Content Area Teachers' Experiences Teaching English Learners:

A Qualitative Case Study

by

Elvira Beches

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Approved by:

Dissertation Chair: John Avella, Ed. D

Committee Member: Rita Deyoe-Chiullan, Ph.D

Abstract

The number of English learners (ELs) entering middle schools continues to increase, and middle school content teachers providing EL instruction face a considerable challenge. The problem that was studied in this research was the middle school content teachers' insufficient understanding of ELs' cultural background, needs, and interests. The literature review indicated middle school content teachers receive training or workshops based on the assigned subject taught and less on accommodating ELs. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore middle school mainstream teachers' preparations, perceptions, and experiences encountered while teaching ELs in one Maryland school district. Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory and the concept of zone of proximal development framed the study. The research questions used to clarify the problem focused on the factors affecting ELs' education such as teachers' preparation, perceptions, and experiences while teaching ELs in the mainstream classroom. Fifteen middle school content teachers took part in the study and answered the online questionnaire and interview questions in detail with interviews conducted one on one. Criterion sampling was used in the identification of the 15 teacher volunteers who completed online teacher questionnaires and one on one interviews. The data from two research instruments were cleaned, prepared, and analyzed, resulting in emergent themes. Findings are presented using figures and tables and data that showed the need for relevant professional development and in-service training for content teachers teaching ELs in the mainstream classroom. The findings suggested the need for greater collaboration among all stakeholders to support content teachers in more effectively instructing ELs.

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my mother, who is now in heaven. Mom, if you were alive today, we would both reminisce about those days of our struggles in life. Each time I asked you for some money to pay school-related fees, your short and surest answer is, "Didn't I tell you not to attend school? Didn't I tell you to stop going to school and help me here in the house? Why are you so hard-headed?" I know you said that because you did not have the means to support me in my schooling. Mom, it's ok. Those hardships and obstacles made me persevere in life, including attaining the highest educational degree, no matter how hard it was. Yes, I was deprived of a good education when I was young but look at me now. I have attended the best school here in the United States. I can only see you now smiling and so proud of me. Mom, this is for you! Despite all the painful experiences of life's unfair situation, I conquered them all. Mom, please cheer for my victory in my doctoral journey!

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I give my heartfelt acknowledgment to my husband for all his support. Thank you for listening to me when I needed someone to talk to, especially at times when I was about to give up. You also made sure everything was taken care of while I was busy completing all the necessary work to complete the degree. I would also like to express my thankfulness to my two children for understanding when I was too occupied and never questioning why there was no cooked food on the table; the degree is for you both. I am also proud to present the fruit of my labor to my siblings back home.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

English learners (ELs) are rapidly increasing among the K–12 student population in the United States (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2019). The percentage of ELs enrolled in the state of Maryland has grown from 2.3% in 2000 to 7.8% in 2016, totaling about 69,079 students (NCES, 2019). The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires every state to assess the English proficiency level of every EL. New accountability systems for ESSA were released in 2015 that require measurement of long-term goals and ELs' progress based on the state assessment (U.S. Department of Education, 2019a).

Middle school ELs are expected to achieve the target goals set on the state assessments, such as the Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program (MCAP) and Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State (ACCESS) for English language learners (Maryland State Department of Education, 2019a). According to the U.S. Department of Education, identified ELs could participate in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) assistance programs to help attain English proficiency. When receiving such support, students are also expected to meet academic content and achievement standards (U.S. Department of Education, 2019b).

Custodio and O'Loughlin (2020) emphasized the importance of teachers' significant understanding of ELs' backgrounds and experiences, which impact ELs' ability to perform daily. Teachers are to provide meaningful and appropriate instructional strategies based on ELs' academic needs and English proficiency levels (Brown & Endo, 2017). This study aimed to present a qualitative case study of content area teachers' preparation, perceptions, and experiences teaching ELs.

The major components of this chapter include (a) the background of the problem, which provides an overview of the research literature and the theory supporting the study; (b) the theory framing the research; (c) a statement of the study's problem, purpose, and significance; (d) the research questions, which align with research instruments; (e) vital components such as the definition of terms, assumptions, scope, delimitations, and limitations of the study, which provide a contextual framework of the research; and (f) a summary that links all the components together, leading to the next chapter.

Background of the Problem

For the past 20 years, policymakers, school leaders, and teachers have continued to discuss what effective teachers do for ELs (Coady et al., 2020). Educators and other professionals teaching ELs are responsible for helping learners reach their potential, and it is important for teachers to understand ELs' backgrounds and abilities and why they may have specific academic gaps (Custodio & O'Loughlin, 2020). The ESSA policy holds all schools with ELs enrolled accountable for ELs' educational achievement. With the current system in place, ELs play an essential part in the educational equation that establishes whether or not a school is fulfilling expectations as evidenced by the satisfactory performance of all students.

A content teacher needs research-based information about culturally relevant teaching, including differentiated educational design, which benefits all students (Adams, 2018). It is important for school leaders and those leading teacher preparation programs, in particular, to recognize the rationale behind empowering teachers to be cognizant of diverse learners so they may receive the appropriate training to instruct ELs effectively (Adams, 2018). Mainstream teachers are tasked to provide meaningful instruction based on ELs' academic needs and English

proficiency (Brown & Endo, 2017). The literature revealed the importance of professional development, preservice coursework, and teachers' perceptions of ELs.

Statement of the Problem

According to the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, schools fall short of adequately training educators, who, in turn, repeatedly provide poor quality instruction and social-emotional support to the nation's ELs (Mitchell, 2017). According to Turgut, Sahin, and Huerta (2016), the problem is middle school content area teachers' insufficient understanding of the cultural background, needs, and interests of ELs. The importance of the problem can be seen in the need to fill the gap between the content area teachers' effectiveness and the ELs' readiness in understanding the method of instruction provided in the mainstream classroom. Persons affected by the problem are middle school content teachers and the ELs enrolled in middle school content classrooms.

The National Education Association has promoted the importance of exposing students to diverse teaching staff within every school (Dilworth & Coleman, 2014). All students deserve to have a qualified and caring staff and to share similar cultural experiences. Professional development is lacking related to knowledge and information on how to accommodate ELs in the content areas of mathematics, science, and social studies. There is a gap in the existing literature regarding research about middle school content teachers teaching ELs in the mainstream classroom. Content teachers struggle to instruct ELs because of a lack of background and training preparation for EL instruction (Chin, Indiatsi, & Wong, 2016). The ESSA accountability for meeting the needs of ELs in middle school content area classrooms is a considerable challenge due to content teachers' struggle to instruct ELs effectively.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the middle school mainstream teachers' preparations, perceptions, and experiences encountered while teaching ELs in a school district in Maryland. Participants were interviewed to explore factors contributing to content teachers' struggles to provide ELs effective instruction in the mainstream classroom. This qualitative case study aimed to explore the current phenomena where the problem continues to exist in one district in Maryland. The study contributes to the knowledge base with data on the experiences of the selected teacher participants in teaching ELs in the mainstream classroom.

The study is significant because of the data collected, which adds to the research literature. The existing literature is limited regarding an effective instructional model to suit middle school ELs' needs. Data collected from online teacher questionnaires (see Appendix A) and semistructured interview questions (see Appendix B) were used as a basis for evaluating the existing educational program offered in the middle school mainstream classroom setting. The results were interpreted through Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory and the concept of zone of proximal development (ZPD). Results were grouped based on the three research questions, and the emergent themes were analyzed and interpreted.

Significance of the Study

As EL enrollment continues to increase in the United States, schools continue to find ways to meet the needs of the students. For the broader educational context, this study adds to the existing knowledge on ELs' education by examining mainstream teachers' struggles to teach ELs in the content classroom. The general education program may help in targeting the specific and related practices needed to support ELs in the mainstream classroom. The district's middle school ESOL department will receive information from the study about how to assist and support

teachers in effectively instructing ELs. Leaders of ESOL programs in the district may gain insights from the study that may contribute to new ways of restructuring the middle school ESOL program and providing better supports for the mainstream teachers.

Findings of the study are relevant and may be beneficial to leaders of the districts' middle schools with ELs enrolled. The leaders of middle schools in the district could benefit from the study by learning how content teachers see themselves as part of the ELs' success. The study can help inform school leaders of gaps in the effectiveness of methods the teachers are implementing in the classroom. The study may assist leaders of similar schools in investigating ways to improve the practices of teachers who serve ELs within content area classes. The information gained from the study may be beneficial to teachers of ELs, as it examines the preparations, perceptions, and practices of the middle school content teachers explicitly.

Research Questions

Mainstream teachers of mathematics, science, and social studies responded to online questionnaires and were interviewed to explore the preparations, perceptions, and experiences of teaching ELs in respective content classrooms. The objective of this qualitative case study was to explore factors contributing to content teachers' struggles to provide effective instruction for ELs in the mainstream classroom. The following research questions guided this qualitative case study:

Research Question 1: How do middle school content area teachers describe the preparations made to effectively instruct middle school English learners in the mainstream classroom?

Research Question 2: How do middle school content area teachers' perceptions of the English learners affect teaching practices in the mainstream classroom?

Research Question 3: How do middle school content area teachers describe experiences working with the middle school English learners in the mainstream classroom?

The study's focus was centered around teaching preparations, perceptions, and experiences of middle school teachers teaching ELs. Probable and expected outcomes of this qualitative case study were evaluated by analyzing data from participants' responses using the study's research instruments (see Appendices A and B), which are in alignment with the research questions.

Theoretical Framework

This study was based on the major theme of Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory. The focus was to reflect on the vital role of comprehensible input, such as social interactions between second language learners and teachers and between learners and peers, in a meaningful learning environment (Adams, 2018; Castrillón, 2017). Sociocultural theory was used to focus on middle school mainstream teachers' preparation, experiences, attitudes, and perceptions in teaching ELs and how it may influence the classroom environment. The theory supported the research questions as to how middle school mainstream teachers effectively instruct ELs in the content area classroom.

Content teachers understand ELs have unique needs and levels of motivation in acquiring knowledge, which is vital in their success (Castrillón, 2017). When viewed through the lens of sociocultural theory, the teacher's role in the success of the ELs, based on their unique needs, differences, and cultural background, can have a significant impact on the teaching and learning process. When a teacher has a clear understanding of how ELs learn, based on Vygotsky's (1978) theory, ELs are more likely to succeed academically (Castrillón, 2017). Vygotsky's theory may assist teachers in effectively teaching ELs. The approach also suggests when teachers

have a background on the Vygotskian theory, teachers can create meaningful and engaging lessons and equitable learning opportunities for ELs in the mainstream setting. The concept of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) was also incorporated to support the sociocultural theory as they both work efficiently when used in the development of meaningful learning among students. Both the theory and the concept of ZPD, when used by teachers will assist in the development of instructional strategies and approaches on meeting the needs of ELs' educational needs (Adams, 2018).

The methodology guided the exploration of teaching practices in the mainstream classroom and can be used to inform teachers of the need to prepare before teaching ELs.

Definitions of Terms

The following definitions are provided to add clarity about the use of these terms in this dissertation.

Content area. Refers to subjects such as reading, English, language arts (RELA); mathematics; science; and social studies (Prince George's County Public Schools [PGCPS], 2020).

English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). Refers to a certified teacher who supports ELs in acquiring language and academic skills in an ESOL program. The ESOL teacher has a broad understanding of second language acquisition using effective strategies for meeting English language learner needs (PGCPS, 2020).

English learners (ELs). Refers to students whose native language is not English. Students are eligible to receive services based on English language proficiency assessment (World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment [WIDA], 2014).

English language proficiency. Refers to the student's leveled understanding of the English language as determined by the ACCESS proficiency assessment (Maryland State Department of Education, 2019a; WIDA, 2014).

Mainstream teachers. Teachers who teach content to diverse learners in the classroom (Maryland State Department of Education, 2019b).

Middle schools. Schools that give services and educate students in Grades 6, 7, and 8.

Newcomer. Students whose proficiency level is low and don't speak the English language (WIDA, 2014).

World-class instructional design and assessment (WIDA). Refers to a consortium comprised of states whose educational leaders are dedicated to the design and execution of high-level standards and equitable learning opportunities for ELs (WIDA, 2014).

Assumptions

Assumptions are beliefs related to the proposed research that are necessary but cannot be proven (Delva, Kirby, Knapper, & Birtwhistle, 2002). This study was based on two basic assumptions. First, middle school mainstream teachers who participated in answering the online teacher questionnaires and semistructured interviews were assumed to respond truthfully, based on personal knowledge and direct experiences. Second, middle school content teachers' participation was assumed to be cooperative because the study benefited the principal investigator and those instructing ELs where the study was conducted. Assumptions were based on the principal investigator's observations and experiences in the workplace and school system.

Scope and Delimitations

Delimitations of a study are characteristics that arise from limitations in the scope of the study (Delva et al., 2002). The research included middle school mainstream teachers teaching

native speakers of English with ELs in respective content classrooms. Fifteen middle school content teachers of mathematics, social studies, and science in one of the schools in the state of Maryland were participants in the study. The study took place in September of school year 2020-2021. The selection of participants for the study was limited to middle school content teachers of science, mathematics, and social studies with ELs enrolled in the classroom. The study did not include RELA teachers based on the support received from the reading department on how to teach ELs. Broader generalizations are not possible concerning teachers of various grade levels, such as the explorations of the elementary and high school teachers' viewpoints, even though teachers at all levels are also teaching ELs.

