including high school drama.

In reference to her diverse teaching experiences she said, “I definitely have very different experiences than most people.” When I inquired about how she came to teach drama, she told me that she was given the choice to teach an elective and drama was what she chose to teach. “I will always do an elective class. I think it’s so important to experience. Teaching drama is totally different than teaching math.” She also mentioned that she had experience with acting, which is what drew her to it. “I’ve acted a lot and I’ve been in plays a lot…I have so much fun. The kids are having a great time and I’m having a great time with them.”

When we discussed Kathy’s experiences teaching ESL in Korea, she mentioned that she tutored approximately 75 students over a two-year period. I asked her how she ended up teaching English out there and she responded,

Well, the first day I’m in Korea a girl meets me and she asks me if I would teach English to her. And she offered to pay me and I said, “You don’t have to pay me, I’ll just help you.” And she was wonderful and she did a lot for me, but then she got me a whole bunch of other students that really did pay me. I mean a million won a week, which is about a thousand dollars. So I made about a thousand
dollars a week and had lots of students and I had fun. And I did that all day long. They’d come over and I would teach them English.

Kathy compared her experience teaching ESL in Korea to her experience teaching math here in the U.S. “I taught English to people who wanted to learn English. Right now I’m teaching math to a child who doesn’t speak English. I’m sure he wants to learn English but I’m not teaching English, I’m teaching math and he speaks Spanish.”

When asked to rate her level of teaching experience overall, Kathy rated herself in between a novice and a veteran (three out of five). And when asked to rate her level of confidence and/or ability to teach culturally and linguistically diverse learners, she rated herself at a two out of five. In Kathy’s first journal entry she wrote, “I know I have a lot to learn.” And in her final reflection paper she stated, “At the start of the semester my knowledge of ELL students was virtually nonexistent.” She also reported having no prior training to work with ELLs.

Beliefs and Understandings about Linguistic Diversity

Given Kathy’s upbringing, travels, exposure to, and appreciation for diverse cultures and languages, it was not surprising that she rated her interest in having ELLs in her classroom very high (five out of five). In addition, her pre-semester LATS scores suggested that she was extremely tolerant of linguistic diversity. She expressed in her responses to the survey that it was important for people in the US to learn a language in addition to English and that the rapid learning of English for ELLs should not be a priority if it means they will lose ability in their native language. Kathy also indicated that learning English should not take precedence over learning subject matter.
Kathy argued that she believed math to be its own language and therefore her subject area related well to the course content and goals. In our first interview she said,

Well, I will tell you…math is a language also and people don’t really understand that. Math IS a language and I’m hoping to get better strategies on teaching in general. Language acquisition also has a lot to do with knowledge acquisition. They go hand-in-hand. And I think having a basic understanding of that is really, really important.

Kathy’s above comment revealed not only what she hoped to get out of the course, but also of her ideas about language and knowledge acquisition. She also made comments that allowed me a glimpse into her worldview in favor of diversity and embracing other cultures.

And I think that for so long if you go back to our perspective in the 50’s and 60’s and how all we did was want to throw them into a melting pot and have them assimilate and become one of us. But that’s really horrible. How we could’ve been so insensitive as to think that that was okay is beyond me.

She described her own experiences in New York and expressed her view that people tend to want everyone to be the same, a view with which she does not agree. In fact, she blames a local drug problem on the lack of diversity and pressure to conform.

I’m thinking I, being a New Yorker, I have had a lot of people here not like me because I am REALLY a New Yorker. And people don’t like that. They want people to be the same. What was that TV commercial? Same thing, same day, same thing, same day…what a boring world! It’s a boring world! We have a real meth problem here because we want everyone to be the same. There’s no diversity. It’s a lot of pressure for people who aren’t the same and don’t fit the mold.

She re-asserted her views in our second interview.

We should embrace everything. There are so many nice things out there and we try to throw it all away. We try to take everything; pick it all gray. I want a pink world. Show them what’s good about our culture and embrace what’s good about theirs and make something nice.
In general it was clear that Kathy embraced diversity and felt a sense of urgency to learn everything she could to help her English learner learn. She appeared open to new ideas and hoped for strategies she could directly apply to her teaching context. Throughout her participation in course activities along with her own personal experiences during the semester of the study, Kathy reported that her thinking about ELLs and teaching ELLs had changed.

Reported Changes as a Result of Course Participation

Over the course of the semester, Kathy reported an increase in both confidence and knowledge as a result of her participation in the course. She self-assessed an increase of 17.5 points out of 50 in her knowledge of ELL issues. In her initial assessment she averaged a 2.3 per response, which most closely equated to “very little knowledge.” She indicated that she had “some knowledge” of about half of the topics and very little to no knowledge on the other half. However, on the end-of-semester survey her average response jumped to a 4.1 (“quite a bit of knowledge”). The topic in which she reported the greatest increase in knowledge was that of sheltered content instruction and how to implement it.

Kathy also reported an increased level of confidence from the beginning to the end of the semester. She perceived her level of confidence in the beginning at a two out of five, relatively low, but by the end of the semester her perception of confidence increased to a four out of five. The data suggests that it is likely that her increased confidence is due in part to her perceived increase in knowledge, but more so due to the fact that she was teaching during the same semester she was taking this course and was able to directly and immediately apply strategies she was learning. And not only that, but
the changes she made to her teaching practice resulted in academic growth and success in her ELL. This success appeared to make an impact on Kathy and her thinking.

I was really touched by the growth that my ELL students, how responsive they were… I think this gave my kids back some of their power. I thought that was really good. I loved watching them respond. I liked watching them blossom, I liked watching them learn English.

In her final discussion post, Kathy wrote to her classmates, “I never imagined such a significant shift in thoughts… I know I need more strategies, but I now feel I won’t fail in my efforts!”

The results of Kathy’s post-semester LATS suggested that she remained consistent in her positive attitudes toward linguistic diversity. Only one of her answers changed from the beginning to the end of the semester and that was on whether or not English should be the official language of the United States. Her initial response was “strongly disagree,” but answered “uncertain” in her follow-up survey. This suggests that her overall tolerance for linguistic diversity remained high.

While Kathy reported changes in her informational knowledge and confidence and reported consistent attitudes towards linguistic diversity, it was clear that shifts did occur in Kathy’s thinking, awareness and understandings about ELLs. For example, when she began the semester she was convinced that she had only one ELL. In our first interview she claimed, “We really don’t have an ELL program. We only have one student to be in it, but we’re doing our best for him.” At the mid-way point of the semester she still spoke of only one ELL. “Unfortunately, our ELL population is this person…it’s extra funding, extra money, but it’s worth it for this one little boy.” However, by the end of the semester she determined that many more of her students were in fact ELLs.
There’s more ELLs than people realize…And that is the key, because I would never in a million years have identified…not lying, I would have only identified one, well two, of my students as ELLs, and there’s 17. I would have missed the other 15 because they speak English so well. I would have just said, “Oh, they’re just not studying,” and I wouldn’t have realized, “Oh yes, you really don’t understand English, do you?” I started the journaling component; they journal every day. When I started reading their journals, I realized that they were writing as English language learners, and not as Americans. It was interesting. I mean I had so many and I didn’t know it. When I talked to the school, “We don’t really have any ELLs, we just have the one.” Well, not only did we have the one, I had 17 just of my 55 students, which is you know 15%.

When I calculated 17 out of 55 students, the resulting percentage was actually about 31% as opposed to 15%. Therefore, Kathy had an even higher percentage of ELLs than she realized at the end.

As Kathy indicated in her comment above, she came to the realization that there is often a difference between a student’s ability in basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) and their cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) (Echevarria & Graves, 2010). Therefore, if a student can communicate effectively in English one might assume that they are proficient in English. However, upon closer scrutiny one might discover that they may not actually be proficient. At another point in our final interview, Kathy indicated that it was through her participation in the course that she became aware of this distinction and it frustrated her that others had not yet learned about it.

I was angered that my other teachers just expected, because he could keep up a conversation, and that a lot of the other students were excellent conversationalists, that they were…That’s exactly what it was, it was BICS versus CALP. They didn’t get it. They had no clue because they’d never taken anything that would have led them to understand that…and they thought that because he could carry out a conversation saying, “Oh yeah, he knew how to dress, and this ball game,” that he could understand content area knowledge, and he could not. That was very upsetting to me, and I realized it wasn’t just him, it was another 15 or 16 kids in my class who were in the same position, and it was a substantial number. And even if English was their primary language, a lot of these kids had problems,
because their parent’s language wasn’t primary, so they weren’t hearing that higher level vocabulary in the home, and that made a huge difference.

Specific Reactions to Course Activities

Kathy mentioned that she learned a great deal from watching the panel discussion, the first field assignment. She indicated, however, that while she learned a lot of useful information and strategies, she would have appreciated greater detail about each strategy presented.

Well, they had so many strategies for teaching the ELLs and they weren’t even, they were just like glimmered on. They really didn’t talk about them. They just said, “oh the here, here, here, these are the things you do.” And I’m thinking, “Whoa! I need a lecture on each one of these things!

She admitted that she was surprised by the statistics of the local ELL population, which she learned about from the video.

I was very surprised, because statistics were that such a high Asian population up north as opposed to the high Spanish population down south, but I mean I guess it makes sense, because a lot of the Spanish are migrant or you know lower income. And the Asians are higher income. But, I still thought it was shocking that there were so many Asians in the American public school system.

The above comment also revealed some assumptions that Kathy held about what she saw as typical Spanish-speakers and typical Asians.

Not only did Kathy appear surprised by the ethnic make-up of students in local school districts, but also by the differences in services that were provided to them. She wrote in her assignment write-up that she was “surprised at how services were provided across districts,” but concluded that, “the panel discussion created an even greater desire for me to effectively teach my ELLs.”
When I asked Kathy in our mid-semester interview about what she felt had contributed most to her learning up to that point, she emphatically answered, “that panel video!” She admitted that at first she did not want to watch it and found the beginning boring, but in the end she was glad she watched it.

I didn’t want to watch it. I will tell you, because we watched it two weeks in a row. First week, I watched the first half, and I thought, “Oh, this is boring.” The second half was where I found all the information. I mean I found lots of interesting facts from the first week, but I think I fell asleep on it, because my daughter found like this (gestures being asleep with mouth wide open) and I was really exhausted and overwhelmed.

She indicated that she would have preferred to have had the opportunity to be in the audience during the live discussion.

I would have so much to ask them, and I would have been required to go, and I would have heard them a little better, and I would have seen their body language more…I actually think that we need some panel discussions, but it doesn’t necessarily have to be ELL directors. It could be someone…you. It could be you and <Eva> just having a discussion.

For the second field assignment, the cultural field experience, Kathy had a strong emotional reaction. She attended an Islamic temple for the Friday Yuma service, a weekly Friday congregational service for Muslims. Kathy admitted that she chose this event for several personal reasons. In her reflection of the experience, she wrote,

I chose this event primarily because I have never had any significant associations with Muslims, individually or in a group. Secondly, when I was considering going to a mosque, I actually felt afraid! I was surprised at myself. I consider myself to be very accepting of other cultures and faiths, but Islam brought to mind very negative connotations. (My family has an apartment in the World Financial District in NYC, and we lost many friends during 9/11). I realized that I had misconceptions and prejudices that needed to be dealt with.

Kathy admitted that she found it “hard to be culturally objective.” Many of her struggles to be culturally objective and sensitive stemmed from the disparity that she
observed between the treatment of men and women. She told me, “It frustrates me. It frustrates me that these men come in there dressed like kings and slobs, and the women have to have their face covered up. That really annoys me. But do I need to be culturally sensitive? Yes.” She wrote in her reflection, “The fact that the women worship apart from men was totally accepted as natural and expected by the entire congregation. As a liberated westerner I felt this was unfair. I know that this is their culture, but I can’t believe, especially in the United States, that they haven’t rebelled against this.” Kathy admitted that while she did not like the fact that women had to remain covered, she adhered to their customs and went to the service covered. “Well, if you’re going to go into someone’s dwelling, you need to you know take off your shoes if that’s the fuss.”

Another difference in gender Kathy noted was in how the children behaved at the service.

It was difficult for me to allocate my full attention to the service; there were several young boys fooling around in the visitors’ area. The young girls were all controlled by their mothers. One little girl, the only one with her father and not mother, was well behaved…The behavior of the male children while annoying, was illuminating. I saw how structured they were with the young girls and how permissive with the boys. I was surprised to see the one young girl in the male area with her father, but her behavior was exemplary.

While Kathy described her struggles to understand her experience, she also explained how they treated her well and she did not feel as though she was treated differently than anyone else. She said, “They were very nice to me.” In her write-up, she expanded.

The reaction of the man in charge and the congregation as a whole to my presence was surprising. I believed they genuinely wanted me to feel welcome and have a good experience. They went out of their way to seem interested in me and to my comfort and understanding of the service. Seeing first hand that Muslims are
caring and interested in others, and in me in particular, lessened my degree of apprehension. In the future I will be more capable and willing to understand cross cultural barriers of all types because of this experience. I have a better understanding of their faith and realize that mainstream Muslims have ethics similar to my own. This experience really illuminated the concept of cultural pluralism.

In an attempt to make sense of her experience overall, Kathy described an internal struggle and concluded that she learned a lot about herself as a result.

The fact that I consider myself an extremely well rounded person, both open to new experiences, and accepting of others’ diversity, was confirmed and challenged by this exercise. I have learned more about myself and my ability to relate to people of different cultures through this assignment.

In our final interview, Kathy reflected once again on this experience and talked about how it continued to cause her to self-reflect.

Well, I realized that putting myself in a culturally unique position, a) that was very hard for me, but doing it I realized that I am very intolerant of Muslims. I am, and I’m really trying to work on that. I just think that they are so against women, and I feel that the religion is so demeaning for women, and I can’t understand how any woman would do it, but I mean we do things that other people think are odd, too, and we have to realize that. So, that was a lot of self-reflection on that.

For the third field experience, Kathy completed a variation on the original assignment. Instead of observing an ESL class, she watched three YouTube videos on SIOP (sheltered instruction observation protocol). In our very first interview she told me her plan. “I definitely want to look at a lesson early on as opposed to whenever it’s due because I want to see what someone else does and I definitely don’t have time to go observe someone in person.” It is important to note that Kathy’s altered third field experience did not come up again in any of the interviews, suggesting it may not have had a powerful impact on her or her thinking. Therefore, I can only infer from her assignment write-up the ways in which she reacted to this assignment.
In her write-up, Kathy admitted that she saw this altered version of the original assignment as less effective.

I have chosen to meet the first and third objectives by assessing several mini SIOP videos on YouTube. I am choosing this less effective option, because of the lack of availability of any other viable alternative. In order to meet the second objective, I have met with one of the instructors at my school, who has previously instructed ELL classes.

It appeared as though Kathy gained useful strategies by watching the videos, but other than that I did not find evidence of a deeper impact. “The strategies used in the videos are ones that I have or will utilize in my classroom. They will enable all my students, not just my ELLs to understand, verbalize, and utilize the materials and knowledge presented more effectively.”

My interpretation of Kathy’s experiences of the three field assignments were that the videos she watched (the panel discussion and SIOP lessons on YouTube) resulted in additional informational learning and new strategies she could apply in her classroom. The second field assignment, however, appeared to result in a deeply emotional reaction which caused her to self-reflect and challenge some of her previously held assumptions.

When I asked Kathy in our mid-semester interview if there was anything in the readings that contributed to her learning, like Sofia, she talked about the acquisition of first languages (Lightbown & Spada, 2006) and connected that with her own personal experiences as a mother.

Yeah…some of the stuff on just acquiring languages first and the younger kids acquiring second languages…I don’t know if I told you the story of my son? Well, I had him with a Korean maid, and I spoke a little bit of Korean, but not a ton, but he was speaking very garbled Korean, and I didn’t understand it. So, I took him to a speech pathologist, because we couldn’t understand him. And she
said, “Well, he’s speaking perfectly fine, he’s just not speaking English.” So, actually, his first language was Korean.

Interestingly, she continued her story and described her experience of being a parent of an English language learner.

And he has problems in English to this day. However, when I filled out the questionnaire on first languages, I didn’t put that down, because then they always program them differently. He could be in a program for English as a second language, because technically it is. For the first four years, he spoke Korean, not English.

When I inquired as to whether or not any of the other readings or internet links contributed to her learning, Kathy did not mention anything specific. She said, “Some of it was pretty interesting, but right now I’m so focused on my ELL that I want to do everything for him, so the other stuff, I’m like ‘this isn’t so applicable.’”

As for online discussions, at the mid-semester interview Kathy expressed that she liked the online discussions and felt they were important. “I like the online discussions. They are really good. They are really interesting…I’ve learned a lot from the online discussions. I like them, definitely. I think that they are definitely a positive part of the course.” When prompted to talk about a specific discussion that contributed to her learning, she mentioned a topic in which she again made personal connections to her family.

Oh yes, I did…‘it’s windy now’ or ‘when they sharped me,’ and I remember the kids doing that, too. It was really funny. My nephew, I took him to the zoo…and we get to the porcupines, and I say “these are the porcupines.” About an hour later, my nephew is crying, and I go, “what is the matter?” And he looks and he goes, “why are the cute pines poor?” (Laughs)

After we shared a few more family stories, I asked her if there was anything else specific from the discussions that struck her. Her response was, “I’m so tired right now;
remind me of some of them…I read so much that that’s so hard.” I followed up by asking her if it was difficult to remember who said what and she replied, “Yeah. Who, what, what ideas I got where, but I’m sure I did get some ideas.”

While Kathy suggested that she felt the discussions were useful, she also described her disappointment with them and the level of participation in them from others.

I haven’t had much interactions with anything. Everything I’ve been doing, I mean most instruction happens with you. And Eva has talked to me a couple of times on the phone, and the discussions, but I feel like I couldn’t call on some of their support. I really do learn it myself.

In our final interview, she re-visited the topic of online discussions. “We did not get any developed discussion, and that was really disappointing. I was horrified at the amount of response we got from people.” When talking about online discussions, Kathy revealed some of her thoughts on learning which have implications for the online learning environment. “Ideas are from talking, communicating, you know. You never know when the next big idea is going to come, and I think we missed some big ideas.”

Based on her comments, it appears that Kathy’s experiences of the online discussions were mixed.

Kathy’s responses to the activity impact questionnaires suggested that she felt the cultural field assignment, the online discussions, and the instructor feedback/input made the greatest impact on her, followed closely by the journals, the other two field assignments, one of the textbooks (Lightbown & Spada, 2006), and one of the supplemental readings, an article on what teachers need to know about language (Wong-Fillmore & Snow, 2000). The research paper, the other textbook (Echevarria & Graves,
2010), and the SIOP links/video were the other activities that Kathy reported as having an average score of four or higher out of five.

It is important to note that one of the experiences that had a powerful impact on Kathy and her thinking during the semester of the study was not part of the course. As part of a project with her school, she delivered food baskets to students in her class who were living in poverty. Kathy reflected on the change in her awareness of what some of her students’ lives were like outside of school, which challenged some of her previously-held assumptions.

They have nothing, Stephanie. They are living in places where they have no heat, no electricity. And they have no coat, and they don’t have eyeglasses when they need it. These children have nothing; they need help. It’s very upsetting. Yeah, my eyes have opened wide. I realize how important it is for a teacher to understand her community, and know what her students are going through, and how they go home at night, and what they go home to, and whether they have a meal or not. Those are all really important factors. You have to know the social situation of all your students, in order to affectively teach them. You have to.

I went to one kid’s house, and he had like a pair of flip-flops. I was wondering why he was wearing flip-flops every day; it’s because all he had were flip-flops. I’ve just never seen anything like that before. They are not meeting their basic requirements. It’s scary, very scary. I find it so sad. I wanted to advocate the other day; now, I’m doubly resolved to advocate for these children.

Kathy summed up her strong emotional and physical reaction to this experience of delivering food baskets. “When I left, first I threw up, then I cried, and now I’m proactive.” This statement shows her shift from being subject to the experience to being object to it. With time she was able to remove herself from those emotions in order to reflect on it, move forward, and take action. My sense of Kathy was that she was someone who had her students’ best interests in mind and appeared willing to do anything to help them.
Transition between Figured Worlds and Subject-Object Shifts

While she did not delve into the subject as much as Sofia did, it was clear that Kathy, too, was experiencing a transition between the figured worlds of math and education. She discussed aspects of that transition with me in our very first interview.

Believe it or not, I never wrote a real paper before on the college level before I started taking these classes. I honestly...math classes...a three-credit math class would be approximately 20 hours per week of work. A three-credit education class is not 20 hours per week of work...So it’s a quantitatively different ballgame and it’s a whole different thought process. One that the creativity is different. The creativity is more in terms of the strategy I’m going to use to solve this problem. It’s not...it’s totally different creatively.

While the differences between the two fields were important enough for Kathy to mention, she talked about it in a matter-of-fact way and did not appear to have any emotional reaction. This revealed to me that she was not subject to the transition, but rather held the experience in object position.

Teacher as Source of Authority and Hints of Dualistic Thinking

During our three interviews, it was evident that Kathy viewed teachers as sources of authority. She approached this topic on multiple occasions from the perspective of both a student and a teacher. From her perspective as a teacher she said, “So now the responsibility of teaching this student is 100% on me.” And when talking about decisions to be made for her student, she stated, “Well, I’m not going to say anything to anybody. I’m the classroom teacher, I do whatever I want.” Kathy saw herself as the authority of her own classroom. In turn, she appeared to hold her university instructors as having that same authority over her. She looked to the authorities for answers. I will provide examples of statements representative of this view later in this portrait, but first I will
provide some background as to possible epistemological stances under which Kathy may have been operating.

Several comments Kathy made about teachers as sources of authority provided evidence that on some level her meaning-making system was dualistic in nature, the view that there is a right and wrong (Perry, 1970, 1981). Similar to Perry’s dualism is Baxter-Magolda’s (2001) absolute knowing. Absolute knowers “often assume that right and wrong answers exist in all areas of knowledge and that authorities know these answers” (Baxter-Magolda, 2001, p. 27).

An example of Kathy’s dualistic or absolute thinking was a comment she made in reference to a prior online class discussion. She said, “Some of the things were really wrong. First off, what the student said, which I tried to correct, but you know it’s kinda hard. So I kind of say, ‘well my perspective is dadadadada.’ I didn’t say, ‘well you did this wrong,’ but I really felt that…” As a follow-up to that statement she said, “There was so much that came up that oh my god if I was the teacher I would have been buhbuhbuhbuhbuh…” My interpretation of her statement was that she meant she would have jumped in and corrected the students giving the “wrong” answers or opinions if she were instructing the class.

In her quest for receiving knowledge from authorities and as evidence of dualistic thinking, she claimed, “I hate when <instructors> don’t answer me. Why would you not comment on whether these ideas were right or not? I had a very erroneous idea, and the <instructor> never corrected it.” Another example was when she reflected on her online experiences over the summer.
These are my first four online classes that I took this semester and the discussion board really irked me...there was so much room for crafting by teachers that was not taken. I felt like we were teaching ourselves and I think that was wrong. I didn’t learn anything from the teacher.

This dualistic, absolute type of thinking is also aligned with Kegan’s (1982) instrumental knowing. A person who operates in an instrumental way of knowing “tends to maintain a what-do-you-have-that-can-help-me/what-do-I-have-that-can-help-you perspective of life” (Drago-Severson, 2004, p. 23). Part of the instrumental meaning-making system consists of a focus on concrete consequences, such as getting a good grade, being successful, getting a job, and so forth. Instrumental knowers also tend to view other people “as either pathways or obstacles to getting one’s concrete needs met” (Drago-Severson, 2004, p. 24).

Kathy’s next statement aligns with the above description of instrumental knowers. I presented part of this statement earlier to describe her reaction to the online discussions. However, it is important to re-introduce it here as part of the context of how Kathy was making sense of her experiences overall. “I feel like I couldn’t call on some of their support. I really do learn it myself. So I blog a lot, try to figure out what I’m doing, but I’m really nervous. I want to succeed in this program.” Her goal of succeeding in the program and viewing the lack of support from others as a potential barrier to her success was consistent with an instrumental way of knowing.

Additional evidence in Kathy’s statements that suggested she was operating to some degree as an instrumental knower had to do with her struggles to take on the perspective of others. We saw evidence of this in her reactions to her experience at the
mosque. Another example was when Kathy first described her ELL to me and had difficulty understanding the choices his family had made.

This child happens to be in seventh grade. Now his brother is in sixth grade, speaks perfect English. You know he has an accent, but very slight and I couldn’t understand it, but I guess his brother’s been here for a year. He was here for a few months and then went back with his dad to Mexico and then his dad finally let his mother keep him, too. I don’t know why he would let her keep one and not the other...Who the heck knows?

A similar example was when Kathy talked to me about the mother of that same student. It was during our first interview that she said, “And she’s not interested in learning the language, which I think is crazy. Why would you want to live here if you’re not interested in learning the language?” She did not take into consideration at that point the reasons behind her lack of interest in learning the language, which may not have been lack of interest at all, but rather lack of time or resources.

It is important to note that Kathy appeared to make a shift in meaning-making over the course of the semester by attempting to understand others’ perspectives. Kathy took the time over the semester to get to know this woman and learned more about her daily schedule and struggles. She shared with me a little about what she learned.

She’s a really neat lady and works up in a Spanish-speaking clinic up in Denver, which is really hard. So she’s driving up to Denver every day. She coming home at 6:30 pm; she’s dropping them off at you know 7:00 am, driving up to Denver, getting up to Denver at 9:00, leaving Denver at 5:00, and getting down at 6:30 to pick them up again. I mean that’s really tiring!

Learning more about the mother’s daily schedule, she was better able to understand why she was not taking English classes. Kathy revealed a shift in her perspective because of her new understandings. In our final interview she claimed, “Another big thing is just really understanding their parents, and helping them cope. I mean it can be a big change.
We don’t know the reasons why they came to the United States. We don’t know what was motivating them.”

Kathy’s statements showed additional evidence of attempts to understand others’ perspectives. “Understanding just your own culture’s differences helps you understand that, how our ELL students have big cultural differences, and their customs are culturally different, and being tolerant of that.” Kathy revealed a similar internal struggle to understand the perspective of the Muslim women at the service she attended (see Specific Reactions to Course Activities above for more in-depth description).

Sense of Self

The ways in which people make sense of their experiences, their ways of knowing, are due in large part to their sense of self, or identity. It was my interpretation of Kathy’s statements that her identity as a New Yorker played a big role in the way she thought and made sense of her experiences. Over the course of our three interviews, she mentioned being from New York or being a New Yorker seven times.

Other aspects of Kathy’s descriptions of herself, her identity, suggested both confidence and insecurity. As posited by Belenky, et al. (1986) many women express self-doubt and often question their intellectual competence, as I discussed in Sofia’s portrait. Many of Kathy’s statements about herself, on the other hand, tended to reveal the opposite. In fact, she spoke very confidently about her intelligence and abilities. “I’m very good.” “I think I write fairly high level.” “My friends are always looking up words to keep up with me…I like to help people improve their vocabulary…I love words. I play
words with friends and nobody beats me ever.” See Table 5.2 for further statements Kathy used to describe herself.

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<th>Table 5.2</th>
<th>Kathy’s Descriptions of Herself</th>
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<td><strong>Interview</strong></td>
<td><strong>Expressions of self</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>One (beginning of semester)</td>
<td>It was up to me and I didn’t want to make the wrong decision. I’m very American. I’m a very mathematical and phonetic person. I enjoy languages. I’m fun. I own a bar, what do you expect? I’m fluent in Spanish. I have an ease with languages. I’m a really type A and I hate losing points. I am really a New Yorker. I’m a gregarious New Yorker. When I write a letter to anybody here I have to dumb my words down. I’m 50. I’m tired. I’m always smiling.</td>
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<td>Two (mid-semester)</td>
<td>I’m the classroom teacher. I do whatever I want. I seem to be not as technical as some people. Of course I’m an advocate, I’m from New York! I’m type A. I’m very good (at using popsicle sticks and total participation). I like to turn things into very concrete…very easy for people to see, because I am a middle school teacher. I think I write fairly high level. My friends are always looking up words to keep up with me. I like to help people improve their vocabulary. I’m an Epicurean, not a heathenish. They think I’m crazy. I didn’t have that word in my vocabulary, can you imagine? I was horrified. I love words. I play words with friends and nobody beats me ever.</td>
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<td>Three (end-of-semester)</td>
<td>I was anxious and nervous about my research paper, because that’s one of my weakest areas. I want to advocate for children who have exceptional needs. I realized that I’m very intolerant of Muslims…I’m really trying to work on that. We are definitely high-power women. I consider myself very well rounded and very worldly.</td>
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While Kathy appeared very confident and self-assured on one hand, there were instances where she did seek approval or praise, which indicated a form of self-doubt. This approval-seeking phenomenon is common of people operating under a socializing way of knowing (Drago-Severson, 2004). As Kegan (1994, p. 171) asserts, for people
making sense of their experiences with this way of knowing, “winning the approval and acceptance of others” is of utmost importance. Based on statements Kathy made and questions she posed, she appeared to see me in some sense as another instructor of the course and sought my approval. In our mid-semester interview Kathy described her research paper topic to me and indicated that she wanted me to get the topic approved by Eva, the instructor. “And I think that’s what I want to do my paper on…I thought I would talk to her, but maybe you can talk to her for me since I’m so overwhelmed.”

Towards the end of that interview we had an interesting exchange which provided additional evidence that Kathy in some ways was seeking approval, praise, or reassurance from me. “Let me ask you this, since you grade my papers, what do most people write like compared to me? Are you appalled when you read these people’s papers?” I reminded her that in fact I did not grade her papers and in no way was I evaluating her work or comparing it to other people’s work. She pushed a little more by saying, “For other years…what level are these people writing at?” And then she asked, “Mine haven’t been bad, have they?” Since it was clear she sought an approving response from me, I replied with, “Not that I’ve noticed, no.” And her response was, “I didn’t think so.”

Summary of Kathy’s Experiences

Kathy is a complex being who brought with her a very unique background, set of experiences and understandings about cultural diversity and working with culturally and linguistically diverse learners. Kathy’s survey results and many of her statements suggested that she was highly tolerant of linguistic diversity, which was not surprising given her culturally diverse upbringing in New York City and her extensive travels in the U.S. and abroad. However, she admitted that through her course experiences she
challenged some of her previously held assumptions. The most concrete example was her powerful experience at the mosque for her cultural field assignment. She was aware of her intolerance of Muslims due to her perception that they were responsible for the 9/11 attack on New York. And since being from New York appeared to be an important aspect of Kathy’s identity, she struggled to change her perspective, and challenged herself to be more tolerant.

The cultural field experience along with her delivery of food baskets to her students living in poverty appeared to invoke the greatest emotional reaction from Kathy over the course of the semester, both of which led to new understandings and awareness of ELL issues. The other field assignments, online discussions, journals, and some of the readings appeared to add to Kathy’s informational knowledge and strategies for effectively instructing her ELLs. As a result, she reported a gain in confidence in her ability to teach ELLs. This is an important finding because Kathy was one of only two participants who were teaching at the time of the study and had a context to which they could apply their new skills and knowledge.

I conclude that while the majority of Kathy’s learning was informational in nature, there was evidence of transformational shifts in her thinking. By challenging prior assumptions and struggling to understand the perspective of others combined with personal reflection on her experiences, Kathy developed new understandings that suggested changes in how she understood her ELLs and herself, which is at the heart of transformational learning.
Jennifer

Background

Jennifer is a widowed mother of four in her early 50’s. She earned her B.S. in mechanical engineering and was enrolled in the ALP program for secondary math during the semester of the study. The first time we spoke was on the phone and the other two interviews were in person. During our conversations Jennifer spoke very lovingly of her children, and being a mother appeared to be an important aspect of her identity. “Kids are such a blessing.” During the time of the study, three of her children were away at college and one was still at home. Jennifer struggled a bit with that transition. “It’s a difficult time but that’s part of life. They grow up and move on…what they’re supposed to do.”

Part of Jennifer’s struggle with her children leaving home may have been influenced by the fact that she lost her husband two years prior. “He had cancer and the doctors were very optimistic that it would be fine, and the cancer just did not want to go away; and so he died two years ago this coming November.” Her husband’s passing impacted many aspects of her life, including her decision to go into teaching, which I will discuss in further detail later on in this section.

As for Jennifer’s background, both of her maternal grandparents came to the United States from Germany through Ellis Island. While their native language was German, they did not speak a lot of German in the home. Jennifer explained,

Actually, my grandfather came illegally and then went back and then came here and so their native language was German. And my mother was born here in America and that was all during…right when WWII was easing up. So my mom…they didn’t speak a lot of German in the home and they didn’t explain their German heritage right away because Germans were really looked down
upon. She can understand the language to a degree, but she didn’t speak it regularly in the home ’cause they were trying to become Americans.

In order to learn the language of her ancestors, Jennifer took two years of German in high school. She admitted struggling with it, though. “I wasn’t really great at it just because I struggled with languages to begin with. I’m dyslexic and so I really struggled through all my language classes…” Because of her challenges with language, Jennifer did not feel confident in her abilities to speak German.

My mom would get letters from cousins that stayed in Germany and we would sit down together and translate them and stuff but I never got enough to really use it or to speak to my grandparents in German. I wasn’t confident enough to really piece together the language.

Jennifer cited that her basic knowledge of German had not been overly useful.

My German is pretty much completely useless. But you know at the time when you’re in that age you say, “Oh it would be so good to speak the language that my grandparents speak. But you know it’s just that practically you don’t run in to people that speak German; at least in America.

In addition to her pursuit of learning German, Jennifer also took a couple of years of Spanish classes in college. She was first exposed to Spanish growing up in California, however. In addition, she and her family vacationed in Mexico almost every year growing up; then as an adult, Jennifer went on mission trips to Mexico.

And then the Spanish is more having lived in California and having taken mission trips to Mexico. I went to Mexico every year of my life, almost. When I was young my parents…we would always go down to Ensenada, Mexico and stay in a house down there for a week of vacation. And culturally I thought that was a great experience because Ensenada wasn’t particularly a tourist town and so it is now, but it wasn’t then, and so you would walk along the streets and there would be people who were severely disabled begging. There’d be men with no arms and no legs begging.

Jennifer talked about how her experiences in Mexico opened her eyes to a larger world.
I thought it was a really good cultural thing to help me see how blessed I was. And I lived in an extremely affluent city, but I was in one of the more middle houses, that had maids and cooks and even live-in maids and stuff; so I thought I wasn’t very rich. But then I went to Mexico and then I went, “ok, I’m a lot better off than any of these people.” And I think it’s a really important lesson for people, and especially for kids to get to see, because they usually live in a neighborhood where everybody’s house is about the same level as theirs. And so they have a skewed vision of their…they think, “Well, oh I’m just the same as everybody. Everybody is like me…as far as wealth or prosperity…” And going to a country where you’re really well-off really opens your eyes to how wealthy we are here in America…how many of us are blessed in so many ways.

As mentioned, Jennifer went back to Mexico as an adult on mission trips. She reflected on those experiences and how she wished she had more of a foundation with the Spanish language.

Close to ten years I’d go on missions trips where I taught swimming lessons during a summer day camp for kids in Mazatlan, Mexico and I was with <another University’s> swim coach; he and I taught swim lessons. And my husband and other people taught tennis and crafts and English and different things like that. We did that for a week and so I know sporadic swimming vocabulary in the Spanish language. I wish that I had taken Spanish. I look back and think it would have been so nice…it’s just the number of people that you run into that are Spanish-speaking. I think it would have been nice to have more of a foundation with that.

Jennifer grew up in a suburb of Los Angeles, which she described as culturally diverse. Due to yearly re-districting, Jennifer and her sister attended a new school almost every year. They stayed in the area until Jennifer turned eight, at which time she and her family moved to the next city over, a predominantly white city. According to Jennifer, this move was part of the ‘white flight movement.’

It was one of what people called white flight cities because it was predominantly white. I don’t recall having any Blacks at all in my elementary school and by the time I hit high school…the high school was about 2,000 students and that was only grades ten through twelve. We still were no more than 100 minorities in the school. And now it’s not like that at all. Actually Whites are in the minority because it’s 50% Asian and at that time it was growing, that was probably the strongest number of minorities that we had at my high school was Asian ‘cause that was the trend that was moving into that area, but so I grew up with…’til eight
with an extremely diversified introduction to people and then starting in third grade moved to an almost exclusively white public school system. And I know a lot of people were doing that for...probably plenty of them were doing it for race and I don’t know that I want to judge my parents’ decision-making on it, but I do know the frustration that they expressed to us was the changing schools...the redrawn bus lines year after year after year.