Limitations

Limitations are constraints that are largely beyond the principal investigator's control but that could affect the study outcome (Delva et al., 2002). The study's first limitation was the present relationship of the ESOL teacher to the research participants. Because the study took place in the organization where both the principal investigator and participants work, research participants might have responded in a socially desirable manner (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Mainstream teachers were asked to respond to the research questions through virtual face-to-face interviews on preparations, experiences, and perceptions in teaching the ELs. Another limitation of the study was the small number of research participants surveyed using an online teacher questionnaire and interviews through the Zoom app. The results have limited generalizability beyond content teachers teaching ELs in the district where the study was conducted.

Biases were avoided as participants were asked to participate in member checking by reviewing the transcribed audio recording of the virtual interviews to determine the dependability, transferability, and accuracy of qualitative findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The self-created research instruments were verified by subject matter experts. The feedback, comments, and suggestions received were all incorporated into the development of the research instruments, the research questions, and the theoretical framework guiding the study.

Chapter Summary

The introduction highlighted the increasing numbers of ELs in the United States, and literature supports the need for well-informed mainstream teachers who know how to instruct ELs effectively. The background of the problem stemmed from content teachers' struggles to teach ELs in the mainstream classroom. Middle school content area teachers' insufficient understanding of the cultural experiences, needs, and interests of ELs was discussed as part of the problem statement.

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore middle school mainstream teachers' preparations, perceptions, and experiences encountered while teaching ELs in one school district in Maryland. Findings from the study were found to be significant after examining the middle school mainstream teachers' practices and attitudes explicitly. The study may provide the district's middle school ESOL department leaders with information on how to assist and support teachers in effectively instructing ELs.

The research questions were crafted in alignment with the data collection tool and self-created research instruments to collect accurate data on the problem under investigation. The framework of qualitative research was based on Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory and the concept of ZPD was used to guide the whole research regarding teachers teaching ELs in the mainstream classroom. The terms related to the topic were defined with expanded meanings. Included in the chapter are the assumptions, limitations and scope, and delimitations of the study.

       The next chapter includes a review of the literature. The literature review provides information about teaching ELs in the mainstream classroom, content area teachers' challenges teaching ELs, content area teachers' attitudes and perceptions of ELs, and content area teachers' preparation for teaching ELs in middle school. Information on how to address the lack of understanding in teaching ELs is included in the literature review. Instructional practices and instructional strategies from previous studies are also discussed.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This study addressed the problem of middle school content area teachers in the United States having an insufficient understanding of the cultural background, needs, and interests of English language learners (Turgut et al., 2016). The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore middle school mainstream teachers' preparations, perceptions, and experiences encountered while teaching ELs in one school district in Maryland. The participating content teachers were interviewed to examine the modifications and accommodations teachers provided in teaching ELs in their respective content area classrooms. The aim of the study was to explore the current phenomena where the problem has been observed at the school site. Most schools in the United States continue to receive students whose primary language is not English (NCES, 2019).

The percentage of ELs enrolled in Maryland as of 2016 is 7.8% of the total state enrollment (NCES, 2019). The present total enrollment shows there is a growing number of ELs enrolled in the United States. With the increasing numbers, there exists a need to consider what needs to be done to provide quality instruction for the continuing influx of ELs in the state. As the number of ELs increases, middle school mainstream teachers need to be equipped with research-based information on culturally relevant teaching, including differentiated educational design, which benefits all students (Adams, 2018). Preparing middle school mainstream classroom teachers to teach culturally and linguistically diverse learners is an ongoing concern in the U.S. educational system (Hadjioannou, Hutchinson, & Hockman, 2016).

The kinds of literature explored relates to teachers' experiences, perceptions, challenges, and preparations for teaching middle school ELs in the mainstream setting. The exploration of the relevant literature informed the development of the guiding research questions. The review of

the literature is organized around four themes related to teaching ELs in the mainstream classroom: (a) content area teachers' challenges in teaching ELs in the mainstream classroom, (b) content area teachers' attitudes and perceptions of ELs, (c) content teachers' experiences teaching ELs, and (d) content area teachers' preparation for teaching ELs in the U.S. educational system.

Literature Search Strategy

The American College of Education (ACE) library contained ample resources to support the study. Online use of the ACE library made it possible to stay abreast of the current information needed for the research. Many relevant and peer-reviewed articles were available from numerous education-based journals and periodicals. The materials were gathered from several databases, such as Education Source, ProQuest Education Database, SAGE Journals, JSTOR, Google, Google Scholar, and ERIC. Applicable to the topic, journals such as *Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) Journal, TESOL Quarterly*, and multicultural education journals provided current literature to support the research—including the information needed with respect to the current situation of ELs in the United States. Relevant information was also gathered from agencies such as the U.S. Department of Education and the county ESOL department.

The following phrases and key terms were used for the literature search: mainstream teachers' perceptions, middle school teachers' experiences, ELs in the mainstream setting, instructional strategies in teaching ELs, English to speakers of other languages (ESOL), English as a second language (ESL) teacher, middle school English language learners (ELs), mainstream teachers' attitudes toward ELs, instructional strategies teaching ELs, supporting ELs in the mainstream classroom, culturally relevant instruction, cultural and linguistic pedagogy, content

teachers' challenges in the mainstream classroom, language support, professional development for mainstream teachers, scaffolding, modification, background knowledge, effective instructional strategies, 21st century learning skills, critical thinking, accommodation, proficiency level, suitable assessment, mainstream teachers' preparation, mainstream teachers' effectiveness teaching ELs, differentiated instruction, ELs' needs and interest, responsive teaching, second language learning, vocabulary and literacy acquisition, culturally responsive teaching, linguistically responsive teaching, ESOL program models, and diverse learners.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework undergirding this study is based on Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory and the concept of Zone of Proximal Development. Social interaction plays a fundamental role in the development of critical thinking and reasoning skills among learners. The aim of this study was to reflect on the vital role of comprehensible input, such as social interactions between second language learners and teachers, and between learners and peers, in a meaningful learning environment (Adams, 2018; Castrillón, 2017). To make teaching more comprehensible, teachers need to accommodate ELs using social interactions

Fan (2018) advocated for the use of higher-order thinking skills, collaboration, and interaction among teachers and peers to produce authentic learning. Collaboration through the use of cooperative learning groups gives all learners access to express themselves. Fan further stated that collaboration, when done successfully, may serve as a cultural link between the ELs and the content teacher representing the mainstream classroom. Adams (2018) advocated for using the lens of sociocultural theory to view the teacher's role in the success of ELs. Adams concluded that the ELs' unique needs, differences, and cultural backgrounds may have a significant impact on the successful acquisition of knowledge and skills. Adams further stressed

that theory is essential for teaching ELs, because content teachers need to provide meaningful learning opportunities in the mainstream classroom. Sociocultural theory was used to focus on middle school mainstream teachers' preparation, experiences, attitudes and perceptions in teaching Els, and to explore how each may influence the classroom environment.

Mainstream teachers should consider the sociocultural behavior, linguistic differences, and racial disparities of students, which affect the approaches to instruction (Auslander, 2018). Niehaus, Adelson, Sejuit, and Zheng (2017) explained how a better understanding of how ELs communicate might give teachers insight into the attitude of ELs in the classroom. According to Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, learning should be related to the student's prior knowledge. Show (2015) indicated students' most significant writing difficulties are in the area relating to language. Teachers should start elaborating on suitable experiences to achieve higher mental processes, which, in Vygotsky's theory, is known as the zone of proximal development (ZPD).

The ZPD is a concept created by influential psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1978). Rentauli (2019) described Vygotsky's ZPD as a range of tasks that are too difficult for students to master alone but can be learned with the teacher's guidance or with the help of more skilled students. Rentauli further explained how the ZPD has a close link to the concept of scaffolding. According to Rentauli, scaffolding requires changing the level of support, and, if scaffolding is successful, a student's mastery level of performance can change leading to an increased level of performance on a particular task. Scaffolding and differentiation are based on a coherent understanding of communication demands and goals (Fan, 2018). Mainstream teachers should be mindful of the value of scaffolding to power and guarantee students' growth in the ZPD. Students are inclined to be more successful learners when equipped with instructional challenges in their ZPD

(Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky's concept of ZPD supports the research questions of this study about how middle school mainstream teachers effectively instruct ELs in the content area classroom.

Adams (2018) claimed to have a considerable understanding of how ELs perceive instruction in the mainstream setting and argued that content teachers may likely need to adjust instruction to meet the needs of the middle school ELs. The ZPD is essential for teaching ELs because content teachers need to provide meaningful learning opportunities (Adams, 2018). English learners need to be challenged and motivated in their ZPD (Castrillón, 2017). Teachers who do not have a constructivist background may not grasp the importance of instruction in a student's ZPD.

The concept behind Vygotsky's (1978) ZPD is that learning occurs when students participate in a cooperative and collaborative environment. When ELs are interacting with peers, learning takes place, as ELs can work with others to meet the learner's needs (Vygotsky, 1978). Effective collaboration helps ELs grasp new concepts and perform more complex tasks, which, in turn, challenges the EL (Vygotsky, 1978). Wissink and Starks (2019) agreed that teaching ELs is a considerable challenge for mainstream teachers. Mainstream teachers find it challenging to engage ELs in learning new specialized terminology and making connections to previously learned vocabulary terms and concepts (Wissink & Starks, 2019). Vygotskian theory is convincing in showing how students learn best through the use of social interaction and awareness of the student's ZPD (Vygotsky, 1978).

Understanding how ELs learn best is the focus of this study. The study's research questions focused on (a) middle school content area teachers struggling to meet the needs of ELs, (b) the modifications and accommodations taking place in the mainstream class, (c) content area

teachers' perceptions of ELs, and (d) mainstream teachers' experiences working with ELs. Vygotskian theory, if learned and applied, may assist teachers in effectively teaching ELs. The approach suggests, when teachers have a background in the theory, teachers could create meaningful and engaging lessons and equitable learning opportunities for ELs in the mainstream setting. Having an enthusiastic and equipped teacher in front of ELs makes it easier for the ELs to grasp the information.

The purpose of this proposed qualitative case study was to explore the middle school mainstream teachers' preparations, perceptions, and experiences encountered in teaching ELs in their respective content area classrooms. Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory and the concept of the ZPD were used as a guide in the exploration of teaching practices in the mainstream classroom. The theory can be used to inform teachers of the need to be equipped and prepared before teaching ELs. Teachers' awareness of students' needs and interests, a classroom conducive to learning, and a safe learning environment are all essential in the attainment of successful learning. Content teachers should understand ELs' unique needs and levels of motivation in acquiring knowledge, which is vital to success (Castrillón, 2017). Understanding how ELs learn, as guided by theory, produces a favorable result in having successful mainstream teachers teaching ELs efficiently and productively in the content classroom. The following topics were explored to identify what has been done in research, what is unknown, and what is unclear when it comes to educating ELs in the United States, specifically in the middle school mainstream setting.

Research Literature Review

The review of literature was organized into several themes. The first theme centers around teachers teaching ELs in the mainstream classroom. The second theme addressed the

challenges of the teachers teaching ELs. The third theme pertained to teachers' preparation and background teaching ELs. The fourth theme explored teachers' attitudes and perceptions toward ELs. In 2015, the ESSA released new accountability systems for measuring long-term goals and ELs' progress based on the state assessment. The ESSA requires every state to assess the English proficiency level of every EL (U.S. Department of Education, 2019a).

Hadjioannou et al. (2016) posited that ELs pose unique challenges for educators because the federal mandates under the ESSA require all students to have access to the core curriculum and meet specific academic targets. Accountability is required of all schools with enrolled ELs. The EL population presents challenges for educators and represents a growing concern to all who teach ELs precisely because of the accountability placed on teachers (Hadjioannou et al., 2016). Hadjioannou et al. reiterated how ELs' state assessment results contribute to the overall rating of each school in the United States. Content teachers teaching the assigned subject are also required to accommodate ELs and play a huge role in the success of the instruction the ELs receive. The continued growth in the number of EL students across the nation, and the level of academic progress required, creates a concern for all educators and school administrators. The aim of this study was to provide valuable information to assist in devising creative solutions for such issues.

The U.S. Department of Education (2019b) released guidance to help schools, districts, and states support and provide high-quality services for ELs. The aim is to improve students' English language proficiency and academic skills and enable them to be college and career ready. The U.S. Department of Education's toolkit for ELs contains a 10-chapter checklist. Each chapter provides explanations, and the toolkit is available and accessible online.

Teaching English Learners in the Mainstream Classroom

Middle school ELs are expected to participate in state assessments such as the Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program (MCAP) and Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State (ACCESS) for English language learners (Maryland State Department of Education, 2019a). The school is accountable for meeting federal and state expectations. Mainstream teachers are tasked with providing meaningful instruction based on ELs' academic needs and English proficiency levels (Brown & Endo, 2017). Teaching ELs is not an easy task for mainstream teachers whose certifications are in the areas of math, science, and social studies. The mainstream teachers' unpreparedness to teach ELs has resulted in having to ask for support and information from the ESOL teachers in the building.

McGlynn and Kelly (2018) suggested some strategies for mainstream teachers. To create a culturally-responsive classroom, McGlynn and Kelly suggested the following: (a) greet students with a smile and a caring comment each day, (b) ask for a response each time a task is done as a way of recognizing ELs' opinions and ideas, (c) listen to ELs' ideas and opinions to boost ELs' self-confidence, and (d) show interest in ELs' lives by asking about ELs' family or activities at home.

The frustration of both mainstream teachers and the ELs is a situation observed in schools throughout the United States. Téllez and Manthey (2015) posited that teachers who teach in a positive and nurturing culture develop a strong belief in the English language development (ELD) or ESOL program in the school setting. Not meeting the expectations of mainstream teachers resulted in ELs receiving a failing grade. The teachers whose students did not achieve the required score on the county test were forced to be creative in creating lessons for the ELs to

comprehend the subject being taught. The effectiveness of instruction for ELs may be greater if there was a collaborative effort among all school staff (Téllez & Manthey, 2015).