After Jennifer graduated high school in California she got married and attended college. Her husband was from Texas and so they moved there initially.

We lived in Texas, lived in Colorado for two years, went back to live in Texas for several years, then we lived here for the last 14 years. But as far as traveling outside the country I haven’t really done any of it other than the few mission trips to Mexico. We never really spent money to go farther...to Europe or traveled around the world at all.

Teaching Experience

After her husband passed away, Jennifer did a lot of soul searching to try and figure out what it was that she wanted to do.

My husband was a pastor; so for a lot of my life I spent being the support system of that and doing whatever a secretary would do and then he went into insurance sales and so I switched over and did that...more clerical work and then I would sporadically substitute teach...<After he passed away> my thoughts were, “what should I do? What do I want to do? What do I like? I do like to substitute teach”...yeah I was an engineer, but going back to engineering is hard and I was never that wild about it when I worked in the field. And so I thought, well, I’ll look around and I did find this alternative teaching program, so I thought, well this is something I could do. It’d still allow me some of the freedoms of time off during the summer and such when my kids are...I mean I still have a few years when my kids will be attending school with all of college and you kind of think I don’t really want to work a full time job and emotionally for yourself but also for your kids. I didn’t want them to lose their mom right after losing their dad.

While Jennifer was in her early 50’s, she was asking herself some of the same kinds of driving questions typical of people in their twenties (Baxter-Magolda, 2001).

She was starting a new chapter of her life and trying to figure out who she was and what
she wanted to do. There were many factors that appeared to influence Jennifer’s
decisions, but her kids seemed to be her primary concern.

In asking herself what she wanted to do, what she liked to do and what would be
best for her family, Jennifer concluded that she enjoyed substitute teaching. Having
subbed for 11 years, she started to realize that she enjoyed teaching math and science at
the secondary level.

When my youngest went to first grade going full day to school I started substitute
teaching...at first I kind of substituted any grade or any level, but after a while I
started realizing how much I enjoyed doing math and science specifically with my
degree and such. And I enjoyed doing the upper grade level...I did like actually
doing the math and science and I understood it, could answer the questions, felt
certain standing up there and having a child say, "but I don't understand" and
it's like "oh, ok" and I could do it without going “yeah, well I guess you’ll have to
ask your teacher when she comes back tomorrow.”

More recently Jennifer was given the opportunity to fill a long-term substitute
teaching position at the same school her children attended. That experience helped her
gain confidence and an appreciation for teaching.

I think I got a real taste for really doing the whole lesson and the grading and
learning what it would be like if I was actually teaching as opposed to the
substitute. It was a really neat experience for me to get to do that and see...can I
do it? Is it interesting? Do I still like it?

She concluded, “Once I got kind of caught up, I was like, ‘ok, I think I can do this.’” On
her background questionnaire she expanded, “I love math and want others to learn to love
it too. I love to see students grasp new ideas. I love being with students, seeing them learn
and grow. I think I could make a difference in a student’s life.”

Jennifer rated her overall teaching experience as a two out of five. That equates to
a level just slightly higher than a novice.
Beliefs and Understandings about Linguistic Diversity

With respect to working with ELLs, Jennifer rated her confidence/ability at a one out of five, the lowest level possible. Her interest in working with ELLs was slightly higher at three out of five, but did not reflect a strong interest. She explained, “Having no training or experience in teaching ELLs, I would be interested but concerned that I would not do a good job.” She expanded on this in her initial journal entry.

I know very little about English language learners (ELLs). I went to a predominantly white high school and had only one friend who was not born in America. She was Taiwanese and even though she had only been in America a few years, she spoke English very well. I have not substitute taught in a class with ELLs. I must admit I am very intimidated about teaching ELLs but I am looking forward to learning all I can in this class so I will be better prepared.

The above statement was reflective of the way Jennifer responded to the initial surveys. She rated her knowledge of most items on the knowledge of ELL issues survey at “no knowledge” or “very little knowledge.” She only rated herself as having “some knowledge” on one topic: issues surrounding the debate on bilingual education. As for the LATS survey, with reverse coding taken into consideration she responded “strongly disagree,” “disagree,” and “uncertain” on most items, suggesting she was relatively tolerant of linguistic diversity overall, but her responses of “uncertain” on four of the statements suggested that there were aspects of linguistic diversity about which she did not have a strong opinion. For example, she was uncertain about whether or not parents of linguistically diverse students should be counseled to speak English with their children, whether or not the rapid learning of English should be a priority for ELLs, even if it meant losing ability in their native language, and whether or not the learning of English should take precedence over learning subject matter. These concepts are typically taught in linguistically diverse teacher education courses and since Jennifer reported that
she had no prior training or experience working with ELLs, it was not surprising that she was uncertain about some of these issues.

Jennifer’s LATS responses revealed her biases. She felt people in the U.S. should learn a language in addition to English, that it was not unreasonable to expect a regular classroom teacher to teach a child who does not speak English, and that having an ELL in class would not be a detriment to the learning of other students. Reflective of her journal entry, Jennifer also expressed that she felt that teachers should be required to receive pre-service or in-service training to be prepared to meet the needs of linguistic minorities.

Reported Changes as a Result of Course Participation

Over the course of the semester, Jennifer reported that she gained knowledge as a result of her participation in the course. She rated herself at a 17/50 for knowledge of ELL issues at the beginning of the semester, which jumped to 29.5/50 at the end of the semester. There were two topics that she reported having “quite a bit of knowledge” of at the end of the semester, both topics of which she reported having “very little knowledge” at the beginning: the local ELL population and legal requirements for educating ELLs. However, for the remaining eight topics, she rated herself as having “very little knowledge” or “some knowledge.”

Her perceived increase in knowledge may have been a factor in her reported increase in confidence to teach ELLs. She reported an increase of two points from the beginning to the end of the semester (from a one to a three out of five). She wrote, “I am more aware of ways to instruct ELLs.” While her sense of confidence may have
increased from the beginning to the end, she expressed that her level of confidence fluctuated throughout the course. In her final reflection paper Jennifer wrote,

As the class progressed the amount of information that was presented became overwhelming. There was so much to learn and so many ideas about the best way to instruct ELLs. Practically speaking I was very nervous about teaching ELLs. I felt I was not prepared. Confidence in my ability to teach ELLs dropped. I was in information overload and I needed to take a step back and remember why I was learning this material. Realizing that I was not expected to be an expert in the instruction of ELLs from taking this one course helped me to gain perspective and not lose faith in my ability to learn how to teach.

In her reflection she also wrote, “I know that I am better prepared to face the challenges of instructing a class with English language learners.” However, on her final questionnaire, she rated her interest in having ELLs in her classroom at a two out of five, which had actually dropped from the beginning of the semester when she reported her interest at a three. Her written response was, “my interest is low because I do not feel prepared to instruct ELLs.”

The results of her LATS survey suggest that Jennifer became less tolerant of linguistic diversity over the course of the semester. While I could infer that she was in a negative frame of mind when she filled out the survey, I am skeptical about the results of this survey because several of her responses did not match with her interview and other written data. I believe it is possible that she misread the scale and answered “agree,” for example, when she may have meant to answer “disagree.”

As an example of Jennifer’s change in her responses, she reported being uncertain at the beginning of the semester as to whether or not the rapid learning of English should be a priority for ELLs even if it meant losing ability in their native language. At the end of the semester she agreed with that statement. She was also uncertain at the beginning as
to whether or not the learning of English should take precedence over the learning of subject matter, to which she again replied “agree” at the end of the semester. These responses are contrary to what she expressed in her reflection paper, in which she challenged some of her previously held assumptions.

I really had no idea. Part of my problem was my lack of understanding of what qualifies a student as an ELL. I thought all ELLs spoke little or no English. My other misconception was the amount of time it takes for an ELL to be proficient and no longer in an ESL program. I thought that language acquisition took a short period of time. I do not know why I thought this, perhaps because I could not imagine them surviving school unless they rapidly learned English. I was certainly ignorant.

In addition, Jennifer indicated on the LATS that she initially felt that having an ELL in class would not be detrimental to the learning of others. However, at the end she changed her response to indicate that she felt having an ELL would be detrimental to the learning of others. In our final interview she expressed the opposite, another challenged assumption.

And I think the end thing would be the fact that there were benefits; that it was less...that the instruction itself was less just geared to ELLs and would benefit the class. I don’t think I really thought about that. I thought, “Okay, well I’m going to have to work with these kids, you know, to help them understand this vocabulary – you know, these words, so that they can do whatever they need to do. That would be like taking time away from the rest of the class.” I think the idea in those models on the sheltered content and the SIOP, showing how they overlap and how they both benefit the general population.

Finally, Jennifer indicated a change in her belief about teachers receiving training to instruct ELLs. At the beginning she agreed that teachers should receive training, but at the end she disagreed. This was surprising to me because she often expressed feeling as though she needed more training. In her first field assignment write-up she wrote, “More training and more awareness need to be provided.” She reiterated this though in her mid-
semester journal when she said, “I think this class has given me ideas but has also shown me the need for receiving specific training in this area.” And in her third and final field assignment write-up she concluded, “This assignment also showed me the importance of receiving instruction in teaching ELLs.”

In conclusion, because of the multiple discrepancies between the LATS survey and other forms of data, I am hesitant to claim that Jennifer became less tolerant of linguistic diversity. She may have felt unprepared to teach ELLs upon the conclusion of the course, but may not have become less tolerant of ELLs or linguistic diversity as a result of her participation in the course. Her reflections and interview data suggest that because of her course participation she was better able to challenge some of her previously held assumptions about linguistic diversity and issues surrounding the instruction of ELLs. I contacted Jennifer in an attempt to clarify this confusion, but did not get a response. I am left, therefore, with the need to conclude that the interview data reveal more accurately her attitudes toward cultural and linguistic diversity. It is important to note that the fact that Jennifer expressed these uncertainties is important. The course activities can be revised to anticipate such confusion and address such concerns for adult learners enrolled in the course.

Specific Reactions to Course Activities

Jennifer expressed mixed reactions to the first field assignment. Overall, though, her response seemed positive. “I really liked that. It was just really informative.” She was surprised by the huge diversity between districts. In her write-up she wrote, “That was a lot larger difference than I expected and I found that information to be very useful.” In our mid-semester interview she expanded by saying, “It was eye-opening. I appreciated
getting it at the beginning of the year, because I would love to see that again, and maybe have more control questions.” Jennifer expanded on her reactions in our final interview.

On the positive, I found surprising and shocking just knowing the numbers of ELLs on that first interview, where they were talking about the percent in the different districts and how it varied. I knew that was the case, but even just knowing the percent was interesting, and then just the fact that I would have ELLs.

While saying that she was “surprised to see how different each program was,” she also admitted that she “would have liked more details” about the information presented. In her write-up she concluded, “I really enjoyed getting the opportunity to watch the discussion panel. I loved hearing the answers to the questions about the change and growth in ELLs… I wish that it was a longer and perhaps a more structured discussion.”

Based on her descriptions, I inferred that her reaction to the panel discussion video was that it was informative and beneficial, but may have fallen short of her expectations for more structured, detailed information.

For the second field assignment, Jennifer chose to attend a Spanish church service. She told me she “enjoyed the cultural project.” This experience also allowed her to gain a sense of empathy for what ELLs might be experiencing. In our second interview, shortly after she had completed the assignment, Jennifer told me about her experience at the Spanish service, along with her time in Mexico, and then reflected on those two experiences in an attempt to better understand what it may be like for ELLs here in the U.S.

Yeah, and then of course you’re going I’m here like only five days…so for an ELL that must be just amazing. Both when I went to Mexico and when I went to this, and I wrote this in my paper, I wasn’t required to learn anything. I wasn’t expected at some point to regurgitate information that I had learned, written or
whatever, a test. So you’re not near under the pressure that they must be under when they’re sitting there in class going, “I don’t understand what you’re saying, and you’re going to test me on this in two weeks,” or “I have a homework assignment, and I don’t know what I am doing.” But it was good. I mean we can’t be in that exact experience. It was good to sort of get that opportunity to see that and also evaluate it.

In her write-up, Jennifer described her emotional reactions to the experience in more detail.

There are connections that transcend languages but it is difficult to feel connected to a group emotionally, intellectually and relationally when they are speaking a language you do not understand…I felt great success when I greeted others with “hola” instead of “hello.” I was so proud of myself for my tiny achievement…

I became bored toward the end because I could not understand the words. I could definitely see how an ELL would get frustrated and tune out if the lesson was proceeding faster than their comprehension. I was not frustrated because I knew I was not going to take a test on the material I heard. Intellectually I did not gain…

Most of the time, I was lost. It really showed me how lost a person who does not speak English could be in America. I can imagine that an ELL would seek out people who speak their native language just so that they can relax for a few minutes and not have to work so hard to understand what’s said.

The lack of emotional connection was perhaps even more daunting than the intellectual separation…I felt left out…It was awkward to see people become emotional but not know why and it was awkward to be emotional and not be able to share that emotion.

Overall, the experience was wonderful. I felt many emotions that I did not expect. Everyone was kind and open but I felt out of place. I know that I did not get to feel what it is truly like for an ELL in an American public school classroom, but I did get a better understanding for what they must be feeling, how they must feel somewhat disconnected intellectually, emotionally and relationally. The event opened my eyes and helped me understand a new point of view but it also showed me that I prefer to understand those around me.

The field assignment has taught me many things. I feel like it gave me a deeper understanding of what it is like for ELLs every day they attend school. I learned how they must feel left out, confused, frustrated and lonely. I knew that my time in a place where everyone understood each other and I did not understand them was just a short moment. ELLs have to face this day after day…I know this experience will help me to sympathize with my students…This event brought me a better understanding of the intellectual, emotional and relational separation that ESL students experience.
Based on her detailed descriptions of her reactions to the cultural field assignment, it appeared to have had a positive impact on Jennifer. It was also the one experience from which I could infer an increase in her sense of empathy for ELLs. This is a great source of information for instructors and implies that revising the assignment to give TCs the necessary support to understand the field experiences may better foster adult learning and development.

The third field assignment, the interview and observation, also seemed to make a positive impact on Jennifer. She interviewed the ELL coordinator at the school her children attended, and one still attends, and the same school in which she has subbed extensively. In her write-up she stated, “This experience had a huge impact on me. It made me desire to become an ELL teacher and removed most of my fear of instructing ELLs in an inclusive class environment.” Based on other conversations, the final interview in particular, it was clear that those feelings of interest in being an ELL teacher waned dramatically.

In our first interview, Jennifer stated that “it was very eye-opening to get to talk to her and to find out what they’re doing in class and what she’s done with the program.” She came to realize that the influx of ELLs is a “huge issue right now and therefore saw a real need to know that information.” Conducting this interview and getting a glimpse into what things were like at the school with which she was familiar; Jennifer acknowledged that her learning would continue beyond just the ESL for Educators course. “I hope to get something from this class, but not to think that this class is gonna do it.”
Overall, Jennifer reflected on her interview experience more than any other course activity. In her final reflection she wrote, “Interviewing her was one of the best opportunities I had in this class. Her passion for ELLs inspired me.” It is important to note, though, that I did not find evidence that Jennifer conducted the observation that was meant to accompany the interview, which may have resulted in a different experience.

In general, Jennifer responded positively to the field assignments. She referred to them often in our interviews and described them as “real learning experiences.” The other course activity that invoked the greatest emotional response from Jennifer was the research paper, but not in a good way.

I was confused on like what the purpose of the research paper was, because since it’s not specific on what your topic is, other than having to relate somehow to ELLs…It may just be me, just because I’m very practical. I’m thinking, “Okay, I’m going to be out there teaching;” so I’m doing the research going, “Yeah, but what is this? How is this benefitting me, other than I’m going to get this paper done?”

As her comments indicate, Jennifer struggled to see the purpose of the paper, which she felt was “busy work.”

I didn’t see the purpose in the ten page paper. I think I could’ve read the information, and give me five pages on it and have collected just as much information other than trying to stretch it out to a ten to fifteen page paper and have it all in this specific format, and this specific way, and I’m like going, “Okay, I get the practice and the idea that this is a graduate class, but is this really benefitting me to do this research and figure out how to write it in this format, and turn it in to you? It just seemed like busy work, honestly.

During our final interview, much of the conversation revolved around her negative feelings toward the research paper. It appeared as though she was subject to the experience at that point in time (Kegan, 1994). Her emotions had control over her and she was very upset, possibly because it was fresh in her mind. She struggled to take a step
back and reflect on the experiences without being tied to the emotions of it. She had a
difficult time making the shift from subject to object with respect to the experience of
writing the research paper. One of her concluding thoughts at the end of our final
interview was expressed with utter frustration, “I don’t really want to get a doctorate, and
I don’t have any…I don’t care if I’m every published; so, why am I writing ten page
papers? Just tell me how to do the job.”

Aside from the research paper, I asked Jennifer about her reactions to the readings
and whether there was something that stood out to her as being helpful or challenged her
thinking. Her response was, “I can’t think of anything in particular that I would say,
‘Wow! That was just something so new.’” She did not appear to appreciate the textbooks.

I’m not as wild about the books for ESL. I mean they are okay…neither one of
those books is like a textbook format. It’s more difficult to go, ‘Oh yeah, that was
in chapter whatever’…or I can read this summary and go, ‘Oh yeah that’s this
chapter.’ And so it doesn’t seem like either one of them does that great, which is
weird.

Jennifer said she preferred the sheltered content book (Echevarria & Graves, 2010) over
the how languages are learned book (Lightbown & Spada, 2006). “The Sheltered Content
one was better than the other one. The other one was interesting, but it was just, it felt
like you were jumping, and of course, you are jumping back from book to book, which of
course is adding to it.”

Jennifer’s comments about the readings often reflected her preference for
structure and layout versus content and ideas. However, in her final reflection she
expressed an appreciation for the ideas presented in one chapter of the sheltered content
text.
I felt like I was not getting enough practical information on how to instruct ELLs. This changed when I read chapter three of Sheltered Content Instruction. Here was the information I wanted. Reading about the SIOP model increased my confidence that I could instruct a class and instruct an ELL at the same time with proper planning.

It is interesting to note that in reference to the SIOP (sheltered instruction observation protocol); additional links to SIOP materials were provided in the course shell as part of the required readings, which Jennifer admitted that she did not take the time to read. In our final interview she explained to me,

I felt like I could have used in this class, and I did get some, but more practical information. I didn’t feel like…I felt like the SIOP would give me that, but we didn’t really go deep into the SIOP. It’s kind of like, “Well, check out SIOP.” And I’m like going, “Yeah, when I have lots of time.” When I get an ELL, I will be running to that website, I’m sure. I wouldn’t have minded going deeper into that and seeing more practical information on how I would apply it.

When I asked Jennifer about the online discussions, her reactions were mostly negative. “At first I was really intimidated.” She described them as “awkward” and “time-consuming.” She compared the online discussions to those that might take place in a classroom setting. “I understand why they have it on there, but I don’t think it’s as beneficial as if you were in the class and it’s very time consuming.” She explained to me that if she were in class, she could better “absorb what other people are thinking.”

Jennifer admitted to me that she spent much of her time reading and just trying to figure out which post to respond to. “I wasn’t wild about the weekly question and answer. Sometimes it was just so much, and since it was a brand new idea every week, it was like, ‘Oh my gosh! I read all of this, and then I got to you know look at the question and see if I’m answering it, and I need to respond.’”
On the activity impact questionnaires, Jennifer did not rate any of the course activities at an average of four or higher. The activities she scored as the highest were (in order starting with the highest): field assignment two, field assignment one, field assignment three, final reflection paper, SIOP links, and journals. I found it interesting that the SIOP links made the list since she had admitted not spending time on it. It is possible she rated that higher based on the information she read about SIOP in the course text.

Based on Jennifer’s responses on the course activity impact questionnaires and our interview conversations, I would conclude that the three field assignments and reflections made the greatest positive impact on her. It made sense that she rated the reflection paper and journals towards the top since she talked to me about how the process of reflecting on her experiences helped her to remember what she learned. Perhaps she included the SIOP because it was that model of instruction that she perceived to give her the most practical ideas, which appeared to be of great importance to Jennifer.

The activities that Jennifer rated at the bottom of her list, suggesting very low impact, were the developmental sequence writing samples, which were part of an online discussion, the exam, the research paper, and the text *How Languages are Learned* (Lightbown & Spada, 2006). Out of those activities, based on our conversations, I would conclude that the research paper resulted in the most negative emotional reaction from Jennifer.
Transitions and Quest for Balance

Like Sofia and Kathy, Jennifer’s background was in math and engineering. She, too, was experiencing a transition between the figured worlds of math/engineering and teaching/education.

I actually started last January and I took…I actually signed up for all four courses that they had for ALP and I was a week into it and went, “Oh my gosh! Can I do this?” And especially after whatever more than 25 years of not going to school and even with that…and of course not ever doing anything online but also just the intimidation of writing and not being a great writer and in mechanical engineering, I mean I can think of two papers I wrote. And they were scientific papers. They weren’t looking at my grammar so much as they were looking if my equations were correct and they weren’t trying to analyze how well I wrote the paper.

Jennifer’s struggles with language and writing, her background in engineering, and her lack of experience writing papers made the transition difficult and intimidating. Also, it was clear that the fact that it had been more than 25 years since she had been in school and her attempt to achieve balance in her life added to her anxiety. “At times I feel like I’m back and forth and it’s been a long time since I’ve been in school. That and my daughter is like, ‘help me study history.’ It’s been tough having all those sort of things too.”

In addition to referring to the time it had been since she was in school, Jennifer also referred to age in our conversations. For example, she would speculate about her age in relation to others’. “I’m probably a lot older than some of the people in the program.” In another instance she said, “Other people I’m sure in the course are probably, for one, they’re probably younger than me…” She admitted that she feared age had something to do with her ability. “I didn’t answer the past couple of questions, ‘cause I was like, ‘I’m not sure what that was,’ and that’s the sad thing. I hope it’s not just age, which is
probably a small possibility.” This may indicate that she felt insecure about her age or that she was just speculating as to her position in life versus others in the class. Jennifer’s uncertainty about who she was working with stresses the fact that the class did not create an environment conducive to personal connection. The course needs to be revised to find ways for the adult learners and the instructor to get to know each other to better foster those connections.

Sense of Self

It was apparent that Jennifer struggled to see the connection between what she learned in the ESL for Educators course and her role as a prospective math teacher. She appeared unable to see herself as teacher who would teach math and a teacher who would teach ELLs, which suggested she struggled with that aspect of her professional identity. On more than one occasion Jennifer made it clear that she was not going to be an English teacher. “I’m not planning on ever teaching English.” She stressed that English was not relevant to her content area.

I want a math paper. I mean there are times when you write things out like that you want to answer something in a full sentence, but that would be it. And then still you’re more looking for a number and a label. You’re not really looking for a grammatically correct sentence.

Her comments at times were reflective of an “us versus them” perspective. If the topic was related to English, that was the ESL teacher’s job; not hers. “I don’t know how my comments on verb usage is really going to apply to me if I’m going to teach math and science…it seems like that would be more with the ESL teacher.” Another example reflective of the separation between the ESL teacher and the regular classroom teacher was,
I just don’t know when I would every apply this; especially as a secondary teacher, other than in the English class. I’m not even sure when everybody would apply this. Or, if I had ESL certification, then I could see applying it, because then I would be a certified teacher, and other teachers would be coming to me talking about it, or I would be going and seeing those individual students, but I didn’t…my sense of this class was not that I was supposed to be getting certification, that I was just supposed to be getting an introduction to it.

It was clear in our last interview that Jennifer was still unsure about the relevancy and connection between the content of the course and her secondary math content area.

I was confused about…we went over such specific things on language acquisition, like the questions and all that stuff, and I’m sitting there going, “Okay, I’m planning on teaching secondary math, what really…, How would I even apply this? And when would I be ever grading their questioning? or When would I even be evaluating it, saying ‘oh I think they’re at this level?’” I had trouble understanding the need to know that so specifically in what I consider this class to be more of an introduction…And I’m like going, “Okay. I’m not an English teacher to begin with.” So maybe if I were going to teach in English, that would be an important next step to make, but to sort of throw it in there, I was like confused going, “Am I really going to use this?” In math, there are very few times that you write a sentence at all.

The fact that Jennifer was unable to see the relevance of the course content and material indicates a shortcoming of the course. The responsibility of learning the course content is shared between the instructor and the learner. The job of the instructor should be to learn the student and adjust the course accordingly to help facilitate learning and development. Revising the course so that the instructor can better get to know the adult learners is critical to the success of the course and the program.

Jennifer and Received Knowledge

In the study conducted by Belenky et al. (1986), they found that all of the 135 women they interviewed “wanted some structure in their educational environments” (p. 204). They concluded that “those who relied most heavily upon received knowledge favored the most clear-cut externally imposed pattern” (Belenky, et al., 1986, p. 204). My
interpretation of Jennifer’s comments during our three interviews is that she craved structure, clear-cut expectations, and practical knowledge and therefore, was likely operating on some level as a received knower.

As indicated early on in this portrait of Jennifer and her experiences during the semester of the study, motherhood appeared to be a very important aspect of her identity. Belenky, et al. (1986) concluded that, “often, parenthood initiates an epistemological revolution” (p. 35). Jennifer sought balance in her life between her role as a mother and her roles as student, worker, and educator.

Similar to other received knowers, Jennifer expressed a sense of obligation for doing the “right thing” for herself and her children. As you saw earlier, Jennifer talked about not wanting her kids to lose their mom right after losing their dad. She continued that thought with, “I didn’t want them to come home and mom’s not home for another two hours, you know that sort of thing. And I kind of thought I would have a job by now but it just didn’t work out that way. But that’s fine and I’m just doing what I feel like I should be doing.” This was a moral dilemma. When trying to solve moral dilemmas, received knowers have a tendency to use words such as “should” or “ought,” which is what Jennifer did (Belenky, et al., 1986, p. 46).

Received knowers typically “learn by listening” (Belenky, et al., 1986, p. 37). As I mentioned earlier in Jennifer’s story about her reactions to online learning, she indicated that she preferred to “absorb” what others were saying. By listening to what others had to say, she felt she would learn. This type of thinking aligns somewhat with Perry’s (1970,
1981) concept of dualism. However, the male participants in Perry’s study focused more on lecturing than listening (Belenky, et al., 1986).

While Jennifer did seem to focus on listening as a way of learning, I found evidence that she was operating in some ways within a dualistic framework (Perry, 1970, 1981); similar to Baxter Magolda’s (2001) absolute way of knowing and Kegan’s (1982) instrumental way of knowing. In addition to viewing knowledge as right or wrong, good or bad, people operating under these ways of knowing tend to listen to authorities and view them as sources of truth. In Jennifer’s case, she seemed to view teachers as sources of authority. There were several examples in the interview data that supported this claim. I shared one earlier about Jennifer’s reactions to the research paper when she concluded, “Just tell me how to do the job.”

Similar examples came from conversations we had about online discussions. Jennifer said that one of her struggles with online learning was the fact that she could not figure out exactly where the teacher stood and therefore, was not sure where she should stand.

<In a face-to-face class> you can analyze your fellow classmates and analyze your teacher, too. You would look and see which ones she positively reinforces and which ones she says, “Well, that’s not the case” or…and you would be able to see where your teacher stood on some of the more controversial issues…In some ways you don’t want to say something when you’re not sure. And that is one of the difficulties being online. If you’re in a classroom, you watch the instructor, you can tell what the instructor thinks, and you adjust your statement. You don’t want your instructor to say, “Yeah, I totally disagree with that person” and as a result you’re not getting a great grade…I mean you’re supposed to sort of write up your philosophy, and you’re going, “I hope I’m not crunching with her philosophy.” Maybe we’re not supposed to mold like that, but you can at least be sensitive to it, you know, and knowing a little more about your teacher is not the worst thing in the world. Without direct instruction, I think it’s good for the teacher to comment and write stuff.
Jennifer mentioned the lack of “direct instruction” on other occasions as well. She stressed the importance of receiving input from the instructor in online discussions because of the lack of direct instruction.

We’re not getting any direct instruction. If we were getting direct instruction, yeah let us talk about it, but we aren’t receiving any direct instruction… I think it’s nice to get feedback, especially you know occasionally, on your discussion post, because you aren’t sure if you’re anywhere close…I think when they do comment, “yeah, you’re on the right track,” or “think this way,” or “you might want to read such and such’s comment, because it was similar to yours.” I think those are great, because it helps you to go, “Okay, I’m not totally missing it.”

In reference to the developmental sequence writing samples that were presented and discussed as part of a weekly threaded discussion, Jennifer expressed frustration and indicated that she would have preferred getting the answer. She responded,

I would rather see the sample and have somebody else tell me about it. I’m not planning on ever teaching English, so I don’t intend to probably correct anybody…because I would not do that correctly…It wasn’t bad to read the information. I just would have preferred getting more of just an answer.

Received knowers “like predictability. They want to know what is going to happen when. They like clarity. They want to know exactly what they are expected to do – what they are ‘responsible for’” (Belenky, et al., 1986, p. 42). One of Jennifer’s statements in her final interview reflected a desire to know what was expected of her in the classroom. “I probably could have used a little more information on what the expectation for me, as a teacher in the class, would be.” She continued later, “It would be nice to know what the expectations are. Are the expectations for me to come in and be the sole instructor for that child in my class? Or, am I just part of a group?” She appeared unsure of what she was “responsible for” in the classroom. For adult learners operating under this meaning-making system, revisions to the structure of the course would be
helpful. Making clear what is expected and what they are responsible for might make the experience less overwhelming and frustrating for them.

A common theme in Jennifer’s statements suggested that she was focused on doing what was required; not more and sometimes less. This could have stemmed from her tendency towards received knowing. Received knowers often “feel confused and incapable when the teacher requires that they do original work” (Belenky, et al., 1986, p. 40). Doing simply what was required could have been a result of the fact that Jennifer was struggling to find balance and keep up with the mental demands of modern life (Kegan, 1994). She could have been afraid of failing. Whatever the reasons, it was a common theme that emerged throughout our conversations and therefore, deserves attention.

As noted earlier, Jennifer had a strong negative reaction to the research paper and expressed that she did not see it as beneficial. “I could walk away and say, ‘okay, maybe I could use that,’ but the rest of it…was what was required. You know I did it because that’s what was asked for.”

Similarly, as discussed under her reactions to SIOP, she admitted that she was not willing to do the work. Part of her rationale was that she was not teaching at the time, and therefore did not have a context to which she could apply what she was learning. This has implications for the role of the teaching context, but in Jennifer’s case she may have believed that to be a legitimate reason for not doing what was asked of her. She said, “So unless I’m willing to do it on my own, and I’m sure…my thought was, well as soon as I get a class and am teaching, if I’m concerned, that will be an area I will go to.”
Jennifer also grouped herself with other students and made an assumption that her thinking was in line with what other students thought.

So I was like, “well, I’m not required to, don’t have an application for it right now, because I’m not teaching, where I have an ELL, and I’m supposed to be you know helping that child,” so…I’ll get to that later when I do need to. You know, I think as students we want the information; we want to think that we go and dig deeper, but practically unless we are forced to do it at that moment, it’s more of a, “okay, I’ve got this at the back of my mind. When I need it, I will go…,” and that’s fine. Until I’m in an actual classroom…

Jennifer appeared to place the responsibility for her learning on the authorities rather than on herself. For example, while she admitted she had not read the syllabus ahead of time, she held the instructor responsible for not giving her more of a warning of when the second field assignment was due. She stated, “I would have loved to have had a little bit more cue ahead of time, because it just happened that I looked the week ahead and went, ‘Oh! We have our next project due!’ Because I hadn’t really looked.”

At times the workload seemed to be too much for Jennifer. “I don’t want to take another class! I don’t want to take any extra classes that I don’t have to.” Jennifer even considered giving up altogether to avoid doing the work. “I was saying week 12, ‘I think I just need to go get a job and skip all this – just not teach. It’ll be easier not to have to finish this work.’”

Based on the data, I found several of Jennifer’s comments suggestive of a received way of knowing, which is why I explored it in greater detail. The insights I was able to gleam from her interviews highlighted for me the importance of taking adult learners’ development into consideration when approaching course design and delivery.
Adjusting the presentation of the course to include more explicit expectations and instructions could have resulted in a more positive experience for Jennifer.

Summary of Jennifer’s Experiences

My experience of Jennifer was that she wanted to do the right thing for herself, her kids, and her instructor. She seemed to be dealing with so much in her personal and professional life and at times it was almost too difficult for her to do it all. Having lost her husband to cancer only two years earlier, her four children were her primary concern. Jennifer was undergoing multiple transitions in her life, which caused her to question her identity and seek her place in the world. This ultimately led to the moral dilemma of how going to school and entering a new career would impact her perception of herself as a dedicated mother to her children.

This online course did not appear conducive to Jennifer’s learning, especially given her tendency toward being a received knower who learns best through listening to others; especially authorities. It was important to Jennifer to better understand her instructor, who she saw as one of her sources of authority. She sought to understand where her instructor stood on controversial issues so as not to clash with her views or philosophy. This proved to be difficult in this particular online course.

While Jennifer struggled to find balance during this difficult time of transition and struggled to see the relevance and applicability of what she learned in the ESL for Educators course, she did report appreciating a few of the “real learning experiences:” the field assignments.
Because of Jennifer’s rollercoaster of emotions, fluctuating confidence, and mixed reactions to the course activities, it is reasonable to assert that she did not have a transformational learning experience. It was clear to me that she challenged some of her previously-held assumptions and she was able to reflect on prior experiences with new knowledge and a new perspective. However, she was unable to apply what she learned and unable to even comprehend how she would apply her newly gained knowledge if she were teaching. Combined with the discrepancy of survey results, the uncertainty about whether or not her core attitudes and beliefs changed, and the uncertainty about whether or not how she thought about ELLs and the education of ELLs changed as a result of her participation in the course, leads me to conclude that Jennifer left the course with considerable anger and confusion and did not have a transformational experience.

Patricia

Background

Patricia is a married mother of one young child in her late 20’s. During the time of the study, she was in her third year of teaching high school science at a local charter school while simultaneously taking classes for the ALP program for secondary science. She earned a B.A. in chemistry and biology and pursued teaching as a career because she said she loves kids. “I wanted to stay in a science related profession and I loved building confidence and self-worth into teenagers. Science tends to be very daunting for a lot of kids and showing them that it can be so fun and interesting is very rewarding.”

Patricia grew up in Alaska around a population which she described as predominantly white and Alaskan Indian (Inuit). She really enjoyed growing up there and
greatly appreciated the cultural traditions of the Inuit people, but she was saddened how the Alaskan natives were often living in poverty and suffered from alcoholism.

I absolutely loved it. I thought it was amazing. Just because I went to a great school where they really celebrated that culture because it was such a great portion of the population they were involved with a lot of that kind of connection in the curriculum and so I went to an elementary school…we had these ballets where they would make into these cultural days and we’d go to class and make crafts and different cultural things. And there was cooking involved of native foods from the Inuits and had many teachers that were Alaskan natives; so I felt like it was amazing. However, I would say the only negative part that I experienced was that a lot of the natives kind of like the American Indians would sadly turn to alcoholism and poverty, too…a lot of them were living in poverty unless they were working for the oil companies. That was the only exception. They were impoverished unless they were working for ARCO or something like that.

I asked Patricia about her exposure to the Inuit language. She mentioned that she picked up a little bit through exposure, but more than the language, Patricia appeared to appreciate the culture and cultural traditions. She said that she may even want to go back to Alaska one day to teach.

The classroom, everything was done in English, but outside of school I’d hear Inuit. I learned a little bit here and there, but mostly that was isolated to the cultural events that we went to. We had a lot of cultural events outside of school that involved their tribal traditions. It was fun. I kind of think it would be really neat to go back there and teach in one of the remote regions. I really enjoyed it and I had some great friends that were Inuit and so I really grew an appreciation for the culture.

Patricia moved to Colorado when she was 16. Other than her dream of potentially moving back to Alaska to teach, she indicated that she would likely stay in Colorado unless her husband’s work takes them elsewhere. “I think I probably will stay. I think that probably depends on…my husband’s doing his master’s in physics right now; so he will be finishing that next year, and so if he gets a job in a different state that might determine where we live.”
Patricia grew up knowing Spanish, but felt that it had slipped away over time. Her father was half Mexican and half Apache Indian and he spoke to Patricia and her brother and sister in Spanish when they were younger.

He was raised in a Spanish-speaking house, but he was raised in New Mexico and California and everybody in the family, he has six brothers and sisters and they are all fluent in Spanish, and his mother is full-blooded Apache Indian and his father was full-blooded Mexican, and so they typically spoke Spanish at home. Any time they spoke English was when they were in school...So he taught us a lot in Spanish. My sister was younger and she didn’t get as much as my brother and I did, but he would speak to us in Spanish probably until my early adolescence when my parents divorced and he separated from the family.