The mainstream teachers' experiences in teaching ELs. The content area teachers, who are primarily prepared to instruct the content area subject (mathematics, science, social studies), are having challenges trying to meet ELs' needs in the classroom. The preparation for mainstream classroom teachers to work with culturally and linguistically diverse learners needs attention, as many ELs continue to enroll in U.S. schools (Hadjioannou et al., 2016). Content teachers should realize the importance of collaboration with all stakeholders in the school and not feel alone in educating the ELs in the content area class. Mainstream teachers' failure in attending to EL's academic needs was often due to a lack of knowledge of the students' first languages (Chin et al., 2016).

English learners in the social studies classroom. Mainstream teachers of social studies experienced challenges addressing the needs of middle school ELs in the social studies class. Dong (2017), in research on culturally relevant pedagogy, showed ELs had a better chance of understanding concepts when they could draw on the educational background of social studies lessons in their home countries. Most teachers used Google Translate to communicate with ELs when accommodating the ELs because the focus was on mastery of the content, which many ELs had difficulty achieving. Dong (2017) cited a social studies teacher who explained how scaffolding the lessons seemed difficult because the key terms in social studies were not easy to modify, and the curriculum asked for mastery of the content. The teacher also mentioned that newly arrived ELs (newcomers) who could not speak English presented the biggest challenge in the social studies classroom. It is important to deliver culturally relevant learning opportunities to help ELs function as well-informed and engaged citizens in a diverse world (Choi, 2013).

Choi (2013) advocated for a culturally responsive pedagogy when it comes to addressing the needs of ELs, specifically the newcomers. Based on their findings, Choi strongly proposed that mainstream teachers and administrators should consider providing meaningfully equitable and culturally-relevant learning opportunities for EL newcomers. Further, Dong (2017) suggested that teachers should understand culturally-relevant pedagogy when preparing instructional lessons for ELs.

Having ELs in the social studies classroom created considerable challenges for social studies teachers. The lack of time to prepare instructional materials did not allow for a more comprehensible input for ELs (Dong, 2017). Barber et al. (2015) found evidence of teachers supporting middle school learners, including ELs, using the program United States History for Engaged Reading. Engaged reading using differentiated texts was crucial in students' feelings of motivation and engagement. Meaningful instruction using various comprehension strategies allowed ELs to identify, think about, and recall important details and ideas (Barber et al., 2015).

English learners in the mathematics classroom. Mainstream mathematics teachers were well equipped to teach mathematics to ELs if they received teacher preparation during the college years (Pettit, 2015). Prince George's County Public School's instructional mathematics coaches trained and supported mathematics teachers in thorough professional development. Turkan (2016) posited that the need for mathematics teachers with a background in teaching ELs would continue to rise in the United States. Teachers receiving adequate training to instruct ELs felt more accomplished because of their ability to help ELs understand the mathematics material (Master, Loeb, Whitney, & Wyckoff, 2016). Some teachers expressed frustrations, primarily when tasked with improving students' scores on the county unit assessments. The lack of instructional strategies to teach mathematics to ELs is an ongoing concern for mathematics

teachers. When teaching mathematics to ELs, the teacher should have more time to prepare because of the need to differentiate or scaffold instructional practices according to the ELs' level of understanding (Turkan, 2016)

Middle school ELs often were found seated in one area of the classroom, trying to catch up and do what other students were doing without a complete understanding of the lesson (Turkan, 2016). The EL students enrolled in U.S. K–12 schools have to learn both language and content concurrently. Consequently, ELs' scores are far below the national average in mathematics (Master et al., 2016). Evidence indicated that professional development specific to EL instruction could potentially raise ELs' achievement in mathematics because the majority of teachers viewed ELs as a group of students who needed specialized support in learning mathematics (Master et al., 2016). Pettit (2015) found significant differences between two groups of mathematics teachers teaching ELs. The group of teachers who had training believed they were considerably more prepared and felt they were good at helping ELs understand the material in classes to a greater degree compared to teachers who had not received training (Pettit, 2015). Mathematics teachers' way of thinking about ELs' learning achievement continued to show a tendency of not considering the ELs' needs in alignment with the content (Turkan, 2016)

Mathematics teachers became more productive after attending training to learn particular skills (Turkan, 2016). Cardimona (2018) proposed differentiating mathematics instruction with ELs with the use of cooperative learning groups and collaborative learning interaction. The activities offered students an opportunity to reflect and build on prior answers. The effect on students using group work was to have a complete understanding of the problem-solving process. The collaboration between and among EL students encouraged ELs to form a community of

learners (Cardimona, 2018). Teachers receiving adequate training to teach ELs felt more accomplished in helping ELs understand the mathematics material (Pettit, 2015).

English learners in the science classroom. Mainstream science teachers often focus on the county and state assessments and forget the needs of ELs, which require accommodations based on ELs' proficiency level. Grapin, Haas, Goggins, Llosa, and Lee (2019) conveyed that the Next Generation Science Standards demonstrated opportunities and challenges for ELs as linguistic and cultural diversity among K–12 students continued to increase in the United States. McGlynn and Kelly (2018) explained the importance of finding ways to connect to students' prior knowledge when teaching science content in the science mainstream class. McGlynn and Kelly further emphasized the importance of creating a culturally responsive class in science content classes. Creating a culture of respect and having a clear picture of ELs' experiences can help teachers guide students through a successful year in the mainstream classroom (McGlynn & Kelly, 2018).

Mainstream science teachers focused on the county and state assessments because the test results reflected what students had learned in the content classroom. In meeting the rigor of the science standards, Grapin et al. (2019) reiterated the need for ELs to be acquainted with the demands of the language and content in science. Most often, ELs found themselves obliged to ask peers about the day's lesson, and the day's instructional cycle may end without ELs having much knowledge. Ryoo (2015) found learners were better able to understand science content vocabulary terms when speaking using the English language approach (ELA) in the science content classroom. Using the ELA, learners were better able to combine science content vocabulary terms with grasping the concepts. Ryoo suggested integrating ELs' everyday

language in science instruction, as there was an increased possibility for all students to acquire both the content and language of science.

English learners' affective needs. Show (2015) recommended mainstream teachers need to understand the affective needs of ELs. English learners needed teachers to show awareness of emotional concerns and to provide ELs with an encouraging and supportive environment. Understanding ELs' affective or socioemotional needs should be attended to first before focusing on the students' academic needs. Having a compassionate teacher expressing awareness of the plight of ELs in the United States may help ELs (Wissink & Starks, 2019).

Some key terms mainstream teachers may consider when dealing with the ELs are highlighted in Figure 1. Middle school ELs come to school with the need to belong in an environment where the place is different from back home, especially for newcomers. Newcomers speak and understand no English at all. In middle school, the class scheduling is different than in elementary school. In primary schools, ELs are usually sheltered in one classroom with one teacher and with the same classmates or peers. In middle school, ELs need to follow the given schedule, and each module is different. English learners interact with different teachers and different classmates every period. When EL newcomers come to school and speak no English at all, this type of schedule can be overwhelming.

Niehaus et al. (2017) observed the plight of some ELs coming into the United States. Most of the immigrants experienced various kinds of stressors, such as poverty and immigration problems. Niehaus et al. further explained the role of teachers when it comes to addressing the emotional needs of the learners. Understanding the sociocultural background using culturally relevant pedagogy can help when dealing with ELs. Culturally relevant pedagogy is a comprehensive instructional framework that transforms ELs' constructions of self, identity,

sociocultural consciousness, and academic rigor (Adams, 2018). The increasing number of ELs is a growing concern for teachers and administrators (Turgut et al., 2016). The popular bilingual and EL site, *Colorin Colorado,* offers guidance and strategies teachers can use to ensure school settings are establishing a welcoming environment for ELs in school (Breiseth, 2018).

Social interaction throug the use of cooperative learning groups and collaborative learning

High-quality lessons for language development

Differentiation, Scaffolding, Modification

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) and Linguistically Responsive Teaching (LRT)

Welcoming environment and supportive classroom and school
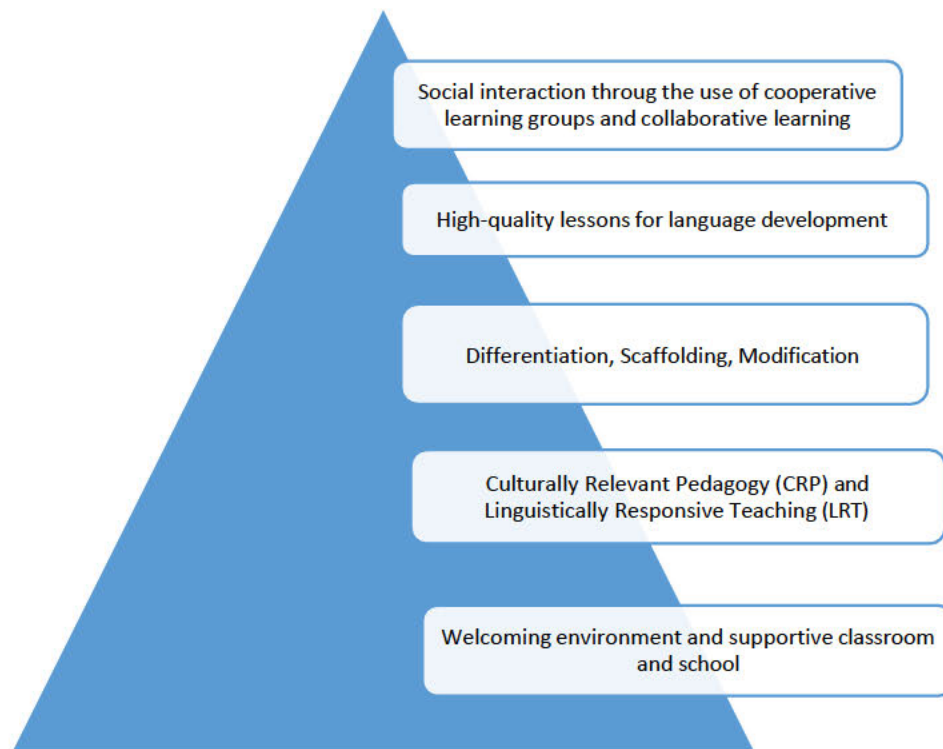
Figure 1. Understanding EL needs. (Beches, 2020)

Breiseth (2018) reported most ELs enrolled in U.S. schools are unaccompanied minors, have immigrant parents or maybe refugees. Breiseth stated that innumerable educators in the country teaching ELs were reporting increased worry and tension among other students and classmates concerning immigration issues and immigration enforcement in particular. Teachers need to understand the affective needs of ELs. Andrei, Ellerbe, and Kidd (2019) identified several reasons why ELs get frustrated in school. The overwhelming number of activities, such as learning a new language while grasping the academic content, creates frustration, which leads to a lack of motivation to understand what is being said by peers and teachers. At times, newly

arrived students may not speak or share such thoughts and feelings with teachers because they lack English vocabulary and have anxiety due to a new environment. As a result, when there is a chance, ELs prefer to speak using the native language to another student with the same language, which defeats the purpose of gaining new learning using the English language in the classroom.

Niehaus et al. (2017) found that students with high achievement had a connection with ELs' socioemotional well-being. It is essential to address the socio-emotional needs of ELs, as teachers help mediate the relationship between language understanding and declining performance for students. Niehaus et al. further raised the question as to how teachers and schools can improve and best promote socio-emotional well-being among ELs. Teachers play a significant role in helping ELs succeed in the classroom during the transition time when everything is new to the ELs. When ELs are encouraged to share what they know based on prior knowledge, they begin to see the meaning in what they are learning and become active and critical thinkers (Dong, 2017).

Content teachers of the assigned subject are required to accommodate ELs and play a huge role in the success of the instruction ELs receive (Dong, 2017). Shoffner and De Oliveira (2017) explained the importance of integrating linguistically responsive teaching in the classroom, which may assist teachers in developing the skills ELs need in the world. Shoffner and De Oleveira identified several vital aspects of linguistically responsive teaching. Mainstream teachers should (a) value and show interest in ELs' home languages; (b) advocate for ELs to gain trust, which leads to improving learning; (c) show interest in ELs' background and experiences to create meaningful teaching and learning; (d) use key terms according to demands of the specific task and that are understandable to ELs; (e) incorporate social interaction such as

cooperative learning groups for authentic learning; and (f) scaffold lessons for an easier grasp of learning.

Exemplary teaching of English learners. According to Hagar (2019), A TESOL International Association writing team outlined the six principles for excellent teaching of ELs. The six principles include the following: (a) teachers should know who the learners are in the classroom, (b) teachers should understand the importance of supporting language development through the use of the high-quality design of lessons, (c) teachers should understand the importance of simultaneously monitoring and assessing language development, (d) teachers should be flexible in the method of delivery of the lesson, and (e) teachers should know the importance of collaborating with other colleagues who teach the same subject or grade level.

Brown and Endo (2017) showed differentiation for ELs provided shallow accommodations and did not efficiently build the academic language or connect content with prior knowledge. Because the task was difficult to accomplish effectively, many teachers concluded the differentiated instruction did not work either. The lack of specialized knowledge, skills, and instructional strategies for working with ELs may lead mainstream teachers to teach ELs inefficiently with ineffective instruction or even to ignore ELs in the content classroom (Turgut et al., 2016).

Content Teachers' Challenges Teaching English Learners

One of the highlights of the ESSA is to ensure critical information is provided to educators, families, students, and communities through yearly statewide assessments that measure students' progress toward high standards (U.S. Department of Education, 2019a). The policy requires educators to teach students how to use critical thinking skills to justify arguments based on evidence. Turgut et al. (2016) posited content area teachers remain inadequately

prepared to teach diverse students due to the lack of knowledge and skills to teach ELs. The requirements are challenging for both teachers and students because students are expected to perform academic tasks and use conversational English.

According to Pettit (2015), teacher preparation or relevant training toward teaching ELs can be successful in affecting teachers' beliefs about ELs in a positive way. Content teachers should be taught how to integrate various strategies in daily instruction, as it is critical for mainstream teachers to provide quality instruction based on ELs' academic needs and English proficiency (Brown & Endo, 2017). Teacher preparation programs need to make learning more useful for preservice teachers by allowing teachers to practice teaching with ELs in the actual setting (Guofang, Hinojosa, & Wexler, 2017). Mainstream teachers continue to struggle because the preparation to meet the learning needs of the diverse population in the school is a considerable challenge.

According to Chin et al. (2016), content teachers experienced challenges because of a lack of background and training preparation for EL instruction. For teachers entering the profession without any preparation, the problem was more daunting (Turgut et al., 2016). The increasing number of ELs caused many teachers and administrators to feel overwhelmed and worried about Els' academic growth (Chin et al., 2016). The challenges facing educators resulted from the lack of adequate knowledge about learners' diverse cultures and languages. Chin et al. further explained that teaching ELs, particularly the newcomers who have a shallow level of English proficiency, constituted difficult instructional challenges for mainstream teachers. These significant challenges help explain why ELs struggled to learn content in the mainstream classroom (Islam & Park, 2015).

Teachers across multiple studies have expressed feelings of being overwhelmed and burdened, and many have expressed little interest in attending professional training because of the lack of compensation and, at times, irrelevant information (Islam & Park, 2015). Lew (2016) suggested, to convince more teachers to attend ESOL workshops, professional development facilitators needed to develop more relevant and meaningful content instead of recapitulating what teachers already know; training should focus on what was necessary for the present situation. Teacher preparation programs in the United States should include specific courses on EL instruction and should consist of some coursework for the general education program, as most teacher education programs in the United States now give more attention to ESOL teachers (Lew, 2016).

English for speakers of other languages delivery program models. As shown in Figure 2, there are multiple ESOL program delivery methods, and ESOL teachers in this study were the only ones with expertise in teaching ELs. The ESOL delivery program models vary across the United States. The most common delivery models for educating ELs in the United States are (a) the push-in (ESOL teacher supports the general education teacher), (b) the pull-out (ESOL teacher gives support to ELs outside the mainstream classroom), and (c) the sheltered instruction models (Stephens & Johnson, 2015). In the co-teaching model, just like the push-in model, the ESOL teacher is in the classroom collaborating with the general education teacher with lessons appropriate to all learners (Sparks, 2016). The Maryland State Department of Education (2019b) permits leaders in every district and individual school to determine which ESOL delivery program model to use, as the ELs' needs vary. Educational leaders at the county level implement different program delivery models and maintain the flexibility to create an

innovative delivery model (PGCPS, 2020). Figure 2 shows how an ESOL teacher could be more flexible in assisting the ELs in school.
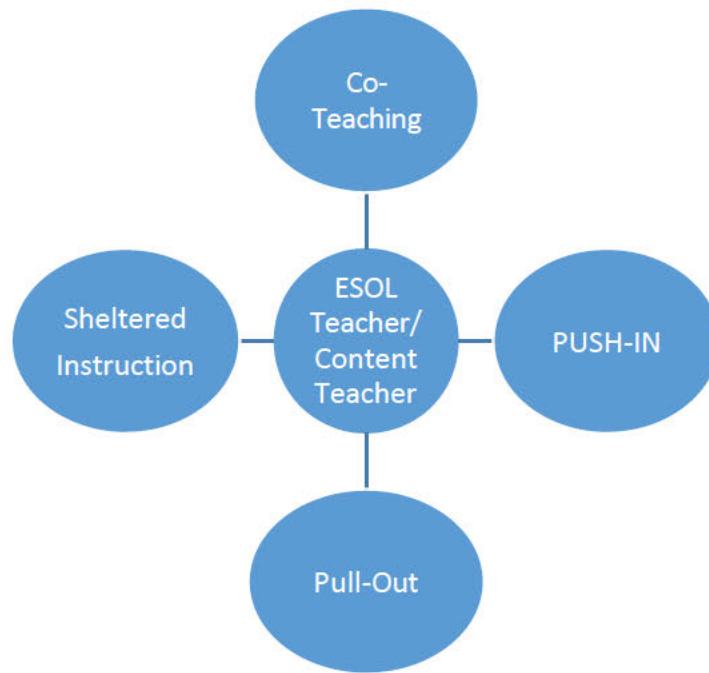
Figure 2. Prince George's County Public Schools (2020) ESOL delivery program models.

Sheltered instruction is often referred to as sheltered instruction observation protocol (Sparks, 2016). The general education teacher provides guidance supporting the EL and incorporating academic content concurrently. With a classroom of ELs, content teachers are responsible for providing language support and educational material (Stephens & Johnson, 2015). In the co-teaching program model, the content area teacher and ESOL teacher collaborate concerning the ELs' needs in content area classrooms. The instructional practices are prepared in a collaborative instructional cycle of plan, teach, assess, and reflect (Honigsfeld & Dove, 2016). Using the services of an ESOL teacher in the classroom may assist the content teacher but may not be the norm in most schools. The cooperation and collaboration between the two teachers,

when established, can provide effective scaffolding of lessons for ELs, which benefits ELs and content teachers (McGriff & Protacio, 2015).

  Strategies for teaching English learners across the content areas. Haynes (2014) designed strategies for teaching ELs across content areas and suggested having an ESL specialist serve as an adviser to all content teachers in the school, as ESL specialists are well versed in teaching ELs effectively. The ESOL teacher can support the content teachers by sharing effective strategies (Haynes, 2014). Vintan and Gallagher (2019) emphasized the importance of effective collaboration between mainstream teachers and the ESL teacher in a school. The school administrator should be in attendance as a member of the collaborative team. The administrator can build time into mainstream teachers' schedules to meet and plan effective support strategies with the ESL teacher (Vintan & Gallagher, 2019). Vintan and Gallagher further suggested professional development opportunities for both ESOL teachers and mainstream teachers for effective collaboration. Because ESOL teachers are mandated to collaborate with mainstream teachers to review and document ELs' evaluation data, the ESOL teacher's job is to assist teachers in discussing and planning ELs' learning outcomes (Vintan & Gallagher, 2019)

  Understanding English learners' proficiency level. The WIDA CAN-DO descriptors contain information about ELs in terms of proficiency level and what can be expected of them when it comes to academic performance (WIDA, 2014). The ELs' level of awareness is important in helping teachers design an instructional activity. An example would be an activity that enabled learners to fill in the blanks with suitable words (Abobaker, 2017). Having ELs match the right terms to the meaning allowed content words to be mastered with the correct definition. Mainstream teachers' understanding of where students are in terms of proficiency

levels—using key terms such as advanced, intermediate, beginner, and newcomer—can assist content teachers in gaining information on ELs' status when it comes to the level of proficiency.

World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment's grade-level English language development (ELD) standards make use of the five proficiency levels (entering, emerging, developing, expanding, and bridging) to evaluate the progression of ELs' development (WIDA, 2014). Mainstream teachers who instruct ELs are given a copy of the CAN-DO descriptors each year for reference. The WIDA CAN-DO descriptors may assist teachers in creating scaffolded lessons to meet the varying needs of the ELs in the content classroom. Scaffolding is important for ELs because it supports ELs' abilities based on proficiency level (Abobaker, 2017). Understanding the level of performance of what ELs can do gives the teacher a better understanding of how to prepare instruction. Aligning WIDA standards with content standards created struggles for mainstream educators and calls for the expertise of both language and content area specialists to collaborate in order to provide meaningful instruction to ELs (Lee, 2018)

Niehaus et al. (2017) agreed, noting that EL students often do not understand or have difficulty following directions due to the unfamiliarity of the language. This unfamiliarity may result in ELs not understanding what the teacher is saying or asking. Teachers should consider ELs when planning instructional materials and selecting the right strategies to use (WIDA, 2014). Scaffolding with ELs is important as it supports ELs' abilities based on proficiency level in all of the four domains (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). The four domains are critical, as ELs are assessed each year on all four domains.

The Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State (ACCESS) test for ELs is taken each year until an EL has exited the ESOL program because the language

proficiency requirement has been met. On this assessment, each domain and every level have a corresponding item with what a particular student can do based on the proficiency level described (Maryland State Department of Education, 2019a). The CAN-DO descriptors can benefit mainstream teachers by showing how they should modify lessons based on what is expected of the ELs.

Content Teachers' Attitudes and Perceptions About Teaching English Learners

Examining the perceptions of mainstream teachers is highly relevant as ELs continue to grow in numbers (Clark-Goff & Eslami, 2016). Mainstream teachers with little background information about teaching ELs tend to depend on perceptions based on what they feel and not what they know. Teachers should know about students' cultural backgrounds to provide appropriate instruction. Training has been found to be effective in positively influencing teachers' attitudes toward ELs (Pettit, 2015).

Guofang et al. (2017) insisted on making learning more productive for ELs by helping preservice teachers in teacher preparation programs understand ELs' cultural backgrounds and language development. Wissink and Starks (2019) endorsed the idea of preservice teachers teaching reading with ELs during the teacher preparation program. Clark-Goff and Eslami (2016) proposed policymakers and administrators should also be aware of mainstream teachers' knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs regarding ELs. Teacher beliefs conveyed in the classroom were a strong predictor of educational outcomes.

According to Clark-Goff and Eslami (2016), exploring the teacher's perceptions regarding instructional experiences with ELs may provide more insights for the ESOL instructional specialist. Clark-Goff and Eslami's study findings suggested that preservice teachers needed evidence and research-based coursework in language establishment and

language acquisition processes to overcome mainstream teachers' misconceptions concerning ELs. Guofang et al. (2017) found that educators' orientations, ways of thinking, and perceptions about ELs played a vital role in teachers' abilities to teach ELs effectively. Awareness of the content area teachers' attitudes and perceptions may give direction for better decisions on (a) relevant professional development, (b) better teacher preparation programs from the universities and colleges, and (c) appropriate resources in teaching the ELs throughout the U.S. educational system.

Content Area Teachers' Preparation for Teaching English Learners

The EL student population in the United States continues to grow. Colleges and universities in the United States are tasked with the challenge of ensuring preservice teacher candidates are prepared to effectively instruct students whose native language is not English. Wissink and Starks (2019) showed that specialized knowledge is required to teach ELs effectively. Content area teachers are asked to ensure ELs understand the content taught in the mainstream classroom. Rubinstein-Avila and Lee (2014) called for leaders of college teacher preparation programs to tackle the needed preparation of teachers in teaching middle school ELs. The lack of training left many educators feeling not equipped to scaffold or differentiate instruction to meet ELs' language and academic needs.

Guofang et al. (2017) insisted on making learning more productive for ELs by helping preservice teachers in preparation programs. Teachers needed help in understanding ELs' cultural background and language development. Guofang et al. suggested helping content teachers by focusing on teaching strategies with ELs and on language in the content areas. Teacher preparation program leaders needed to make learning more useful for preservice teachers by helping provide opportunities to practice with ELs in the actual setting. Teachers

who have received training feel more prepared to teach and help ELs understand instruction than teachers who have not received training (Pettit, 2015).

Professional development for mainstream teachers. Providing mainstream teachers with time to enhance language and content knowledge through learning opportunities is vital to success in teaching ELs (Ross, 2014). Several studies have indicated teachers' participation in professional development for EL instruction has the potential to lead to progress in addressing ELs' academic challenges. Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), one of the most prominent organizations for professional development, gives priority to English language teaching for certification as an ESOL educator. The organization also conducts conferences nationwide for ESL teachers. However, mainstream teachers do not get the same exposure as the ESL teacher when it comes to teaching ELs. Lucas and Villegas (2013) tried to persuade instructional researchers and policymakers to prioritize the investigation of the likelihood of achieving a comprehensive educator development program for teaching ELs.

Wissink and Starks (2019) observed teachers and became convinced of the need for relevant professional development for the enhancement of teachers' understanding of the intricacies of language acquisition. Wissink and Starks further recommended second language training for teachers because, with improved knowledge of language acquisition, teachers' beliefs were altered, leading to the development of empathy for EL students. Master et al. (2016) recommended training about ELs as leading to better-equipped teachers prepared to face the demands of teaching ELs. By participating in professional development, teachers may eventually develop more compassion toward ELs.

Master et al. (2016) found that mainstream teachers' continuous training with specific instructional strategies for ELs was associated with higher academic gains for ELs. Teachers

receiving adequate training to teach ELs felt more accomplished because of being able to help ELs understand the content. Professional development helped mainstream teachers feel better prepared and equipped to teach ELs (Pettit, 2015). Content teachers should realize the importance of collaboration with all stakeholders in the school and not feel alone in educating ELs in the content area class (Hadjioannou et al., 2016).

When participating in professional development, mainstream teachers explored instructional strategies such as differentiation, modification, and scaffolding. Teacher preparation programs should train all teacher candidates to work effectively with native English speakers and ELs with diverse language and cultural backgrounds (Islam & Park, 2015). Teachers receiving adequate training to teach ELs felt more accomplished because of their ability to help ELs understand the mathematics content (Turkan, 2016). In summary, there have been many studies about the importance of professional development for teachers teaching ELs. The professional development offered in the district in this study is primarily for RELA and ESOL teachers. In the fast-changing educational realm, the need for professional development to meet Els' needs in the mainstream classroom becomes irrelevant if teachers showed no interest in attending professional training because of the lack of compensation (Jefferis & Bisschoff, 2017).