Patricia also studied some Spanish in high school, but she admitted that her focus was not on learning Spanish, but rather on science. Her basic knowledge of the language, though, helped her to understand some of her Spanish-speaking students.

At that point I was in high school and I was taking Spanish classes and my focus mentally was more on my other academics like science, and I didn’t really care a whole lot about my Spanish classes, unfortunately. I wish I would have, but it slipped away ‘cause I didn’t practice it. So now when I hear my students talk in Spanish I can understand a good bit of what they said, but I can’t understand the whole thing and I could pick up words here and there based on all of...and the pattern of speech and the way the words are organized that sometimes makes sense to me. But overall I don’t have any fluency and understanding of it anymore.

Teaching Experience

As I mentioned, Patricia was in her third year of teaching high school science at a local charter school. She described additional teaching-related experience on her background questionnaire. “Before teaching I worked as a research assistant in the lab at a local university. I also have worked with kids afflicted with Reactive Attachment Disorder. I have a few years of experience working at treatment centers for at-risk
adolescent girl populations.” Patricia rated her overall teaching experience at two and a half out of five, slightly higher than a novice.

Patricia had quite a bit of experience working with ELLs. She had ELLs in every class, every semester of her three years teaching at her current school; including the semester of the study. “I have had the opportunity to work with many ESL students from a wide variety of cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds. The vast majority of ESL students I work with in my classroom are Hispanic; however, I work with the occasional ‘study abroad’ student from countries such as Cuba, Korea, China, Lebanon, etc.”

Patricia described feeling anxious and unprepared to teach her ELLs because she had no prior training on how to work with linguistically diverse learners. In our first interview she explained, “I think for the most part I felt anxiety actually because I didn’t know what was the appropriate way to effectively teach kids that barely knew the language.” She insisted that she was “not an expert” and described feeling “completely unprepared.”

Patricia had more experience working with ELLs in the U.S. school system than any other participant. Even though she had experience, due to her lack of training and uncertainty, she rated her confidence to teach them low at two out of five. In our first interview she discussed her hopes for the course. “I think the most helpful for me is to figure out exactly what strategies I can start implementing in my classroom that will be effective. That’s really what my interest in this course is. What can I do tomorrow?”
Beliefs and Understandings about Linguistic Diversity

Patricia rated her confidence in teaching ELLs as low. However, she rated her interest in having ELLs in her classroom higher at a four out of five. Based on our conversations, Patricia had some assumptions about CLD learners, some of which she challenged in the ESL for Educators course.

Patricia discussed what she described as disparities between the Hispanic students and the non-Hispanic ELLs.

So there’s a huge distinction between the way the Hispanic students are and the way the rest of the ELLs seem to be: from a motivation perspective, too. And unfortunately the Hispanic kids, I don’t know if it’s self-efficacy issue for them, I kind of feel like it is, or if it’s a cultural thing, but especially for the boys that they don’t really want to be good at school necessarily, because it’s not something that’s of value in their culture, it seems like. It’s just very different between the ELLs.

Some of these perceptions may have been influenced by her experiences with her father. The fact that he left the family when she was in ninth grade appeared to impact the way Patricia thought about the Hispanic students, the male students and their fathers in particular.

I think that my dad was probably what I feel might be a typical Hispanic male. And maybe that’s negative. Maybe I see it in a negative light because of what my experiences were in my childhood especially. I see a lot of similarities between the way he was and the way that some of my Hispanic students are and Hispanic father figures are. They’re very uninvolved unless it’s a discipline issue and they expect the women to do a lot of the work and they don’t value education that much. It seems like it’s, to me, and I don’t mean to put any racial profiling on them, but my experience has been that they can be a bit self-centered and patriarchal to an extent that’s not helpful to the child.

Many of Patricia’s understandings about her CLD learners in the beginning of the course involved a separation of the Hispanic students and “others.” Her above comments
are reflective of that. She expressed similar observations in her initial journal entry as well. “Students from other countries seem to work harder and have greater motivation to learn the language.”

One of the assumptions that Patricia revealed to me in our first interview was that ELLs “needed more to catch up in the language before they could even attempt to understand the academic material.” This was an area in which she reported being “uncertain” on her Language Attitudes of Teachers Scale (LATS). She expressed being unsure whether or not the learning of English for ELLs should take precedence over learning subject matter. However, she responded that the rapid learning of English should not be a priority if it meant losing the ability to speak their native language. To support that sentiment of embracing one’s language and culture, in the conclusion of her initial journal entry Patricia wrote,

Allowing the ESL student the opportunity to take pride their own cultural background and language sets the ESL student at ease in the realization that they do not have to leave their origins behind; they can embrace a new language while retaining a sense of where they came from and who they are.

Overall, Patricia’s survey results revealed that she was quite tolerant of linguistic diversity. Patricia strongly supported the idea of the government providing money to fund better programs for ELLs and was strongly in favor of teachers receiving training on how to meet the needs of linguistically diverse learners. In fact, a common theme throughout our conversations and within Patricia’s reflections was that of training and the great need for more of it. One of her first comments to me in our first interview was, “With the little reading we’ve done in the class so far I think it’s been really eye-opening to understand
the huge impact that it can have of just more training. I was actually surprised at the lack of training that is involved.”

Reported Changes as a Result of Course Participation

In the beginning of the course Patricia reported having very little to some knowledge on most topics on the Knowledge of ELL issues survey. Two of the statements did not fall under those categories, though. She perceived herself to have “quite a bit of knowledge” about the local ELL population, possibly due to her experience, but “no knowledge” about local resources or organizations that serve ELLs and their families.

Upon completing the course, her ratings of those two items did not change much. She felt that she still had “quite a bit of knowledge” of the local ELL population, but her perceived knowledge of local resources to help them increased slightly from “no knowledge” to “very little knowledge.” For the remaining eight topics, her scores changed from “very little knowledge” and “some knowledge” at the beginning to “quite a bit of knowledge” and “extensive knowledge” at the end. In fact, on six of the ten topics she rated herself as having “extensive knowledge” after completing the course.

Patricia’s LATS score increased by four points from the beginning to the end of the semester. The changes in responses were only by one degree of agreement in each case. For example, on the pre-semester survey she answered “strongly disagree” to a statement, which she changed to “disagree” on the post-semester survey. So her overall attitudes did not appear to change; just the level of strength of the agreement or disagreement changed.
Patricia did change one of the statements from “uncertain” to “disagree,” however. Originally she reported being unsure about whether “At school, the learning of the English language by non- or limited-English proficient children should take precedence over learning subject matter.” By the end she reported feeling that learning English should not take precedence over learning academic content, an assumption which she challenged as a result of her participation in the course.

Over the course of the semester, Patricia mentioned several “aha moments” or “big revelations” that came about due to her course experiences. In our mid-semester interview she reported,

I think that part of the big revelation for me so far has just been that for these ELL students I have to be thinking about the whole student and not just the language, but what else are they experiencing at home that’s affecting…what else are they experiencing in life that could be affecting where they are at right now? If they are living at a poverty level, then that primary need will go before anything else. Before they can begin to feel like they can take in information, they need to have their primary needs met first…I think that’s been the big thing is that it’s not just the language component, but there are so many other components that are involved in their ability to retain and learn information.

She reflected on the disparity she described earlier between the Hispanic students and “other ELLs” through a new lens.

A great example I have of that is I have one Korean student who came in not knowing any English whatsoever. I mean he couldn’t speak any English at all. He’s an exchange student, and he’s staying with a family – you know an American family. On the other hand, I have the student who I was talking about before, who knows barely any English, and he’s Hispanic, and he’s probably living at poverty level right now. And there is a huge difference in the amount of growth that I see between the two boys. The Korean student is passing in full sentences now, and he is completing assignments at the same level as other students in the class, except with grammar mistakes and spelling mistakes. It’s incredible how much progress he’s made versus the Hispanic student who has been in public education for years now, who is speaking. I’m certain of it that they speak only Spanish at home, and he’s living at poverty level, and I think
there is some gang and drug involvement with him, and he’s made virtually no progress. Its’ those situations that I look at, and it’s not just the language component; it’s everything else that you have to be thinking about when you teach these kids.

Her new awareness revolved around the importance at looking at all of the potential factors affecting the child; not just the language component resulted in an emotional reaction from Patricia. As mentioned in the results chapter, in our final interview Patricia reported feeling sad as she reflected on previous experiences with ELLs from a new perspective based on her new knowledge. She described a specific experience that caused her to feel sad.

Well, I had this female student two years ago, and she was absolutely silent through the whole entire semester – didn’t turn in any work, you know, just didn’t do anything. And I didn’t know what to think of it. And I would see her sitting with Hispanic friends, and I just wasn’t sure what was going on there – if it was lack of motivation, if there was a home things going on…I wasn’t sure, and she wouldn’t let me in. I would try to interact with her, and there was just nothing. And she didn’t interact with any of her other peers too. So looking back, I’ve seen her this previous semester in other classes, and I’ve talked to other teachers, and she’s starting to talk. She was like that in other classes as well; it wasn’t just mine that she was like that in. Maybe I could have employed some sort of appreciation for her culture, and her identity, and where she came from…just to make sure she is feeling welcome in class, because when I hit her with questions about material, she’s probably really overwhelmed because she doesn’t understand what’s going on. If I would’ve gone back…if I could do it over, I would’ve done everything that I could have to make her feel welcome first and comfortable in the classroom. And then I would’ve, at that point, tried to address the language and where she was at with her language maybe.

When I asked her if there was something specific from the course that made her think differently about that experience, she replied,

Well, the silent stage in language theory is definitely where that thought started to arise and then affective barriers. Affective issues really put all of that together for me; at least that one instance…Comprehensible input was probably – I mean I think that was one of the huge ideas for me to get into my head, was that anything that I present to them really needs to be comprehensible to them, so I need to make sure that I can assess their levels of content and language knowledge, and
then combine those things together and make sure that I am presenting information in a way that they can understand; so that was huge. And that’s part of the sadness, too, that I could’ve been doing that instead of probably presenting material that was way above their head, that they couldn’t even grasp, because they didn’t have the foundation, whether it was because of previous learning experience, previous background, whatever it was.

Not only did Patricia reflect on prior experiences through a new lens and develop new understandings and beliefs about her students, she appeared to have taken on a more global perspective about how the education of her ELLs could potentially impact society as well.

I think it’s hugely important that we don’t address, in science specifically, the needs of ELL students. They are not ever going to have the chance to be in careers that are related to science and technology, because math and science are traditionally, it sounds like from the statistics, the hardest subjects for them to gain proficiency in. And so, if they can get to proficiency in these content areas, then that increases our chances of having those guys in those professions later on. And in the country, we can stay the leader in those fields. I think it’s hugely important as a society. That was the big breakthrough for me is that this is not only important because we have ELL students in our classroom. This is important because it affects our society as a whole if we don’t address this population, because they’re increasing so quickly.

Because Patricia was teaching during the time of the study, like Kathy, she was able to take what she was learning in the course and directly apply it to her teaching context. Therefore, not only did she change her beliefs and understandings about linguistic diversity, she also changed her teaching practice. When I asked her in our final interview if she had been able to do things differently in her classroom, she responded,

I have. I have been able to do some things differently. I’ve really made an effort to try to know the kids on a personal level, especially those ELL kids and make sure we talk about their home life and not in an invading way, but just “what do you like to do when you have free time?” kind of thing. Trying to really incorporate them in the classroom with cooperative learning strategies and making sure they are interacting with each other and not just within their group but also getting to know the other kids that are of different backgrounds in the classroom. It’s not just about them getting to know other kids; it’s about other
kids getting to know them, too; so that they can go to class and really feel comfortable in that sense.

Not only was Patricia able to make changes to her teaching practice, but as mentioned in chapter four, she was also able to take what she learned and, along with her principal, provide trainings to other teachers in her school about sheltered content instruction techniques. “We need something in place,” she told me. She reiterated the fact that teachers need more training, which she felt more strongly about after going through the training process. “I’m super excited about it, and we’ll see what happens. I think that a lot of the teachers were…I think we just need more training. You know, teachers just need so much more training on how to implement the SIOP model into their classrooms.” Patricia also expressed a need for “more observation time.” Watching someone who was skilled in that area would be “hugely beneficial,” according to Patricia.

The process of translating course activities into leadership resulted in a great deal of learning for Patricia. “That’s where a lot of the learning for me has taken place.” She continued to say, “I think a lot of the things that I’ve been learning about have happened at work and delving into the book, the actual textbook that we have in this class, and applying a lot of the concepts to what we’re trying to improve at our school.” I will describe Patricia’s reactions to each of the course activities more specifically in the next section.

Over the course of the semester, Patricia reported having gained not only knowledge, but confidence to teach ELLs. Her reported level of confidence increased from a two to a four out of five and her reported interest in working with ELLs increased as well from a four to a five out of five. On her mid-semester journal entry she wrote,
At the half-way point in the semester I have been able to accumulate a variety of tools and knowledge that will allow me to better serve English language learners…At this point in the semester I feel a bit more at ease when addressing some of the challenges that ELL students struggle with because I am able to analyze behaviors and patterns and then address the issue by using components of the SIOP model.

In her final interview she described feeling “empowered” and more confident. “I feel like I can do it.” She reported on her final questionnaire that the ESL for Educators course prepared her very well to meet the needs of her ELLs. However, she wished there had been more practical application incorporated.

The course was very informative and helpful as a foundation for understanding the needs and complexities of ELL students in the mainstream classroom. I only wish I could have practiced more application within assignments to be more comfortable with teaching using sheltered content instruction.

Specific Reactions to Course Activities

Patricia found the information presented in the ELL directors panel discussion video, the first field assignment, surprising for a couple of reasons. In her write-up she explained, “One of the most surprising factors that the panel discussion allowed me to become aware of was the complexity of providing services for large populations of ELL students.” She was also surprised for another reason. “My general reaction to the panel discussion was surprise at how much I did not know.”

In her write-up, Patricia mentioned again her thoughts on the need for more training. “As a teacher, it forced me to consider the fact that all teachers probably need to have an LDE endorsement, or many hours of some type of ESL training to ensure that they know how to appropriately accommodate the growing population of ESL students.” She said, “Now when we watched that panel discussion I was kind of happy to see that
they were starting to require the LDE endorsement to hire teachers, is what it sounded like.”

During our mid-semester interview she discussed her reactions to the video in terms of the resources that are needed to properly educate ELLs.

The first field assignment on the video, I think my take on that was just that there needs to be a huge amount of resources put into ELL programs across the nation to be able to make it something that is effective. It just seems like they had so much to conquer, so much to…so many students that needed help and not enough resources across the board. I think that was the big revelation that I had with that.

To conclude her thoughts on the first field assignment, Patricia expressed to me in our final interview that she gained a lot from the panel discussion. “I gained a lot from the panel, because it was just – I didn’t know anything about it, and that was my first glimpse into what it was really like.” As a result, she rated the panel discussion on the activity impact questionnaire as having the greatest impact on her thinking.

For the second field assignment, the cultural experience, her reactions were more personal. She described feeling “out of place” and at times “unwanted.” Those feelings caused her to grow in her sense of empathy and understanding for ELLs. In her write-up she described her experience.

I decided to attend a Jewish Temple to experience a language that is completely foreign to any of my previous experiences. Being exposed to Catholicism and Christianity, I have virtually no knowledge of the Jewish faith or the Hebrew language…My experience led me to believe that ELL students in the United States and elsewhere may feel very lost and frightened in the beginning, as well as ostracized from the mainstream culture…Although attending the service on a night of Yom Kippur was uncomfortable at times, I was set more at east by being able to meet and converse with a woman next to me who was kind enough to share her prayer book…Although I felt out of place, I can imagine that being the only one who is unfamiliar with the language would make me feel less confident and more frightened as would ELL students facing this type of situation.
There seems to be an underlying theme of responsibility of the Jewish faith to hold on to the exclusivity of their culture and religion. This discussion led me to feel very uncomfortable and out of place. I felt unwanted at the Temple as a result of this discussion.

Culture, language and religion are key to a person’s identity. When an individual is immersed in another language/culture they may have to face the questioning of their own identity. My analysis of the experience in the Jewish Temple led me to believe that it is of the utmost importance to make a student feel welcome and wanted.

When I asked Patricia about whether or not her experience at the Jewish temple caused her to reflect on some of her previous experiences differently, her response was,

Oh, absolutely! Absolutely, because you’re in this just a completely different world; and nothing makes sense, because it’s a totally different environment, and interaction with each other; and everything is different. And I didn’t really realize that it was that different, and that it was so dependent on having a welcoming environment. That’s probably one of the biggest reasons I feel sad right here is because I was so concentrated on content, content, content, and I didn’t think in that way at that time.

For field assignment three, the interview and observation, Patricia rated that activity as making the second greatest impact on her, second to the panel discussion video. However, she only mentioned her experiences briefly in our final interview. “I gained a lot from that last observation that I did. I really tried to apply the components of the SIOP model to analyze that lesson plan, and I got a lot out of it by doing it that way.” This statement combined with Patricia’s write-up and analysis of the experience highlighted what I considered to be Patricia’s analytical nature. I will discuss this in further detail later in this portrait.

Patricia responded favorably to the field assignments in general. In addition, she also reacted positively to the readings, writings and reflections. “One of the biggest things about the course is all of the increased awareness through the readings and I think
the writings, the essays and the reflections.” Opposite of Jennifer, Patricia described the research paper as a great learning experience for her; possibly the best. “That final research paper was probably the best learning experience that I had in the class, and that just might be because of the way I work.” She expanded on that notion of how she works and the type of learner she is in an earlier interview.

The field work and the journal, those are really where I’m getting the most benefits from. And I think maybe that has to do with just how I am as a learner. When I write, I tend to have little luck if any developing things as I write; and so maybe that helps me develop my ideas as opposed to writing on a direct topic in a discussion.

With respect to the readings, she indicated that she found them valuable and beneficial to her learning and to her teaching.

Both of the <textbooks> to me are pretty valuable. The theories are what are incredibly enlightening just to me. It really allowed me to look at my students and say, “Okay, so this is what might be going on here.” Like the affective barrier theory, or hypothesis. Some of those ideas were really important for me to look at as a cause and then as a way to near myself towards the solution. So if they’re distracted by all these other things or overwhelmed by all these other things, what can I do to make that easier for them? Or, how can I get through that so that we conquer what we need to conquer? So, a lot of those things are causes of behavior; they are extremely important I think to learn about, because then you can think about how you can guide your teaching to you know directly assess those issues.

When I inquired as to whether there was any particular activity that had contributed most to her shifts in thinking, she referred to the sheltered content instruction textbook (Echevarria & Graves, 2010) and again mentioned the importance of the theories she learned about.

I think it was when we went over the theories that I first started thinking about all of this stuff. That was where it started, and then we got to the chapter on affective issues. So that was chapter four, and I would say sheltered instruction, the SIOP chapter was extremely useful, because it was like here we have all of these
theories and chapter three where we talk about the SIOP model and how am I going to assess all of those different possibilities of what could be happening there, and what could be in play there. So, the SIOP model was cool, because it just gave me all of these ideas for how to individually pick out things that would be good for specific students.

In general, Patricia appeared to appreciate each of the readings, but showed a definite preference for the sheltered content instruction book (Echevarria & Graves, 2010). Not only did she learn a lot from it, but she was also able to apply what she learned from it to her students and her classroom. And beyond that, she used that book as a resource for the training that she conducted with her principal for her fellow teachers.

Another course activity that Patricia and I discussed was the online discussion component of the course. Patricia reported being very comfortable with the online learning environment both at the beginning and the end of the course. However, she did not indicate that the online discussions were beneficial. Patricia had taken other courses online before and described her reaction to online discussions in general in our first interview.

So my experience with the online classes is that in the discussions in particular some discussions can be very eye-opening and others I kind of feel like I’m just trying to find something to talk about. I think it depends, I actually think how well the courses work out hugely depends on the questions that are asked in the discussion.

At the mid-way point in the semester she had formed an opinion about the online discussions in this particular course, which she described as “repetitive” and “not very challenging.” “I have not obtained a lot from them.” In our interview she described a couple of examples and offered her opinion about the type of discussion prompt that would be more conducive to an in-depth discussion.
Well I think that within the last couple of weeks, it just seems like a lot of people say...like the discussion on power imbalances, I kind of felt like everybody had the same thing to say, which isn’t a bad thing. It just meant that I didn’t see any other way to really talk about it as far as examples. In the classroom, what could you see as examples of it in the classroom? And, how might you assess those or change or adapt to those situations? I just kind of felt like everybody talked about the same thing – about the student becoming quiet. And, how do you put that back and balance it back. It just seemed like you know everybody was saying the same thing. I didn’t get a whole lot out of it just because of that. That’s just one of the examples. It might be just that it’s the…it’s not the students necessarily, like, I don’t know if the students are feeding off of each other maybe, maybe a little bit. I think some of that happens in online classes where they see somebody say something, and “Oh, that sounds good, so maybe I’ll add onto that a little bit.” You kind of expand on each other, which is great, but it decreases the variety of the responses. Maybe, taking a big topic and offering options within that topic to talk about. For instance, this week…this week was good; because of…it’s like asking you to pick a couple of the strategies that you find that are important basically. So, there’s a drawback to this. What I saw already is that people were choosing a couple of the strategies that were at the very beginning of the reading – that’s where they were in the reading. And then some of the people had some that were further in the reading. I don’t know…I think that option is better, when you have different things to go off of and not just one question that everybody is responding to, you know what I mean?

In our final interview Patricia reflected on the online discussions overall and offered suggestions for how they might be improved.

The one thing that was difficult for me, too, that at times felt like busy work, were the discussions. If I were to change things, if I was in control of the class, I would probably break it down into two week discussions instead of one week discussions, and I would have it a really in-depth question that they have to do a reading on, or that they have to analyze a bit before answering it, because I kind of felt like I could go on and do it in about 20 minutes thoughtfully, but at times, I didn’t have that time to go on as frequently to respond to people, to really get into it in that week time frame, because in the middle of the week I’m planning and grading…I would extend it to two weeks and give it a more in-depth question.

Part of Patricia’s reaction to the online learning environment and the online discussions appeared to be influenced by instructor participation. In our first interview she described the instructor participation as “extremely helpful;” especially since she had not seen that level of instructor participation in her previous online courses.
I think the weekly discussions, and actually I’ve never had an instructor respond back in discussions before. They just kind of monitor the discussions…to actually see <Eva> respond back to everybody this last week with really in-depth observations and comments…I think that was extremely helpful and I just haven’t seen that before in either of my other classes. So that’s probably something that would really help everybody.

In our mid-semester interview, Patricia commented on the feedback she was getting from the instructor on her papers, which she again found helpful.

I’ve been getting good feedback on the papers. I really appreciate that there’s, you know, comments. She wrote five comments in the margin that she’s re-uploading. Again, I haven’t had a professor do that for either. I’ve just had a grade posted. So, that’s really nice to see feedback on there; and I’m liking that. I’m appreciating it, and I’m getting a lot from it, so that’s good.

However, when the topic of feedback came up again later in that interview, she indicated a sense of disappointment that her instructor’s decreased participation in the online discussions. She reflected on how it was at the beginning of the semester. “Like the first one or two times she was responding within the week that the discussion was occurring, and it was really, really good that time. So that would be my feedback on that.” She empathized with her instructor, though. “I’m sure that’s really difficult. I know what that’s like, having to be grading things and doing things as they are happening, and I realize that it’s just a lot.”

The way Patricia rated the course activities on the activity impact questionnaires seemed to be in line with the way she described her reactions in our interviews. Out of the activities that she rated at an average of four or higher out of five, this was the order in which she put them (starting with the activities that she rated the highest): field assignment one (panel discussion), field assignment three (observation/interview), self-reflection paper, research paper, sheltered content instruction textbook, journals,
instructor feedback/participation/input, field assignment two, and the how languages are
learned textbook.

Sense of Self

Throughout our three interviews, Patricia rarely talked about herself on a personal
level. She responded to the questions posed and offered insights into the type of learner
and teacher she was, but did not tend to offer additional personal information. Therefore,
it was more difficult to determine what Patricia’s sense of herself was. When I analyzed
the interview data for “I-statements,” I only found a few. She described herself as “Type
A” and “detail-oriented” with a need to “plan, plan, plan, plan, plan.” That was it. The
rest of Patricia’s sense of self had to be inferred from other types of statements.

Patricia and Procedural Knowing

My overall impression of Patricia was that she was thoughtful, analytical, logical,
and pragmatic. Our first two interviews were conducted on the phone and our final
interview was conducted in person. My reactions to our phone interviews were that they
were very straight-forward and to the point. When we met in person and had the
opportunity to chat on a more personal level, I was able to get a more personal sense of
Patricia. I found her to be very friendly, positive, optimistic, and kind-spirited. She
appeared calm and yet enthusiastic about what she was doing for her students.

When I read through the women’s ways of knowing (Belenky, et al., 1986), I
found several aspects of the procedural way of knowing reflected in Patricia’s statements,
assignment write-ups and reflections. I was particularly struck by the synopsis that
“procedural knowers are practical, pragmatic problem-solvers…Their feet are planted
firmly on the ground. They are trying to take control of their lives in a planned, deliberate fashion” (Belenky, et al., 1986, p. 99). While I do not claim to understand how she approached her life in general, I felt as though I had a good sense of the ways she approached her teaching, and the above statement accurately reflected my sense of Patricia.

Similar to participants in Belenky et al.’s (1986) study, Patricia tended to favor “reasoned reflection” (p. 88), which was similar to Perry’s (1970) concept of “critical reasoning.” An example that stood out to me was in Patricia’s write-up of the cultural field experience. She wrote, “In my analysis of the experience in the Jewish Temple…” She appeared to take a step back from her experience to reflect on it in a reasoned, analytical and objective way.

Taking an objective stance on this and other experiences was a common action for Patricia and common to procedural knowers in general. “Procedural knowledge is more objective than subjective” (Belenky, et al., 1986, p. 98). Because of this, my interpretation of Patricia was that she did not struggle to make subject-object shifts (Kegan, 1994), at least not in our conversations. In fact, I did not find a single instance where Patricia appeared subject to her experiences. There was only one time in my analysis that I hastily indicated a subject stance. It stemmed from this statement in our final interview: “Does it just sound like I’m a nervous wreck right now!??” However, she followed up that statement with, “I’m not really. I just try to be very thorough with what steps I take.” The full statement revealed a more objective stance.
Procedural knowers tend to be “absorbed in the business of acquiring and applying procedures for obtaining and communicating knowledge” (Belenky, et al., 1986, p. 95). While the degree of involvement in that process may vary from person to person, “the emphasis on procedures, skills, and techniques was common to all” (Belenky, et al., 1986, p. 95). The fact that Patricia acknowledged that she was thorough and detail-oriented with a need to plan things in a structured, organized way, was in line with the procedural way of knowing. One example of this was reflected in a statement she made about lesson plans in our final interview. “I really need something very straightforward to look at at the beginning of the day, where I can see bullet points, and I could just go through those – just as a review before I get started.”

Another process of procedural thinking which Patricia appeared to espouse was that by increasing her knowledge and skills, she was able to “experience an increasing sense of control. The world becomes more manageable” (Belenky, et al., 1986, p. 96). While Patricia expressed a sense of anxiousness about changing her lesson plans to meet the needs of her students because of the newness of it all, she appeared to maintain a sense of control.

Well, that’s what this Christmas break is about for me, because I have such a large population of ELLs, I am changing a lot of my lesson plans, all of my lesson plans, my daily lesson plans to include strategies that will allow me to address their needs. I’m anxious and nervous about how to structure those lesson plans. I mean I can use the SIOP model as a guide, but we have a template to follow already at our school, so I’m trying to figure out, and it includes language objectives in there, but it’s more along the lines of, “how can I redo my daily agenda?” in a way that I can make sure that all of their needs are being assessed.

It seemed to help that she had a plan from the very beginning and she stuck with it. In our final interview she said, “I think I started the semester, just ‘How am I going to make this
benefit me in the classroom now?’ and I think I just geared myself that way the whole
time, and in that way it was very, very helpful.”

Based on Patricia’s perceived gain in knowledge, she described being able to
better analyze her students, where they might be coming from, and what factors might be
affecting them in school. This phenomenon is common to those who have tendencies
towards a procedural way of knowing. They often assume that “certain phenomena have
many potential meanings” depending on the way they view them. “In order to fully
understand the phenomenon, she had to view it from a variety of angles” (Belenky, et al.,
1986, p. 98).

Finally, while my interpretation of Patricia is that she identified with both
separate and connected aspects of the procedural way of knowing, one of the qualities of
connected knowers that I found reflected in Patricia’s statements was that of care. As
mentioned in Sofia’s portrait, connected knowers care about the objects they seek to
understand (Belenky, et al., 1986, p. 124). It was clear that Patricia cared about her
students and it seemed important to her to learn everything she could to help them. This
was evident when she spoke of feeling “sad” about how she handled students in the past
and how she wished she would have known then what she knows now. That way she
could have been able to better understand them and help them. The feeling of care was
also evident when she talked about the training she provided to her colleagues and how
she hoped it would help the students and the school.

I feel like it’s benefited the school, and at this point, in getting the process going,
so hopefully we’ll see something. And, maybe we can get a class going or…we
need more training, I think is the key for teachers to implement this…I hope that
it helps the students…and I hope we can improve things at our school.
Summary of Patricia’s Experiences

Due to her active participation in the course and the application of what she learned to her teaching context, I am confident that Patricia changed not only what she knew and thought, but how she thought about ELLs and the education of ELLs. Her course participation and her involvement in the community of practice at her school appeared to result in a transformative learning experience for Patricia. She reported gaining both knowledge and confidence, and with tendencies towards procedural knowing, she was able to analyze and reflect on her experiences for the benefit of her students, her school, and herself.

Steven

Background

My impression of Steven was that he was a confident, social, and charismatic, single man in his upper 20’s with diverse interests, goals, and aspirations. He was enrolled in the ALP program, but indicated that he had not chosen a specific content area of concentration. He earned his B.A. in social science and fluctuated in his feelings about wanting to teach. He felt he was “destined to be an educator;” yet he had concerns about the teaching profession and education in general. “I have questions about the future of teaching…the teaching career, the occupation. I have concerns about the education system.” It was clear that the semester of the study was a time of “soul-searching” for Steven.

I was not clear on Steven’s family background as he did not talk much about it. What I learned of his upbringing was that it was not ideal for him. He moved around a lot
as a young child and has lived in Colorado since the age of 12. “I came from a pretty rough background. My mom had two kids when she was 19, single..., moving on everywhere.” In his initial background questionnaire, Steven wrote, “As a child I moved around a lot, in fact, I cannot remember an address before the age of 12.”

Steven indicated that he was raised in a “very much English speaking environment.” However, in his initial journal he wrote, “I have witnessed and been a part of multilingual education my entire life.” On his background questionnaire, Steven expanded on that statement. He wrote,

I am an international enthusiast who has travelled and studied the people, cultures, religions, languages of a given group of people. The social aspect of human connection is truly fascinating! Languages other than English have never been utilized around me regarding my family although I have Spanish, German, Russian, Ukrainian and English familial language backgrounds.

Steven’s native language is English, but he reported knowledge of Spanish and Thai with “language awareness in multiple other languages/dialects.” He rated his proficiency in both Spanish and Thai at three out of five. His knowledge of Thai came from his experiences in Thailand as part of a study abroad program, which he did as an undergraduate.

I lived in Thailand for a few months in which I’m going to be going back here pretty quick and once I went over there I was involved with students, I was just involved in so many different things. I got into playing music out there, started performing and it’s just one of those things…

One observation he made about the Thai culture and education was,

What’s interesting about Thai culture and education is that they’re very, very traditional. They use the same methods they’ve been using for a long time. That is until a westerner comes over and they get in a class and they try and take over and take the reins. To teach English over there you just have to be from an English-speaking country.
Upon conclusion of the course, Steven had plans to return to Thailand and spend time in Burma as well.

I’m in the process of setting all that stuff up. A friend of mine is going to be in Burma and we’re hoping to meet over there and do a little…we want to team up and we have this vision to save the world with medicine and through education. So yeah I want to get out there and go travel a bit.

He described a little more about what he planned to do during his time in Thailand.

Well, I’ll be training six days a week, twice a day. I’ll have Sundays off. I’m going to Burma to meet my girlfriend; she’s going on a medical mission to Burma, and I’ll be going out there to meet with her for a couple of weeks. So, for three months, I’ll basically be training six days a week…It’s for, have you heard of Muay Thai fighting style? It’s kickboxing. It’s where the dudes stand up and they kick with their legs, you know and their elbows, stuff like that. Anyway, I’m going out there to study a style called Muay Tang Pa, which is a conglomeration of five different Southeast Asian studies. And its, the whole goal is mental mastery, the study of ancient martial arts, so built into the program, into what I’m going to be doing, is a lot of meditation, a lot of yoga, and a lot of civil work, you know, included…a lot of cooking for monks and stuff.

Steven also indicated that he may visit schools while he is there. “I’ll be able to work with some monks over there; I’ll be able to go to some schools; I’ll be able to go to Burma to work with the medical mission…” Steven sounded very excited about his trip to Asia. “Asia is my place of desire!”

Teaching Experience

Steven was in a teacher education program as an undergraduate. However, his study abroad experience caused him to change course. “Well, I spent a lot of time when I was doing my undergrad…I started towards teaching. I was in a teaching education program with a history endorsement, and then I went on a study abroad program and my track kind of changed and was thinking more international.”
Steven was not teaching during the semester of the study, but had taught previously. He taught a University Studies course for three years (2008-2010). In our final interview he reflected on his experiences there.

When I was working at a local university teaching those classes I actually felt good, you know, because it was a mental exercise, working with young minds, and having great lesson plans, and teach things, you know things like that. I enjoyed that, and I need to get back to that.

On his background questionnaire, Steven indicated that he was a former higher education administrator, but did not expand on that. He only mentioned that he “worked largely with international student populations.” Overall, Steven rated his teaching experience at a three out of five, half-way between a novice and a veteran.

Beliefs and Understandings about Linguistic Diversity

Based on several of his written and oral statements along with the results of his LATS survey, my interpretation of Steven was that his thinking was in line with an “English-only” mentality. Steven’s responses to statements on the LATS supported an English-only philosophy. For example, he strongly agreed that to be considered American one should speak English and that the government should require that all government business (including voting) be conducted in English. In his final journal entry he wrote,

As English is the dominant, major language of business worldwide, our students MUST have the ability to compete on this simple level. Therefore, I will never be able to support curriculum or educational legislation that does not maintain English as the primary, most necessary language of instruction.

In his final reflection paper, Steven expressed additional sentiments in line with what I consider to be an English-only philosophy.
When speaking of the idea of bilingualism, and more specifically how to implement working, effective plans, skepticism has arisen. It’s not that the belief that language other than English are useless or inferior, but the mentality that English skills are vital for survival and success in the United States…Students now come from all over the world in our schools and this should be celebrated and fused into lessons. However, it is more vital to gain mastery of English…English abilities are so important in the United States, as we must be able to communicate as humans.

On the LATS survey, Steven also said that he did not think it was important for people in the U.S. to learn a language in addition to English. While Steven appeared to favor an English-only philosophy, he often commented that a person’s native language should be valued and appreciated. In our first interview, Steven said,

I don’t really have friends here in America. Most of my friends are from around the world. It’s just everywhere all over the place, some of my best friends are from Nepal, Vietnam and so yeah, I’m very comfortable with other cultures and other ethnicities, backgrounds, languages, things like that because it’s so vital in this day and age to be able to communicate between two different cultures. Even if you can’t communicate in the common language; still, it’s important to have appreciation for the other person.

Steven also said, “It’s a connector right there especially in education even if you can just say hello in someone’s native language. They might think, ‘hey this is a person I can come and talk to.’”

Steven’s responses to other statements on the LATS reflected tolerance of linguistic diversity. For example, he reported that he did not feel the rapid learning of English should take place if it means losing the ability to speak one’s native language; nor did he feel that learning English should take precedence over learning subject matter. He indicated that having ELLs in class would not be detrimental to the learning of others and that it is important for teachers to receive training to be able to better meet the needs of linguistically diverse learners.
In his initial journal entry, Steven admitted that while he acknowledged the importance of teaching ESL, he had not considered what it entailed. “To be completely honest, the idea and recognition that ESL is truly important today in terms of national sustainability and global competition was evident, but I never took the time to think about who teaches ESL and how.” He stated that he was taking the class “very, very seriously” and predicted that it would be “beneficial and rewarding.” The data suggest, though, that he did not take the course seriously, nor did he find it beneficial or rewarding.

Reported Changes as a Result of Course Participation

At the beginning of the semester, Steven reported having at least “some knowledge” of half of the topics on the knowledge of ELL issues survey. He claimed having “no knowledge” of bilingual program models, but “extensive knowledge” of the issues surrounding the debate on bilingual education. He reported having “quite a bit of knowledge” of legal requirements for educating ELLs and “extensive knowledge” of how second languages are learning/acquired. The rest fell somewhere in the middle. At the end of the semester, his overall self-assessment of knowledge of ELL issues increased by five points, a modest gain compared to others in the course.

As for the results of his LATS, his score increased by four points, suggesting that he became less tolerant of linguistic diversity over the course of the semester. The statements that resulted in change from the beginning of the semester to the end were in line with my interpretation of Steven’s tendencies toward an “English-only” philosophy. For example, in the beginning of the semester Steven was uncertain as to whether or not parents of ELLs should be counseled to speak English with their children whenever
possible. At the end of the semester, however, he changed his response to indicate that he felt strongly that parents should be counseled to speak with their children in English.

Another example of change was in Steven’s shift of support about funding for ESL program. Initially, he stated that he would support the government spending additional money to fund better programs for ELLs. At the end, though, he stated he would not support funding for ELL programs.

With respect to learning English, Steven indicated on the pre-semester survey that the rapid learning of English should not be a priority for ELLs if it meant losing ability in their native language. In the follow-up survey, he expressed that the learning of English should take priority, even if the ELLs would lose ability in their native language.

Some of Steven’s responses did not change, however. For example, he claimed to remain consistent in his belief that having ELLs would not be detrimental to the learning of others and continued to argue for the importance of teachers receiving training to teach ELLs. However, based on one of his comments in our final interview, it seemed as though he believed having ELLs in class may in fact be detrimental to the learning of others if teachers did not have proper training.

For someone who wasn’t interested in ELLs, they’re gonna see it one way or another inside their classrooms. It’s better to understand that, “Hey, I might need to fight, so I need to learn how to punch, so I need to at least know how to throw a jab and a left cross.” We have to have an awareness of it, so…continue to show the relevancy on why working with ELL students is so vital for the success of everyone in the school, because if you have that one student in your class who doesn’t understand what’s going on because of language deficiencies, and if the teacher has to give that energy to that student…well, the other students are hurting, too. So, at least we need a little bit of strategy and be aware that this is gonna happen.
He compared the needs of ELLs and ESL educators to the concept of “sink or swim.” He wrote in his final reflection paper,

All teachers should be trained in the practice of working with this population of students. Leaving a student to ‘sink or swim’ is not the desired path of education. It is also vital not to subject the teacher to this ‘sink or swim’ method either by expecting them to develop techniques and strategies alone.

For Sofia, Kathy and Patricia, one of the greatest changes that took place as a result of their participation in the course was an increased level of confidence to work with linguistically diverse learners. This was not the case with Steven. He reported entering the course extremely confident in his ability to effectively teach ELLs, even though he had no prior coursework or formal training. He left the course extremely confident as well, suggesting that his course participation did not affect his confidence to work with ELLs.

As far as his reported interest in working with ELLs, that, too, remained high at five out of five. Some of his statements corroborated that finding while other statements suggested that Steven was uncertain about whether or not he would want to work with ELLs. For example, in our final interview, he reported having great interest in working with ELLs.

Preferably, actually, I would rather work with bilingual students. I would; I would absolutely rather work with people who don’t just speak English, just because living in a culture…it would help enrich my own perspective…With bilingual education, it doesn’t seem feasible to make it work for everybody, so I would prefer to work in an ELL environment, where I could get these target students up to par. I would prefer that, and previous to these classes, taking these classes, I was like “I want to work with everybody,” and I still do. I still do want to work with everybody, but I would prefer to work with international, bilingual students. I would prefer to work with them, because I feel that I would be able to work with them better, and they would be able to work with somebody like me better…So, I kind of went from teach everybody to maybe just teaching ELLs, teaching ELL
and minority populations. I would love to work with them in the United States in the public schools. I would totally want to work with that population.

However, in his final journal entry, Steven expressed the opposite. “I do not feel that I will pursue a career working with ESL students and am seriously questioning whether or not I will continue to pursue the teaching profession.” Due to the conflicting nature of his statements, it appeared as though Steven was still searching for a direction, and the course did not change that.

Specific Reactions to Course Activities

Steven rarely discussed the content of the course or his reactions to the specific activities in which he engaged. The data suggest that he did not do the readings and did not participate consistently in discussions. Perhaps in an attempt to minimize his doubts and downplay his lack of confidence, he avoided discussing the course material at length (Tannen, 1995). However, I was able to infer, based on the few comments he made, that the first two field assignments and aspects of the sheltered content instruction text (Echevarria & Graves, 2010) stuck with him the most. The online discussions made a strong impact on Steven, but not in a positive way.

Steven mentioned the first field assignment, the panel discussion, more than any other activity, except for the online discussions. In his write-up of the assignment, Steven described the panel discussion as “informative and thought provoking.” In our interviews he talked about feeling surprised and overwhelmed by what he learned. “Something that surprised me was watching that English as a second language panel directors’ discussion. It was just surprising how many different languages are represented in <local school
districts>. Those numbers were astonishing.” He explained how what he learned made him unsure about whether or not it is possible to reach all students, especially ELLs.

Just learning some of the things in the ESL class in <one of the local school districts> they have like 3,000 ELL students…54 languages represented. That seems to be just out of this world overwhelming. I don’t understand how a district can tackle that kind of issue. It just doesn’t make sense especially the way the Office of Civil Rights, Title VI act and all that stuff. It just doesn’t really make sense. So I don’t know if maybe I’m being ignorant about the whole class, the whole object of English as a second language or if there are really solutions to this issue…That just – that blows my mind. It seems absolutely impossible to give every one of those students an equal education according to all the regulations. It really seems like the cards are stacked so much against the school and district. I just never thought that the problems were that big, but they are, and they’re everywhere. I didn’t know that. I didn’t really think that those numbers and that perspective…that really sticks with me is how many students are out there who fit in this bill. That is a huge problem.

For the second field experience, the cultural activity, Steven attended a Russian orthodox church and a Greek orthodox church. He described it as a more “spiritual” experience than anything else. “I wasn’t quite understanding what was being said and what was being done. So, it was kind of the unspoken language that connected me to the feeling of being in these churches…I wasn’t understanding what was going on, but I was feeling what was going on.” He described that feeling in another term: unspoken vibrations. “What most sticks with me from the experiences of both locations are the ‘unspoken vibrations’ as I like to call what I felt.”

Steven acknowledged in his write-up that “a ‘language imbalance’ was evident from the first moment.” However, Steven suggested that this experience led him to realize that people are people. In our interview he said, “It comes down to this: people/humans, we’re really not that different when it comes down to it. The difference is
the language – that’s usually what it is. That’s kind of the synopsis I got from field assignment two.” He expanded on that thought in his write-up.

If we (humans) can come to terms that what separates us (humans) from truly understanding each other is LANGUAGE, then we may have some hope for the future. We are not much different in terms of seeking the same goals in life: peace, stability, acceptance and security.

Steven only talked about this experience when prompted, but never brought it up on his own. That was also true of the third field assignment, which was never discussed in any of the three interviews. From his write-up I learned that he attended an adult ESL class at an English language institute at a local university. He explained that what he took from that experience was the reinforcement of ideas he already had about what constituted good teaching. He wrote, “As I was observing the class one simple thought kept recurring: all teaching styles and deliveries have a basic need for teacher charisma and passion.” He described being “bored” during the class and found himself being critical of the choice of music the instructor used to enhance the lesson.

I did not like the idea of everyone simply staring at their papers trying to listen and grasp all the words at one time. I, as a musician, was not even familiar with the songs being played to use as practice and I felt this may have not been as effective as if the songs were familiar and likeable.

Steven indicated that, because he did not observe a public education classroom, he felt this experience may not have been what the instructor would have hoped for. However, he found his observation “extremely helpful.” There was no indication that he conducted an interview or used that experience to speculate on what it might be like for him as a future educator of ELLs.
As for the readings, the only reading Steven mentioned in our conversations was the sheltered content instruction textbook (Echevarria & Graves, 2010). Based on the activity impact questionnaires, it appeared as though he read that text, at least parts of it, and the other course text (Lightbown & Spada, 2006), but did not do the supplemental readings. His response to the sheltered content instruction text was favorable. “I really like that sheltered content instruction textbook. It’s really concise with ideas. It gives you general ideas and then it kind of expounds on them a little further, but it doesn’t do it in a sense that kind of bores you.” He described a specific section that made the greatest impact on him.

When it talks about affective issues dealing with students – the ten steps or the ten different criteria for dealing with students, making them feel comfortable, those are ten great ideas. Those are ten fabulous thoughts and practices for an instructor. If you could do that on a daily basis, and you could stay aware of those things, you’re probably gonna be damn effective.

As I mentioned, the only other course activity that we talked about was the online discussions. I will discuss the greater context of the online learning environment later in this section, but for now will address more specifically Steven’s reactions to the weekly threaded discussions. As discussed in the results section, Steven found it difficult to keep up with the discussions since there was nobody forcing him to do them. He also said that he could speak his thoughts much more easily than type them. “The way I express myself in person is much different than in words. You know I can say in ten minutes the amount of things in the same time that I could type, and I just forget all the words when I’m typing kind of thing.”

Steven admitted that he did not often take the time to view others’ work and therefore questioned whether or not people would view his.
We see these posts for the discussions, and do we really take the time to read them; you know each word in each person’s submission? Do we really take the time to submit them? I don’t even know if anybody has viewed my Power Points or not…I didn’t watch anybody else’s PowerPoint, so I’m taking that from my perspective that if I didn’t watch theirs, they probably didn’t watch mine. It’s just kind of one of those things that if no one, if…it’s like if you don’t want your butt kicked in sand, you know to stay with the wagon. Well, we’re probably going to fall behind the wagon a little bit.

On the mid-semester activity impact questionnaire, for the activities Steven rated, he put fives for almost everything, suggesting that each activity in which he engaged had a positive impact on him and was helpful in preparing him to work with ELLs. Based on our conversations, though, I was skeptical about those ratings. A close examination of the questionnaire was revealing. He put a four for the journals under the category “interesting/engaging” and he put threes for the online discussions under the categories “interesting/engaging” and “helpful in preparing me to work with ELLs.” The supplemental articles were not rated, suggesting to me that he did not read them. The rest of the categories he rated as fives.

For the end-of-semester activity impact questionnaire there was slightly more variety in his responses. He did not rate the supplemental internet links, indicating that he did not view them. He put threes across each category for the two textbooks and the exam, and he put zeros across the board for the online discussions. The majority of the remaining activities were rated at fives with a few exceptions. He rated the journals at a three out of five under the category “helpful in preparing me to work with ELLs.” Under that same category, he assigned a one for field assignment three. He rated most of the categories for instructor participation/feedback/input at fives with the exception of that same category (helpful in preparing me to work with ELLs), which he rated at a three.
In conclusion, based on the lack of variety across activity impact ratings, I relied more heavily on interview data and reflections to provide a better interpretation of which activities appeared to have the greatest impact on Steven. My conclusion was that the first field assignment (panel discussion) appeared to make the greatest impact based on the fact that he brought it up on several occasions without prompting. In addition, the ideas presented on that video stuck with him; likely because he seemed to find the information new, shocking, and useful.

Steven reported that the second field experience, in which he attended the two orthodox churches, resulted in a more emotional and spiritual impact. The experiences led him to a new realization, or confirmation of an existing one, that people are very much the same. The data suggest that the third field assignment, the observation, did not appear to make much of an impact on Steven.

Other than the one chapter Steven mentioned about the readings, I was not convinced that the readings or any of the other course activities made a lasting impression on Steven or challenged his beliefs about ELLs or the education of ELLs. Because I was unsure, I asked Steven in our final interview what, if anything, caused him to think differently. His response was “the open communication with you and <Eva>.” At one point during the semester Eva, the instructor, reached out to him by phone, which appeared to make an impression on Steven.

That was absolutely surprising. That’s been absolutely surprising to me how personal…, it seems like <Eva> wanted to make a relationship. She wants to help, she wants to be involved with students, she wants to know what’s going on. She’s active, and it’s obvious, and what that is, it’s contagious. For someone like me, it’s very much appreciated that she would actually take the time out of the day to say, “Hey dude, you’re screwing up big time man. What’s going on?” To me,
that’s education. Right, that is the underlying theme…that you need to at least try, as an educator, to know what’s going on inside the student’s mind. She’s done that well, and you doing that research, and you allowing me to talk about my craziness. What that does, it exemplifies what teaching means to me. So, it’s been very surprising to me, almost in a beating around the bush way, the entire perspective of what teaching is, has been delivered. You need to be there and communicate with your students. I was very surprised that it happened this way, but it happened.

In summary, while it was not engagement in an assigned activity that may have made a difference, I can infer that his interaction with the instructor and with me led to a shift in his thinking about what is important in education. This also highlights the importance of communication between instructor and learners and the need to find ways to create those connections in an online course.

The Quest for Answers in a Phase of Self-Exploration

Similar to other people in their twenties, Steven asked himself three driving questions: Who am I? How do I know? What kind of relationships do I want with others? (Baxter-Magolda, 2001). My interpretation of Steven’s experiences during the semester of the study was that his primary focus was on finding answers to those questions. The course provided an opportunity for him to accomplish that.

I first learned of Steven’s quest of self-discovery by reading his background questionnaire. Under the heading “other daily responsibilities” he wrote, “Personal journey to discover balance, holistically building from the three pillars of mind, body and soul.” He also wrote, “I am still in TRUE ‘self-discovery/awareness’ mode.” When asked on the questionnaire why he was taking this course, his response was, “I am trying to identify if teaching is the correct career choice right now…The environment seems stacked against the teachers. I may be wrong. This is why I am taking this.”
I was not surprised, then, in our interviews that much of our conversations revolved around Steven and his quest for answers. I have pulled the statements from the interview data and have presented them in table 5.3.

Table 5.3 Steven’s Statements of Self-Exploration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Statements representative of self-exploration</th>
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</table>
| First interview | That’s why I’m taking these classes is kind of in the boat of 99% sure I want to be a teacher, but I have concerns and I have questions about the future of teaching…the teaching career, the occupation. I don’t know if I’ll get in the classroom and love it, so I just have questions about if this is something I really, really, really want to do. And it’s pretty good that I’m asking these questions now.  
Do I just want to get in the classroom? Do I want to start working right away? Do I want to keep going to school and doing it that way kind of taking a little time off before I get in the classroom? There’s just a thousand questions going on in my head about, am I doing the right things right now making the right decisions? My thing is I kind of want to be a cop. I have a strong desire to be a police officer and I know I don’t want to do that for a career, but I do want to do that for a while so I’m kind of thinking, well this teaching thing, get a master’s, it could be a terrific plan T, plan teaching. I’m kind of jumbled a little bit.  
Oh yeah, there’s no question I want to be an attorney. I’ve tried to get into law school for the past year. It just didn’t quite work out and I still know the reasons why I didn’t get in.  
So I’m kind of…what do I want to do? Do I really just want to be a teacher or do I want to big time go for everything I’ve ever dreamt about? I’m kind of just in a jumbled state of what do I want to do 100% exactly.  
I’m trying to see if I really want to do this. You have kids. It’s very important to think about financials. I don’t want to struggle at all. I don’t want to struggle and if that’s what being a teacher means is going to happen I’m not really interested in that.  
I’m just in that boat, you know. This is an exploration phase. I’m willing to spend a couple thousand dollars on these two classes just to see do I really want to keep going? Do I just want to try to get my license another way, shape or form I don’t know.  
Where do I really want to spend my energies and years trying to accomplish or do?  
I have to think big time…future career, family, financials…  
I’m just asking myself these questions. It’s more of a soul searching. Talking to you…you’re gonna help a whole lot more than I’m gonna help you.  
I just don’t know if I’m gonna be a teacher for 25 years. I am going to teach ESL somewhere at some point. |
Table 5.3 Cont’d

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Statements representative of self-exploration</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Second interview</td>
<td>Well, I’ll just be honest. The honest thing is, I’m not sure how much I even want to follow this career path. I absolutely, positively want to teach; I want to get into the teaching field. It’s just I don’t know if it’s the right time right now, and I don’t know if this online setting is the proper setting for me to learn. I’m just asking myself a thousand questions: Do I really want to follow this 100%? Do I want to do law school first? I’m really just trying to ask myself these serious questions, and that’s not an excuse of why I haven’t been performing well in class, but it kind of is a reason. I do want to continue this program. Do I want to continue online? Do I want to go on campus?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Third journal entry</td>
<td>I do not feel that I will pursue a career working with ESL students and am seriously questioning whether or not I will continue to pursue the teaching profession. This class has potentially opened a door in which I felt was compelling but is of vital importance to the future students of the U.S., that is educational law.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final self-reflection paper</td>
<td>The exploration of educational legislation has sparked an internal interest. It cannot be stated whether or not I will work directly with English language learners in the public school setting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third interview</td>
<td>I don’t know how much I want to go towards a master’s degree in education, so I really changed in my goals there. Do I want to be a teacher? Yes. Do I want to go in this direction? Maybe not. There’s just so many questions. I’m trying to figure myself out. I’m going to have some big goals, and when I do, I’m going to go for them 100%. Am I ready for that now? Absolutely not! I’ve just been asking myself these questions. I thought I was kind of ready, and I’m not even close, not even close! But at least I know that. I’m still going to pursue being a teacher; I just don’t know if a Master’s is what I need, or what I want. I don’t know if I want to go to school, at this time. You know, I want to go to law school, so I need to pursue that a little more. I do want to teach, absolutely. I’m trying to ask myself some very big questions.</td>
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Based on the repetitive theme of those statements, it was clear that Steven fluctuated between wanting to be a teacher and being unsure whether or not that was
something he wanted to pursue. He also expressed fluctuating interest in earning a Master’s degree. Other possible directions he explored were going to law school, becoming a police officer, and pursuing educational legislation. On the background questionnaire he also described himself as a “future legislative reformer” and expressed interest in becoming a state senator one day.

Table 5.3 highlighted Steven’s quest for discovering what he wanted to do in life. The data reveal Steven’s search for identity, or sense of self, which would connect with the driving question of ‘Who am I?’ In stark contrast to Patricia, for whom I only found three personal statements, for Steven I found more than 60. This was not surprising given the fact that he openly admitted he was focused on himself and finding answers to some of his big questions. The majority of our conversations centered on that goal. The statements I identified as representative of Steven’s sense of self are presented in table 5.4.

Table 5.4 Steven’s Statements about Himself

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<tr>
<th>Activity/Interview</th>
<th>I-statements</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Background Questionnaire</td>
<td>I am an international enthusiast. I am a martial artist. I am a musician, classically trained on the trombone. I have a natural 3 ½ octave baritone voice mixed with the ability to “fake” the guitar. I can entertain people! I am a realist. I am an idealist.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First interview (on phone)</td>
<td>I definitely am one of those people that is very helpful and very useful in terms of having feedback. I was never the best student in the first place. I’m an international traveler. I want to be one that helps solve these problems. I’m trilingual. I’m one of those people that I want to be around people and have feedback and listen to what’s being said, state my own opinions, things like that. I’m kind of jumbled a little bit. I’m one of those people I just love to do so many things and I’m good at almost everything I do.</td>
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Table 5.4 Cont’d

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Activity/Interview</th>
<th>I-statements</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>First interview (on phone) cont’d</strong></td>
<td>I don’t want to struggle at all and if that’s what being a teacher means is going to happen I’m not really interested in that. I’m good with money one way or the other. I want to do so many things and it’s not really going to be possible to do them all. I can do and handle a lot of things. I’m very comfortable with other cultures and other ethnicities, backgrounds, languages, things like that. I’m one of those dudes that I’ll either focus 100% and I’ll focus like crazy or I won’t. It’s totally the yin and the yang process for me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Second interview (on phone)</strong></td>
<td>I love the mission of educating young minds; I know I’m going to be good at it. I’m one of those dudes, one of those people that I can get animated, but I use totally other ways…The way I express myself in person is much different than in words. I’m a total “I need to be in class” type of person. I’m a fiscal conservative. I watch every penny. It has to do with me as a visual, kinesthetic kind of person. You know I need to be active. I need to be loud. I need to be touching here and listening. I need to be “in it,” you know what I mean? I like people and I’m a social person. I’m the kind of guy I take notes; I take notes for everything. I like to see people’s reactions; I like to see body language, things like that. I’m you know “old school” – social – it’s me face-to-face. I hold nothing against anybody really; I’m one of those people. I can’t say for one second that I know anything, because I know nothing – that’s what I know. I need to learn. I’m just an educator naturally. As a teacher, I believe one of the most necessary traits is charisma. You’ve got to be charismatic; you gotta keep the…you gotta make it a little bit fun and interesting; you’re going to have to keep them engaged, and that’s something that I have inherently. Some of these people think I’m the biggest asshole in the world, and I’m not – totally the opposite of that. I’m an “in class” kind of guy. I want to be an educator; that’s what I feel I’m in this existence to do is to help…</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Third interview (on phone)</strong></td>
<td>I’m a musician and I’ve only composed one song in like the last four months, and that’s not good enough. I’m one of those people that needs to have feedback, that needs to be around people, hearing what people say, you know. I’m a kinesthetic kind of person; I like to have hands-on. I could have been the biggest faker, and I would have gotten an A+, but I wasn’t trying to fake it; I’m trying to figure myself out. I’m a relatively young person, and I’m trying to solve these answers; I’m trying to solve these deficiencies and shortcomings that I have, and this is a whole part of the education process. I’m a musician; that’s how I get paid money. I’m not a good student. I’m incredibly talented, I’m intelligent, I’m not so “book smart.” I can relate to kids. I’m a natural educator. I would prefer to work with international, bilingual students because I feel that I would be able to work with them better, and they would be able to work with somebody like me better. I’m an entertainer. I’m not that good of a musician, I mean, I’m a good singer, and good at the guitar, but when I put it all together, I’ll blow your mind. I like to see faces. I’m good at typing, it’s just the ideas don’t flow as good, you know? I’m a creative guy. I have one of those memories that doesn’t forget anything.</td>
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Let us turn now to the third driving question of the twenties: What kind of relationships do I want to have with others? In our final interview, Steven confessed that much of his thinking shifted over the course of the semester because he “met someone.” He explained how they met.

She moved in next door to where my dad lives, and I stay at my dad’s sometimes to watch his house on the weekends while he works, take care of his dog and stuff like that, and anyway, I ended up meeting this girl, and I just….it seems like everything that she wants to do coincides with what I want to do.

“Meeting a girl changes everything,” he told me. “My entire goal of finding and meeting someone seems to be fitting with her.” Steven made it sound as though his dreams were finally coming true.

Having someone around to love and to share with has always been a dream. Playing music, being a bit successful, and having a future of happiness has always been a dream. Being able to train martial arts wise has always been a dream, and it seems like it’s all come together here.

Steven and Subjective Knowledge

Belenky and colleagues (1986) proposed that the five epistemological perspectives they presented as women’s ways of knowing could cut across gender lines. I found this to be the case with Steven who exhibited characteristics of a subjective knower. The term Perry (1981) used for subjectivism was multiplicity. In most cases the terms are interchangeable and the emphasis for people operating under this meaning-making system is on personal experience (Belenky, et al., 1986).

There were some distinctions made between young men and young women who exhibited characteristics of this epistemological perspective. For the male multiplists, “the business of the classroom is to express loudly what you believe and feel” (Belenky,
The male students tend to take on multiplicity with vigor, whereas the female students usually approach it much more cautiously. In addition, men tend to be more outspoken and at times confrontational in an attempt to persuade others into their point of view. Women, on the other hand, tend to be less outspoken, non-confrontational, and less concerned with persuading others to believe what they believe. I found Steven to be outspoken and a person who expressed himself loudly so that he could be heard. In fact, he even used the term “loud” to describe a need of his. He said, “It has to do with me as a visual, kinesthetic kind of person. You know, I need to be active. I need to be loud.”

Subjective knowing is partly defined as the quest for self, which fit well with my impression of Steven. The predominant mode of learning for this way of knowing is inward listening and watching. Steven admitted that he was in self-discovery mode and uncertain about what life had in store for him. Subjective knowers seem to have the will to launch themselves into the world. They tend to be wanderers and world travelers. They are often assertive and self-absorbed, throw themselves into life, take risks, and try out new selves as their contexts change (change in schooling, travel to foreign countries, work a variety of jobs, etc.) (Belenky, et al., 1986). The fact that Steven took off to Thailand upon conclusion of the study was in line with something a subjective knower might do. Subjective knowers are often like youths in fairy tales (usually male) who set out from the family homestead to make their way in the world, discovering themselves in the process. Minimal forethought and reason go into their decision to “walk away” (Belenky, et al., 1986, p. 77).
Part of the reason for “walking away” is that subjective knowers tend to harbor unspoken desires to be free from the prescriptions of others. They dream of escape and release and have an impulse to live a carefree and unrestrained life, which can lead to a silent alienation from the educational process, knowing somehow that their conformity is a lie and does not reveal the inner truth or potential that they have come to value (Belenky, et al., 1986, pp. 66-67). I got a sense of this from Steven throughout our interviews. He predicted from the beginning that he would not do well in the course. He did not respond well to the online learning environment because it appeared to conflict with his need to “express loudly” what he believed and felt. He often spoke of being an “in-class kind of guy” because he wanted to share his opinion with others. He also expressed a desire to experience the course through the senses. He said, “I need to be touching here and listening. I need to be ‘in it’...I like to have hands-on.” This is common among subjective knowers who tend to trust less in written words and text books in favor of learning through direct sensory experience or personal involvement with objects of study (Belenky, et al., 1986, p. 74).

Most subjective knowers are forward-looking, positive, and open to new experiences, which I found to be the case with Steven. Belenky and her research team (Belenky, et al., 1986, p. 83) found that the subjective knowers in their study “seemed propelled by an inner fire, communicating to us a feeling of exhilaration and optimism as they plunged ahead toward some dim future.” This made me think of Steven’s aspiration to “save the world with medicine and through education” without having given much thought to what that would entail. When looking towards the future, he aspired to work a variety of jobs (teacher, lawyer, police officer, legislative reformer) that appeared to lead
him down an uncertain path. He spoke with confidence; yet remained unclear about what he wanted to do in life. In his quest for life experience he said, “I want to do so many things and it’s not really going to be possible to do them all.”

Steven described for me an experience about his participation in an ‘Occupy’ protest close to where he lived. The way he described the experience and appeared to make sense of it was in line with subjectivist knowers who often, when faced with controversy, become strictly pragmatic – “what works best for me” and refer back to the centrality of their personal experience, whether they are talking about right choices for themselves or for others (Belenky, et al., 1986, p. 70). This is the story he told me during a part of our interview that had to do with “standing up for one’s beliefs.”

I’ll tell you what; it doesn’t really have to do with the ESL class, but maybe it does somewhat wise, but I went down to an ‘Occupy’ protest. I was getting verbally assaulted, and people were bumping me. These ‘occupy’ people were uncontrollable. It was ridiculous, and all I did was, I had one simple sign that said two words, “Self-reliance.” People were just trying to destroy me, verbally assaulting me; calling me names. A couple of old ladies came up to me and got into my face. It was just unbelievable. It was unbelievable! I had no idea what was going on, and it was kind of that experience.... I’ve got solid bank accounts. I’ve got bank accounts, and it’s not because of my mommy or daddy. It’s because of me out there. It wasn’t because of no government handout. It wasn’t because I got scholarships from school. It was because I’ve earned it, and I just can’t understand why you’ve got to say, “more, more, more, more.” And anyways, it’s just I was being very polite to people, and then as soon as the word got out that I wasn’t “with” them, it was an entire different ball game. It was just an entire different existence. I wasn’t afraid, you know, by any means, I wasn’t afraid. I was going to stand my ground, but it was just incredible how people claimed to be so one way, you know peaceful, and trying to be progressive toward changing government and helping everybody out, and then somebody comes along who potentially doesn’t agree with their viewpoints, and then their entire message of civility just; it just ceases to exist. It was incredible, yeah. I didn’t think it was going to be like that. If I did, I would have taken somebody with me to record it. This happened, I think mid-November, and I don’t know it just made me think a lot. I’ve worked since I was eighteen; I’ve saved my money. I paid for college; I didn’t really take any loans out. I’m a musician; that’s how I get paid money. Why should I have to give more to you guys, or anybody else that doesn’t want to
work? It wasn’t what I was saying. It’s just what’s so bad about me having a sign that says ‘self-reliance?’ What’s so bad about that idea? And having all of that negative feedback told me, “<Steven>, just rely on yourself real quick. Take a step back. Do what you do best. Do it better than anybody,” and that’s that.

Steven was uncertain about what path he wanted to pursue in life and at the same time appeared extremely confident in himself as a person. One aspect of the shift towards subjectivism, or multiplicity, is a shift in orientation to authority from external to internal (Belenky, et al., 1986; Perry, 1981). This evolution is common among many people in their twenties (Baxter-Magolda, 2001). They become their own authorities as an adaptive move to self-protect, self-assert, and self-define (Belenky, et al., 1986, p. 54). I found evidence of this reflected in Steven’s story above and in Steven’s statements about himself in general (see table 5.4).

Perry (1981, p. 85) argued that at this position “an opinion is related to nothing whatsoever – evidence, reason, expert judgment, context, principle, or purpose – except to the person who holds it.” The ethic of multiplists, or subjective knowers, seems to be that they should hear people out, but are under no obligation to accept or even consider others’ ideas seriously (Belenky, et al., 1986, p. 66). This appeared to be the case with Steven. He listened intently, but I did not find evidence that he seriously considered the ideas presented in the course, by the instructor, or by me.

Subjective Knowing and Online Learning

It was evident that by the end of the semester Steven was strongly opposed to the online learning environment. In the beginning of the semester, he mentioned being unsure if the online format would work for him and questioned whether or not he could “hack it.” By the end, he revealed a strong opposition to anything and everything related to the
online environment. It appeared as though Steven was putting the responsibility and the blame for his lack of participation on the fact that the course was online. Perhaps this can be further explained by the idea that the online learning environment may have conflicted with his subjective way of knowing. As an example, Steven strongly believed in the importance of human connection and personal experience. “The social aspect of human experience is truly fascinating!” He expanded by saying,

Online discussion doesn’t seem as real as connecting, communicable wise, via person, as in a room. You don’t get as much. You can’t explore. Try to get all that stuff together, you know, so that when I’m 50, I actually have some good advice for those young people that want to listen to me.

It’s the extra intangibles; it’s the extra qualities that people can offer inside a class, inside of social situations. It’s exactly that stuff that I think is lost in online classes. As a teacher, I believe one of the most necessary traits is charisma….Some of these people think I’m the biggest asshole in the world; and I’m not – totally the opposite of that, but that’s just kind of what’s lost.

While reflecting on his own experiences with past teachers he became more aware of the importance of a teacher’s ability to connect with students.

There’s always teachers who have been huge, and it’s because they’ve been able to connect. And if you can find one thing to connect with, with a student, whether it be home life, school, music, sports, whatever – reading a good book, that’s important. I think that I’m more aware of that.

Steven appeared to believe that connections could come in many forms. Verbal communication was one. It was not surprising, then, that the most important experience in the ESL for Educators course for Steven was his communication with the instructor and with me. “Having you guys to communicate with, is so vital, just to have that path, people to talk to…I believe in communication. It’s very powerful.” Music was another. “That’s the whole point of being human. Their stuff moves me, and I want to move people.”
Steven often referred to education as a “give and take” process. He spoke of “karma” and “yin and yang.” He explained in our first interview, “You can never go with just one side good or one side bad; it has to be a reflection of both the yin and the yang.”

That statement provides further evidence of a subjective way of knowing. He provided an example of this line of thinking when he described the superficiality of online discussions and the experiences of a friend of his, who Steven concluded was not learning; nor was he contributing to anyone else’s learning.

You can’t learn when everybody says, “That’s wonderful,” “Thank you,” “Good job,” pat on the back. It’s not the way it goes. I believe that. Just in my perspective, there’s just a lot of miscommunication in dialogue and discussions, because it’s just “Hey, let me get the points real quick, let me put something,” and that’s it. I was talking to my friend. He’s an advisor at a local university. He is getting his Master’s in Higher Ed. He’s not the brightest guy in the world. He’s a friend and all, but not the brightest guy. He’s getting straight A’s in all of his classes because he does his discussion questions and all, but when he talks to me about it, it’s very superficial. He’s not getting anything from it. He’s not benefiting; he’s not making anybody think. It’s like, “Dude, are you just going through the motions? What are you learning here?” And I need to learn. I’ll tell you what.

Steven spoke not only of online classes, but the role of technology in general, in what he perceived to be a negative impact on social experience altogether.

I think technology, in general, is totally dwindling social experience. You know Twitter, Facebook, texting, all this stuff. There’s no ‘butterflies in the stomach’ by meeting face-to-face with somebody anymore. I don’t like that personally, because I like people and I’m a social person, and just…I don’t know, that’s just kind of the way I feel.

In addition, Steven spoke of his belief in the power of debate and the ability to express one’s emotions, for which the online environment may not be conducive. He related his views on that to his views on education in general.
If someone can debate what they are thinking, and they can express their emotions, then that is just the most incredible stuff in the world…We’re in education. We are supposed to be pushing our thoughts. We’re supposed to be in an expanding world. We’re supposed to be debating important ideas. We’re not in higher education on accident. We’re here to try to be leaders and to mold the future. That’s what this is about. I can’t say for one second that I know anything, because I know nothing – that’s what I know.”

Steven’s subjective way of knowing combined with the importance he placed on connection, communication and human experience appeared to conflict with the online course. Perhaps part of the issue was that Steven viewed the online setting as a barrier to his quest for self-discovery. “I don’t know how beneficial the online setting is for me. It’s not helping exactly answer these questions.” Because of his process of intrapersonal development, he was more concerned about his own development rather than the benefit of others in this particular course experience.

Transitions, Change in Perspective, and Projecting Forward

“I’m totally transitioning,” Steven told me. “The last few months, it’s been changing my perspective, because like I need to take things so much easier, and I need to focus on what’s important and not try to do a thousand things at once, which I have always tried to do.” He seemed welcoming of this change in perspective. “Perspectives change,” he said. “That’s good, that’s very natural, that’s healthy when our perspectives change when we grow and learn and experience.”

Through this process of self-exploration, Steven learned a lot about himself and what was important to him.

Well, it’s important to me to figure out what’s important to me in my life, and to try to figure out all of these things, I mean life isn’t easy. For me, it’s like life has been very difficult, but happiness is there for everybody, and it involves helping others, it involves having a huge impact on the world, and that’s where I want to
be. That’s where I’m going, and I just lost that for a while, and I need to maintain that, and I need to bring it back, and I need to cultivate it. I need to stick some enriching water on my soul and let it grow.

Steven acknowledged that he needed to slow down, which is one of the reasons he looked forward to going back to Thailand, and to reconnect with the Southeast Asian philosophies, which appeared to influence his perspective on the world.

It’s day-by-day, breath-by-breath, really that’s the only way you can go – you have to do what’s right at the moment, for the next moment, for the next moment, and in anticipation of the next moment. That’s total Buddhism, which is why I’m going back to Southeast Asia, to connect with this, and just breathe. I need to breathe…a lot.

Steven appeared to conceive of life as a process. He discussed the role of his new relationship and the next steps for him in that process.

I have to get a lot better in myself, in so many different ways, spiritually, mentally, physically, and I believe in the next few months, I will be able to take, I’ve been able to take some incredible steps lately anyway, but just meeting this girl has helped me understand and evaluate myself like crazy.

Steven seemed to take comfort in knowing that everything was working out as he felt it was supposed to and indicated that the ESL for Educators course was part of that.

“Everything is working out exactly how it’s supposed to be. I believe it’s supposed to be happening. These classes were absolutely, 100% unequivocally, part of that. Even if it seems like they weren’t, they were.”

Before I had a chance to thank Steven for his time and participation in this study, he thanked me for my role in his quest for self-discovery. He said to me as we were wrapping up the interview,

Change is the only thing that is constant. So, I want to thank you for being a part of my life in the last little, in the last few months. We don’t know each other, I mean, really. I think you’ve asked some really good questions, and you’ve been
an ear to listen, and that means a lot. Personal exploration, just having someone to ask questions about what you think, what’s going on, and that’s huge.