Using technology in mainstream classrooms. With the use of technology, the ELs could easily grasp the lessons in the mainstream classroom. The use of social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter are becoming more popular among teachers and students because of the uncomplicated and convenient features. Twitter enabled teachers to access a far more extensive network of educators (Jefferis & Bisschoff, 2017). Teachers and students are dependent on cellphones, and the use of technology is more prevalent than any other

instructional learning tool. The educational landscape has changed tremendously because of technological advancement.

Stairs and Skotarczak (2018) encouraged teachers to adapt the use of technology to make lessons more comprehensible. Stairs and Skotarczak acknowledged the use of technology might provide tools to increase comprehensible input; a teacher doing the talking for a more extended period may turn to language overload for ELs. All school stakeholders (e.g., the technology person, principals, instructional coaches, and support staff) should commit to meet together with the needed time and resources to cooperate and accomplish the goal of advancing ELs' academic achievement (Andrei, 2017). Lee, Hoekje, and Levine (2019) suggested that teachers need not spend much time adapting content for ELs to make it understandable, and instead should spend more time integrating technology in teaching ELs. There was a strong argument for the integration of technology in family literacy programs as a balanced approach (Lee et al., 2019).

Andrei (2017) found technology use had the potential to support the learning needs of ELs. Andrei suggested all school staff needed to work together to come up with a viable plan of technology integration in daily instruction. Integrating technology into everyday instruction may improve students' content and language learning as the easy-to-use technologies created a welcoming and friendly academic environment (Stairs & Skotarczak, 2018). If there was one issue about the use of technology, in terms of teachers' attitudes and beliefs regarding technology, it might be the lack of planning time and sufficient resources that could hamper teachers from integrating technology into everyday lessons (Andrei, 2017).

Gap in the Literature

Through this literature review, a gap was identified in research on middle school content area teachers (science, social studies, mathematics) receiving training or workshops based solely

on the assigned subject taught. Less professional development is offered related to knowledge and information on how to accommodate ELs in the content areas of mathematics, science, and social studies. In addition, few studies have investigated middle school ESL programs. The accountability for meeting the needs of ELs in middle school content area classrooms is a considerable challenge. Attention is needed as the EL population continues to grow (Rubinstein-Avila & Lee, 2014).

As the only ESOL teacher in the school, the principal investigator's awareness of the existing situation led to this in-depth study of the phenomenon. When no one is addressing the issues, it compels the education professional to step up because the problem is affecting both the teachers and the ELs. The school is also affected as a whole due to school accountability required by the ESSA. This study addressed the gap in the literature, which was the need for relevant professional development, teacher preparation through the study of programs, and necessary coursework or trainings suited to the needs of middle school mainstream teachers.

Chapter Summary

This review of the literature provided information about teaching ELs in the mainstream classroom, content area teachers' challenges teaching ELs, content area teachers' attitudes and perception of ELs, and content area teachers' preparation for teaching ELs in middle school. The literature provided information on how to address the lack of understanding in teaching ELs. Instructional practices and instructional strategies from the previous studies were also discussed. Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory and the concept of the ZPD supported the study of preparing content area teachers to meet ELs' needs in the mainstream classroom effectively (Castrillón, 2017).

The study addressed the existing gap in the literature in which middle school content area teachers typically receive training based solely on the assigned content and less on language skills needed to teach ELs. The literature review concluded with a counterargument from existing studies on strong advocacy for adopting technology integration to meet ELs' needs (Lee et al., 2019). The knowledge and information described in Chapter 2 were used as the rationale in choosing the research methodology and research design presented in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3 contains a detailed description of the methodology and research design using a qualitative instrumental case study design. Contained in the chapter is the problem statement as the main focus of the study. The identification of participants, location, and research instruments provided support in the study's purpose. Data collection tools and procedures, such as the online teacher questionnaire and semi-structured interviews, demonstrated an alignment with research questions and guided the study. The data analysis process featured recommended software, such as NVivo for transcription and NVivo for the coding process, which fits with the chosen methodology. Reliability and validity were established in detail with the use of different strategies such as member checking and triangulation from the various data sources. Informed consent is discussed fully. Ethical procedures were strictly observed during the study process and are described in the next chapter.

Chapter 3: Methodology

There is a growing concern in most middle schools in the United States in which content teachers' lack of specialized training, skills, and instructional strategies to work with ELs cause an insufficient understanding of the cultural background, needs, and interests of the ELs (Turgut et al., 2016). The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore middle school mainstream teachers' preparations, perceptions, and experiences encountered while teaching ELs in one school district in Maryland. Research participants were interviewed to examine factors contributing to teachers' struggles to teach ELs effectively in the mainstream classroom. Qualitative research was helpful in assessing mainstream teachers' perspectives and enabled the development of an understanding of meaning teachers attribute to experiences (Sutton & Austin, 2015).

The ESOL department in the district actively disseminates information to ESOL teachers through professional development and ESOL department chair meetings. Most ESOL teachers should understand the principles of excellent teaching for ELs, as ESOL teachers have a solid background in teaching ELs. Mainstream teachers, on the other hand, are expected to prepare differentiated lessons, as instructed by the administrators, to address the needs of ELs. The ESOL instructional specialist explains the curriculum to the mainstream teachers, but the effect can be overwhelming.

Mainstream teachers of mathematics, science, and social studies were interviewed to explore the content teachers' preparations, perceptions, and experiences in teaching ELs in mainstream classrooms. Qualitative research was used to gain an understanding of underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations of the content teachers (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Creswell and Creswell (2018) explained when choosing a case study design, the focus should be on

answering "how" and "why" questions. A qualitative case study was the suitable methodology because it generated answers to research questions and guided the dissertation. The following research questions guided this qualitative case study:

Research Question 1: How do middle school content area teachers describe the preparations made to effectively instruct the middle school English learners in the mainstream classroom?

Research Question 2: How do middle school content area teachers' perceptions of the English learners affect teaching practices in the mainstream classroom?

Research Question 3: How do middle school content area teachers describe experiences working with the middle school English learners in the mainstream classroom?

The study's focus was centered around teaching preparations, perceptions, and experiences of middle school teachers teaching ELs. The first section of this chapter is used to explain the research methodology used for the study. Subsequent sections of the chapter address the study's research design, researcher's role in research, research procedures, data analysis, reliability and validity, and ethical considerations.

Research Design and Rationale

Qualitative methodology was chosen to capture individual lived experiences and insights on practices and perspectives of teachers in mainstream classes. The approach was to explore mainstream teachers' perceptions and preparation for teaching ELs (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The research questions warranted selection of this method, and explored the "why" and "how" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Qualitative researchers should build a case for research questions (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017). Semi-structured interviews using open-ended questions elicited information about participants' perspectives on teaching ELs. The interview questions were

centered around mainstream teachers' preparation, perceptions, and experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The case study approach (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) provided an opportunity to gather data from a variety of sources including virtual interviews and an online questionnaire. (Glen, 2015). Using two instruments (a) enabled data triangulation; (b) strengthened validity and reliability; and (c) provided credibility, dependability, and authenticity (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A case study approach was well-suited for the exploration of mainstream teachers' preparations, perceptions, and experiences teaching ELs. The case study approach supports in-depth investigation using interviews with research participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Instrumental case studies are appropriate for answering research questions (Baskarada, 2014). The instrumental case study approach was selected because it was appropriate for developing insights into the experiences of teachers teaching linguistically diverse learners (Crowe, Creswell, & Robertson, 2011). These insights will add to the existing knowledge in this field. Instrumental case studies allow the selection of a particular type of person (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). The research participants in this study included 15 mainstream teachers of social studies, science, and mathematics.

Role of the Researcher

The role of the principal investigator was as an interviewer in this study. This qualitative case study was used to access thoughts and feelings and to seek a deeper understanding of mainstream teachers' plight in teaching ELs (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). As an ESOL teacher, part of the job description of the principal investigator is to support content teachers, as specified in the contract given by the ESOL district office. The principal investigator's working relationship with colleagues shifted from ESOL teacher supporting teachers to a researcher

conducting a study. The switching of roles made it necessary to be mindful of biases that may arise during the research process.

As an interviewer during the research process, the role of the researcher was to take notes, record, and capture an accurate account of participants' experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The principal investigator had no power over research participants, as both have the same job position in the location where the research was conducted. Personal biases, such as preconceived ideas of mainstream teachers' experiences and the desire to achieve an accurate result, were strictly avoided. A recruitment letter (see Appendix C) was used to provide a clear description of the study and was communicated to research participants by email.

Ethical procedures, such as following the interview protocol (see Appendix B), were appropriately discussed with participants prior to the actual interview. Virtual interviews using Zoom did not deviate from the agreed protocols as stated in the informed consent form (see Appendix D). The researcher's responsibility was to safeguard participants' information, and this was communicated properly. The development of the research topic was explained to participants. Research participants displayed a willingness to support the study and were all cooperative throughout the process.

Research Procedures

A qualitative case study allowed the collection of data through virtual interviews and online teacher questionnaires. Case studies allow the freedom to focus on a particular issue, such as content area teachers' preparations, perceptions, and experiences in mainstream classrooms (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The procedures of the research were strictly followed, though some deviations were made, as discussed in Chapter 4, to adapt to changing conditions during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Population and Sample Selection

This study population was comprised of middle school content teachers in one school district in Maryland. The target for the study was a sample size of 30 participants. Research participants were all qualified for participation in the study as they were all middle school content teachers teaching ELs in the areas of science, mathematics, and social studies. Research participants were selected based on classroom position and willingness to communicate at length and in-depth (Moser & Korstjens, 2018).

The data collection process included the distribution of the questionnaire followed by the individual teacher interviews. Before the research began, Institutional Review Board (IRB) approvals from American College Education and the district were secured (see Appendix E). After approvals were received, an email was sent to the district's middle school principals. Procedures on how to communicate with the principals were provided by staff in the district's IRB research and evaluation unit. The email included information about the district's approval to conduct research involving content teachers teaching ELs in the mainstream classroom. Thirty content teachers were invited via email to participate in answering the questionnaire. Thirty participants were chosen with the help of school principals to ensure a representation of the subject matter taught with ELs in the mainstream classroom.

The online teacher questionnaire (see Appendix A) was sent to the target population. From the 30 participants, criterion sampling was used in the selection of 15 participants to participate in interviews. In criterion sampling, participants were chosen based on meeting the predetermined criteria of importance (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). The first 15 of 30 teachers who volunteered to be interviewed were selected. The 15 research participants were interviewed

individually online using Zoom. The Interview protocol was strictly observed to give room for

participants' experiences and perspectives (Flick, 2018).

Instrumentation

This qualitative case study allowed for the collection of data to gain meaning and insights

regarding the lived experiences of the research participants in mainstream classrooms (Glen,

2015). For the study, data-gathering instruments included an online teacher questionnaire and

semi-structured interview questions for research participants. The online questionnaire (see

Appendix A) explored teachers' preparations, perceptions, and experiences teaching ELs. The

questionnaire items and interview items were used to collect data for exploring answers to the

research questions.

Items included in the questionnaire and interview questions were created in alignment

with the research questions. Teacher questionnaire included questions about demographic

information and qualification questions for the interview session. The administration of the

online teacher questionnaire was done using SurveyMonkey software; each participant received

an email with a hyperlink for easy access.

The interviews for this study were conducted virtually. These virtual interviews generally

involved open-ended questions and were intended to elicit views and opinions from participants'

perceptions about teaching ELs (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). There were eight open-ended

questions (see Appendix B) used to guide the semi-structured interview. Follow-up questions

were explored with 15 research participants who were individually interviewed using Zoom. The

individual interviews produced information on participants' experiences, perceptions, and

preparations for working with ELs.

The online teacher questionnaire items and semi-structured interview questions (see Appendices A and B) were field-tested by sending them to five subject matter experts (SMEs) in the field of ESOL for content validation. The feedback received was preserved as screenshots (see Appendix F). The SMEs were instructed to use the validation rubric (see Appendix G) for assistance in reviewing the instruments. Criteria listed in the rubric included clarity, wordiness, overlapping responses, and relationship to the problem. The purpose of the criteria was to serve as a guide for SMEs' validating each item of the questionnaire and interview questions. The SMEs' detailed feedback and suggested revision(s) for some of the question items were all applied.

Data Collection

Data collection for this study occurred through an online teacher questionnaire using the SurveyMonkey platform and transcribed interviews from individual participants. Collecting data using an online survey and interview is one advantage of qualitative research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The online questionnaire items and interview questions items focused on teachers' preparation, perceptions, and experiences related to teaching ELs. The data collection started by sending the recruitment letter (see Appendix C) to 15 teachers using teacher's work email addresses. Follow up email was made throughout the entire process until the last interview was conducted.

The recruitment letter addressed (a) the objectives of the research, (b) the research questions, and (c) the research process. Attached to the email was the informed consent document (see Appendix D). The link to the questionnaire was provided to the teacher after a signed informed consent form was received by the principal investigator. Part 1 of the

questionnaire included the demographic information, and Part 2 addressed the qualification

criteria for the interview (see Appendix A).

Participants answered Part 1 of the online questionnaire to ensure qualification for the

study. Teachers who were eligible to participate proceeded in answering Parts 2 and 3 of the

online questionnaire. Teachers who were not qualified were thanked for participating. The

timeframe for the online teacher questionnaire administration was 2 weeks. Respondents who did

not respond after the first week received an email reminder with the link attached to it. In the last

part of the questionnaire, participants were invited to volunteer to participate in one-on-one

virtual interviews to discuss experiences teaching ELs in the mainstream classroom. Fifteen

participants completed the online questionnaire and volunteered for the one-on-one interview.