Summary of Steven’s Experiences

While the content of the course may not have impacted Steven greatly, his participation in the course did appear to impact his thinking in a personal way. This semester of soul-searching seemed to help him come to a few conclusions, but did not appear to help him answer all of his burning questions about what he wants to do and what is important to him in life.

I definitely, I’ve seen myself change during the course of the last few months, while participating in this class in a variety of ways, almost every way I could think about. You know it’s not really the class that has helped me change or helped me realize what I didn’t know. I think it was just a reaffirmation of you know, my goals in life and what I want to do with myself, and you know I see myself get more motivated, and focused on a couple of things, which I feel I need to give my energy, and I think that this class has definitely helped me see that.

I would conclude that while this course led to a modest amount of informational learning for Steven; that was not what this semester was about for him. It was evident that he underwent a process of self-exploration and development, some of which was impacted by his course experiences. In our last interview he left me with this final thought, “So, I tell you what, this ESL class has done a lot more than you guys will probably ever know.”

Erik

Background

Erik is a married man without children in his upper 30’s who, in my experience of him, was very intelligent and had a quirky sense of humor. He worked in instructional technology on voice recognition software during the time of the study and was enrolled in
the ALP program for secondary history. It is important to note that Erik started the program and the course late and therefore, I only conducted two interviews with him instead of three. “I started like a week and a half late, two weeks late, because I was trying to get all this paperwork done, and scrambling. So, I wasn’t expecting to be in the program.”

Erik grew up as an “Air Force brat,” which means he moved around a lot as a child. Among other places, he spent four years in Germany with his family (from age two to six). “It’s weird…I’m an American, but my first memories are of a foreign country.” Some of his memories included learning how to swim in Germany, seeing his first snowfall, and seeing mountains for the first time. He shared a story with me about the day he walked away from his German school while his kindergarten class was out for recess.

I went to a German kindergarten for about two weeks. My mom was like, “you’re going to go to German school, and you’re going to learn German.” And I didn’t know any German. So, finally, we’d go out every day for recess, and I just left. I didn’t go back, and there was “oh no, we lost the American kid.” The police were looking for me; the MPs were looking for me. It was really just straight how you go to the base. You go down the road to this German school, so I just walked back to the gates. They were like, “what’s your name?” And they grabbed me, and I thought I was in trouble, and then my mom came and got me. “Everyone’s been looking for you,” and I was just walking down the road.

Erik’s grandfather was German, and therefore, Erik said that he was encouraged to study German in high school. He told me he could understand simple conversations, “enough to get around, order food, make hotel reservations,” but that was about the extent of his ability to speak German.
Erik described living in many places as a child and one of those places was the South, which he described as “different” and as having its own culture. He shared a story about an experience he had in first grade in Virginia.

We first moved to Virginia, too. I was in first grade. These kids asked me, “are you a Yankee?” And I was just like, “what the hell are you talking about?” I had an idea to go home and ask my mom. But I could tell these kids what state I was from, and they knew, “Oh, okay, you’re okay, because you’re from Missouri.” My brother is from Illinois, the land of Lincoln, so he was in trouble. I mean it’s weird, the South is different. When I was in high school I did this thing called citizen B, and I don’t know if you’re familiar with that. I don’t even know if they still do it. It’s like this spelling bee for geography, U.S. constitution, history. So I won second in the state of Colorado. And so first and second place winners went to Washington, D.C. for the national competition, so we spent a week in Washington D.C., and there were two or three kids from every state. So we went to the Lincoln Memorial, and this kid from Mississippi walked up to Lincoln and spit on him. So you know, I don’t know that was even 1990 – I don’t know how much things have changed, but it’s still there. I mean we like sort of make fun of people in the South or whatever, there’s a certain amount of prejudice that goes towards Southern White. I think they’re aware of that; sort of a chip on the shoulder down there. It’s an entirely different culture you know.

Erik and his family lived and traveled extensively throughout the U.S. and abroad when he was a child. Unfortunately, though, when Erik was 16, his father passed away. Shortly thereafter he decided to join the Army.

So I didn’t want to go to college right away. I just wanted to go, just leave, and do something. I knew I was going to go to college at some point down the road, but I just didn’t want to do it then. So, I joined the Army. I figured you know they’ll feed me at least.

After the Army, Erik went to college where he earned his B.A. in Asian Studies with a minor in Japanese. He studied abroad in Japan for one year and described that as a “sink or swim experience” because “Japan doesn’t have a large number of non-native speakers, so they don’t really slow down their rate of speaking for foreigners.” At his university he was offered a scholarship to return to Japan upon graduating.
So they offered all these scholarships, so if you want to come here, we’ll pay your airfare here and there, and we’ll give you $1,200 dollars a month for a stipend. So it was my junior year, and my professor was like, “who wants to go to Japan?” So I wound up, I was sort of like a five-year student because I spent a year in Japan, but it seemed like a good opportunity.

Erik took the opportunity and returned to Japan to teach English for three years. I will describe more about his teaching experience in the next section.

After his three years in Japan, Erik moved to China and lived there for two years. When I asked Erik why he decided to move to China, he explained that unfortunately, after his time in the military he started having issues with his heart, and due to his particular condition, the government determined that he was disabled.

I’m probably the healthiest disabled person you will ever meet. So, I was in Japan when I got this letter saying, “Hey you’re disabled, we’re going to give you x amount of dollars every month for the rest of your life.” I was like “well that’s awesome,” so then I was 32, no 31 and I was ending my 3 years in Japan. What am I going to do now? So I just took off and went to China for two years - just wandered around. And then I met my wife, and we got married, so then I had to come back and become a productive member of society. It’s a little different ...

Well you know, I didn’t have a dad, I didn’t have a mortgage, so it was like well I have a guaranteed income, and you only get to do that once.

It was in China that he met his wife, who was Japanese. He explained that they speak a mix of Japanese and English at home, what he called “Japenglish.” Because he lived in China for two years, he felt his Chinese was “good enough to travel around the country, read and order from menus, and have basic conversations.” Erik rated his Chinese as slightly better than his German.

In addition to his time in Germany, Japan and China, Erik also travelled around Europe for a few months in college and visited England, Wales, Ireland, France, Spain, and Holland. While in Japan, he travelled to Thailand, Cambodia, India, Turkey, Egypt,
Jordan, and South Korea. At one point Erik said that he “spent a quarter of his life outside of the United States.”

Teaching Experience

While Erik was studying abroad in Japan, he was given his first English tutoring job. He described his experience.

While I was studying at a Japanese university just north of Tokyo, I had a part time job teaching English to two eight-year-old boys, the children of visiting professors from Kenya and Tanzania. The families spoke English at home but one of the fathers wanted them to get a more structured education on English grammar. To this end he had purchased elementary level textbooks...from Ireland. So I was an American teaching two boys from Africa English in Japan using Irish textbooks. It was a good experience. One of the surprising things about it though was listening to the boys talk about the taunts they received at school, and they were black in an all Japanese school. Growing up in the United States, you see racism, but it isn’t as overt as what those boys described.

The main source of his English teaching experience, however, came when he went back to Japan after he graduated college. He taught in a small town of about 5,000 people. “I was the white guy… the foreigner,” he said. He spoke extensively about the education system in Japan and how it differed from the education system in the U.S. For example, he said,

In Japan, you have to pay a lot of education fees. Children are expected to go to what’s called JuKu. It’s cram school; so basically, your kid goes Saturday or maybe he goes after school for two hours every day to learn all the stuff he should be learning in school. Japanese teachers are surprised we don’t have that in America...In Japan, that’s expected... But schools aren’t just there to educate, they’re there to socialize. Teachers have a lot of responsibilities in that regard. If you’re a teacher, like a home room teacher, and two of your kids get arrested, they’ll call you probably before they’ll call the parents, because it’s your responsibility to teach them to be better citizens. You go into it thinking, “Oh, I’m going to go to Japan, and I’m going to teach English,” and there is a lot going on in the background they should probably tell you about, but it’s all kind of weird, so they don’t really want to tell you about it.
Erik described how each town had an English teacher. He felt that part of the reason each little town had an English teacher was to teach the kids English, but the other part of the reason was for the money the town received to have an English teacher. He described how it worked.

So, your town gets say a lock of say 100,000 dollars. 40,000 of that is for your salary and maybe another 10,000 for benefits or whatever, your health insurance comes out of your salary. Well, the town keeps the rest of the money. So, every little town in Japan, or at least where I was, they had an English teacher...Well, if the town is getting 50,000 dollars to have this teacher, beyond the salary or whatever, they’re going to keep the extra money. They’re going to take it. They’re not stupid, because they can use that money. So on the one hand, you’re there to teach. On the other hand, you’re just an excuse to redistribute money to the countryside.

Erik described that he chose a rural town to teach in because it was a way to push himself out of his comfort zone to better his Japanese. He shared with me in our first interview,

I just wanted to be out in the middle of nowhere. You sink or swim. Either my Japanese gets better or...My grandma was like, “what are you going to do for food?” – “Well, they have food you know, if I get really hungry, I’ll just go next door and make frowny faces and point at my stomach. I think it’s hungry.”

While he was in Japan, Erik taught preschool, elementary school, middle school, high school, and adults.

In a typical week I would go to the middle school twice a week, the high school twice a week and the elementary schools once a week. Once a week in the evening I would teach an adult English conversation class for about two hours. Once or twice a month I would also visit the preschool.

He mentioned again some of the differences he observed between Japanese and U.S. education systems.

The big difference between Japanese middle schools versus American middle schools is the kids stay put. They don’t move. So English teacher comes, English
teacher goes. Math teacher comes, math teacher goes. History teacher comes, history teacher goes. To me the most interesting thing about the school, and it starts at the elementary school level, is that the kids run the school. So in the elementary schools and these little schools, you would have lunch, and so the fifth and sixth graders would make sure the first and second graders were doing what they were supposed to do; and the third and fourth graders were doing what they’re supposed to do. So even as children, they’re given responsibility and they expect you to work as a group. So I thought that was really interesting.

Erik also asserted that in Japan, in schools or elsewhere, “it’s all about knowing your relationship to other people” and “networking.” When I asked him how he fit into that as a visiting English teacher, he said, “That’s where it gets weird.”

Generally, you’re treated better. As a whole, Japanese like Americans. They don’t like Koreans so much. They don’t like South Asians so much; so as an American, I was treated better. For somebody else, a black or a Korean, I can’t say. It depends on where you are and the people. My wife’s family didn’t want her to marry me, because I was a foreigner, and they were open about that…But where I was too, and they have a lot more respect for teachers. It was…I was treated a little better.

Part of Erik’s teaching responsibilities involved working with a group of high school students who were going to study abroad in Colorado for a farm stay, which was essentially a home stay, according to Erik, but they would be working on farms. “We did everything from standard conversation practice, to table manners, to going over agricultural vocabulary. It wasn’t your standard English teaching experience, but I liked it because it was for very practical reasons.”

When I asked Erik how he decided to pursue teaching high school history in the U.S., he said that finances were not a concern for him, and therefore, he decided to go into teaching purely because that is what he wanted to do. “I have a great love of history. Also I feel an obligation to give something back to society.” A contributing factor to his
decision to go into teaching was an important conversation Erik had with his grandfather before he passed away.

And one of the things we had talked about before he had died was, “What would you like to do?” He was always saying to me, “Do something you want to do, and you never work a day in your life. Do something you don’t want to do and every day is a chore.” So, when he passed away, that really sort of came back to me.

Due to his experience teaching abroad, Erik rated his overall teaching experience at 4.5 out of five. Erik admitted, “I’ve never been to a U.S. school - you know since I graduated high school,” which was many years ago. However, his English teaching experience in Japan appeared to give him a sense of confidence at the beginning of the semester. He rated his confidence to teach ELLs at the beginning of the course at a five out of five.

Beliefs and Understandings about Linguistic Diversity

Based on Erik’s LATS scores, he appeared to enter the course with a relatively high tolerance of linguistic diversity in classroom settings. This was not surprising given Erik’s extensive time spent abroad living, teaching, and traveling. Erik did not believe that to be considered American, one should speak English. However, he wrote a side note on that statement: “though all Americans should be able to speak English.” He claimed on the survey that he would support government funding for ELL programs, that parents should not be counseled to speak English with their children, and that it is extremely important for people in the U.S. to learn a language in addition to English. Erik expressed that the rapid learning of English should not be a priority if it meant losing the ability in one’s native language and that having ELLs in class would not be detrimental to the learning of the other students.
There were two items on the survey in which Erik indicated being uncertain. He was not sure whether or not regular classroom teachers should be required to receive pre-service or in-service training to be prepared to meet the needs of ELLs, or whether or not the learning of English should take precedence over learning subject matter.

Because of his own personal experiences in foreign countries, he said that the “sink or swim” approach with children does not work. “People always say that children learn languages more quickly than adults, but that doesn’t mean that they don’t need help or instruction. Just throwing them into the deep end of the pool and expecting them to swim doesn’t work.” Erik expanded on this thought in our first interview, indicating that he started the course with an ability to empathize with ELLs because of his own experience as a second language learner.

I think I have a little more empathy for kids who are in sort of the similar situation here in the United States, where certainly you’re here - not by choice, because you’re six, you’re seven, eight, nine, or whatever. But you’re expected to swim, and everyone just says, ‘well, kids learn languages fast.’ And, that doesn’t really help you.

He further indicated an ability to empathize, or in his words sympathize, with ELLs on his background questionnaire.

I have a great deal of sympathy for people trying to operate in a language that they aren’t comfortable with. Additionally ELLs have an incredible breadth of life experiences that serve to enrich their classrooms and schools…For American students ELLs are an amazing opportunity to realize that there is more to the world than what they see on T.V. or the internet.

The above statement was supported by his indication that he would be very interested in having ELLs in his classroom. He rated his level of interest at a five out of five.
Reported Changes as a Result of Course Participation

Erik assessed his level of knowledge of ELL issues at the beginning of the course at an average of “some knowledge” of each of the ten topics. His overall reported level of knowledge of the ten topics increased to an average between “quite a bit of knowledge” and “extensive knowledge.” He reported that he had at least “some knowledge” of all ten topics, but for six out of the ten he reported having “extensive knowledge” by the end of the course. Therefore, Erik perceived an increase in informational knowledge.

The results of his LATS scores did not change much from the beginning to the end of the semester. He remained uncertain as to whether or not teachers should receive training to work with ELLs, but did change his response about whether or not the learning of English should take precedence over learning subject matter. At first he was uncertain, but at the end he decided that learning English should not take precedence over learning content. This was one of the important concepts that Erik gained as a result of his participation in the course. “The thing I got from this course is how important it is to teach the subject matter to the child, even if they don’t quite understand the language.” In his words,

It doesn’t matter if they learn it in Spanish, German, or French, or Russian, or whatever, as long as he knows who George Washington is and why George Washington is important. That is the important thing. And you know maybe it takes him a little while to figure it out in his native language, but as long as he gets it at the end, that’s all that matters. So, speaking English, they will catch up with that eventually...

Erik’s interest in having ELLs in his classroom remained very high, but his confidence to teach them decreased. This is likely due to a shift in his thinking, which
occurred as a result of his course participation. He wrote about it in his final reflection paper.

So for me, coming out of this class my biggest change in thinking has involved understanding that what ESL learners need and want here in America is quite different than what ESL learners in other countries might be looking for. I think that for me, it is something I need to remember going forward… I had, or thought I had, a good understanding of the practical side of ESL education. Unfortunately, I’m thinking now that my experiences in Japan aren’t one hundred percent transferable to education here in the United States.

In our final interview, Erik expanded on that new understanding by describing some of the differences he observed between the two educational systems.

In Japan, kids they take a test when they go from middle school to high school, from high school to college, then college to business, so they are always testing. In English, they are studying sort of either business English or written English, it’s not spoken English. They are not testing them on comprehension or listening. They are taking English because it’s going to be on their tests, and they have to know English to pass the test. So, it’s like studying for the SATs. So, you start studying for the SATs in seventh grade, and all of your classwork is designed to get you to pass the SATs over and over again; so you can move up to the next rung in the ladder, so you can study for the SATs some more, so you can take the SATs again. That’s fine, that’s their system. I’m not going to criticize it, as much as I would or would not want to. But here in the U.S. it’s different, because kids have a need and desire to speak English. When I was a kid I lived in Germany. I couldn’t always speak to the German kids. So you want to play with your friends and have fun, but that language barrier is there. So, for a child coming to the U.S., and all of your friends speak English, there’s an obvious desire to speak English. Reading and writing, I don’t really care about that, I want to be able to talk to my friend. You know, I want to be able to explain fart jokes to him… trying to think like a second grader. I want to know what SpongeBob is talking about. So, the reading and writing – not so much, but the listening and comprehension, that’s key to them. As much as your parents want you to succeed in school, we’re social animals. Being able to communicate with the group is step one of being a social animal. So that’s sort of what changed me this semester, is that realization of the kids.

Another new understanding that Erik developed as part of the course was an awareness that there are multiple factors that affect a student’s performance in school, beyond motivation or parental support. He explained in our final interview.
Even small things can make a difference in how your school performs, or how your kids do. Find out, “Hey, what’s the problem?” Asking kids, “How come you’re missing class? How come you weren’t here?” You know, “My mom couldn’t bring me.” “Why couldn’t you take the bus?” “We don’t have money for the bus.” You have to find out what’s going on. I think a lot of it is almost all of your teachers have been to college. Most people who go to college are from you know fairly middle-class suburban areas, so there’s an underrepresentation of minority and poor in the educational system, because the people that sort of grew up in that environment understand sort of this is what these people are dealing with. So, you come into a school, and it’s like, “You have to respect me and be on time.” You’re wondering, “Why are you disrespectful? Why are you late? Why aren’t you doing your homework?” That you’re hungry, you don’t have heat in your house, or whatever reason.

It was evident that Erik developed new understandings based on information he acquired as a result of his participation in the course. In the next section I will discuss the specific activities that contributed to the development of those new understandings.

Specific Reactions to Course Activities

For the first field assignment, the ESL directors’ panel discussion video, Erik found it “very helpful” and “eye-opening.” He indicated that he was “surprised both at the level of information the panelists had and the disparity in ELL numbers by district.” It was through watching the panel discussion that Erik first began to realize the importance of teaching both content and language to ELLs. He also felt the panel highlighted the importance of parental and community involvement to the academic success of ELLs. “Finding teachers, other students, or community volunteers that can help enable communication and education is vitally important.”

In his write-up of the activity, Erik mentioned that he felt as though the education of ELLs is going to become even more important as time goes on, and he indicated that he was supportive of the idea of local school districts requiring ESL endorsements.
The final and possibly the most important point the panel made was the ESL education is going to become more important as time goes on. Non-native English speakers are the fastest growing segment of the student population, and there is every indication that this will continue into the foreseeable future. Federal regulations require forty hours of ESL education and in some Colorado school districts an ESL endorsement is required. Personally I think this is the way to go, going that extra mile may cause some inconveniences, but the final goal is worth it.

Erik also expressed a feeling of anger when he spoke about the distribution of funds for each of the local school districts, which he learned about in the video.

I’m kind of angry at the distribution of funds, I guess, for ELLs but also in the school districts. <One district> needs a lot more money, versus <the other districts.> And you know, these guys have the need, but the way our funding system is set up…it’s just the disparity, it’s not even, it’s not fair. You have underfunded schools that are overwhelmed with these special needs kids, and I don’t mean special education, but they have needs. The kids aren’t getting the services they deserve…It annoys me, because it’s just so ineffective. You have the kids who need the least, with the most, and the kids that need the most, they have the least.

For the cultural field experience, field assignment two, Erik chose to attend a Russian orthodox church. He admitted that he expected “to suffer through a dreary, unintelligible service for an hour or so,” but found that he was pleasantly surprised.

“What I got was a nice lesson that nothing is ever what you might think it is.” He made connections between that experience and his role as an educator. “As an educator I think understanding could be helpful when dealing with people coming from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Understanding the church helps to understand the family.”

While Erik found the experience itself enjoyable, he described being unsure about the value of the activity. He did not feel as though it helped him gain a greater understanding of ELLs. On the activity impact questionnaire, he commented.
I’m not sure about this one. It felt a little weird, maybe touristy to go and watch a non-English event just for the sake of ‘experiencing’ it. On the surface I understand the point. Many Americans never leave their home country, so getting a better feel for what it’s like not being a member of the dominant language group is a good experience, just not sure that this is the best way. And honestly I don’t have a better idea.

Erik revealed in his interview that this assignment did not do much for him since he had lived abroad and had experienced being a second language learner in a foreign country on numerous occasions, and therefore, the cultural activity felt superficial to him. Also, since his wife is Japanese, he told me that he lived that experience daily at home as well.

In stark contrast to his reactions towards the second field experience, Erik found the third field experience extremely useful. He spent an entire day observing several one-on-one tutoring sessions and in-class visits at a local elementary school. He wrote in his write-up, “This was the first time I had the opportunity to observe English education for non-native students in an American school, and I was pleasantly surprised.” Erik discussed some of his major take-aways from the assignment in the conclusion of his write-up.

In conclusion I have to say that I learned a little bit more than I was expecting to. From the first field exercise I knew that parents had an important role to play in the ELL’s success, but I think I underestimated just how important their role is, and how big a role their culture influences them. I also had not quite realized just how many different and valid approaches there are teaching ELLs. On the other hand, <the school I visited> is in a fairly wealthy area, with good parental involvement and a low number of ELLs. I don’t think it is necessarily representative of the educational experience of all ELLs in the state.

It was evident that Erik “really got a lot out of the class visit.” In fact, he said that he got more out of that activity than he got out of anything else in the course. On the activity impact questionnaire he wrote, “We need more of these!”
Erik did not mention the readings much in our interviews. He admitted that he struggled to keep the readings for the ESL for Educators course separate from the readings he was doing for another course. When I asked him if anything in the readings had struck him or challenged his thinking, he responded, “Honestly, I have trouble sometimes keeping the other class readings separate from the ESL readings; so I’m not sure how to answer that.”

While he did not discuss the class readings much in our interviews, he did comment on the textbooks and one of the articles on the mid-semester activity impact questionnaire. For the How Languages are Learned text (Lightbown & Spada, 2006) he wrote,

Having taught English to non-native speakers before, I sort of come to this experience from a different angle. The thing I really like about the book is the number of “oh yeah” moments I’ve had while reading it. I especially enjoyed Chapter 6 (six proposals for classroom teaching) because I had seen all of the described teaching methods in action but had never read a formal analysis of them.

For the Sheltered Content Instruction text (Echevarria & Graves, 2010) he wrote, “I like this book, a lot. It is laid out well, and the activity examples/suggestions are pretty nice. I just wish the book was a little longer.”

Unlike any of the other participants, Erik also commented on some of the supplemental readings. He admitted that there were some he did not read, but commented on one that he did. It was an article about bilingual education in the United States (Ovando, 2003).

Ovando does a good job creating a historical narrative of the arc of language education in this country. Overall, though the article was essentially propaganda
for one particular point of view. Ovando confounds bilingual education with ESL education, using the two interchangeably when in fact they are very different. His statement that “There are two possible paths that we can take. One is the language-affirming path of two-way bilingual education, in which language-minority children and children from monolingual English homes learn side-by-side in multilingual classrooms, becoming bilingual and cross-culturally competent together. The other is the predominant path of the 1980s and 1990s: resisting the use of languages other than English in classrooms.” His argument is great if you are a speaker of whatever language is chosen to be 2nd, such as Spanish, but leaves children who aren’t Spanish speakers even more worse off since in this system they now have to learn two languages they aren’t familiar with. Presenting Ovando’s essay as a sort of fait accompli is dangerous. A more balanced approach would be better.

In addition, Erik commented on the developmental sequence writing sample activity that took place as part of a weekly threaded discussion. He wrote on the questionnaire, “This is something I had never thought about, or even remotely knew existed. New things are always good. The fact that it is so obviously useful makes it so much more important. It would be nice if there was a class activity/exercise that lets us work with this more.” He rated the activity as interesting, engaging and helpful in challenging him to think differently about ELLs.

In our final interview, Erik commented extensively on his research paper. He conducted a great deal of research that began with the purpose of fulfilling the assignment, but then continued out of genuine, personal interest. He found quite a few statistics about the ELL population that resulted in reactions from Erik ranging from shock to confusion to anger to sadness. As an example, he expressed frustration when he described what he learned about the drop-out and graduation rates of ELLs and the effect of those on society.

Essentially, we’re giving up on 50% of these kids. And they’re growing larger than the population at large right now, which means you know they’re going to grow up as people who are prison inmates and have substandard jobs, where the
number of minimum wage jobs is growing. So, by not educating them, we are impoverishing ourselves.

Erik indicated that while he learned a lot from his personal research endeavors, he felt that the research paper activity itself could have been structured differently.

It just sort of seemed like, “Boom, here’s a paper, write it.” I haven’t written a school paper for like a decade, so it was just like, “Hey, cool.” Let’s swim the English Channel, too. Let’s climb Pike’s Peak, just jump on out there. It’s kind of like running. If you haven’t run for a while, it’s gonna hurt if you just decide, “Hey, I’m going to go run five miles.” I’m not one of those guys who could just jump up and do a marathon. Granted it was double spaced, which I think double space is cheating. I mean, I’ve written work papers before, but that’s more technical, and you’re sticking a lot of diagrams and charts, and then you do analysis. It’s not quite the same. There’s no thesis. You just do bullet points and work your way through…You have to figure this is the first class people are taking in this program, and so you don’t know where everybody is coming from. Some people may have just finished their senior year of high school or college last year, but other people, like me, maybe haven’t actually been in an academic setting for a decade or so. It doesn’t have to be a big deal. Just, you know, “What’s your thesis?” Or, you know you need like 10 or 15 sources, “Well, where are you getting, what sources are you using? Well, go start finding those now. Run those by us; make sure that they’re actually ok.” Yeah, give us a bibliography before you write the paper, because your grade is based on the final paper, so there’s a lot of stress involved in, “Hey, I don’t want to screw this up, and I’m not quite sure what I’m doing.”

With respect to the journals, Erik rated them somewhere in between not helpful and extremely helpful. He commented on the mid-semester activity impact questionnaire, “I think the journal exercise is good in that it makes you look at your own personal experiences and consider how much, or how little you bring to the table as far as teaching ELLs.” No other comments were made about journals or reflections.

With respect to the online learning environment, even though Erik worked in IT, he rated his confidence at the beginning of the semester as a one out of five, suggesting that he was not very confident or comfortable with online learning. He explained, “Yeah, I’m not really a fan of online courses…It seems kind of difficult sometimes to figure out
what you’re supposed to be doing.” He also admitted that with the set-up of the online class, “you only look at your course stuff maybe twice, maybe three times a week, for some people, I think it’s easy to forget.” This feeling was reflected in Erik’s lack of participation in online discussions. He only contributed three posts throughout the entire semester.

On the mid-semester activity impact questionnaire, he rated the online discussions as being extremely helpful. He wrote, “They are good. It forces you to consider what we are learning in depth and critically. I also have to confess my contributions have been marginal.” On the end-of-semester activity impact questionnaire, however, his ratings of online discussions dropped to threes and fours out of five and did not add any additional comments. Erik also indicated on his final questionnaire that his confidence and comfort level with online learning went up slightly from a one to a two, but said that if given the choice, he would take this course face-to-face because he thinks he would get more out of it.

Overall, based on our conversations and on Erik’s ratings of the course activities, I would conclude that the class visit and panel discussion video had the greatest impact on Erik’s thinking. He also indicated that the developmental sequence writing samples activity challenged his thinking. While Erik rated the exam very high on the questionnaire, he did not comment on its impact. He rated the two textbooks (Echevarria & Graves, 2010; Lightbown & Spada, 2006) and the research paper as most helpful in preparing him to work with ELLs and challenging him to think differently about the education of ELLs.
Empathy and Perspective-Taking

Two common themes that emerged during our interviews and within Erik’s reflections were those of empathy and perspective-taking. Erik seemed to possess the ability to take on other’s perspectives and empathize. “I think I have a better understanding of some of the difficulties these students face and have a better insight into how to teach these kids the course material.” Several examples have already been cited throughout Erik’s portrait based on his personal experiences.

It was interesting to me that Erik’s sense of empathy and perspective-taking often appeared informed, backed up by knowledge, facts, information, and experience. He also expressed emotion when he tried to understand what others were thinking, feeling, or experiencing. For example, he described feeling sad that ELLs did not appear to have the same opportunities that others did. He then related that sadness to time he spent in an orphanage in China and connected those emotions to his school visit for the course.

It’s sad that these kids don’t have that. When I was in China, a friend of mine, who’s possibly the nicest guy, and this was actually in Time Magazine. He works for a charity in China; he was working with orphanages there. They were for abandoned children, kids with cleft palates. In China, there’s a one child policy, so infanticide is not uncommon, but more common is they’ll just leave kids at a police station, or wherever, and they have a cleft palate, or they have some sort of disability or disfigurement, and they’re poor rural families, and they just can’t afford the surgery. The reality is the surgery isn’t that expensive. Well, these guys work in Pennsylvania, and they’d come over once a year, and all they would do for three days was cleft palates. They would do like 80 kids and then fly back. So, we went to the orphanage, and you just felt so bad, because these kids…One little boy, he had been burned, and his family just left him out in a field to die, and somebody else found him. And there are kids there with minimal disabilities, physical disabilities. There was a girl there, she had a clubfoot, and their families didn’t want them. So, we went there, and we played with them, and we left, and you just felt so bad, because you were leaving all of these kids. You can’t save them, you just have to accept that, but it just makes you feel really bad inside. So, it’s sort of the same thing. When I was at <the school visit>, I was thinking about those kids. There were a couple of kids that were pretty disruptive. One kid who
was sort of brutal on me, they weren’t quite sure what to do with them. He had come from an orphanage in Russia, so he’d get angry and hit other kids, the teachers, so they weren’t sure what to do with him. What’s going to happen to him? He seemed perfectly nice when I met him, but he gets angry, he gets frustrated, and acts out, and then…Then, you know the statistics on all this…I guess they brought him over when he was six. So, whatever was going on for six years. I know how bad orphanages are in the U.S.; I can’t imagine how awful they are in Russia, physical or emotional abuse. But yeah, you can’t save them all. It makes you sad. Yeah, it’s your natural human…If you didn’t have that you’d be a bad person.

Erik told me about another time he felt bad for leaving a child behind.

My wife is Japanese and we went back to her home town last year for her sister’s wedding. And a friend of her family’s, they run a Buddhist elementary school; and so I went, and they had a preschool attached to the school. And so I went and just did you know…basically the hokey pokey for three hours. But it was like Alabama hot and my heart…I felt like I was going to die by the end of it. But, there was a little girl, and I had a lot of Japanese friends in college do this, they would do this. Her parents had sent her back to Japan from the U.S. to spend time with her grandparents, but she spoke no Japanese. And so, they let her stay with me through all three classes. And when I left, she started crying. I felt bad, because you’re like, “I don’t want you to be sad,” because I was like the first person in like a month that she could talk to.

One example of Erik taking on an informed perspective of others was in his discussion of Japanese teachers’ unions and how their history may have contributed to a sense of guilt he believed they felt.

The teachers’ unions, there’s two big ones in Japan. They argue that the money should be spent teaching Japanese teachers English versus…”You should be sending our teachers to America for four years or however long, instead of bringing these college kids over for two years. Then they just go home and there’s no benefit.” Part of the argument that where I was I was the foreigner and little kids would come up to me and say, “Hey uncle, are you a foreigner?” Because they didn’t know, they’d never seen one. Part of the payoff is you’re exposing these kids to people that they would not normally meet. Yeah, there was a lot of…though in Japan, well before WWII, the schools were used to indoctrinate the population that the Emperor was a God, and it was their duty to die for the empire. So after the war, the teachers’ unions were founded, and they were adamantly against anything, any sort of indoctrination. They felt it was sort of their…they were partly culpable as educators, because they had taken part of this, and you know provided all these soldiers. I think something like 2 million soldiers
died in WWII, and you know most of them came from little towns – big cities, too. But these teachers, you send half your one-room schoolhouse to war and only half of those come back. There’s a certain amount of guilt that goes with it, and so it’s weary to go to graduation ceremonies, because I worked at the board of education. They would play the National Anthem. I worked at the board of education, but I was seated with the teachers. The board of education would stand, students would stand, parents would stand, teachers would stay seated. Because as unions, they are opposed to the national anthem as a sign of militarism. And it’s just sort of, nobody tells you this before you get there.

Another example of Erik taking on the perspective of others related again to the differences between the Japanese and U.S. education systems. Erik took on the perspective of the parents in the U.S. and said, “If you tried to tell parents that they had to spend $1,000 a month so somebody else could teach your kids what you’re not teaching them, they would come after you with sticks. They would chase you out of town. I don’t have any kids, but I’m pretty sure about this.”

Erik’s apparent capacity for empathy and perspective-taking of others offered insights into his way of knowing. I will discuss what I felt was a tendency towards a self-authoring way of knowing in the next section.

Sources of Authority and Self-Authorship

My experiences of Erik resonated most closely with a self-authoring way of knowing (Baxter-Magolda, 2001; Drago-Severson, 2004; Kegan, 1982). One of the features of a self-authoring meaning-making system is the concern with consequences for personal integrity and meeting one’s own standards. Therefore, when Erik discussed feeling as though he should give something back to society, it appeared as though this was based on his own personal belief system. “I just have this silly idea I should be a productive member of society, or a more productive member of society.” This also appeared to be true when he mentioned choosing a remote town in Japan in order to force
himself to improve his language ability and “sink or swim.” My interpretation was that he made that choice based on his own internal authority and no one else’s. He wanted to improve his Japanese and he found what he considered the most effective way to accomplish that goal for himself.

Self-authoring knowers “can control their feelings and emotions and can discuss their internal states” (Drago-Severson, 2004, p. 27). I found evidence of this meaning-making feature in Erik’s statements. For example, when he described feeling sad about leaving the orphanage in Russia, he was able to take a step back from his emotions, reflect on them, and talk about them. Similarly, he described feeling bad for leaving that one little girl in Japan who looked to him for native language support. These reactions appeared in line with his internal structure of beliefs and values. In fact, when looking for instances of subject-object shifts, I did not find any in Erik’s statements. He did not appear to be subject to any of the experiences he talked about, which led me to believe that he was able to reflect on his emotions and experiences and in general, take them as object.

I mentioned earlier in this portrait that Erik appeared able to empathize and take on the perspectives of others in an informed way, an ability which seems to be in line with a self-authoring way of knowing. Self-authoring knowers “have a way of understanding how the past, present, and future relate” (Drago-Severson, 2004, p. 27). Erik demonstrated an understanding on several occasions of how the past, present and future related. For example, when Erik described the Japanese teachers’ unions, he described their past history with WWII, how that led to a sense of guilt on behalf of the teachers, which influenced their actions at events such as graduation ceremonies.
Erik also discussed the inter-relatedness of his own past, present and future. For example, he discussed his reasons for joining the Army, which ultimately led to heart problems, which resulted in his earning disability pay, which influenced his decision to teach, which led him to the ALP program, and will likely influence his future career and life path.

“Competence, achievement, and responsibility are the most important concerns of people who make meaning in this way” (Drago-Severson, 2004, p. 28). I found this to be the case with Erik. He admitted that he did not have to work. However, because of his sense of responsibility, he wanted to work. He set to achieve a standard he set for himself, which was to be a contributing and productive member of society.

Summary of Erik’s Experiences

Erik spent about a quarter of his life outside of the U.S., beginning as a child when he and his family moved around a lot due to his father’s job in the Air Force. His first memories as a child are of his time in Germany. He lived and traveled extensively throughout the U.S. growing up. Unfortunately, his father passed away when Erik was 16, and shortly thereafter he decided to join the Army. After the army he went to college and studied abroad in Japan for a year. After he graduated he returned to Japan to teach English for three years. Due to the fact that the Army originally misdiagnosed his heart condition, Erik learned that he was going to receive disability pay for life. At that point he decided to move to China, where he met his wife, who was Japanese. Because finances were not a concern for Erik, he chose to go into teaching because of his love of history and a desire to be a productive member of society.
Erik appeared able to take on an informed perspective of others and make decisions based on his own internal source of authority. Therefore, I inferred that Erik was operating on some level under a self-authoring meaning-making system. That way of thinking appeared to shape his life decisions and his course experiences.

Overall, I believe this course served as an informative rather than transformative experience for Erik. He reported having gained a great deal of knowledge and developed new understandings about the education of ELLs. The panel discussion video and the ESL classroom visit appeared to be the course activities that had the greatest impact on Erik. He reported that the biggest change in his thinking over the course of the semester was the realization that his experiences teaching ESL in Japan were not transferable to teaching high school history to ELLs in the U.S. That realization led him to decrease in his perceived level of confidence to teach ELLs.

In conclusion, the content knowledge Erik gained as a result of his participation in course activities led to new realizations about the education of ELLs. At the same time, his fundamental thinking, attitudes and beliefs about linguistic diversity did not appear to change as a result of his course participation. I did not find evidence of a change in how he thought, which would suggest that transformation did not occur for Erik during this semester-long course.

Unfortunately, Erik did not receive a passing grade for the course to count towards the ALP program. Therefore, if he continues in the ALP program he will likely need to repeat the course.
Eva

Background and Teaching Experience

My impression of Eva is that she is an energetic, enthusiastic, and hard-working teacher. She is also a married mother of two young children. She grew up in Virginia where she earned her B.A. in Spanish from Virginia Tech. She left Virginia and headed for North Carolina where she taught high school Spanish, English, and ESL. After that, she moved to Texas where she taught refugees in a newcomer program in a middle school. This experience had a great impact on Eva.

These children taught me, humbled me, and inspired me every day. They came from Kosovo, Sudan, Iraq, Somalia, Liberia, Nigeria, Mexico, Nicaragua, Bosnia, Rwanda…To hear their stories of destruction, war, chaos, violence, poverty, and being forced to flee their homes would break the strongest man or woman. Yet, they came to class ready to learn, live and carry on…These are my heroes and the reason I do what I do.

When her husband joined the U.S. Air Force, they moved to Florida where she was an ESL endorsement instructor for a local school district. She also taught ESL at the community college, elementary Spanish, and several classes for a homeschooling group. During her time in Florida Eva earned her M.A. in Education Leadership, Curriculum and Instruction from the University of West Florida.

One of Eva’s greatest success stories came from a time when she worked with a local school district in Georgia whose ELL population was not making AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress). Because of her expertise and her strong drive to advocate for ELLs, the district hired her to assist them in making some changes. She was able to help the school district reorganize its entire program by implementing an endorsement program, revising
and instituting better policies, and providing professional development and assistance to all staff. The following year the school district was able to meet its AYP goals.

After Eva left Georgia, she and her family moved to North Dakota where she earned her Ph.D. in Teaching and Learning from the University of North Dakota. Her dissertation and research interests revolve around collaboration between mainstream and ELL teachers. Eva taught courses in the Department of Teaching and Learning while in North Dakota, and she continued to teach online classes for her alma mater and was a full-time instructor during the time of the study. She taught for the department of Curriculum and Instruction and taught both online and face-to-face courses in Linguistically Diverse Education.

Course Experiences from the Instructor’s Perspective

Eva discussed with me her views on teaching and learning in general and about her experiences in the ESL for Educators course more specifically. Eva believes learning happens when people are open to new understandings and new ideas. She sounded hopeful that this type of learning would occur in the TCs over the course of the semester. She explained what she felt was most important for the TCs learn from her and from the course.

I think for me, the value of understanding the English Language Learners as people and how they add, not only diversity, but understanding and acceptance of others is very important. It’s not just that we have to teach them, but we should be valuing them as people, as well.

It was important to me to inspire them and for them to learn more about the population, the ELL population, and to develop a sense of empathy, and also a sense of efficacy.
It came across as very important to Eva to have her passion for ELLs come through to the teacher candidates in her class.

I talk about my experiences, and I think my passion for ELLs kind of comes through, so whatever I can do to add stories, just to kind of try to put them in the shoes of the ELLs or to demonstrate success, so that they know it can be done. So, anything that I could do, I tried.

Observations of Change in Teacher Candidates

With respect to the change that Eva observed in the TCs, she said that she felt the TCs that changed the most were the ones who were teaching at the time they took the course.

So, I did see some of them coming without that sense of efficacy, not knowing what to do, especially if they were in a classroom and they had ELLs. They were the ones that I felt like I did see the most change, because it was directly applicable.

As an example, she cited, “So, just even the discussions, throughout the semester, changed. From at first talking about…complaints about what’s not going right turning into the joys of what was. That was pretty powerful.” Eva was also “moved and touched by the teachers that did show a change from fearing ELLs to advocating for them. I really like that.”

And while Eva was excited to see positive change in some of the TCs, she was also frustrated by the fact that some of them did not put forth the effort she felt necessary to get out of the course what she wanted them to get out of the course. It frustrated her because she wanted the students to learn and to be successful.

And when you want your students to be successful, and when things are important to you that I already mentioned at the beginning; then you know that they need to do the requirements, in order to meet the objectives, in order to develop that sense of efficacy and empathy. So, when they’re not doing it, it’s frustrating.
She found herself not only getting frustrated at times, but expressed a sense of sadness as well when she felt she could not reach the TCs.

…if I couldn’t impact change, that made me sad. I really have such a passion for these students and for making their lives better, so it’s difficult when you feel like you can set the stage, but you can’t be a player in it, and I try to be, but it was difficult, because when students didn’t turn in assignments, or when they didn’t take the assignments seriously, didn’t take the assignment to heart, it made me really sad.

Thoughts on Transformational Learning

Eva discussed her thoughts about whether or not she felt she saw evidence of transformational learning on the part of the adult learners enrolled in the course.

You know, I saw growth and learning, not necessarily transformational, because not everybody comes to you without an understanding, and without empathy, and without efficacy. Some already have some of that, and so, there’ll be change, but not as much.

Eva expressed a belief that greater change could have been possible had greater effort been put forth in some cases. “What would make me sad are the ones who come with low efficacy or low empathy and then didn’t put forth the effort. I think it could have been greater change if they would have.”

Connected Teaching and the Online Learning Environment

Eva appeared to identify with a connected form of teaching (Belenky, et al., 1986). Connected teaching is in stark contrast to Paulo Freire’s (1971) “banking” model of traditional education, which views the teachers’ role as making deposits of information into the students’ banks, and the students’ role as storing the deposits of information. The connected teachers, rather, “support the evolution of their students’
thinking” (Belenky, et al., 1986, p. 218). They “support their students’ thinking, but they do not do the students’ thinking for them” (Belenky, et al., 1986, p. 218).

This type of thinking was evident in Eva’s interaction with Steven, which will be described in more detail later in this section. Eva and Steven had differing opinions which were debated at first in one of the weekly discussions, but later in a phone call initiated by Eva. Her response to that interaction was, “I can only give the experiences, the ideas, the discussions, set up an environment where he can change his beliefs, but I can’t change his beliefs for him.” This comment is representative of a connected classroom environment, which establishes “a culture for growth” (Belenky, et al., 1986, p. 221).

Establishing a “culture for growth” in the online learning environment did not go without challenges. Eva discussed how the online environment made it more difficult to meet the goals she set for herself and for the course.

It’s really difficult, I think especially, because it’s online...It is difficult, because you don’t know who is reading the words; you don’t know that they’re interpreting it the same that way you are trying to write it, so I think my passion came through, and I think that some of them picked up on that. It hopefully inspired them.

Lack of nonverbal communication in the online environment was also difficult for Eva. In referencing the particular instance of disagreement between her and one of the TCs, as mentioned above, Eva said,

It’s just if there’s a comment that’s made, then you can address it so much easier if it’s face-to-face, because they can see your facial expressions and your intonations, and they know that you’re not saying it back disrespectfully. Whereas if you’re responding to a comment online, it’s difficult to convey your ideas and express what you really want to say, but say it and know that they’re
going to take it the way you meant it and that it’s not going to sound disrespectful. So, that was pretty tough.

As a follow-up to the disagreement mentioned above, Eva highlighted the importance for her of standing up for one’s beliefs. Speaking of Steven, she said,

But he would stand up for his beliefs, and I respect that. But determining, for me, how to then stand up for my beliefs, which I believe are based on experience in education, in this field, to someone who doesn’t have experience in education, in this field; especially if their ideas and beliefs might be held as even racist, just very anti-ELL. And how to do that in a very respectful way but also challenge his views and make, see if I could make a path for a different point of view and that maybe he could take it in and consider it. So, I wanted to stand up for my beliefs, while he’s standing up for his, and of course, I’m trying to change his way of thinking but understanding that only he can change. I can’t change somebody, I can only kind of give the experiences, the ideas, the discussions, set up an environment where he can change his beliefs, but I can’t change his beliefs for him.

The nature of the difficulty of resolving such conflicts in an online environment challenged Eva’s ability to create a culture of growth for all of the adult learners enrolled in the online class.

An additional challenge of the online environment for Eva was the fact that it was difficult at times to remember “exactly which person said what.” The difficulty of distinguishing voices conflicted with Eva’s desire to create an environment conducive to an exploration of thinking, where knowledge is co-constructed and evolves based on the input of others. There were a few TCs, however, who stood out for various reasons.

As you’re reading through and responding to the different ideas, you don’t always remember exactly who did say what. There are several students that stand out in my mind, more than others, and I think a lot of it has to do with the passion they brought with them. Or, if they’re poor writers, that stands out in my mind, because I feel like if they’re going to be teachers, we need to be modeling proper English, and so, there are a few students that I had to constantly say, “I don’t understand what you mean. Can you clarify this for me?” So, usually who stands
out, is if they bring passion, if they did have opposing views, of course, that ends up standing out.

One of the ways that helped Eva connect better with some of her students was phone calls. She did not call of the TCs as part of her instructional practice, but rather if a problem arose, she called them. The TCs with whom she spoke on the phone stood out in her mind as well, which helped her better determine the contributions they made to the class. “I remember conversations, probably because we had phone conversations.” This realization led her to believe that adding in phone conversations as part of the course along with other technological adaptations to some of the assignments (e.g. adding voice to introductory PowerPoint presentations, incorporating more videos, etc.) in order to “add some human contact to the internet.”

Similar to the TCs who mentioned that keeping up with online discussions was a challenge, so did Eva. The semester of the study was an extremely busy semester for Eva, and she struggled at times to stay on top of the online course. “Because it was online, there were so many competing demands…it got pushed to the side.” Competing commitments led her to do most of the work for the online course at night. Unfortunately, though, that cut into her personal commitments.

…every time that they took my three hour chunk for a meeting, then that was three hours that I had to do <work for the online course> at night, which cut into family time, and my own children. Sometimes, I felt like if they e-mailed me, they wanted a response that minute, that it’s online; so why am I not online?

A lot of times, this was a night time class that I would teach, at night. So, then, once it started cutting into family time, it was after I got everybody to bed, so then it’s a 9 to midnight, because it needs, it deserves the same attention that every other class gets.
The benefits, challenges, and limitations of the online environment appeared to be shared between the TCs and the instructor. At times the environment conflicted with a person’s way of knowing or way of teaching, which added an additional dimension to their experiences and also contributed to the qualitatively different experiences of each of the participants, including the instructor.

Overall Feelings about the ESL for Educators Course

While Eva felt that the course resulted in both positive and negative outcomes, she reported being committed to making the ESL for Educators course the best it could be and vowed to continue to strive to reach all of her students. She felt proud that she “had some students say they were inspired to teach ELLs after taking this course,” but also saw areas for improvement. She left me with these overall reflections about the course.

Overall I found it to be very good. I think that from semester to semester, it depends on the group of students that you have as well as to how you’re going to feel about the success of it. If we were going to look at, there’s one out of ten that I don’t feel like I reached, there’s another one out of ten that could have done better, that efficacy and empathy were there, 90% of the students then had when they joined the class, left with a better understanding of how to meet the needs of their learners. But, I’m still not happy unless it’s 100%, so we’ve always got room for improvement.

Summary of Portraits

Table 5.5 presents a summary of the participants. It highlights key aspects of their background and experiences and life circumstances. The table also includes tendencies of the TCs towards particular epistemological stances to include whether internal or external sources of authority predominate, whether they take a subject or object stance on their
experiences, characteristics of their ways of knowing, and course changes that would support their type of learning.

Table 5.5 Summary of Individual Portraits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part.</th>
<th>Background/Experiences</th>
<th>Life circumstances</th>
<th>Epistemological Tendencies</th>
<th>Course Revisions to Support Learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sofia (A)</td>
<td>Mother: 3rd generation Mexican-American; Father: half Japanese/part Native American; born in Athens, lived in England, moved around a lot due to father’s job in military; lived in mostly suburban/predominantly white areas; little experience with diverse learners</td>
<td>Female; late 20’s; single mom of 1 young child; working as a contract engineer; not teaching; transitioning between engineering and education; was taking Spanish class at time of study; unsure about future career</td>
<td>Internal</td>
<td>Some difficulty with subject-object shifts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathy (A)</td>
<td>Grew up in white/culturally diverse suburb of Long Island, New York; traveled and lived throughout U.S. and abroad due to ex-husband’s job in military; lived and taught ESL in Korea for 2 years; knowledge of Spanish and Korean</td>
<td>Female; early 50’s; divorced mother of two children; teaching middle school math and drama; ran local bar/restaurant; transitioning between math and education</td>
<td>External; viewed teacher as source of authority</td>
<td>More often in object position</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5.5 Cont’d

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part. (grade)</th>
<th>Background/Experiences</th>
<th>Life circumstances</th>
<th>Epistemological Tendencies</th>
<th>Course Revisions to Support Learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Source of Authority</td>
<td>Subject-object stance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patricia (A)</td>
<td>Grew up in Alaska (white and Inuit) in Spanish-speaking home; father: half Mexican, half Apache Indian; father left family when Patricia was in 9th grade; moved to Colorado at age 16, three years’ experience teaching ELLs high school science</td>
<td>Female; late 20’s; married mother of 1 young child; 3rd year high school science teacher at local charter school; conducted SIOP training at school</td>
<td>Internal</td>
<td>Object; no apparent struggles with S-O shifts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steven (B+)</td>
<td>Moved around a lot as a child, rough background, lived in Colorado since age 12; studied abroad in Thailand; knowledge of Spanish and Thai; experience in administration and teaching in higher education</td>
<td>Male; late 20’s; in phase of self-exploration; aspires to be a teacher, lawyer, police officer, and senator; met someone who changed his life</td>
<td>Internal</td>
<td>Subject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erik (C)</td>
<td>Born in Germany, moved around a lot as child due to father’s job in military; father passed away when Erik was 16; joined Army as paratrooper, studied abroad in Japan; returned to Japan to teach ESL for 3 years; lived in China for 2 years after that; was deemed disabled by military due to heart condition; financially secure; has knowledge of German, Japanese and Chinese</td>
<td>Male; late 30’s; married to Japanese woman; no children</td>
<td>Internal</td>
<td>Object; no sign of difficulty with S-O shifts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 6
SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

Summary

This study examined the potential for transformative learning in a one semester online ESL for Educators course. Six adult learners enrolled in the course agreed to participate in the study: four females and two males ranging in age from late 20’s to early 50’s. They were all enrolled in the alternative licensure program in a secondary content area, and this course was required as part of their program. Two of the participants, Kathy and Patricia, were teaching at the time of the study and the remaining four were not.

I approached this study from a sociocultural perspective and drew on constructive-developmental theories of adult learning and development in my analysis of the data. The research questions that guided this study were:

1. How did the six teacher candidates experience the online ESL for Educators course?
   a. What roles did their backgrounds and prior experiences play?
2. What changes, or shifts in thinking, took place in the understandings and/or beliefs of teacher candidates about working with culturally and linguistically diverse learners as a result of their participation in the course?
3. Which course activities, educational practices and processes, according to the TCs, contributed to transformational shifts in thinking?
   a. What role did the online learning environment play?
Through questionnaires, surveys, written reflections, and interviews, I was able to learn about the six participants’ range of experiences, beliefs and understandings about linguistic diversity, and ways of knowing. I observed the TCs’ reactions to the course activities and reported on them in chapters 4 and 5. Overall, the three field experiences (ESL directors’ panel discussion video, cultural field experience, and ESL classroom observation and interview) appeared to have the greatest influence on their thinking with respect to working with English language learners.

In my theoretical analysis of the data, I was also able to learn about some of the ways these adult learners made sense of their experiences and how those features of particular meaning-making systems may have influenced their course experiences. In addition, I found evidence that the participants developed new understandings about linguistic diversity and the education of ELLs as a result of their participation in the course.

There were several factors that appeared to influence the teacher candidates’ course experiences. First, their backgrounds and prior experiences formed their pre-existing assumptions about culturally and linguistically diverse learners and gave them a starting point for the course. Second, their teaching experience and teaching context appeared to influence their sense of urgency or feelings of relevance toward the course material. For example, Kathy and Patricia, the two participants that were teaching at the time of the study, indicated that the course content was important and relevant to their lives at that time. They were able to apply what they learned to their classroom practice and experienced positive outcomes. Third, the adult learners’ qualitatively different ways of knowing and sources of authority influenced their satisfaction and/or frustration with
the structure of the course, the course activities and the online learning environment. Finally, the participants’ life circumstances, more than age, appeared to influence their experiences of the course. Several of the adult learners were in a period of transition and the ESL for Educators course played different roles in each of their transitions.

Based on my collection and analysis of the multiple forms of qualitative and quantitative data, I conclude that the online ESL for Educators course provided opportunities for learning. However, there was minimal evidence to support the claim that the course overall was an ideal context for transformative learning experiences. Several of the participants developed new understandings and experienced shifts in their thinking, and some even experienced transformational shifts in thinking, both personal and professional. However, the results imply that modifications in course and program design would result in a context more conducive for transformational learning.

In this final chapter, I discuss the implications of the findings. I address the role of transitions and ways of knowing; highlight the important elements of experience, reflection and meaning-making in adult learning and development, and describe supports and challenges that have been found to promote development. I pay particular attention to the online learning environment when I present implications for promoting development through discussion. Based on the data and results of the study, I include suggestions for the revision of course activities and program design, address the limitations of the study, and provide areas in need of further research. Finally, I conclude this chapter and this dissertation with final thoughts on my own learning and development throughout this process as the researcher.
Promoting Adult Learning and Development

Development does not stop in adolescence, but rather continues throughout adult life. In fact, there is no expiration date on one’s ability to grow (Kegan & Lahey, 2009, p. 323). Change is a major ongoing factor in adults’ lives, which influences adult learners’ engagement with learning (K. Taylor, Marienau, & Fiddler, 2000). Adults’ needs for learning often grow out of their larger life issues, which I found to be the case with the six adult learners who participated in this study.

Transitions

All of the participants in the study were experiencing some sort of transition in their life: a change in relationships, routines, roles, assumptions, or beliefs. Transitions can take many forms. They can be *anticipated* (expected to occur), *unanticipated* (unexpected), *nonevent* (expected to occur, but did not occur), or *sleeper transitions* (occurs gradually, perhaps goes unnoticed for a while, but culminates in a change) (Merriam, 2005). The link between each type is first, their complexity, and second, their potential for learning and development.

In a study conducted by Aslanian and Brickell (1980), 83% of adult learners could identify some transition in their lives, either past, present or future, as a reason for engaging in formal study. I found this to be true for the majority of the participants in the study. Sofia and Steven, for example, were in a period of self-discovery and trying to figure out which direction they wanted to go with their careers and their lives. Enrolling in the ALP program was one way to find answers.
To a certain extent, Jennifer and Erik were on similar paths of self-discovery, but for different reasons. Jennifer experienced an unanticipated transition when she lost her husband. She had always been his support system and had to learn how to adjust to a new set of roles, responsibilities, and relationships. She had to decide what she wanted to do and how to balance a career with her important role as a mother to four children who recently lost their father. Erik was transitioning into what he described as becoming “a productive member of society” in order to “give something back,” which resulted from a culmination of several life events: losing his father at age 16, talking about life and careers with his grandfather before he passed away, returning to the U.S. after living abroad for several years, unexpectedly being given life-long financial security, and figuring out what he really wanted to do in life. Going back to school was the first step in that process.

The types of transitions described above may have influenced the participants’ reasons for going back to school and joining the ALP program. However, once they got there, a new set of transitions emerged. For example, Sofia, Kathy, and Jennifer each said that they were struggling with the transition from the world of math, science and engineering into the world of education. This is a form of sleeper transition. There was not a life event that suddenly changed their worlds. They were gradually realizing that their routines, among other things, were altered, which led to some level of discomfort for each of them. That discomfort, however, lent itself to a greater potential for learning. Not all transitions become learning experiences. “For learning to occur, an experience needs to be discomforting, disquieting, or puzzling enough for us not to reject or ignore it, but to attend to it and reflect on it. It is then that learning takes place” (Merriam, 2005).
Sofia, Kathy and Jennifer all mentioned their struggles between the two worlds, which suggested that each of them recognized the transition and was reflecting on it, crucial steps in the process of learning. They were becoming aware of the differences and trying to make sense of them in order to adapt to the new roles and expectations. It is important to note, though, that while the transition appears to be similar on the surface for these three participants, the way each of them made sense of the transitional experience differed. Therefore, we can infer that the learning that accompanied the transition was also different for each person (Merriam, 2005, p. 8).

Implications. Our lives are shaped by the life events that occur within a particular sociocultural and historical context that we encounter as we live our daily lives and attend to our unique roles, responsibilities, and relationships (Merriam, 2005). These life events can be anticipated or unanticipated and have the potential to lead to transformational learning. For learning to become developmental or transformational, we must attend to the way we make meaning of our experiences; and as educators, we must attend to the ways in which the learners in our classes make meaning of their experiences. Being sensitive to the fact that many of our adult learners are in transition is an important first step. In addition, transitions present opportunities for promoting development, which can help educators to design course activities to promote that development (Kegan, 1994; Mezirow, 2000).

In the case of this study, I was able to determine certain transitions the participants were experiencing through my role as the researcher. It is important to understand the role of transitions in adult learning and development, and I learned that the way the ESL for Educators course was designed did not provide appropriate support
for those transitions. This requires attention. The course and instructor need to find ways to learn about, acknowledge and support transitions in the adult learners’ lives.

The background questionnaire that each individual is asked to complete at the beginning of the semester is an important first step in that process. However, further adaptations need to be made if the instructors are going to be able to learn about the unique transitions of the adult learners, become sensitive to them, attend to them, and use them as sources of learning to promote development. Further suggestions for such modifications will be discussed later in this chapter.

Ways of Knowing

Determining adult learners’ ways of making meaning out of their experiences can serve as a springboard to learning and development. Development is a qualitative change, or transformation, in a way of knowing (Kegan, 2000; Mezirow, 2000). Development “takes place in a social context of environmental prompts as people act on the world and it, it turn, acts on them. However, how adults experience this interaction is influenced by how they perceive and make sense of the events that make up that experience” (K. Taylor, et al., 2000, p. 11).

A person’s way of knowing matters in a learning context because learners construct knowledge in qualitatively different ways, which is dependent upon their way of knowing (Drago-Severson, 2004). Using data collected through a variety of activities, I was able to infer certain characteristics often associated with particular meaning-making systems (see table 5.5 for a brief summary of participants).
For example, Sofia and Patricia both exhibited features of a procedural way of knowing (Belenky, et al., 1986). However, even within the procedural way of knowing, there are multiple and unique aspects that can differ greatly from one person to the next. Both Sofia and Patricia revealed to me that they deeply cared about what they were trying to learn and do, and showed a sense of empathy for the people they were trying to help, aspects associated with connected procedural knowers (Belenky, et al., 1986). However, one major difference between the way that Sofia and Patricia seemed to make sense of their experiences was that Patricia appeared much more focused on the pragmatic, procedural aspect of learning. This was likely due to the fact that Patricia was teaching during the time of the study and Sofia was not, which has its own implications for course design that I will discuss in a later section of this chapter.

A critical element of a person’s way of knowing is who they take as sources of authority. On the path of development, people often begin by seeing authorities (individuals to whom they often turn for validation such as parents, employers, researchers, teachers, etc.) as holders of “truth.” Knowledge is either right or wrong and the authorities determine what is right and what is wrong. Further along on the developmental path, people begin to realize that knowledge is uncertain and that the authorities do not hold all the answers. Finally, those operating on a more complex level of development become aware that all knowledge is relative to context. Understanding adult learners’ sources of authority can help educators design appropriate supports and challenges for them.

As an example, Jennifer and Kathy both demonstrated dualistic thinking at various points in the interviews. They expressed a belief in right or wrong and indicated
that they viewed the instructor as a source of authority. Their statements suggested a need to know what was expected of them and reflected an expectation that the instructor lead them on the “right” path in order to gain practical skills and knowledge.

Taylor and her colleagues (2000) offer a possible reason why adult learners “hand over” authority to someone else, the instructor in this case. They suggest that the possibility exists that adults who are already overwhelmed with responsibility for work, family, and now learning, may be perfectly happy to turn over responsibility to someone else for a while. They likely want mutual respect, but maybe not mutual authority. Both Kathy and Jennifer exhibited signs of being overwhelmed in their personal lives and therefore, this explanation may be applicable to the two of them.

While Kathy and Jennifer’s thinking may have been similar at certain times, their reactions to the course activities and their experiences of the course were different. Kathy said that the course provided her with the practical skills and knowledge she needed and prepared her well to meet the needs of her linguistically diverse learners. However, Jennifer described being disappointed and discouraged by the course and did not feel as though she got the practical knowledge she sought.

There are two implications of the differing reactions from Kathy and Jennifer. First, like Patricia, Kathy was teaching during the semester of the study and had a context to which she could apply what she was learning. Jennifer was not teaching and therefore did not have a context to which she could apply what she was learning. The results of the study highlight the importance of teaching context which deserves attention when considering course design. The other implication is that while both Kathy and Jennifer
exhibited features of dualism in their thinking, they were likely operating under different meaning-making systems overall. “Adults’ different ways of knowing can help explain how it is that the same curriculum, classroom structures, activities, assignments, and/or teaching behaviors can leave some learners feeling stimulated and well supported while others feel abandoned or lost” (Drago-Severson, 2004, p. 160). This was certainly the case for Kathy and Jennifer.

Cutting across gender lines, Steven exhibited characteristics most in common with a subjective knower (Belenky, et al., 1986). He was on a quest for self-discovery and loudly asserted himself in an effort to self-protect and self-define. He wanted to gain life experience in a hands-on way and trusted in personal experience more than in written words.

Erik, on the other hand, appeared to orient more towards a self-authoring way of knowing. King and Baxter Magolda (2004, p. 303) define self-authorship as follows:

Self-authorship is the capacity to internally define a coherent belief system and identity that coordinates engagement in mutual relations with the larger world. This internal foundation yields the capacity to actively listen to multiple perspectives, critically interpret those perspectives in light of relevant evidence and the internal foundation, and make judgments accordingly.

Drago-Severson (Drago-Severson, 2004) posits that “an authority over one’s own identity marks the attainment of a self-authored way of knowing, which can retain its integrity in the company of others.” A person with a self-authoring way of knowing has the capacity to reflect on and consider the expectations of others as separate from his own.

Erik appeared to be the author and authority of his own life. He held expectations of himself that he strove to attain. He was able to reflect on his experiences objectively,
empathize with others, and take on multiple perspectives simultaneously. Erik was concerned not only with how his actions would affect him personally, but the larger world around him as well. Erik consistently spoke of “giving back to society.”

**Implications.** The way the ESL for Educators course was designed may have been more appropriate for learners who have one way of knowing while inadvertently neglecting others (Drago-Severson, 2004). As an example, imparting knowledge to learners as facts to be internalized, similar to Freire’s (1971) “banking” model, may feel frustrating to learners who have self-authoring ways of knowing; whereas it may feel satisfying and supportive to those who make sense of their experience with an instrumental way of knowing (Drago-Severson, 2004). However, the reverse is also true. Courses that are less structured, more constructivist in nature and do not fall into the “banking” model of education may appeal to self-authoring knowers while leaving the instrumental knowers feeling frustrated.

One way to address the issue of course design as being geared more towards learners operating with particular ways of knowing, is for educators to be mindful of the unique ways of knowing with which each adult learner approaches the course (Drago-Severson, 2004). Changes to the ESL for Educators course must take place in order to gain insights into the adult learners’ ways of knowing. Based on what I learned, I argue for the importance of trying to understand the unique ways the adult learners make meaning; and I agree with leading researchers in the field that providing the appropriate supports and challenges for each individual and his or her unique meaning-making system is crucial for development and transformational learning (Baxter-Magolda, 2001; Belenky, et al., 1986; Drago-Severson, 2004; Kegan, 2000; Kegan & Lahey, 2009;
Mezirow, 2000; K. Taylor, et al., 2000). Multiple perspectives on how to provide appropriate supports and challenges will be described in more detail later in this chapter.

Experience, Reflection and Meaning-Making

Three essential aspects of adult learning theory are experience, reflection and meaning-making. As Dewey (1938) observed, all genuine learning comes through experience, but not all experience leads to learning. “For experience to lead to shifts of perception associated with meaningful learning and development, it is necessary also to include reflection and critical reflection” (K. Taylor, et al., 2000, p. 27). Critically reflecting on an experience can lead to meaning-making, which is to make sense of that experience (Mezirow, 1990).

Experience, reflection and meaning-making were all critical elements in describing the unique experiences of the six adult learners who participated in this study. They each entered the course with a variety of experiences, and they reacted to the course activities differently, based on how they experienced them and made sense of them. Reflection was built into the course design by requiring that the learners reflect on each of each of the three field assignments and on their experiences overall through journal entries and a final reflection paper. In addition, participation in the study for six of the nine adult learners enrolled in the course provided additional opportunities for reflection. Through the questionnaires, surveys, written reflections, and interviews, I was able to construct hypotheses about how they made meaning of their experiences.

*Kegan’s subject-object continuum.* One way to better understand those meaning-making systems is through the lens of the subject-object continuum (Kegan, 1982, 1994).
If a person is subject to an experience, she is fully in the experience, living it, and feeling the emotion of it. When a person is able to move to the object position, she can examine it, reflect on it and make sense of the experience for her life. Using Kegan’s lens, I carefully observed what the participants said about their experiences and could infer whether a person was subject or object to particular experiences.

For example, I found that Sofia had difficulty making the shift from subject to object when she talked about feeling overwhelmed about teaching and everything going on in her life. She was subject to the experience of being a single mom of a toddler who was working, going to school and trying to figure out who she was and what her place was in this world all at the same time. She could not reflect on it without becoming emotional.

Jennifer also showed signs of being subject to the experience of writing the research paper. Her emotions of the experience seemed to overshadow her reactions towards other course activities. She was unable to separate herself from that experience and gain perspective on it. It was as though that experience had hold of her, a sign of being subject to it.

Several other participants, on the other hand, appeared much more able to objectively reflect on their experiences, examine them and talk about them calmly. Patricia and Erik, for example, appeared to have full control of their emotions and could reflect on emotional experiences without experiencing the emotion. As an example, both Patricia and Erik described feeling sad without showing sadness. This suggested to me that they were object to move the experiences of sadness to the object position. They
were not feeling the emotion of it; they were in full control of those emotions, even when they discussed them.

**Implications.** Being aware of how an adult learner orients to an experience can aid an educator in providing the appropriate supports and challenges that foster learning and development. For example, specific guidelines and examples would support learners, such as Jennifer and Erik, in the process of writing the research paper so it would not be such an overwhelming and intimidating experience. “High expectations are appropriately challenging when the environment also provides adequate guidance toward meeting those expectations” (K. Taylor, et al., 2000, p. 333). The adequate guidance may have been lacking in this case. Additional supports could have included helping her choose an appropriate topic and helping her break the paper up in to smaller, more manageable chunks by setting up step-by-step instructions with specific due dates along the way.

These additional supports would be helpful for all of the adult learners, but more important for Jennifer, and adult learners like her, who found the activity of writing the research paper to be overwhelming and intimidating. To provide additional supports, such as helping Jennifer with the research paper, the instructor would need to make herself aware of Jennifer’s way of knowing and the ways in which she made sense of that experience. For that to be possible, data would be required. I know that while she shared her struggles and frustrations with me as the researcher, she did not share those same frustrations with her instructor. The instructor did not inquire about it either. “Learning is a partnership between learners and educators” (King & Baxter-Magolda, 2004, p. 305) and therefore, some of the responsibility lies with the educator and the way she designs the course and some of the responsibility lies with the learner and the way she helps the
instructor learn about her way of knowing. The acknowledgement of that partnership by both members is important in promoting development in learning contexts.

Appropriate Supports and Challenges that Promote Development

Teaching with developmental intentions can foster transformational learning. However, using a developmental approach to course design and instruction can be unpredictable (K. Taylor, et al., 2000). Brookfield (1989, p. 240) expanded on this notion of unpredictability.

When we begin to ask people to identify assumptions underlying their habitual ways of thinking and learning, we do not know exactly how they are going to respond. When we ask them to consider alternatives, we do not know which of these will be considered seriously and which will be rejected out of hand. When people are presented with counter-examples that contradict their commonly held assumptions...we do not know exactly what will transpire...risk, surprise, and spontaneity are important and unavoidable.

Because of this unpredictability of teaching with developmental intentions, it is important to know who the learners are and where they are with respect to their learning and their life. This will help educators better provide the two factors essential to developmental growth: support and challenge (Baxter-Magolda, 2001; Belenky, et al., 1986; Drago-Severson, 2004; Kegan & Lahey, 2009; K. Taylor, et al., 2000).

Taylor and her colleagues (2000, p. 326) offer broad definitions of support and challenge.

Support, in its broadest sense, is confirmation of the learner and his or her current efforts. It includes, for example, positive feedback of all kinds, clear and explicit communications and directions, affirmation of what the learner already knows, and response to the learner’s perceived needs. Challenge, in its broadest sense, is encouragement to stretch beyond what is currently familiar and comfortable in order to achieve some new level of competence. It focuses on what remains to be done, rather than what is already accomplished. It may involve ambiguities, with
the intention that the learner take a more active role in decision making. Educators may also, after appropriate consideration, challenge adults by not responding to certain of their expressed desires.

By using a developmental approach to education, educators must consider that the potential for growth may be matched by a potential for disorientation (K. Taylor, et al., 2000). Support, while essential, is not enough by itself. Challenge must be present as well. Learners need to be “pushed, prodded, and encouraged past the point that feels comfortable and safe” (K. Taylor, et al., 2000, p. 333). The most effective way to support development, though, is the combination of and the right balance between support and challenge.

The ESL for Educators course provided several opportunities for the adult learners to challenge themselves. For example, asking students to seek out a cultural activity or event conducted in an unfamiliar language certainly pushed many learners outside of their comfort zones, which was one of the purposes of the assignment. However, there may not have been enough support in place to accompany the challenge. The TCs were given the opportunity to reflect on the experience, which is a key element in development, but because it was an online environment, they never had the opportunity to share those experiences through dialogue with a group of colleagues, which may have held the potential for further learning and growth.

The adult learners were essentially alone with that experience. Given the fact that developmental challenges such as these can shake an individual’s sense of self (K. Taylor, et al., 2000), providing additional sources of support would be helpful. We cannot underestimate the magnitude of the extent of this challenge and of the transformation that
learners undergo in experiencing new ways of looking at the world around them, and of experiencing a new sense of self.

_Baxter Magolda and promoting self-authorship_. To address the magnitude of such experiences, several researchers offer suggestions for how to provide supports and challenges that foster development and the potential for transformative learning. For example, Baxter Magolda (2001) suggests three principles for educational practice. First, she stresses the importance of _validating the learners’ capacity to know_. Second, she advocates for _situating learning in the learners’ experience_. Third, she highlights the need to define learning as _mutually constructing meaning_.

These three principles stem from the longitudinal work Baxter Magolda (2001) did with young adults in their 20’s and the questions they ask of themselves: How do I know? Who am I? What kinds of relationships do I want with others? After identifying the driving questions of the 20’s, she aligned them with the three dimensions of development: epistemological, intrapersonal and interpersonal. Based on those three dimensions, Baxter Magolda argues that there are three core assumptions that promote self-authorship, which are: 1) knowledge is complex and socially constructed (epistemological development); 2) self is central to knowledge construction (intrapersonal development); and 3) authority and expertise are shared in mutual construction of knowledge among peers (interpersonal development).

Several of the participants in the study were asking themselves questions similar to the ones posed by Baxter Magolda (2001). Sofia and Steven, who were in their twenties, made statements that indicated they were searching for answers about who they
were, how they knew, and what kinds of relationships they wanted with others. Jennifer
was asking similar questions, as was Erik to a certain degree, but they were not in their
twenties. Jennifer was in her early 50’s and Erik in his late 30’s.

Based on the results of the study, I found Baxter Magolda’s (2001) framework
helpful in understanding not only the adult learners in their 20’s, but the adult learners at
any age who happened to be undergoing a certain transition in their life. Many adult
learners enrolled in education programs are in transition (Aslanian & Brickell, 1980;
Merriam, 2005); which as mentioned, was the case for many of the adult learners who
participated in this study. Therefore, it is helpful to know the kinds of questions they may
be asking themselves, which along with the three core assumptions and principles that
promote development, hold implications for course design.