Teachers who agreed to be interviewed received an email containing information about the

interview schedule and interview session.

The recorded semi-structured interviews with 15 teacher participants were the primary

data sources for this study. Before the interview, the informed consent form was clarified with

each participant for a deeper understanding. The ability to opt-out at any time during the

interview process was explained. Each participant was informed of the freedom to ask questions

or to leave if they decided not to continue with the interview. Each participant agreed to the

consent form's content, including the agreement to record the interview.

The interview process was conducted by following the interview questions guide and

protocol (see Appendix B). The interview questions guide and protocol were used to help

facilitate the interview to ensure the right topics were covered and nothing was left out during the

conversation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Each meeting lasted between 20 to 30 minutes using

Zoom from a MacBook laptop. After each interview, participants were thanked for joining the interview session.

Interviews generally involved open-ended questions, which were limited in number and intended to elicit views and opinions from research participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Through the qualitative research interviews, the principal investigator sought to capture the meaning of what participants said (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Prepared open-ended questions served as a guide to acquiring a valuable and detailed understanding of participants' preparation, perceptions, and experiences in mainstream classrooms (see Appendix B). Data collected from recorded one-on-one interviews were transcribed using NVivo transcription software. The NVivo transcription software produced transcripts to print , which were shared with research participants for member checking (see Appendix H for a sample transcription). The transcription document was sent through email to each teacher who participated in the interview, and each participant received an email back for confirmation.

The virtual recorded semi-structured interviews generated information from participants' experiences on content-area instruction during (a) whole-class lessons, (b) small-group instruction, (c) students' independent activities, (d) teacher-student interactions, and (e) students' conversations with peers. Virtual one-on-one interviews were scheduled based upon participants' time availability, usually after school hours. Participants were informed about study results and were given a Starbucks gift card as a token of appreciation. The data collected from the online questionnaire and NVivo transcription documents were stored safely in a password-protected electronic file on a personal computer. The study finding/results are stored in the iCloud drive accessible only to the principal investigator. The data collected and kept during the study process will be destroyed three years after completion of the study.

Data Preparation

The collected data were prepared and cleaned before data analysis. The teacher questionnaires were reviewed for accuracy and completeness. Incomplete questionnaires were not used as part of the research. Each saved audio recording for the interview was thoroughly checked to ensure it captured the entire conversation with accuracy. When all the information was cleaned and prepared, data analysis was performed. Teachers' responses to questionnaire items were transferred in an Excel document and were coded following the steps mentioned in Chapter 4.

The records consisted of collected online survey data and virtual interview data from the 15 middle school mainstream content teachers. The data collected were cleaned and prepared for manual or hand-coding. A code in qualitative research is a word or phrase which summarizes or captures the essence of a portion of data (Di Gregorio, 2019). The following steps were followed in data coding: (a) relevant information in the data was identified; (b) a word or phrase that best represented relevant information in the data was assigned; and (c) information was documented as to why it was essential.

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Data Analysis

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Multiple forms of data were collected and analyzed for this study. As asserted by Creswell and Creswell (2018), the use of various data sources, such as teacher questionnaires, and teacher interviews can validate case study research. Data analysis makes sense of data through consolidation, narrowing, and interpreting what participants shared and switching back and forth between narrative and interpretation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Data were collected to gain information on how mainstream teachers' preparation, perceptions, and experiences affect the ELs in the content classroom.

To code and analyze data, survey item files and transcribed virtual interview files from NVivo transcription were transferred to an Excel Spreadsheet document. Organizing codes and reviewing coded content is essential to make sense of the collected data (Di Gregorio, 2019). The coding process was used to generate a description of the setting and people as well as categories or themes for analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Outcomes from the data analysis were used for cross-checking to ensure data gathering and processes were reliable and valid for triangulation purposes.

Reliability and Credibility

Creswell and Creswell (2018) encouraged qualitative researchers to document their procedures and steps throughout a case study. Following the recommended steps helped in checking the findings' accuracy and credibility. This study followed established steps during the research process to ensure credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the research.

Credibility was established through the development of an in-depth understanding of participants' preparations, perceptions, and experiences teaching ELs in mainstream classrooms. The data conveyed details about the site and lent credibility to the narrative account. The in-depth interaction with research participants using virtual interviews and member checking provided trustworthy findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The use of triangulation of data, such as online teacher questionnaire data and recorded audio from virtual interviews was scrutinized to build a coherent justification for themes (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

Dependability was established by having five SMEs field test the two research instruments for consistencies. The SMEs' viewpoints, input, suggestions, and recommendations helped validate the two research instruments and added to the study's validity (Zamanzadeh et

al., 2015). The content validity of the two research instruments (see Appendices A and B) was consistent with the study's research questions and are in alignment with the actual study results.

Transferability was established by providing rich, reliable, and detailed descriptions of the data from questionnaires and open-ended questions from the semi-structured interviews. The study's findings may be useful and applicable to anyone interested, as the findings could be applied for transferability and will have a robust framework for comparison (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Member checking added accuracy and trustworthiness to the findings by having participants review the transcribed audio recordings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Confirmability was established by clarifying possible biases and reflecting on the research process (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Self-reflection allowed for an open and ethical narrative that will resonate with the content teachers participating in the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A reflective journal was used in noting what had happened in the research process.

Selected research participants reviewed the coding and meaning-making procedures. The findings were consistent with the research participant's perceptions (Given, 2008). Confirmability was further developed by being transparent in describing how the data were collected and analyzed and by providing a pattern of the coding process for the final document (Given, 2008).

Ethical Procedures

The research was ethically conducted, as the knowledge and information learned from the doctoral program at American College of Education were all observed and applied. These included following the ethical guidelines in research and Institutional Review Board (IRB)

policies and procedures (American College of Education, 2019). The IRB's primary purpose was to ensure the confidentiality, safety, health, and welfare of research participants.

For ethical considerations, as advised by the district's office of research and evaluation (ORE), the recruitment letter (see Appendix C) was sent using the principal investigator's personal email to the teachers' work email. Attached to the email was the consent form (see Appendix D) for signature. Research participants were informed about the research designs and procedures, including the use of virtual interviews. The informed consent emphasized confidentiality for participants. Protecting participants from harm was clearly communicated to gain participants' trust and commitment to the study. Participants were informed of the voluntary nature of the study and the right to withdraw, even after agreeing to participate, with no punitive repercussions.

Participants' information was preserved by assigning numbers to participants' interview records to ensure privacy protection. Research participants were assured of the confidentiality of the data collected. Data were only presented to the dissertation research reviewer, teacher of record, dissertation committee, and IRB personnel. Data gathered were stored and retained in a secure location in a locked file cabinet. Electronic files will be kept on a password-protected personal computer for a minimum of three years as required by federal regulations (American College of Education, 2019; Protection of Human Subjects, 2020;). After three years, all data will be discarded. For further questions, participants were advised to contact the IRB via email, which was included on the informed consent form.

Chapter Summary

This chapter contains a description of the methodology and research design used, which is a qualitative method instrumental case study design. Outlined in this chapter is the problem statement as the main focus of the study. Identification of participants, location, and research instruments provided support in achieving the study's purpose. Data collection tools and procedures such as the online teacher questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, and member checking reports demonstrated alignment with research questions guiding the study.

Research instruments, such as teacher questionnaires and open-ended questions, revolved around mainstream teachers' preparations, perceptions, and experiences encountered while teaching ELs and were all crafted to extract information and find answers to the research questions. The data analysis process featured software, which fits with the chosen methodology. Reliability and validity were established in detail with the use of various strategies. The informed consent document highlighted ethical procedures that were followed during the study process. In Chapter 4, the findings of the study are thoroughly explained as to how data were prepared, collected, interpreted, and analyzed.

Chapter 4: Research Findings and Data Analysis Results

The number of ELs entering middle schools continues to increase, and middle school content teachers providing EL instruction face a considerable challenge. The problem is the middle school content teachers' insufficient understanding of the cultural background, needs, and interests of ELs. As stated in Chapter 1, the purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore middle school mainstream teachers' preparations, perceptions, and experiences encountered teaching ELs in one school district in Maryland. Teachers who volunteered to participate in the study provided data through an online questionnaire and one-on-one interviews. Participants for the study were middle school content teachers teaching ELs in the mainstream classroom. The three research questions guiding the qualitative case study were:

Research Question 1: How do middle school content area teachers describe the preparations made to effectively instruct middle school English learners in the mainstream classroom?

Research Question 2: How do middle school content area teachers' perceptions of the English learners affect teaching practices in the mainstream classroom?

Research Question 3: How do middle school content area teachers describe experiences working with the middle school English learners in the mainstream classroom?

Chapter 4 contains the research findings and a discussion of the data analysis results for the study. The presentation of the information begins with the description of the data collection process and is followed by the data analysis processes. Results of the study are presented in tables and figures with explanations of each. Reliability and validity during the data gathering and data analysis part of the research are described.

Data Collection

After receiving IRB approval from the district's Office of Research and Evaluation (see Appendix E), site permission letters were sent to the middle school principals for permission to conduct the study (see Appendix I). The 12 middle schools in the district provided the setting for the study. The target was to obtain a sample of 30 volunteers from 12 different schools. Personal emails were sent to the identified 30 middle school content teachers in the areas of science, mathematics, and social studies. Due to teachers' busy schedules with distance learning, only 15 participants signed the informed consent form.

The informed consent form was initially sent as a PDF to be signed, as stated in Chapter 3. A deviation was made because some teachers could not open the PDF document for signature. As an alternative, the consent form was transferred into Google forms because it was easy to use. Fifteen research participants were cooperative in signing and emailing back the consent form. Once consent forms were received, the SurveyMonkey online questionnaire link was sent.

The 15 teachers who completed the questionnaire all met the criteria to be included as interview participants as well. After each participant completed the online questionnaire, thereby qualifying for the interview, the interview date was scheduled. Data collection was completed between September 9, 2020, and October 5, 2020. Most of the interviews were conducted in the evening around 8:00 p.m.

Data collection was challenging, as teachers' schedules were hectic due to distance learning. The exchanging of emails and texts happened several times for follow-ups. While data collection was going on, preparation and cleaning of data were done simultaneously. The final review of the collected data was completed soon after the final teacher interview. The completed

questionnaire response rate was 50%. The online questionnaire participants were the same

teachers who participated in the interviews. The interviews comprised the primary data source.

The interview response rate was 100%. After each recorded interview, transcription

occurred immediately using NVivo transcription. NVivo transcription was helpful to strengthen

data collection and minimize bias (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Some participants' answers were

not accurately captured by NVivo transcription due to participant accent issues; in these

instances, the audio recording was reviewed to ensure accuracy in the transcription.

Transcribed interview documents were sent to individual research participants for review.

Once participants reviewed and agreed with the content of the transcribed interview, a

confirmation email was received. Table 1 shows the composition of participants from the

different grade levels and content taught.

Table 1

Middle School Content Teacher Participants

Grade level and subject taught	Number of participants	Completed questionnaires and interviews
Grade 6 mathematics	2	2
Grade 7 mathematics	2	2
Grade 8 mathematics	2	2
Grade 7 science	4	4
Grade 8 science	2	2
Grade 6 social studies	3	3
Total participants	15	15

Participant Demographics

Parts 1 and 2 of the questionnaire (see Appendix A) dealt with participants' qualification

questions and background information. All 15 teachers who signed the consent form were

qualified to participate in the study in both the online questionnaire and one-on-one-interview.

Figure 3 shows the demographics of teachers who participated in the questionnaire and one-on-

one interviews. Participants were predominantly female teachers (80%). Data show more

nonnative than native speakers of English (60%) participated in the study. In terms of ethnicity, participating teachers represented diverse backgrounds, which added credibility to the research. More than half (53%) of participants were Asian, with 40% identifying as African American and 7% as Latino.
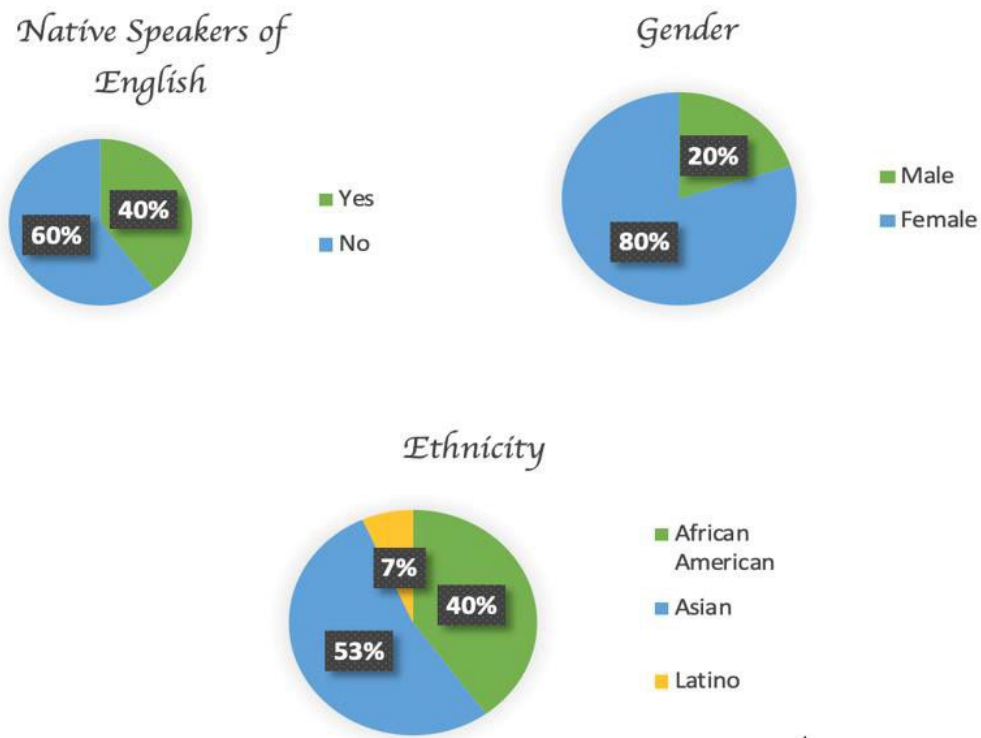
Figure 3. Participant demographics.