*Holding environments as contexts for growth.* Kegan (1982, 1994) describes the
importance of a holding environment as a context for growth and development, which is
necessary for transformational learning to occur. In essence, a holding environment is a
place where learners who are making sense of their experiences are held safe while they
test their assumptions about the world. Kegan argues that we must create:

a holding environment that provides both welcoming acknowledgement to exactly
who the person is right now as he or she is, and fosters the person’s psychological
evolution. As such, a holding environment is tricky, a transitional culture, an
evolutionary bridge, a context for crossing over (Kegan, 1994, p. 43).

Drago-Severson (2004) describes the three functions that good holding
environments serve, according to Kegan. First, a good holding environment must “hold
well” (Drago-Severson, 2004, p. 35). This means that the environment acknowledges
who the person is and how the person is currently making meaning and does not urgently
anticipate change. The holding environment is not meant to confine, but rather to support a person’s meaning-making process. Second, a good holding environment needs to “let go” when a person is ready. This allows a person to move beyond his existing understandings to more complex ways of knowing; hence promoting growth. Third, a good holding environment “sticks around” while the person is in the process of growth. It provides continuity, stability, and availability to that person.

The third feature of a good holding environment, which is to “stick around,” can be difficult, especially in a one-semester course like ESL for Educators. However, the other two features can be included, which align with the essential elements of promoting growth and development: support and challenge.

**Supports and challenges for women.** Belenky et al. (1986) in their study of 135 women found that women have unique ways of knowing. They acknowledge, however, that certain aspects of the ways of knowing they present cut across gender lines. In their research and in listening to women’s voices, Belenky and her colleagues observed ways to help women in their growth and development. They argue that in order to help women develop their own authentic voices, educators should “emphasize connection over separation, understanding and acceptance over assessment, and collaboration over debate” (Belenky, et al., 1986, p. 229). They also suggest that educators respect the knowledge that emerges from the women’s firsthand experience and encourage learners to evolve their own patterns of work based on the problems they are working on. In addition, Belenky et al. highlight the importance of allowing time for this development to occur. Taylor and her colleagues (2000) agree. “Significant change takes time, far more
time than brief training courses or individual class sessions can offer and perhaps even more than an entire program of courses or workshops” (p. 334).

Promoting Development through Online Discussions

Discussion and dialogue appear to be important facilitators of adult learning and development. However, facilitating classroom discussions to promote development is challenging. “When in our roles as teachers and trainers, if we automatically respond to each comment or question, we may without realizing it subtly reinforce the notion that we are the source of information and at the center of all interaction” (K. Taylor, et al., 2000). This challenge is also present when facilitating discussion in online settings: finding the right balance between being present and showing the learners that you are paying attention to what they are saying; yet not monopolizing the conversation or giving off the impression that you are the sole source of knowledge.

Brookfield (1989, p. 237) described why he opts not to circulate among small groups of learners engaged in discussion in his classroom. He found that his presence interrupted the flow of dialogue by either intimidating the learners, who would suddenly fall silent as he approached the group, or by encouraging bursts of anxious animation from those who were striving to be seen as good students. While he avoided interrupting group discussions, he made a point to actively offer himself as a resource to be called upon as needed.

This “hanging back,” but being available when needed, can be challenging for online instructors. The online instructor may not be called on when needed if the learners are afraid or unwilling to explicitly ask for guidance or assistance in the online...
environment. However, creating smaller groups for online discussion may provide a more comfortable environment for the learners to explore ideas, share experiences and challenge assumptions.

For some learners, discussion is a major, if not the major source of learning (K. Taylor, et al., 2000, p. 303). In academic settings, learners can be rich sources of learning for one another by bringing multiple perspectives to the conversations and a variety of examples that go beyond the texts or individual instructors. Unfortunately, many of the participants in the study indicated that they did not benefit much from the online discussions as they were set up in the ESL for Educators course. One reason for that was the number of posts they were expected to view and respond to, which became overwhelming for many, the instructor included. Smaller groups may address this issue for the learners by allowing them to go more in-depth with fewer people.

Another reason they may have felt the discussions were not beneficial to their learning was based on the structure of the discussions. They only lasted one week each. Several participants indicated that one week was not enough time to thoroughly explore a topic. Therefore, they found themselves scrambling to read and post and then it was time to move on to the next topic. Quality discussions take time. They “need time to develop momentum, to engage learners at deeper levels, and then to come to some resolution” (K. Taylor, et al., 2000, p. 302). A possible way to address this in the online setting is to expand the threaded discussions to span across two or more weeks. This would allow more time to explore a topic in greater detail and hopefully provide additional opportunities for growth and learning. Another possibility is to leave the discussions open and encourage TCs to return to them throughout the semester.
Changing the time span will only be useful, though, if the topics themselves lend themselves to rich exploration and discussion. It takes considerable skill and sensitivity to encourage learners to openly examine their values and beliefs (K. Taylor, et al., 2000); possibly even more so in an online environment when all responses are written and may appear “final.” Several participants indicated that the topics did not facilitate their learning or challenge their thinking. Brookfield (1989) describes the challenge of posing questions at the right level of difficulty. If they are too easy, learners will not fully engage. If they are too hard, learners may become discouraged. In addition, if the questions are too global and abstract, we run the risk of learners giving formulaic or conventional responses, which was one complaint of the online learners in this study. Several of them described the responses to discussion questions as “repetitive” and/or “superficial,” which may imply that the questions were not at the right level of difficulty to encourage learners to explore the topic and engage in the discussion.

Another factor in the success of any discussion, online included, is the learners’ awareness and understanding of how to appropriately engage in the conversations. For example, “learners need to know in advance the criteria for a quality discussion so they can assess how well they are accomplishing the goal” (K. Taylor, et al., 2000, p. 303). This is particularly true in the online environment; especially if it is the learner’s first experience in an online learning context.

The appropriate guidance for weekly threaded discussions may have been one aspect of the ESL for Educators course during the semester of the study that was lacking. They received five points for each weekly discussion. To earn those five points, they were required to respond to the question prompt and reply to at least two of their
classmates during the week. There were no additional criteria set for what was expected of them as contributing members to the conversation; nor was there any indication of what a quality post might look like. Eva increased the amount of points to ten and provided a more detailed rubric with clear expectations for accomplishing the goal of a quality discussion.

A final aspect of the online discussions that is important to address, is that of online instructor participation and feedback. As indicated, Eva struggled at times to find the appropriate balance between responding too often and not often enough. The online learners admitted that if she posted after the week of the discussion, they did not go back and read her comments calling into question whether or not her feedback was beneficial to their learning. The data results showed that the instructor’s posts, especially those that were posted after the week of the discussion, were not being viewed by all of the students.

These results offer implications for the structure of the online discussions as well as the role of the instructor in providing feedback. First, if the discussions last two weeks, instead of one, as discussed earlier, that may allow for more processing time for both the learners and the instructor. Participation and feedback on the part of the instructor would more likely fall within the time frame dedicated to that particular discussion. In addition, finding alternate ways to provide feedback may help reach more of the learners. For example, the instructor may choose to create a summary of important points from the discussions and post it in several places: the threaded discussion, a course announcement, and an email. This is one of the changes that Eva implemented to the course the semester following the study.
Implications for Practice

The results of this study highlight the need for the structure of the course and the programs in which it resides to be critically examined. Given the pressing need for teachers to work effectively with English language learners, this study calls into question the reasonableness of expecting teachers to gain the necessary knowledge, skills and techniques in a single semester online course. The issues raised by the study provide a framework, however, for examining the professional preparation of teachers who work with ELLs, and offer insights into the revision of activities and practices that may positively impact the teacher candidates’ understandings of the education of ELLs, and suggest ways to create environments more conducive to transformative learning experiences.

Implications for Course Design

And in-depth study of this nature revealed both the strengths and weaknesses of the ESL for Educators course. As teacher educators our job is to prepare our future teachers to work with their diverse learners. Helping them acquire the knowledge and skills necessary is an important aspect of that preparation. However, this study underscores the importance of going beyond informational learning to include opportunities for adult learners to transform their frames of reference to a deeper, more reflective understanding of themselves and the students with whom they will work.

*Analysis of course syllabus.* One of the first aspects of the course in need of revision is the syllabus (see appendix I for complete syllabus). The course goals and objectives are all geared towards informational knowledge. According to the course instructors and the program coordinator, the unwritten goals for the teacher candidates
enrolled in the course appear to go deeper than simply knowing the theories associated with language acquisition, lesson adaptations and assessment of ELLs. As Eva mentioned, from her perspective two main goals of the course were facilitating a sense of efficacy and empathy for ELLs. Empathy and other developmental goals are not represented on the course syllabus. There are specific standards as outlined by the state that must be included. However, instructors need to re-word, revise, or add goals and objectives that have a more developmental focus. If in fact that is to be a goal and focus of the adults’ learning, it needs to be explicitly stated on the syllabus and course activities designed appropriately to meet those goals.

Informational learning through readings. Each of the six participants reported a gain in informational knowledge of ELL issues and topics. Some of the readings appeared to contribute to that knowledge base, but most commonly cited was the text on sheltered content instruction (Echevarria & Graves, 2010). Few readings appeared to do much in the way of challenging the teacher candidates’ thinking about ELLs and some participants indicated that they could not remember the readings or they could not keep them straight from other courses.

A critical analysis and review of the readings is in order. Based on the participants’ reactions to course activities, those that invoked emotion had a tendency to lead to greater shifts in thinking and perspective. Therefore, I would suggest looking for materials that have the ability to impact emotions, increasing what Richard-Amato (2010) refers to as the “affective base” in teacher education. For example, incorporating books, articles or videos that tell a story may result in a greater feeling of connection and instill a greater sense of empathy for ELLs. In addition, due to the perceived lack of a community
in the online environment, using materials that create feelings of human emotion and connection may be more effective in challenging the learners’ thinking as well as provide additional opportunities for learning and development.

*Importance of context.* Having a context to which the TCs could apply the new knowledge and skills acquired appeared to be an influential factor in the way the participants experienced the course. Kathy and Patricia were the only two teaching during the semester of the study and they found the course beneficial in helping them work with their ELLs. Research shows that adults learn best when the content they are learning is of clear and current importance to them (Knowles, 1980; Knowles, et al., 1998). Kathy and Patricia had a current and relevant context to which they could apply what they were learning in the ESL for Educators course.

Jennifer, on the other hand, struggled to see the relevance of what she was learning and therefore, reported that she did not get much out of the course. She did not see the relevance partly because she did not have a context to which she could apply the knowledge and skills. And in fact, she admitted that she did not complete some of the readings and activities because she did not see a need to do so at that point in time since she did not have her own classroom.

One implication here is that since context appears to be an important factor in the learning of the adults enrolled in the course, it would be helpful to find a way to provide a context for those who are not currently teaching. It is possible that the learners could tutor ELLs or could find a classroom in which they could assist the teacher working with ELLs. To account for varying schedules, evening classes taught to adults could be an
option as well. Also, the course could possibly find local English learners in the area and provide a free English class taught by the TCs. This could be beneficial to both the TCs and the ELLs. Exploring the possibilities of incorporating a context could help bridge that gap and provide an opportunity for more adult learners to experience that clear and current importance, which would likely enhance their learning.

**Differentiation.** Differentiation is a buzz word in K-12 education right now. The term is generally used to refer to the altering of or modification of course activities to better meet the needs of diverse learners. However, it is rarely used in contexts of higher education. In a personal communication, S. Stein said to Drago-Severson, “learning activities need to be structured that can effectively address the multiple needs/expectations of adults at multiple developmental as well as skill levels to most effectively reach and teach all students” (Drago-Severson, 2004, p. 160).

The ESL for Educators course incorporated several activities that by nature were differentiated: journals, reflections and discussions. However, one thing I learned from the study was the need to differentiate course activities. A contradiction exists between the course content, which encourages the teacher candidates to differentiate, and the conduct of the course, which does not differentiate. For example, the cultural field experience is designed for adult learners who have not had much exposure to diverse cultures or languages, or who may not have traveled outside of the state or the country. However, for Erik, who spent more than a quarter of his life outside of the U.S. and lived that experience already, the cultural field assignment appeared superficial and did not challenge him to think differently about ELLs or the education of ELLs. So for learners who, like Erik, have extensive experience abroad, an alternate assignment would likely
be better at promoting learning and development, and potentially lead to more opportunities for transformational learning.

Another example of an aspect of the ESL for Educators course that may benefit from differentiation would be the final research paper. For example, Jennifer in particular struggled with all aspects of the research paper. She did not see the relevance or the purpose in doing it and struggled with the format. Others, such as Erik, indicated that they understood the importance and purpose of the research paper, but felt that structure could have been improved. Patricia, though, found the experience of writing the research paper one of the most valuable in the course for her. This highlights the fact that each person experiences the same activity in qualitatively different ways, likely influenced by their individual ways of knowing.

One way to address that issue is to provide options. For example, the research paper could remain an option for a final project for those who learn best in that way. For others, though, who may learn better in different ways, a hands-on, practical application project may be added as an additional option. And for those who prefer more personal contact and connections, maybe incorporating interviews or devising a type of action plan might be helpful. The possibilities are numerous, but the point remains the same: to support learning and development, we need to begin with the learner’s experience and be mindful of their unique ways of knowing to provide appropriate supports and challenges to take the learners where they are and help them get to where they can be.

Creating a community of connection. Based on the interview data, it was clear that the majority of the reactions were negative. Many of the TCs indicated that they
would have learned more in a face-to-face classroom. My interpretation is that they did not feel part of a community of learners or practice (Wenger, 1998), which Drago-Severson (2004) refers to as a community of connection. The adult learners appeared to feel somewhat alone in their experiences and craved more personal human contact and connection. The big question is, then, how can one create a community of connection in an online learning environment?

Drago-Severson (2004) claims there are ways to build a community of connection that includes elements of a cohort design without having structured, formal cohorts. However, the design features of a cohort design need to be woven into class and program structures, such as sharing a common purpose and meeting for longer periods of time. I will discuss this further when I talk about implications for program design later in this chapter. What can be done in the course itself, though, is provide opportunities for the learners to talk with each other, learn from each other, and reflect on each other’s experiences.

Opportunities exist for the TCs enrolled in the course to converse in the weekly online discussions. However, the way it was set up was not working. Face-to-face meetings cannot be required in fully online courses, per the rules and regulations of the university, but the instructor can arrange for optional face-to-face meetings. That way, those who feel they need that personal connection could have the opportunity to meet and talk with their classmates. For example, several participants explained that they rely on people’s faces. This would provide an opportunity for them to see the faces of those with whom they are conversing online.
Another option for providing opportunities for learners to talk with each other is through phone conversations or Skype. Speaking on the phone would not provide a face, but would provide a voice, a sense of a personality, and more of a personal connection. Skype could provide all of the above plus a face. Phone calls or Skype calls could come in a variety of forms. First, the instructor could call her students at the beginning of the semester to introduce herself and welcome them to the course and ask if they have any questions. This may break the ice and bridge that distance that online learners have a tendency to feel from their instructor and classmates. Speaking on the phone or computer via Skype with their instructor may lead them to feel more comfortable asking for help and guidance along the way, which would help the instructor provide the appropriate supports and challenges to foster their learning and development.

Another form that calls can take is from student to student. Maybe the instructor could set up a sort of phone/Skype tree where the TCs have to talk to two of their classmates and conduct a mini-interview to get to know them. As is often done in face-to-face classrooms to break the ice, they could report something interesting they learned about their classmate during the interview. The difference would be that the reporting would come in the form of an online threaded discussion.

Other options to help promote a community of connection through personal contact and communication could come through the use of technology. For example, incorporating voice into their introductory Power Point presentations would be an additional way students could connect. Instead of just viewing words on the page and looking at a few pictures, the vocal component could provide an additional dimension and allow learners a glimpse into each other’s personality.
Finding additional ways to incorporate voice into online discussions could also be helpful for those who prefer to speak rather than write their thoughts. This would also add an additional dimension of vocal intonation and intention, which is often lost in the online environment. Nonverbal communication would still be missing unless a video component was included, but this would be a step in the direction of creating that community of connection.

*The potential for transformative learning.* Starting with the learners’ experience and providing opportunities for critical reflection and meaning-making can lead to growth and development. When educators create learning contexts that heighten learners’ awareness of their assumptions, or “taken-for-granted beliefs,” and provide spaces, or holding environments, in which adults can engage in reflection and discussion of those assumptions, they are providing opportunities for transformational learning to occur.

To foster real change and development, educators must take a developmental stance and “send the message that they expect adults can grow” (Kegan & Lahey, 2009). As a result of the course design and experience, several of the participants were able to examine their own assumptions and some of them were able to reflect on them and even change them. For example, Erik came to the realization through his participation in the course that his experience teaching ESL in Japan did not directly transfer to teaching ELLs in a content-area classroom in the U.S. The classroom visit he conducted as part of the third field experience and his reflections on that experience along with his prior experiences led to that shift in thinking.
Another example was when Patricia described feeling sad when she reflected on how she approached ELLs in her previous classes. She had assumed certain things about those students and was able to challenge those assumptions through her course experiences and reflections. She changed the way she made sense of those experiences, a sign of a transformational shift in thinking. In addition, through our conversations, she was able to reflect on her assumptions about the Hispanic males with whom she came in contact. She discovered that she may have been assuming they were a particular way given her history with her Hispanic father, who left the family when Patricia was in ninth grade, and who Patricia viewed as a “typical Hispanic male.”

Yet another example was when Kathy was able to challenge her previously-held assumption that those who spoke fluent English were in fact fluent in all aspects of English. Based on what she learned in the ESL for Educators course, she incorporated a journaling component to her middle school math class and discovered that many of her students, even though she had not realized it, were ELLs. For the majority of the semester, Kathy believed she had only one ELL in her class and she focused on helping him, but it turned out she had many more and realized that the strategies she learned about and implemented were helping many of her students’ growth and achievement.

The three field assignments and the reflections of those assignments appeared to be the greatest contributors to the potential for transformational learning overall. However, each person’s reactions to the course activities were unique, as discussed in the individual portraits in chapter 5.
In conclusion, the way the online ESL for Educators course was designed was not an ideal context for transformational learning, but transformational shifts in thinking did occur in several participants as a result of their course participation. Incorporating the revisions suggested may lead to a greater potential for the adult learners to have a transformative experience. It will be difficult to determine which modifications result in greater learning and development, though, because a new group of learners in a new semester will bring with them their own unique sociocultural histories, experiences, ways of knowing, and life circumstances, which will all influence whether or not the potential will exist for transformative learning for them.

Implemented Changes to Course Design and Next Steps

Shortly after the conclusion of the study, Eva began instructing the ESL for Educators course again with a new group of TCs. She talked to me about some of the changes she implemented based on some of the results from this study. First, Eva reported that she noticed a pattern of frequently asked questions from the TCs. For example, she often heard questions such as, “Why do I need to take this class if I don’t plan on being an ESL teacher?” To address questions such as those, Eva started a class wiki with frequently asked questions and her responses to them. She also used the wiki as a place to add resources that might be helpful to them in their content areas. Eva strove to highlight the importance of learning how to effectively work with ELLs.

Based on the mostly negative reactions to the weekly discussions, Eva altered some of the discussion topics in an attempt to foster more in-depth responses and conversations. She also began posting feedback within the weekly discussions, as she did during the semester of the study, but incorporated as well an announcement on the
Blackboard course shell, which was also sent as an email to the TCs. Based on the fact that her posts were not being viewed as often as she would have liked, she found different ways to communicate with the TCs in an effort to challenge their thinking and help to better prepare them to work with ELLs.

Based on the fact that several of the study participants suggested that they would have appreciated a more practical application activity, Eva removed the formal research paper and replaced it with a more hands-on, practical final project. The write-up for the new project read on the syllabus,

Using the framework from Chapter 8 (Echevarria & Graves, 2010), consider the needs of one of the learners profiled in this chapter. (Or, you may select an ELL or ELLs you know.) Select a lesson plan from a curriculum guide or a teacher-made plan. Describe how you would adapt the plan and implement the lesson. Justify and support your rationale for the decisions you would make referring to what you have learned in this class. Similar to Echevarria & Graves’ suggestion to work collaboratively at your schools, partners and/or teams are encouraged to work together for this project. Specific guidelines will be posted on Blackboard.

Due to the generally positive response to the field assignments, Eva left those the same. She also arranged to video-record an updated ESL Directors’ panel discussion to the course shell on Blackboard.

Those were the major changes that Eva made to the course based on the results of this study. The process of action research will continue and additional changes may be implemented down the road based on what she learns.

Implications for Program Design

This study indicates that a critical analysis of the program of which ESL for Educators is a part would be beneficial to the creation and development of experiences
conducive to transformative shifts in thinking. The online learning environment in particular can appear decontextualized and therefore, finding ways to create a community of connection for those enrolled in the program may be beneficial to the adults’ learning and development. In addition, finding ways for the teacher candidates to collaborate may also unlock the potential for them to acquire additional skills and knowledge to better meet the needs of their English language learners. This section describes suggestions for how to start that process of analysis and revision.

Creating a community of connection. Creating a community of connection is important in supporting adult learners in academic, emotional and cognitive ways (Drago-Severson, 2004). Online teacher education programs, such as the ALP program in which the adult learners in the study were enrolled, need to find ways to establish communities of connection. Due to university policies, online courses cannot require face-to-face meetings. Therefore, one possibility is to change the format of the online courses to a hybrid format, where the majority of the interactions take place online, but with face-to-face meetings schedule regularly throughout the semester (once a week, once every other week, etc.). That way, there is the convenience of the online environment with the human contact and connection of face-to-face interactions.

Developmental focus throughout. Implementing a developmental focus in the ESL for Educators course is essential. However, teaching with developmental intentions in one course is not enough. Changes in a person’s development or way of knowing take time, longer than one semester in most cases. For the teacher education program to facilitate transformative learning experiences, each of the courses need to focus on
developing adult learners and providing them opportunities to reflect and explore who they are and who they want to become. (See Clarke (2007) for example).

One suggestion is to invite learners to write their autobiographies as a way to support and promote development (Drago-Severson, 2004). This should be incorporated into the very first course the TCs take as part of their curriculum and then strewn throughout each of the courses. Externalizing their experiences by writing about them provides an opportunity for the adult learners to take a step back and reflect on their experiences and on their assumptions. If this autobiography format is incorporated throughout the course sequence in the program, adult learners will be able to continue their journey of reflection and revise their autobiographies accordingly.

*Development of teacher educators.* The majority of the instructors of the courses in the teacher education program at this particular university are adjunct instructors, meaning they are not full time employees of the university. This can lead to a disjointed program design. Not only do the TCs enrolled in the online courses not know each other, but often the online instructors do not know each other either. The lack of connection and communication may cause some instructors to feel isolated. Eva was an exception since she was a full time instructor at the university during the semester of the study.

Due to the high percentage of adjunct instructors and frequency of instructor turnover, there is room for improvement of continuity and consistency. Courses often undergo minimal revision from one semester to the next. I would recommend that the teacher education program not only work on creating a community of connection among the teacher candidates, but of the teacher educators as well.
One way to do so would be to incorporate periodic meetings, even as infrequently as once a semester. That way, the instructors could get to know each other and provide opportunities to collaborate on course and program design. Also, providing training on how to design courses with a developmental focus would be helpful if that is one of the goals of the program. It would be important to make teacher educators aware that they cannot “develop” their students, but can provide opportunities for them to grow, learn and develop on their own (K. Taylor, et al., 2000). And since development grows out of ongoing interaction among people, creating contexts in which dialogue and discussion are an integral part of the curriculum would be helpful for both teacher candidates and teacher educators.

A shared journey. As adult educators we are also adult learners and we need to recognize that (K. Taylor, et al., 2000). Engaging in critical self-reflection about our own existing assumptions, values and perspectives can prompt and promote our own development. This is a partnership between teacher educators and teacher candidates, all of whom are developing adult learners (Baxter-Magolda & King, 2004). It is a shared journey. “As we come into the lives of adult learners, our best and greatest influence may be our willingness to travel with them on that journey” (K. Taylor, et al., 2000, p. 335). In the words of Kegan and Lahey (2009, p. 323), “no matter how old you are, the story of your own development – and the stories of those around you – can continue to unfold.”
Limitations and Areas for Future Research

This study had limitations. The small sample size permitted in-depth analysis of the six participants and allowed for richer interpretations of the data. A similar study conducted with a greater number of participants would be beneficial.

Another limitation of the study was its short duration. The study focused on a single university class that took place during a single semester. In sixteen weeks I was able to infer characteristics of certain meaning-making systems, but one semester was not long enough to find evidence of changes in the way the participants constructed the meaning of their experiences. A longitudinal study would address that limitation. For example, following a particular cohort of TCs throughout the duration of their licensure program would provide more opportunities to observe changes in their ways of knowing.

A third limitation of the study was that I was unable to observe the teacher candidates in practice. Even though only two of the six focal participants were teaching during the semester of the study, observing their practice and the ways in which they responded to and educated their ELLs would have provided additional insights into the ability of the ESL for Educators course to meet its goal of making a positive impact on ELLs. Future studies that involve observation of practice and the impact on student learning are necessary to make that connection between teacher learning and practice.

A final limitation of the study was that some of the TCs viewed me to a certain degree as another instructor. They were each aware that I had taught the course in the past and that I was connected to it in some way. Due to my positionality, even though I did everything I could to assure them that I was in no way responsible for evaluating
them, some of them may have been reluctant to share their true feelings or reactions to
the course with me. My knowledge of and experience with the ESL for Educators course
may have altered the results of the study as well as my interpretation of the results.

Conducting a similar study in a different course or university, or having someone else
who is less familiar with the course research similar questions posed in this study, may
address some of those biases.

I plan to keep in touch with the six adult learners who participated in this study if
they are willing to keep in touch with me. I would like to conduct my own longitudinal
study to see if I can find evidence of changes in their ways of thinking and knowing and
to see if the ESL for Educators course has an impact on their teaching. Additional time
with them will hopefully add to my understanding of who they are, how they know, and
the types of supports and challenges that will assist them on their path of growth, learning
and development.

Final Thoughts

An important result of this study not reported elsewhere is the growth, learning
and development that happened in me as a result of my engagement in this study as the
researcher. In an attempt to understand the participants, I began to examine myself and
my own ways of making meaning out of my experiences. I have asked myself some
difficult questions about my own assumptions and ability to reflect on my experiences
and make sense of them. Throughout my seven years of participation in this Ph.D.
program I have observed shifts in my ways of knowing, which I did not realize existed
until I began writing this dissertation.
I vividly remember that I began this process seven years ago with an external sense of authority. I actually thought someone had made a mistake by admitting me into the program! I was surrounded by members of academia who spoke a language with which I was unfamiliar. Much like the TCs in their cultural field experience, I was out of my comfort zone. I felt out of place and uncomfortable. It was as if I was waiting for someone to provide me with a manual for how to be a doctoral student, but that manual never came.

Starting the program was a time of transition for me. I admit that part of my thinking was dualistic in nature. While I acknowledged that knowledge was uncertain and relative to context, I also viewed the professors as sources of authority. I expected them to tell me what they expected of me. I craved for them to tell me how I should learn and be a doc student. As an example, I was the student who wanted to know how many pages I should write and what elements I should include in a given paper. I did not possess the ability at that time to see myself as a source of authority. I did not acknowledge that I had something to offer and was an active, contributing member of knowledge construction in that particular context.

Over the years I started to become aware that I, too, had something to offer based on my own diverse experiences and unique way of making sense of those experiences. Also, I started to realize that not only was I able to understand the language of those around me, but I was beginning to speak it. I was slowly becoming a contributing member of this community of practice.
It was not until somewhere around my dissertation proposal hearing that I really began to see myself as my own source of authority. I shifted my thinking at that point. I started to see my professors more as colleagues than assessors and evaluators of my knowledge and work. That was an exciting feeling!

I am now finishing my dissertation and in a few short months will be able to officially join the members of academia. This chapter of my life will run over into a new chapter. Throughout the rest of my life I know I will continue to develop, learn and grow. And because of this experience, I will be more aware of how I am doing it.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A. BACKGROUND QUESTIONNAIRE

TED 5800, Fall 2011

Name (Last, First): __________________________ Phone #:________________

Preferred E-mail address: ____________________________________________

Current degree program/major: TELP / ALP; Elementary/Secondary;
    Content area:

Where you are in the program (1st year, final year?): ___________________

Previous degrees/education attained: _________________________________

Why do you want to teach?:

Gender: Male / Female Native language/background: ________________

Age: 20-25 / 26-30 / 31-35 / 36-40 / 41-45 / 46-50 / 51 or older

If you’re currently teaching, where and what do you teach? (school/subject/grade level):

Other daily responsibilities (work, family, volunteering, other courses, etc.):

Briefly describe where you grew up (city/suburb?, culturally diverse/ predominantly white?, etc.)

Teaching experience (grade level, number of years, place, responsibilities):

    How would you characterize your teaching experience?

          Novice               Veteran
          1    2    3    4    5

If your career background is something other than teaching, please describe:

2. What languages do you know other than English?

What is your level of confidence/proficiency in them?

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<th>Language:</th>
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<td>Low 1</td>
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</table>
Describe your experience(s) with other languages (learned from family members, took a foreign language in school, can understand your Grandmother, but can’t speak her language, etc.):

3. How would you rate your experiences with/knowledge of other cultures?

Low  High
1  2  3  4  5

Describe your experiences (Family background? Lived abroad? Traveled abroad? Where? When? For how long? What cultures?):

4. How would you rate your level of confidence/ability in teaching culturally and/or linguistically diverse learners?

Low  High
1  2  3  4  5

Describe your experience(s) in working with diverse learners:

5. How would you rate your interest in having ELLs in your classroom?

Not at all interested  Very interested
0  1  2  3  4  5

6. How would you rate previous coursework you have taken in preparing you to teach/work with English language learners?

No preparation  Highly prepared
0  1  2  3  4  5

List prior coursework you have taken related to diversity and/or working with English language learners (ELLs):

List any other type of formal training you have received with regard to working with ELLs (in-service, conference, workshop, etc.):

7. I am taking this course because:

8. I am taking this course ONLINE because:
Rate your confidence/comfort level with online learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not confident/comfortable</th>
<th>Very confident/comfortable</th>
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</table>

Comments:

8. Anything else you would like me to know about you…
APPENDIX B. LANGUAGE ATTITUDES OF TEACHER SURVEY

Language Attitudes of Teachers Scale (Byrnes, et al., 1997)

Instructions: Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

1 = strongly disagree  2 = disagree  3 = uncertain  4 = agree  5 = strongly agree

1. To be considered American, one should speak English.
   1 2 3 4 5

2. I would support the government supporting additional money to fund better programs for linguistic-minority students in public schools.
   1 2 3 4 5

3. Parents of non- or limited-English-proficient should be counseled to speak English with their children whenever possible.
   1 2 3 4 5

4. It is important that people in the US learn a language in addition to English.
   1 2 3 4 5

5. It is unreasonable to expect a regular classroom teacher to teach a child who does not speak English.
   1 2 3 4 5

6. The rapid learning of English should be a priority for non-limited-proficient or limited-English-proficient even if it means losing the ability to speak their native language.
   1 2 3 4 5

7. Local and state governments should require that all government business (including voting) be conducted only in English.
   1 2 3 4 5

8. Having a non- or limited-English-proficient student in the class in detrimental to the learning of the other students.
   1 2 3 4 5

9. Regular classroom teachers should be required to receive pre-service or in-service training to be prepared to meet the needs of linguistic minorities.
   1 2 3 4 5

10. Most non- and limited-English-proficient children are not motivated to learn English.
    1 2 3 4 5

11. At school, the learning of the English language by non- or limited-English-proficient children should take precedence over learning subject matter.
    1 2 3 4 5

12. English should be the official language of the United States.
    1 2 3 4 5

13. Non- and limited-English-proficient students often use unjustified claims of discrimination as an excuse for not doing well in school.
    1 2 3 4 5
APPENDIX C. KNOWLEDGE OF ELL ISSUES SURVEY

KNOWLEDGE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNER (ELL) ISSUES SURVEY

(adapted from Teague, 2010)

Instructions: On a scale from 1 to 5, please indicate your self-assessed current knowledge of the following topics. Please circle only one number for each item.

1 = No knowledge
2 = Very little knowledge
3 = Some knowledge
4 = Quite a bit of knowledge
5 = Extensive knowledge

1. The local ELL population (who are our ELLs?)
   1  2  3  4  5

2. Local resources/organizations that serve ELLs/families
   1  2  3  4  5

3. Legal requirements for educating ELLs (i.e. legislative and judicial milestones)
   1  2  3  4  5

4. History of bilingual education in the U.S.
   1  2  3  4  5

5. Bilingual program models
   1  2  3  4  5

6. Issues surrounding the debate on bilingual education
   1  2  3  4  5

7. How first languages are learned/acquired
   1  2  3  4  5
8. How second languages are learned/acquired
   1  2  3  4  5

9. Sheltered content instruction and how to implement it
   1  2  3  4  5

10. Effective instructional strategies for ELLs
    1  2  3  4  5
**APPENDIX D. MID-SEMESTER ACTIVITY IMPACT QUESTIONNAIRE**

**ESL for Educators (TED 5800) Activity Impact Questionnaire**

We are just over half-way through the course. Please rate the course activities you have participated in so far. Circle the number that best matches your feelings about how helpful each activity is to you with respect to the following categories. Use the below scale to help you answer the questions.

**0 – n/a or did not participate in activity**  **1------------------5**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Not helpful at all</th>
<th>extremely helpful</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Journals</td>
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<td>0 1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>ELL Guidebook</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>FA1: ELL Directors Panel Video</td>
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<tr>
<td>SIOP links/video</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>FA2: Cultural/Language field assignment</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Developmental sequence writing samples</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Book: How Languages are Learned (so far)</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Book: Sheltered Content Instruction (so far)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ovando Article (Bilingual Education in the US)</td>
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<td>0 1 2 3 4 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>What Teachers Need to Know About Language article (Wong, Fillmore &amp; Snow)</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Online Discussions (in general)</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5</td>
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Additional comments:
Below is a list of the weekly threaded discussion topics. Please indicate whether you would keep them, change them, or get rid of them. Any comments you can provide to help me understand the reason behind your answer would be extremely helpful!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week / Discussion topic</th>
<th>Keep/ Change/ Get rid of it</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week 2</strong>: Historical and legal influence (discussing important court cases)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week 3</strong>: Program options (imagining you are a parent of an ELL…)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week 4</strong>: First language development (stages of language development…looking at writing samples and discussing)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week 5</strong>: Second language acquisition (examples of theories from readings and experience about language acquisition)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week 6</strong>: Sheltered instruction (provide examples and discuss how you would adjust instruction for ELLs)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week 7</strong>: Factors influencing language (discussion of power imbalance)</td>
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</table>

*Additional comments:*
APPENDIX E. END-OF-SEMESTER QUESTIONNAIRE

Post-course Surveys (TED 5800 Online, Fall 2011)

Instructions: Please fill out the following surveys as completely and honestly as possible. Return to Stephanie Dewing (sdewing2@uccs.edu) at your earliest convenience, but please no later than Monday, December 19th. Thank you!

Name: _____________________________________________

1. How would you rate your level of confidence/ability in teaching culturally and/or linguistically diverse learners upon completion of the ESL for Educators course?

   Low  High
   0    1    2    3    4    5

   If you feel that your level of confidence/ability in teaching ELLs has changed, please describe as specifically as you can about what contributed to that change:

2. How would you rate your interest in having English language learners (ELLs) in your classroom?

   Not at all interested  Very interested
   0    1    2    3    4    5

   If you feel your level of interest in having ELLs in your classroom has changed due to your participation in the course, please explain as specifically as possible what contributed to that change:

3. How would you rate this course in its ability to prepare you to teach/work with English language learners?

   Did not prepare me at all  Prepared me very well
   0    1    2    3    4    5

   Please explain:

4. Rate your confidence/comfort level with online learning

   Not confident/comfortable  Very confident/comfortable
   0    1    2    3    4    5
If you feel your confidence/comfort level with online learning has changed as a result of your participation in this course, please explain:

5. If I were to take this course again, I would take it:

   _____ online
   _____ on campus

Please explain the reason(s) for your choice:

6. Anything else you would like me to know about your course experience…
APPENDIX F. END-SEMESTER ACTIVITY IMPACT QUESTIONNAIRE

ESL for Educators (TED 5800) End-of-semester Activity Impact Questionnaire (2 pages)

Congratulations! You have just completed ESL for Educators. Please rate the course activities you have participated in from the middle of the semester to the end. Circle the number that best matches your feelings about how helpful each activity is to you with respect to the following categories. Use the below scale to help you answer the questions.