Data Analysis and Results

Data collected from the questionnaire were secured and prepared. The purpose of the online questionnaire was to collect information on participants' demographics and the qualifications to be included as research participants. The online questionnaire also included three general questions about teacher experiences, perceptions, and preparation for teaching ELs in the mainstream classroom.

Questionnaire Data

Answers to the questionnaire were collected, analyzed, and presented graphically to consolidate the ideas and opinions of research participants. Participants' answers were manually counted and consolidated using an Excel spreadsheet. The questionnaire items were used to identify factors that contribute to teachers' struggles in effectively teaching ELs in the mainstream classroom. Participants' answers were aligned with the three research questions. Questionnaire data were compared with data gathered from interviews for triangulation purposes.

The purpose of the questionnaire was to gather information from the middle school content teachers' experiences, preparation, and perceptions of teaching ELs in the mainstream classroom. For Question 1, participants were asked about accommodation and modification of ELs' lessons in the mainstream classroom. The reason for this question was to assess the degree to which teachers are finding ways to modify ELs' lessons. All research participants answered "Yes" to the question, though it was the subsequent interviews revealed the difficulties teachers experienced in providing quality instruction to ELs.

For Question 2, participants were asked about the perceptions of ELs' inclusion in the mainstream classroom. Data show teachers have different opinions (see Figure 4). Eight of 15 teachers agreed ELs work best if placed in the mainstream classroom with "native-speaking" peers, whereas seven of 15 disagreed. Subsequent interviews revealed some of the reasons for these opinions.

For Question 3, participants were asked what experiences best helped content teachers effectively teach ELs. Participants were asked to choose among four choices: (a) peer coaching, (b) in-service training, (c) professional development, and (d) college preparation. Most participants selected professional development and in-service training as the best options to

adequately prepare content teachers in instructing ELs in the mainstream classroom. The answers

to the questionnaire are seen in Fig.4 below.
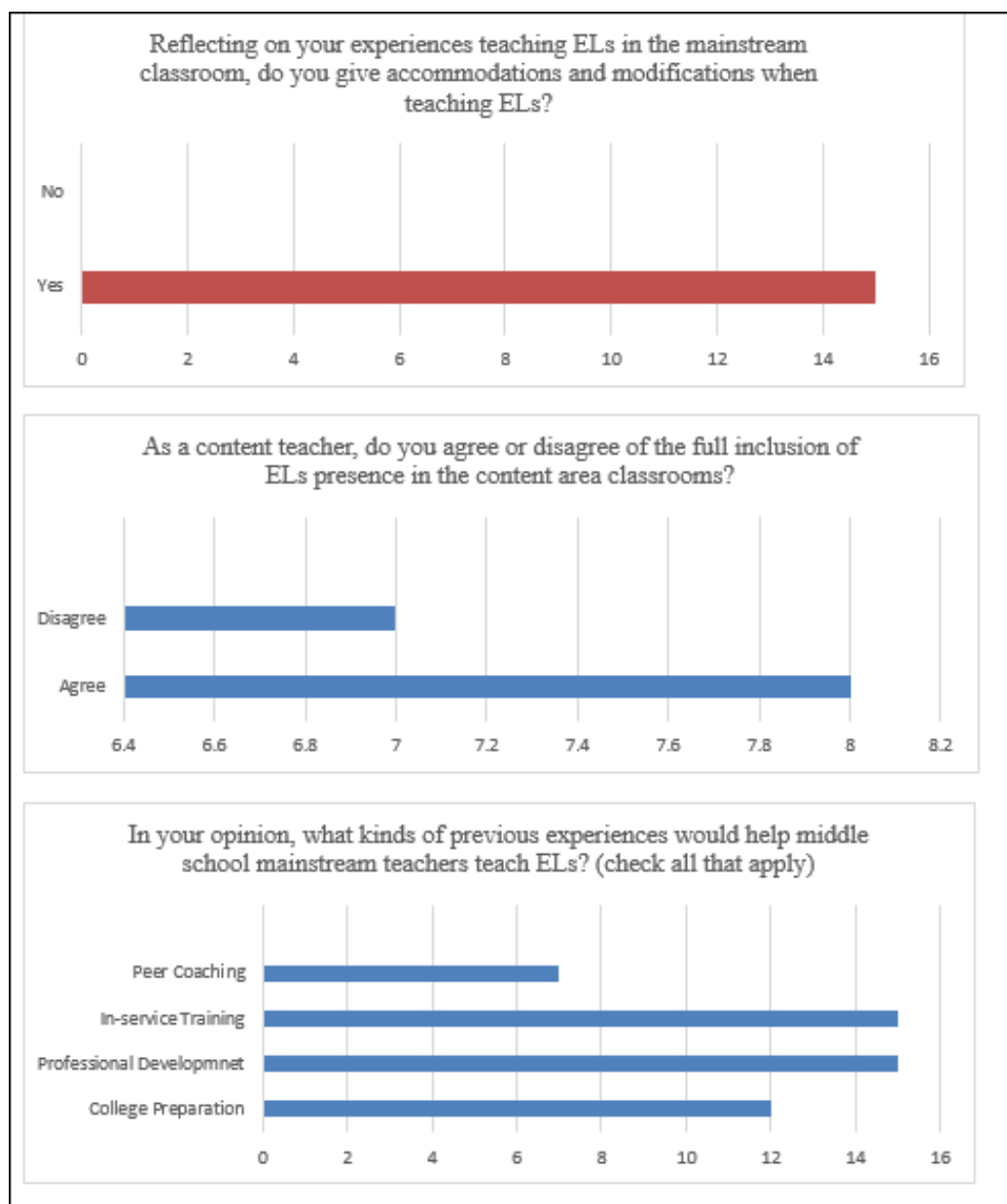

Figure 4. Online questionnaire data.

One-on-One Interviews

The one-on-one interview was designed to gain a deeper understanding of teachers'

preparations, experiences, and perceptions of teaching ELs in the mainstream classroom. The

virtual one-on-one interview via Zoom followed the protocol presented in Appendix B. Interview questions were organized according to the research questions and can be seen in Tables 2, 3, and 4. The initial plan for analyzing the interview data was to use NVivo coding. However, a different approach was used due to the complexities of the software. Ryan (2004) suggested, for basic projects with limited themes and text, an Excel spreadsheet and Microsoft Word include all the features needed to analyze and manage data. After cleaning the transcribed audio interview, participants' answers were manually categorized and consolidated using the Excel spreadsheet.

Categorization for the transcribed interview data was done by placing similar and differing items on an Excel sheet before deconstructing and manually coding them. Common codes were grouped for thematic review where themes naturally emerged. Quotes supporting the themes were highlighted; similar ideas were captured, and differing opinions were consolidated to develop emerging themes (see Tables 2, 3, and 4). The following sections include the presentation of findings in tabular form followed by or preceded by textual form for analysis and interpretations.

Content teachers' preparation for teaching English learners. Table 2 displays four themes that emerged based on participants' answers related to Research Question 1. There were four interview questions related to teachers' preparation. Participants' answers, when coded, resulted in four emergent themes: (a) insufficient background knowledge related to teaching ELs, (b) differentiated instruction used to effectively teach ELs, (c) inadequate preparation, and (d) preparation needed to teach ELs effectively. Teacher 5E repeatedly said, "I know I am doing my best to prepare all the materials, but I still feel inadequate." Teacher 13S and Teacher 4G agreed that not having a sufficient background to teach ELs will always be a problem, and teachers'

preparation in terms of college coursework and continued relevant training would help middle

school mainstream teachers teach ELs in the mainstream classroom.

Table 2

Interview Questions, Codes, and Themes for Research Question 1

Interview questions	Codes	Theme
Q1. Describe knowledge and/or strategies for ELs from your teacher preparation/ college coursework program you currently use in your classroom?	• I learn a little bit of the Spanish language. • Never took ESL courses. • I was prepared for the content only. • Never heard of ESOL students.	Insufficient background knowledge related to teaching ELs.
Q2. Describe knowledge and/or strategies for ELs from any professional development you currently use in your classroom?	• Use of graphic organizers. • Pear deck, technology tools, speaking slowly, use of google translate, small groupings, technology, peer buddy system, use of lower level text. • Cooperative groupings. • Collaborative learning. • Speak agent.	Differentiated instruction used to effectively teach ELs.
Q3. Do you feel equipped in meeting the needs of ELs in the mainstream classroom? Explain.	• Trying hard but struggling. • Feeling inadequate in spite of trying my best. • No, because there is more to learn. • No, because I don't speak their language. • No, because I don't get the training.	Inadequate preparation.
Q4. In your opinion, what kinds of previous experiences would help middle school mainstream teachers teach ELs?	• Continued professional development, college coursework relevant training.	Preparation needed to teach ELs effectively.

Content teachers' perceptions of teaching English learners. Table 3 displays themes

that emerged from participants' answers to Research Question 2, which was about teachers'

perceptions about ELs. The four interview questions solicited answers, which, when coded,

resulted in five emergent themes: (a) inability to learn because of a language barrier, (b) ELs as

below grade level students, (c) ELs receiving less instruction due to inability to handle rigorous

work, (d) lower level of expectation for ELs, and (e) inclusive setting for ELs, especially

newcomers. "Newcomers who come here speak no English, and it is truly difficult to communicate with them," Teacher 6Ab repeatedly emphasized.

Content teachers' concerns with the ELs emerged as some research participants expressed doubts about the quality of ELs' education in the mainstream setting. This led to the last theme about newcomers. As Teacher 3P explained, "ELs who speaks zero English should be assisted by an expert who could meet the challenging needs." In contrast, Teacher 13S said, "ELs, who speak a little English could be with the mainstream teachers." Teacher 12S added, "It is just the language where teachers find it difficult to reach the ELs, and as we know, communication is the key."

Table 3

Interview Questions, Codes, and Themes for Research Question 2

Interview questions	Codes	Themes
Q1. What are your perceptions of ELs in terms of their performance in your class?	• Below grade level students. • Inability to learn fast. • Not ready to embrace the new skills because of language barrier. • Can't learn because of language barrier. • ELs' readiness to learn.	Inability to learn because of language barrier ELs as below grade level students
Q2. What do you consider as the major strengths of your ELs? What about their areas of growth?	• Very good at technology and numbers in math. • Rigorous work is not offered to them especially the newcomers. • I seek support from ESOL teachers for guidance.	ELs receiving less instruction due to inability to handle rigorous work
Q3. How do your perceptions and beliefs regarding your ELs affect how you teach them in your classroom?	• Low expectations for ELs. • Less rigorous work. • The level of motivation to push. • ELs is less compared to the native speaking peers.	Lower level of expectation for ELs
Q4. As a content teacher, what are your perceptions of the full inclusion of ELs presence in the content area classrooms? Explain.	• ELs receive huge disservice in the inclusive setting. • Newcomers should be in a small group setting with the ESOL teacher.	Inclusive setting for ELs especially newcomers

Content teachers' experiences teaching English learners. The study's objective was to explore the contributing factors of middle school content teachers' struggle to teach ELs in the mainstream classroom. Fifteen participants expressed similar and differing experiences. Teachers were asked to speak about their observations and experiences of working with ELs. Responses to interview questions related to Research Question 3 are shown in Table 4. Interview questions were asked about teachers' practices during the delivery of instruction. The first emergent theme showed teachers felt inadequate despite the effort taken to accommodate ELs. Eleven of 15 research participants identified different instructional resources and strategies to teach ELs.

Two themes emerged from Interview Question 2: (a) the use of technology and (b) EL students being supportive of each other. "ELs gravitate to each other and don't always like mingling with native English speakers in class," according to Teacher 15V. For Interview Question 3, two themes emerged: (a) ELs work best in groups and (b) ELs work best with peers speaking the same language or the buddy system. The teachers spoke mostly about how ELs behave in class and ELs' strengths. Teacher 1A reiterated:

I believe that they should have an opportunity to be taken out or pulled out into small groups such that they have that opportunity to talk to one another in their native tongue.

Have them work with their peers because I think they learned a lot from their peers. Interview Question 4 was used to address how teachers encourage ELs to participate. The overarching emergent theme from the responses to this question was the ELs' strengths as students.

Table 4

Interview Questions, Codes and Themes for Research Question 3

Interview questions	Codes	Themes
Q1. Describe your experiences working with EL students in your classroom? How do you encourage your EL students to participate in classroom lessons?	• ELs do not speak during class discussion. • It's a struggle. • ELs gravitate to each other and don't always like mingling with native English speakers in class. • Feeling inadequate.	Teachers feeling inadequate
Q2. How do you try to ensure your EL students understand your directions or instruction during lessons?	• Cooperative grouping works best for ELs. • Use of videos works best for ELs. • Talking Points program. • Use of translation. • Use of peer buddy system to translate for them.	Use of technology works well with ELs EL students support each other
Q3. What instructional strategies work with your ELs? What instructional materials do you prepare for your instruction?	• Use of sentence starters. • Pairing newcomers with students who can speak the language. • Use of translation app. • Use of transitional words.	Buddy system works well with ELs Working in groups
Q4. How do you encourage your EL students to participate in classroom lessons?	• I put them in groups. • I make them feel that it is ok to make mistakes. • I give them time to process. • I rely heavily on technology because they can produce output.	ELs' strengths

Summary of Themes/Findings

A summary of emergent themes from the one-on-one interviews is shown in Table 5, organized according to the three research questions. The table shows participants' preparations, perceptions, and experiences teaching ELs in the mainstream classroom. For teachers' preparation, the overarching theme was less preparation leads to less success in teaching ELs. For teachers' perceptions, the four themes point to ELs as slow learners because of the language barrier. For teachers' experiences, teachers freely spoke about their experiences teaching ELs. The themes highlighted the ELs' strengths and how ELs performed best if given the needed support, as mentioned by most research participants during the interview. Findings that emerged

from teachers' interviews were congruent with questionnaire data findings (see Figure 4),

although teachers' interviews provided more detailed and in-depth information.