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**Activity** | **Interesting/Engaging** | **Helpful in preparing me to work with ELLs** | **Helpful in understanding myself better** | **Helpful in understanding others better** | **Challenging me to think differently about ELLs** | **Comments**
---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
Journals | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
Field Assignment 3: ESL classroom observation/interview | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
Link to Pike’s Peak Literacy Project | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
Link to TPR/TPRS | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
Link to Colorin Colorado (informal assessment) | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
Exam | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
Self-assessment/Final Reflection paper | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
Research Paper | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
Book: How Languages are Learned | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
Book: Sheltered Content Instruction | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
Online Discussions (in general) | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
Instructor participation/feedback/input | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Additional comments:
Below is a list of the weekly threaded discussion topics from week 8 until the end of the course. Please indicate whether you would keep them, change them, or get rid of them. Any comments you can provide to help me understand the reason behind your answer would be extremely helpful!

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week / Discussion topic</th>
<th>Keep/ Change/ Get rid of it</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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<tr>
<td>Week 8: Learner language (developmental writing sequences)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 9: Strategies and adaptations for teaching ELLs</td>
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<td>Week 10: Linking theory to practice</td>
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<td>Week 11: Approaches to ELL instruction</td>
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<td>Week 12: Literacy for ELLs</td>
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<td>Week 13: TPR &amp; TPRS</td>
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<td>Week 14: Assessment considerations</td>
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<td>Week 15: Discussion of research findings from your papers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 16: Revisiting of ideas from surveys</td>
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*Additional comments:*
APPENDIX G. SUBJECT-OBJECT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Online ESL for Educators Course Study

Interview Protocol

Adapted from Brancard (2008)

Prepare before the interview:

- For face-to-face interviews, 10 index cards, each with one of the following prompts written on it: anger, anxious/nervous, success, standing up for your beliefs, sad, confused, moved/touched, surprised/shocked, change, important to me
- For phone interviews, a document with a 2x5 table, each cell with one of the prompts written in the top-left corner (same prompts as above)
- Digital recorder
- Pen for interviewee
- Pen and notepad for myself

Explanation of interview to participant:

“This interview will take between an hour and an hour and a half. The goal of the interview is to learn how you think about your learning experiences over the past semester in the online ESL for Educators course. I want to understand how you understand your own experiences. You have control of what you want to talk about. You don’t need to talk about anything you don’t want to talk about. Your participation is strictly voluntary and you may stop at any time.”

Reflection time with cards/prompts

- For face-to-face interviews,
  - Give students the 10 cards described above. Say, “These cards are for you to look at and write on. You can take them with you and keep them or throw them away after the interview. The purpose of the cards is to give you a chance to think about and jot down ideas about what you might want to talk about in the interview. Look at the cards and think of times when you have felt these emotions related to your experiences in the previous semester in the online ESL for Educators course. I’d like you to spend about 15-20 minutes looking at the cards and writing notes to yourself about experiences you might want to talk about. You don’t need to write on all the cards, just the ones that make you think of an idea or an experience you’d like to talk about. We won’t have time to talk about all
the cards. You’ll decide which ones you want to talk about.” (The interviewer takes time to introduce each card. Two examples follow.) “For example, if you want to think about the success card, think back to a time over the last semester when you felt success and make some notes on the card about that experience of success. As another example, with the change card, think back on your past experiences over the last several months. Are there ways you’ve changed that come to mind? Make some notes on the card about that experience.”

- Allow 15-20 minutes for participants to make notes on the cards.
- For phone interviews,
  - Send the word document to the participants the night before or the day of the phone interview via email. In the document is a 2x5 table, each cell containing one of the prompts. Include the following written instructions to the participant.
    - I'm attaching a paper that I'd like you to print out if you can. On it are 10 prompts. The purpose of these prompts is to give you a chance to think about and jot down ideas about what you might want to talk about in the interview. Look at the prompts and think of times when you have felt these emotions related to your experiences in the ESL for Educators course this past semester. Write notes to yourself about the experiences you might want to talk about. You don't need to write on all the prompts, just on the ones that make you think of an idea or an experience you'd like to talk about. We won't have time to talk about all the cards. You'll decide which ones you want to talk about. For example, if you want to think about the success prompt, think back to a time in this past semester in the ESL for Educators course that you felt success and make some notes on the card about that experience of success. As another example, with the change prompt, think about how you've changed over the last several months. Are there ways you've changed that come to mind? Make some notes on the card. These are just examples. You are in complete control of which prompts you want to talk about.

Initiating the interview:

“Are you ready to start? In the next hour or so we can talk about some of the experiences you’ve made notes about. Are there a couple of cards you feel more strongly about or that you’d like to talk about more than the others? Look through the cards and choose one that you would like to talk about. You’ve chosen the ____ card. Tell me about a time when
you felt _____ in a situation related to your experiences over the past semester in the online ESL for Educators course.”

**During the interview:**

Try balancing two roles – that of active, sympathetic listener and that of active inquirer. The interview manual describes ways of indicating active listening and ways of questioning that elicit clearer articulation of ideas from the participants. As an active listener, let the interviewee know that you understand and empathize.

Examples of ways of indicating sympathetic listening:

- Rephrase what you’ve heard: “So when the instructor responded that way to your discussion post, you were upset.” “So you could feel really proud after you did that.”
- Express empathy: “That’s too bad.” “What a wonderful experience!”

As an inquirer, use question intended to lead the interviewee to articulate the extent to which he/she is able to examine and reflect on his/her experience and the extent to which he/she sees himself/herself in control of and responsible for his/her decisions as students or learners.

Examples of ways of leading the participant to a clearer articulation:

- Ask why: “I’d like to understand how you felt about that experience a little better. Can you tell me why…?”
- Ask what might have changed the way the interviewee felt in that situation.
- Find out extremes: “What was it about that experience that made you most proud?”
- Ask how the participant knows something: “How did you know that the instructor didn’t care about the students?”
- Ask what would be an important outcome for the student: “What is most important to you about working with kids?”
- When you and the participant have exhausted the ideas on one card, ask the student choose a second card to talk about.

**Ending the interview:**

The interview ends when the time is up, talk about a card has been exhausted, or the student does not want to talk anymore. Explain that you will transcribe the interview and then study the transcript along with transcripts from other participants’ interviews to
understand better the perspectives of the adult learners in the course. Thank the participant for his/her time.

References


APPENDIX H. PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

**Study Title:** Online ESL for Educators Course

**Principal Investigator:** Stephanie Dewing

**COMIRB No:** 11-1185

**Version Date:** October 19, 2011

**Version No:** 2

You are being asked to be in a research study. This form provides you with information about the study. A member of the research team will describe this study to you and answer all of your questions. Please read the information below and ask questions about anything you don’t understand before deciding whether or not to take part.

**Why is this study being done?**

This study plans to learn more about how the adult learners enrolled in the online ESL for Educators course experience the course in different ways. You are being asked to be in this research study because you are an adult learner enrolled in the course and can help me learn more about which aspects of the course contribute to your learning and in what ways. Through your regular coursework and interviews, I hope to learn more about how this course contributes to both informational learning (increased knowledge and skills) and transformational learning (changes in the way one thinks or understands). Up to 10 people will participate in this study.

**What happens if I join this study?**

If you join the study, you will be asked to fill out a background questionnaire at the beginning of the course and complete two short surveys at the beginning and at the end of the course. You will also be asked to participate in an interview after the completion of the course. The interview will last approximately one hour and will be digitally recorded and transcribed. In addition, I will contact you four times for mini-interviews at the beginning of the course and after each of the three major field assignments. These mini interviews should last approximately 15 minutes and will also be recorded and transcribed. Your name will not be used in the recordings or in the write-up of the research. Your participation in this study will last approximately five months (just beyond the course end date) and will require about 2 hours of your time outside of regular course activities.
What are the possible discomforts or risks?

Discomforts you may experience while in this study include the possibility that discussing your learning or prior experiences may bring up uncomfortable feelings. Other possible risks include the very unlikely possibility that confidentiality about your participation is compromised.

What are the possible benefits of the study?

This study is designed for the researcher to learn more about how adult learners enrolled in the ESL for Educators course experience the course in different ways and which aspects of the course contribute most to your learning (both informational and transformational learning). What I learn from this study may inform teacher education programs about best practices for preparing future teachers to work with culturally and linguistically diverse learners. By improving linguistically diverse teacher education programs, the potential exists to make a positive impact on the culturally and linguistically diverse students themselves. In reflecting on how you learn, not only do you have the potential to contribute to improved teacher education programs and CLD students, but you may also find satisfaction in learning more about yourself through the process.

Will I be paid for being in the study? Will I have to pay for anything?

You will not be paid to be in the study. It will not cost you anything to be in the study.

Is my participation voluntary?

Taking part in this study is voluntary. You have the right to choose not to take part in this study. If you choose to take part, you have the right to stop at any time. If you refuse or decide to withdraw later, you will not lose any benefits or rights to which you are entitled.

Who do I call if I have questions?

The researcher carrying out this study is Stephanie Dewing. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may call Stephanie Dewing at 719-633-3472.

You may have questions about your rights as someone in this study. You can call Stephanie Dewing with questions. You can also call the Multiple Institutional Review Board (IRB). You can call them at 303-724-1055.

Who will see my research information?

We will do everything we can to keep your records a secret. It cannot be guaranteed.
Both the records that identify you and the consent form signed by you may be looked at by others.

- Federal agencies that monitor human subject research
- Human Subject Research Committee
- The group doing the study
- The group paying for the study
- Regulatory officials from the institution where the research is being conducted who want to make sure the research is safe

The results from the research may be shared at a meeting. The results from the research may be in published articles. Your name will be kept private when information is presented.

Audio recordings of interviews, interview transcriptions, and course documents will be kept in the researcher’s home. Pseudonyms will be used on all recordings, transcribed interviews and documents and the list of code names will be kept separately in a locked cabinet in the researcher’s home. Electronic files, which will also use pseudonyms, will be stored on the researcher’s personal laptop, which is password protected. All materials will be kept for three years and then destroyed.

You will be given the opportunity to receive any and all publications that involve your participation if you would like to see them.

**Agreement to be in this study**

I have read this paper about the study or it was read to me. I understand the possible risks and benefits of this study. I know that being in this study is voluntary. I choose to be in this study: I will get a copy of this consent form.

Signature: ________________________________ Date: ______

Print Name: ________________________________

Consent form explained by: _________________ Date: _____________

Print Name: ________________________________

Investigator: _______________________________ Date: _____________
APPENDIX I. ESL FOR EDUCATORS COURSE SYLLABUS

TED 5800: ESL for Educators

*University and Instructor information were removed

Required Textbooks:


Course Format: This online course consists of readings, assignments, and online discussions.

Course Overview: This is a theory, methods, and materials course that provides a comprehensive survey of ESL, bilingual and multicultural education programs and effective materials and teaching methods for language minority students. The course emphasizes individual and collaborative learning to develop knowledge and understanding of the various models, philosophies and theoretical underpinnings of bilingual/ESL education and instruction. Also included are an overview of the history of and legislation related to bilingual/ESL education and discussion of the culture of ESL classrooms, instructional strategies, appropriate materials and important considerations for teaching the LEP student. Students will have opportunities to explore theoretical concepts of socio-cultural perspectives of language interaction and literacy instruction and learning. They will also have opportunities to integrate technology into their individual and collaborative enterprises in the course.

Course Goals: As a result of participating fully in the experiences of this course, students will:

1. demonstrate foundational knowledge about student language and literacy development in reading, writing, speaking, viewing and listening. (Standards Addressed: LDE: 1, 2; CDE: 1, 4, 6; TESOL: 1, 2; INTASC: 1, 2)

2. demonstrate working knowledge of instructional materials and strategies proven by research to be effective for the teaching of language and literacy. Standards Addressed: LDE: 3; CDE: 5, 6, 7; TESOL: 1, 3; INTASC: 4, 5, 6, 7; NETS: 1, 2, 3)

3. demonstrate a basic knowledge of the role of assessment in the instruction of English Language Learners. Standards Addressed: (LDE 4; CDE: 3; TESOL: 4; INTASC: 3, 8; NETS: 4)
4. understand how to create a positive classroom environment in which students are motivated to engage in language and literacy activities. Standards Addressed: LDE: 3, 5; CDE: 5, 6; TESOL: 3; INTASC: 1, 2, 9, 10; NETS 5, 6)

Course Objectives: Students will learn/be able to:

1) describe various learning theories and how they shape classroom instruction and learning today (LDE: 1a, 2c, 3a; CDE: 4.1, 5.1, 6.1, 6.2, 6.4; TESOL: 1, 3 INTASC: 1, 4, 7; NETS: 1i, 2iv, 3ii)

2) describe various models of ESL instruction programs that integrate theory, practice, and assessment (LDE: 1a, 2c, 3a, 3b, 4a; CDE: 3.2, 5.1, 6.1, 6.2; TESOL: 1, 3, 4 INTASC: 1, 4, 7, 8; NETS: 2i, 3i, 4i)

3) identify the processes and theories that support current views about how children acquire language and literacy (LDE: 1a, 2a, 3a; CDE: 4.3, 5.1, 5.4, 6.2; TESOL: 1 INTASC: 1, 2)

4) discuss the general stages of language and literacy development children experience, and effective strategies that would promote their language and literacy acquisition (LDE: 1a, 2c, 3b, 3e; CDE: 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 3.1, 5.1, 6.1, 6.2; TESOL: 1, 3 INTASC: 1, 2, 3, 4, 7; NETS 3i)

5) discuss how children’s progressively intricate social and academic language development are related with their increased use of conventional English in multiple contexts in school (LDE: 1c, 2c, 3a, 3b; CDE: 5.1, 6.1, 6.2; TESOL: 1 INTASC: 2, 5; NETS: 3i, 3ii, 3iv)

6) describe important theories for effective systems and strategies for the instruction and organization of classroom environments, methods, and materials that combined, will promote student learning and language acquisition (LDE: 1a, 2c, 3c; CDE: 3.1, 3.6, 5.1, 5.5; TESOL: 1, 3; INTASC: 4, 5, 9; NETS 2i, 3i, 5i, 5ii)

7) describe the role of family as a factor for involvement in student literacy acquisition and development (LDE: 1b, 5a, 5c, 5d; CDE: 5.8, 5.9; TESOL: 2; INTASC: 10)

8) recognize and appreciate the importance of alternative methods and materials for English Language Learners (LDE: 2c, 3b; CDE: 3.1, 3.6, 5.3, 6.1, 6.2; TESOL: 3; INTASC: 2, 3, 4, 5; NETS: 3i, 6i, 6ii, 6iv)

9) identify and discuss effective strategies for setting up and maintaining a positive and orderly classroom culture and environment that support all students’ learning (LDE: 2c, 3c; CDE: 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 6.1, 6.2; TESOL: 3; INTASC: 1, 2; NETS: 3i, 6i, 6ii, 6iv)

10) identify and demonstrate a variety of resources, including the Internet and e-mail, the community and the school, as critical factors that support and promote the engagement of students in their language and literacy development (LDE: 3d, 5b, 5f; CDE: 5.6, 7.1; TESOL: 3; INTASC: 6, 10; NETS: 2i, 2ii, 2iii, 3i, 3ii, 5iii)

Reasonable accommodations will be made for students who have a documented disability that interferes with completion of this course. It is your responsibility to request any accommodation before assignments are due. Please contact the Disability Services Office the first week of classes located in Main Hall #105 or call 719-255-3354, or let me know if you have any questions or need assistance.
Course Requirements:

1. Navigating the course website:
   It is very important for everyone to become familiar with how the course website operates and how the particular features function. The more you engage in the opportunities presented, the easier it will be for you to navigate this course.

2. Preparation:
   Your preparation should include a careful, critical reading of assigned materials so that you each bring your questions and insights to the class discussions. Your membership in this class through your reading, your writing and your sharing is valued and essential. Completion of required readings and assignments, and participation in the online discussions and activities is expected, and is indicative of your professional attitude and behavior. There is no substitute for actual quality interaction with your peers.

   The process of interacting involves reflection to challenge your personal beliefs, and listening to the perspectives of others. Moreover, it requires that you ask questions to clarify your thinking, building from a positive attitude or mindset. It is very simple to build discussions on what is wrong with an approach, a method or a perspective to research processes; that is, be negative or take a negative approach. It is more difficult, and the mark of a true professional, to build a discussion based on constructive criticism of teaching and interacting with learners whose first language is other than English.

   This is a graduate level course. As a graduate student, you are expected to demonstrate thinking and work that is in concert with graduate school expectations. All of your assignments will carry an expectation of graduate level thinking, understanding, and scholarship.

3. Course Materials and Assignments:
   This syllabus is your guide to the course, the contract with your instructor and your set of rules for the course. Master the contents of this syllabus during the first week and use it as a reference before you turn in any work. If you have any questions, please ask your instructor. These assignments are designed to assist you in preparing for active participation in the learning activities, to use writing as a tool for learning, and to develop skills that will be needed to communicate in writing with individuals in the school setting. The course assignments cannot be successfully completed without a thorough study of the assigned readings. If you follow the syllabus, you shouldn't become lost.

   SOME ADVICE: Keep up with the readings and the various assignments. If you fall behind, you most likely will find yourself overwhelmed and frustrated. If you are behind in your assignments for any reason, please discuss it with me before it becomes a chronic situation. Note that there are deadlines throughout the syllabus that indicate what you must have completed and by what date.

4. Evaluation Process:
There will be a number of evaluations as a usual part of this course. Furthermore, your performance with the various assignments will indicate your level of understanding of the concepts and the methods, and of your degree of preparedness to effectively engage students in language and literacy acquisition processes. Your final reflection of your learning is an important component of this course.

5. Academic Honesty
As a member of the CU-Colorado Springs academic community, please adhere to the following guidelines: (a) reference all work; (b) do not use projects from previous courses; and (c) do not plagiarize. Please review the CU-Colorado Springs Course Bulletin (http://www.uccs.edu) for additional information regarding academic honesty.

6. Technology Competencies
It is expected that candidates begin our program with basic computing skills that include using Microsoft Word to write papers, accessing online research databases, and corresponding by email. Knowledge of the use of technology-supported multimedia, such as PowerPoint and other audio/video resources is a plus; those who do not already have a working knowledge of their use will develop it over the course of their program.

Communications will be in our course or email. All students must obtain a UCCS email address and check it regularly (at least every day) so as not to miss announcements. An idea: if your UCCS address is not your primary one, have emails from it rerouted to the one you check daily.

7. BLACKBOARD Competencies
All faculty members in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction are required to use Blackboard to manage their courses. This includes the syllabus, course schedule, and assignment criteria (if not detailed in the syllabus). Students need to become familiar with document sharing, assignment upload, and the grade book.

8. Online Participation and Discussion
Like the instructor, students are expected to be thoroughly prepared for course activities, meaning all assigned reading has been completed and questions on the reading have been raised in our course; concepts, definitions, examples, and procedures presented in the text and previous classes are understood well enough to be discussed; individual or group assignments have been prepared; and the student is ready to engage in online course activities.

Class participation is vital for acquiring the knowledge necessary to meet the course objectives. Additionally, students' presence and participation contribute to an interchange of ideas and experiences that benefit everyone. The instructor reserves the right to reduce a student's grade for consistent lack of participation.

9. Ethical Conduct
The responsibility for ethical conduct, academic honesty and integrity rests with each individual member of the UCCS community. The Student Codes and Academic Policies (which may be found at http://www.uccs.edu/~dos/studentconduct/index.html) are
followed in this class. In general, academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating on assignments or examinations, plagiarism (which means misrepresenting as your own any work done by another), misuse of academic materials, or interfering with another student’s work. Violations of the honor code may result in dismissal from the program.

10. Diversity Statement
The faculty of the College of Education is committed to preparing students to recognize, appreciate, and support diversity in all forms — including ethnic, cultural, religious, gender, economic, physical, and intellectual — while striving to provide fair and equitable treatment and consideration for all. Any student who believes that he/she has not been treated fairly or equitably for any reason should bring it to the attention of the instructor.

11. Special Assistance
Reasonable accommodations will be made for students who have a documented disability, which interferes with completion of this course. It is your responsibility to request any accommodations before assignments are due. Please contact Disability Services (255-3354) or the instructor if you have questions.

12. Military Students
Military students who have the potential to participate in military activities including training and deployment should consult with faculty prior to registration for any course, but no later than the end of the first week of classes. At this time, the student should provide the instructor with a schedule of planned absences, preferably signed by the student's commander, in order to allow the instructor to evaluate and advise the student on the possible impact of the absences.

In this course, the instructor will consider absences due to participation in verified military activities to be excused absences, on par with those due to other unavoidable circumstances such as illness. If, however, it appears that military obligations will prevent adequate attendance or performance in the course, the instructor may advise the student to register for the course at another time, when she/he is more likely to be successful.

13. Appeals
In any academic issue, including attendance decisions, students may exercise their right to appeal. Should the faculty member and student be unable to agree on appropriate accommodation under this policy, either party shall have the right to request mediation as outlined in the grievance policies of the College of Education and the UCCS Student Standards.

14. Assignments, more specifically:
It is important for teachers, who are responsible for teaching ELLs to read and write, to be able to write well themselves. You will be role models for your students, and they and their families will expect all communications from you to be accurate. You are expected to demonstrate a high level of proficiency in all oral and written work. Therefore, all of
your assignments should reflect the high standard of excellence in literacy expected of teachers and other educators. **All written assignments must be typewritten/word processed. When turning in assignments, please include a cover page with the title, the course and section number, and your name.** The general assignments are listed below.

A. **Introduction.** An initial activity is to post a “Who I Am” PowerPoint in the course using a threaded discussion forum. The bios will help everyone to get acquainted as well as become accustomed to the functions and operations of the course learning management system (CLMS). I look forward to meeting all of you and working with you this semester.

B. **Weekly Discussion Forums** - Your reading, thinking, and experiences with research are valued and essential. Regular contributions to the discussions are critical. In a course of this sort in a regular classroom, there is a great deal of discussion based on the readings and experiences of the class participants. In light of our online format, we will foster the same sort of discussion using the discussion forum each week. Please post your initial response by Thursday evenings and respond to at least 2 colleagues’ posts by Sunday evenings. (5 points each x 15 weeks)

C. **Field Assignments.** There are three field assignments to be done outside of class that help you to link the ideas and the discussions in the class to the community, public schools, and classrooms.

   **Field Assignment #1:** Find out about how ELL children are served at a local school (Video recording provided.)

   **Field Assignment #2:** Attend an activity or event that is different from your own past cultural experiences (for example, participate in an ESL family night at a local school, attend a religious service of a faith that you are not familiar with (perhaps in a different language), take part in Cinco de Mayo celebration, etc.)

   **Field Assignment #3:** Observe a class or tutoring session with an ESL teacher or paraprofessional

D. **Exam.** This will be an online exam that will cover material through the first 12 weeks of the course.

E. **Final Paper.** A scholarly paper will demonstrate your advanced knowledge and understanding of language and literacy acquisition theories, and of the methods and materials appropriate of effective pedagogy. There are many appropriate topic ideas. The most important thing to keep in mind is that the topic should be narrowed appropriately to reflect a clear thesis. Here are some possible topics:
The pros of bilingual education
The pros of an inclusion program
TPR(S)
The overrepresentation of ELL’s in special education
The differences in teaching reading to ELL’s
Effective methods of teaching ELL’s in the science (or social studies or any other area)
Legislation affecting instruction for ELL’s
Teaching from a multicultural perspective
Dialects of English
How Native American students can succeed in school
Parent/family involvement

F. Self evaluation/ reflection. A self assessment and evaluation of your learning in this course that starts with your understandings of ELLs and ESL processes the first day and culminates in taking stock of your growth by the end of the semester. For this class, in Week 1, you will write your initial ideas about language learners and language learning. Midway through the course, you will complete a journal entry about your learning. At the end of the course, you again will write about what you have learned. These journals will culminate in a short paper reflecting on your experience in the class. See specific guidelines posted.

Graduate Credit: For graduate credit, you are expected to demonstrate thinking and work that is in concert with graduate school expectations. All of your assignments will carry a graduate level of expectation for scholarship.

Grades: Grades will be based on your projects, on your timely completion of the written assignments, and on your participation in the discussions and the activities. The mechanics of writing including spelling, punctuation, and grammar WILL affect your grade. Before you submit anything as a final draft, be sure that it is a final copy. That is, be sure to proofread, spell check, edit, check for logic and readability, grammar, etc. The Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association must be used to guide your mechanics. (It is sold in the bookstore, and is available in the library.) Reading your work out loud before you do your final draft is a good way to edit it. You may also make appointments at the Writing Center for help. Concise prose, clarity of ideas and creative synthesis of the concepts will be expected. All work must be typed, double-spaced and on time. Late assignments will be penalized 10% for each day past due. No papers will be accepted after scored papers are returned in class. Each assignment will be awarded points based on criteria that fit the nature of the task. Grade points for this course are weighted as follows:

Grading Assignments and Points:
- Introduction (Who I Am PowerPoint) 25
- Discussions (5 pts. X 15 weeks) 75
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Three Field-Based Assignments (3 X 50 pts each)</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exam</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Paper</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Evaluation/Reflection Journals and Paper</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>600 points</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Grades will be computed as follows:

- **A** = 94% to 100%
- **A-** = 90% to 93%
- **B+** = 87% to 89%
- **B** = 84% to 86%
- **B-** = 80% to 83%

*Please note that students who earn a grade of C or less must repeat the course.*
## T Ed 5800 Online Class Schedule

*Please Note: This schedule is subject to change with sufficient notice.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week Date</th>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Required Readings/Viewings</th>
<th>Assignments &amp; Activities</th>
<th>Assessments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1 8/22</strong></td>
<td>Introductions</td>
<td>1) ESL acronyms explained&lt;br&gt;2) Legal requirements&lt;br&gt;3) CDE PowerPoint “State of the State”</td>
<td>Introductions: Who I Am PowerPoint &amp; Background Questionnaire&lt;br&gt;Initial Journal Surveys</td>
<td>Post Introductions in Discussion Area&lt;br&gt;Journal entry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2 8/29</strong></td>
<td>Historical Background</td>
<td>1) Sheltered Content Instruction (SCI) Ch. 1, 2&lt;br&gt;2) Ovando, C. (2003). “Bilingual Education in the US”&lt;br&gt;3) Colorado Department of Education’s Language Culture and Equity Unit: <em>ELL Guidebook</em>, section 1.3 (pp. 19-22). Links found in weekly units.</td>
<td>Participate in discussion</td>
<td>Participate in discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3 9/5</strong></td>
<td>ELD Programs</td>
<td>1)Colorado Department of Education’s Language Culture and Equity Unit: <em>ELL Guidebook</em>, (Appendix H). Links found in weekly course readings.</td>
<td>Participate in discussion&lt;br&gt;Carry out Field Assignment #1</td>
<td>Participate in discussion&lt;br&gt;Field Assignment #1 due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4 9/12</strong></td>
<td>Language Development</td>
<td>HLL Ch. 1</td>
<td>Participate in discussion</td>
<td>Participate in discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5 9/19</strong></td>
<td>Second Language Acquisition</td>
<td>1) HLL Ch. 2&lt;br&gt;2) Wong Fillmore &amp; Snow (2000). “What Teachers Need to Know about</td>
<td>Participate in discussion</td>
<td>Participate in discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Readings</td>
<td>Discussion</td>
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</table>
| 6    | 9/26 | Introduction to Sheltered Content Instruction | 1) SCI Ch. 3  
2) Link to SIOP website  
3) Short YouTube video on SIOP | View YouTube video  
Participate in discussion |                                                  |
| 7    | 10/3 | Factors Influencing Second Language Development | 1) SCI Ch. 4  
2) HLL Ch. 3 | Participate in discussion of Field Assignment 2  
Carry out Field Assignment #2 | Field Assignment 2 due |
| 8    | 10/10 | Learner Language                          | 1) HLL Ch. 4  
2) Read through Language Samples for Discussion | Participate in discussion of Language Samples  
Mid-semester Journal | Participate in discussion  
Journal entry |
| 9    | 10/17 | Learning Strategies and Curricular Adaptations | 1) SCI Ch. 5, 6, 7  
2) Second Language Acquisition Stages and Strategies | Participate in discussion | Participate in discussion |
| 10   | 10/24 | Linking Theory to Classroom Observations  | Review SCI Ch. 2  
HLL Ch. 5 | Participate in discussion  
Carry out Field Assignment #3 | Field Assignment #3 due |
| 11   | 10/31 | Approaches to ELL Instruction             | HLL Ch. 6 | Participate in discussion | Participate in discussion |
| 12   | 11/7 | Literacy Acquisition for ELLs              | Read link to Pikes Peak Literacy Strategies Project | Participate in discussion  
Take Exam | Participate in discussion  
Exam |
| 13   | 11/14 | Literacy Acquisition for ELLs: Focus on TPRS | Click and read links for:  
1) TPR | Participate in discussion | Participate in discussion |

Language.” Link found in weekly units.

3) Colorado Department of Education’s Language Culture and Equity Unit: *ELL Guidebook*, section 1.2 (pp. 14-18). Links found in weekly units.
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Field Assignment #1 - Guidelines

Field Assignment #1 has three main purposes:
1. to increase your awareness of pedagogical considerations in educating ELLs
2. to increase awareness about how ELLs are being served in your community
3. to anchor theoretical considerations to student learning.

Steps to complete Field Assignment #1:

1. Download the ESL Directors Panel Discussion from Week 2 on Blackboard. Expect this to take at least 30 mins to download and a few hours to complete the viewing and write-up.

2. Take notes during your viewing. Also, you may wish to create additional questions that either I can answer, or I can submit the questions to the directors.

3. Type and post a narrative (1-2 pages) describing your reaction to the panel discussion. As in all your written work, this assignment must be typed and carefully edited for grammar, punctuation, and mechanics. After listening to the panel discussion on how our local school districts assess and attend to the needs of our ELLs, please do the following:
   • Provide a brief summary of at least two or three main points that you took away from the discussion and discuss how this information will impact you as an educator.
   • Give your personal reaction to the discussion. What did you find surprising? What information was most useful to you?
   • Considering the readings, what we are learning in class, your personal experiences, and the panel discussion, do you have comments, questions or concerns related to the panel discussion and/or how ELLs are served in Colorado or elsewhere?

Field Assignment #2 - Guidelines

Field Assignment #2 has three main purposes:
1. to facilitate positive awareness of cultural and/or linguistic diversity
2. to increase community interaction and community building through experiencing, exploring and supporting cultural and linguistic diversity
3. to increase awareness of issues faced by linguistic and/or cultural minorities

Field Assignment #2 - Description:
Attend an activity or event that is different from your own past cultural experiences and conducted in a language with which you are not familiar. For example, attend a religious service in a different language (several Jewish Temples, a Russian Orthodox Church, and
an Islamic Mosque are near the downtown area), a neighbor’s quinceañera celebration, etc. Or you may participate in at least one complete lesson learning a new language (preferably one which is written in a non-roman alphabet). The course must be taught in a language with which you are not familiar. (If you took 4 years of high school Spanish, please do NOT attend a Spanish lesson). This experience most closely relates to the experiences of ELLs.

Considerations for completing Field Assignment #2:

1. Select an event or language program
Select something completely new and different. It may push you outside of your comfort zone, but for the purpose of this assignment, that is what we want! This is an opportunity to experience on a very small scale what your ELLs experience on a daily basis.

2. Contact an institution ahead of time
Many places might have schedules, dress requirements, fees, activities, etc. which you might consider in making your choice of what you would like to attend. Calling ahead to answer questions, clarify logistics and make contact can ease the process for you, especially if you are considering language learning. Attending a celebratory event has a good number of components that transcend specific cultures and thus make attendance or participation a little more familiar.

3. Think of what you will pay attention to for the “assignment” part of the experience.
Focus on the relevancy of language, cultural components of communication, both linguistic and gestural, as well as competencies or understandings that seem necessary for successful participation. You might make a list of questions beforehand to help you keep in mind what you will write about later and what things to pay attention to and take notes on while you attend this event or lesson.

To get you started, here are some questions you may choose to ask:
- How did I come to choose this event or language lesson?
- What are my gut reactions at different instances in this experience?
- How easy or challenging was it for me to attend this event and to participate?
- Is this a regular event or a special occasion?
- Are other language learners beginning at the same level as I am?
- Are others affiliated with this language or institution or culture in a more familiar or habitual way?
- What are the expectations I place on myself to attend or participate?
- What are the expectations of me from the other people present?
- What confused me?
- What frightened me?
- What did I enjoy?
- What made me have to think about something I normally take for granted?
- How incorporated into “group” did you find yourself?
- Did this “incorporation” occur due to your efforts or other’s?
-What made you curious?
-What seemed impossible to ever understand?
-What elements transcended language or culture?

4. Be cordial with those you interact with
As much as possible during this assignment, suspend judgment while in contact with those who speak this language or live within this culture. You are attending as an observer and a learner. You may experience many negative or positive emotions, and I recommend just keeping track of these and process them as you write up your analysis of this experience.

5. Submit your assignment according to the guidelines provided
Take detailed notes during your interactions and observations. You may also ask permission to record the event, lesson or conversation. Then, submit a 3-4 page analysis of your impressions, feelings, questions, concerns, challenges, successes and learning. Refer to the following rubric to calibrate yourself to the grading and assigned points. As in all your written work, this assignment must be typed, double-spaced, and carefully edited for rhetorical structures appropriate to your paper’s argumentation, depth and support of ideas, personal voice and variety of word choice, and mechanics. Please include a cover page with the title of the assignment, the course and section number, the date, and your name. Reference correctly any works you cite according to APA formatting conventions.

Field Assignment #3 - Guidelines

Field Assignment #3 has three main purposes:
1. to increase your awareness of pedagogical considerations in educating ELLs
2. to increase awareness about how ELLs are being served in your community
3. to anchor theoretical considerations to actual student learning.

Steps to complete Field Assignment #3:

1. Select the school or educational program
Select the school or program in which you are currently working, or in which you plan to work. Decide on which school and classroom to observe. This may require a bit of informal research on your part, and might be in the same school or district in which you completed Field Assignment #1. Contact me if you are having trouble finding a class to observe.

2. Contact the ESL coordinator or classroom teacher
There may be one ELL classroom at a school, or there may be a variety of classes offered to ELLs at a particular school. Set up a convenient time for you to watch one or several classes where ELLs are served. It may prove interesting to watch an ELL only class, and to watch an immersion class with ELLs. Keep a record of what is offered at a school and what you chose to observe.

**Whenever possible, try to observe a teacher with at least 3 years of experience.**
3. **Set up a time to meet with the ESL professional**
Most ESL professionals will welcome you to observe their class or program. Please remember they are busy professionals. Please be respectful and mindful of their schedules. Be sure to schedule a time to observe based on their schedule and meet them at their school or office.

**Also, schedule a time before or after your observation to talk with the teacher. This is an opportunity to clarify any questions you may have about the class itself (i.e. class composition, pedagogical considerations, or teaching methodologies being used) or about the teacher. Be sure to limit the conversation to no more than a half an hour as teachers’ time is extremely valuable. Include what you learned from this meeting in your write-up.**

4. **Observing Classes with ELLs**
Remember, a primary goal of this assignment is to observe actual practices and challenges in the classroom when teaching ELLs. Create questions and conversation starters with this goal in mind.

To get you started, here are some considerations for recording an observation:
- Make a diagram of the desks, tables, boards, and screens relevant to the students and lesson delivery
- Record or map out where students are seated and where the teacher is located throughout the lesson.
- Record the students with codes for gender or other demographics you wish to consider, such as first language distribution patterns.
- Make notes of what is presented on the walls.
- Make notes of any lesson objectives identified for the students.
- Record patterns of questioning with tally marks next to each student as they are invited to speak or as they request to speak.
- List grouping structures used.
- Keep a time record in the margin for when the teacher switches activity or pacing.
- Keep a record of texts, graphics, maps, diagrams, media, etc. that aided in lesson delivery or in practice and application.
- Feel free to use the SIOP protocol to guide you in things you might consider as you watch the lesson.
- Keep track of the type of questioning according to Bloom's taxonomy.
- Keep an open mind to what you see. You are there to record.

5. **Follow up with a thank you letter or email**
This is self-explanatory, but please make sure it happens. Remember: you’re working to establish good working relationships.

6. **Submit your assignment according to the guidelines provided**
Take notes during your observation and any conversations related to the observation. You may also ask permission to record the class. Write a substantial narrative (3-4 pages) according to the following guidelines. As in all your written work, this assignment must be typed, double-spaced, and carefully edited for grammar, punctuation,
and mechanics. Please include a cover page with the title of the assignment, the course and section number, the date, and your name.