Table 5

Summary of Themes from One-on-One Interviews

Research questions	Themes
Q1. How do middle school content-area teachers describe the preparations made to effectively instruct middle school English learners in the mainstream classroom?	Insufficient background knowledge related to teaching ELs; differentiated instruction used to effectively teach ELs; inadequate preparation; preparation needed to teach ELs effectively.
Q2. How do middle school content-area teachers' perceptions of English learners affect teaching practices in the mainstream classroom?	ELs inability to learn because of language barrier; ELs as below grade level students; ELs receive less instruction due to inability to handle rigorous work; Language barrier makes learning more difficult; Content teachers' concerns with the ELs; Inclusive setting only for ELs.
Q3. How do middle school content-area teachers describe experiences working with middle school English learners in the mainstream classroom?	Teachers feeling inadequate; Use of technology works well with ELs; EL students support each other; Buddy system works well with ELs; Working in groups; ELs' strengths.

Reliability and Credibility

Creswell and Creswell (2018) advised qualitative researchers to document procedures

and steps made in a case study. Conveying the steps taken helps establish the findings' accuracy

and credibility (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The credibility, transferability, dependability, and

confirmability of the research were established when the steps and procedures mentioned in the

methodology section were applied during the actual study process.

Credibility was established in the form of data triangulation using an online

questionnaire, one-on-one interviews, and member checking. Data gathered from the online

questionnaire were compared with data gathered from the interviews. Member checking was

done by having each participant read their transcribed interview for affirmation (Marshall &

Rossman, 2016). In addition, data from one-on-one interviews were accurately captured using NVivo transcription, which added to the credibility of the research.

Dependability was established by having five SMEs field test the two research instruments for consistency. The SMEs' viewpoints, input, suggestions, and recommendations when evaluating the two research instruments helped validate the study (Zamanzadeh et al., 2015). The two research instruments' content validity was congruent with research questions and aligned with study results.

Transferability from this research could be possible as the study's findings may be used and applied to anyone wanting to conduct research involving the EL population. Results could be applied for transferability and have a robust framework for comparison (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Establishing confirmability was achieved when the principal investigator clarified possible biases and engaged in self-reflection Creswell & Creswell, 2018). During the self-reflection stage, a reflective journal was used by the principal investigator to take notes of critical and challenging events. To further develop confirmability, the research process was made transparent by the use of descriptions of how data were collected and analyzed and by providing a pattern of the coding process for the final document (Given, 2008).

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore middle school mainstream teachers' preparations, perceptions, and experiences of teaching ELs in one school district in Maryland. Participants of the study included 15 teachers from 12 middle schools. The study produced emerging themes from the data that answered the research questions. Factors contributing to the struggle of middle school content teachers include (a) the language barrier on the part of the ELs and (b) the feeling of inadequacy on the part of teachers because of the lack

of preparation in both college coursework and training. Teachers' perceptions of ELs were mixed, as half of the participants were optimistic and half were pessimistic about ELs' ability to learn in the mainstream classroom. Further analysis and discussion are presented in Chapter 5 in connection to the literature review and the theoretical framework.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

The problem addressed in this study was middle school content teachers' insufficient understanding of ELs' cultural background, needs, and interests. There is a significant gap in the research literature about supporting middle school content teachers with ELs in the mainstream classroom. The literature review indicated middle school content area teachers receive more training or workshops based on the assigned subject taught and less on accommodating ELs.

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore middle school mainstream teachers' preparations, perceptions, and experiences encountered while teaching ELs in one school district in Maryland. The aim of the study was to identify factors that contribute to content teachers' struggles in the mainstream classroom. Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory was examined to provide greater clarity about the factors affecting ELs' education. Research questions focused on factors affecting ELs education, such as teachers' preparations, perceptions, and experiences.

In Chapter 5, the summary and conclusions of the study are presented. Findings include suggestions that may be helpful to staff in the district's ESOL department. The study was conducted in one school district in Maryland where participants were middle school content teachers in the areas of science, mathematics, and social studies. The methodology was a qualitative case study using an online questionnaire and one-on-one interviews with 15 research participants. Teachers were selected using criterion sampling. Data from the online questionnaire and one-on-one interviews were cleaned, prepared, categorized, and analyzed to find emerging themes. The results of the data analysis were presented in Chapter 4.

The results, interpretations, and conclusions presented in this chapter show how the study findings relate to significant literature. Limitations identified during the study are presented as

are proposed recommendations for those involved with ELs' education. The study's implications for leadership are discussed. The chapter concludes with a reflection on the new knowledge and outcomes.

Findings, Interpretations, and Conclusions

The three research questions generated a summary of data findings, as discussed in Chapter 4. The study problem was the content teachers' insufficient understanding of ELs' cultural background, needs, and interests. The study's objective was to examine the contributing factors in the struggles of content teachers teaching ELs. Themes and subthemes were identified and reviewed, examined, and compared to the themes presented in the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. The theoretical framework provided a basis for further analysis and interpretation. The following sections discuss the findings in connection to the literature review and theoretical framework presented in Chapter 2.

Findings Related to the Literature

The study's objective was to examine the contributing factors in content teachers' struggles teaching ELs. The study's findings validated and confirmed the possible causes of content teacher's struggle teaching ELs in the mainstream classroom by checking and affirming with relevant literature discussed in chapter 2. Three research questions guided the qualitative case study and the evaluation of study findings:

Research Question 1: How do middle school content area teachers describe the preparations made to effectively instruct middle school English learners in the mainstream classroom?

Research Question 2: How do middle school content area teachers' perceptions of the English learners affect teaching practices in the mainstream classroom?

Research Question 3: How do middle school content area teachers describe experiences

working with the middle school English learners in the mainstream classroom.

Content Teachers' Struggles Teaching ELs. The literature review identified significant factors

contributing to teachers' struggle to instruct ELs in the mainstream classroom. Three identified

factors were discussed in the literature review: (a) content teachers' lack of preparation for

teaching ELs in the mainstream classroom, (b) content teachers' insufficient understanding of

effective strategies to teach ELs (c) content teachers' attitudes and perceptions toward ELs.

Content teachers' lack of preparation includes college preparation and coursework and the lack of

pre-service training before instructing ELs, which includes understanding how students learn

best.

The study findings showed the contributing factors to the struggle of the content teachers

instructing ELs. Several themes and subthemes emerged from the data relating to the literature

review: (a) teachers' less preparation in teaching Els, the less success in teaching ELs; (b) ELs as

low-level learners; (c) language barrier; (d) insufficient background knowledge related to

teaching ELs; and (e) teachers feeling inadequate in teaching ELs. The five themes uncovered in

the research were discussed, in relation to the factors identified in the literature review.

Content teachers lack preparation for teaching ELs in the mainstream

classroom. The literature review in Chapter 2 emphasized that content teachers' lack of

preparation in teaching ELs was the primary indicator of teachers' struggles teaching ELs (Chin

et al.,2016; Turkan, 2016; Wissink & Starks, 2019). The theme that emerged in the study was

"teachers with less preparation in teaching Els, the less success in teaching ELs." The study

participants revealed two pieces of information on the issue of lack of preparation: (a) the lack of

relevant workshops and professional development such as in-service training; and (b) the lack of support from school leaders and district leaders. Participants confessed the lack of preparation to instruct ELs is making them feel less capable of advancing ELs' educational needs in the classroom. On the other hand, research participants who equipped themselves with knowledge and information through an offered scholarship to take relevant courses about ELs instruction found themselves successful in instructing the ELs.

Content teachers' insufficient understanding of effective strategies to teach ELs. The literature identified the insufficient understanding of effective strategies to teach ELs causes struggles for content teachers teaching ELs in the mainstream classroom (Chin et al., 2016; Turkan, 2016). The theme that emerged in the study was the insufficient background knowledge related to teaching ELs causes teachers to feel inadequate. During the one on one interview, each teacher reflected on the teaching practices, as the questions addressed teachers' experiences teaching ELs.

Two important issues brought up in the study falling under content teachers' insufficient understanding of effective strategies to teach ELs were the overwhelming tasks assigned to teachers and lack of guidance from the school's instructional leaders. Teachers had to prioritize or give utmost attention to what the school leaders asked of them. Content teachers felt the need to meet the needs of the diverse classroom. Consequently, teachers' insufficient preparation for teaching ELs made them feel ELs were not mastering the content compared to the "native speakers" of English. Participants felt the lack of time to acquire all the knowledge and information needed leads to frustration, which greatly affects the ELs.

Content teachers' attitudes and perceptions toward ELs. The literature review showed that the teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards ELs contributed to teachers' struggle to meet

the students' needs, culturally, socially, and emotionally (Breiseth, 2018; Niehaus et al., 2017; Show, 2015). The literature review also confirmed that teachers' perceptions and attitudes contribute to the struggle of teachers educating ELs (Guofang et al., 2016). The research participants in the study confessed that perceptions of ELs' academic standing as below grade level lead teachers to expect less to ELs performance in the class. Teachers perceived that ELs not speaking the English language with fluency would result in difficulty in learning the instructional activities inside the classroom. The theme that emerged in the study was that ELs do not learn because of the language barrier, which the literature review confirmed where teachers' perceptions and attitudes contribute to the struggle of teachers educating ELs (Chin, et al., 2016). The study findings confirmed the research of Chin et al. (2016) that showed mainstream teachers' failure in attending to ELs' academic needs is due to a lack of knowledge of the students' first languages.

Findings in the Context of Theoretical Framework

The aim of this study was to explore factors contributing to teachers' struggles in the teaching of content with ELs in the mainstream classroom. Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory and the concept of the ZPD were presented to guide teachers in effectively teaching students. Through the lens of sociocultural theory and the idea of the ZPD, the teacher's role in the ELs' success, based on students' unique needs, differences, and cultural backgrounds, has a significant impact on the teaching and learning process. Comprehensible input involves social interaction between and among peers in a meaningful learning environment (Adams, 2018; Castrillón, 2017).

The concept of the ZPD is to inform teachers about how to better support learners. Participants' responses were highlighted and connected to the theory presented in Chapter 2.

When coded, themes that emerged were connected to English learner strengths, differentiated instruction, technology, buddy systems, and group work were found to be helpful in delivering successful EL instruction. The study findings were compared to the literature of the theoretical framework related to sociocultural theory and the ZPD. The following section discusses the participants' responses that stood out in relation to the theoretical framework used in the study.

The research explored how teachers encourage ELs to participate in classroom lessons. When analyzed and categorized, teachers' answers were well aligned with the theory used in the study. Working in groups, using buddy systems, and encouraging ELs to support each other confirmed Vygotskian theory in which students learn best through social interaction. Vygotsky's (1978) ZPD coincides with study findings where students learn best in a cooperative and collaborative environment. When ELs interact with peers, learning takes place (Vygotsky, 1978).

Conclusion

Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory and the concept of the ZPD informed this study. The theoretical framework helped develop the research questions and the purpose of the study— to explore teachers' preparations, perceptions, and experiences teaching ELs. The central problem addressed in this study was content teachers' insufficient understanding and background knowledge related to teaching ELs (Turkan, 2016).

The study findings revealed factors contributing to content teachers' struggles are directly connected to the suggestions given (Castrilon, 2017 & Adams, 2018). The lack of teachers' preparation equates to less success in teaching. If teachers are prepared and aware of how to effectively instruct students (Castrilon 2017 & Adams, 2018), the content teachers' struggle would be lessened.

Limitations of the Study

Following the data collection and analysis, the limitations of the study were reviewed. There was no indication of social desirability influencing participant responses. As the study was conducted in schools where the principal investigator is not employed, the study was shown to be valid and reliable. The verified and self-created research instruments added to the credibility of the research. The feedback, comments, and suggestions received were all incorporated into the research instruments, research questions, and theoretical framework guiding the study.

The manner in which the study was conducted added credibility, as the potential bias was eliminated right away. The primary limitation of the study was the limited number of participants ($n = 15$) included in the sample. The original goal was to enlist 30 teachers, but due to teachers' busy schedules, it was difficult to secure more participants. The small number of research participants may limit the generalizability to other content teachers teaching ELs. The use of member checking helped reduce potential bias. Reviewing the written interview transcriptions helped establish the dependability, transferability, and accuracy of the qualitative findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The self-created research instruments, verified by SMEs, added to the study's conformability and transferability.

Recommendations

English learners face the difficult task of mastering a new language while learning subject matter content and deserve to be taught by teachers who are equipped to meet ELs' unique needs. In this study, the preparations, perceptions, and experiences of content teachers teaching ELs in the mainstream classroom were explored. The findings provide the basis for future research and changes in practice. Recommendations for the district middle school ESOL

program include (a) the development of a mandatory professional development for all content teachers related to teaching ELs and (b) the creation of a district-wide program guide to ensure effective implementation of instruction to EL students and support of content teachers.

The school system should revisit the current practice in which some teachers refuse to attend PD on teaching diverse learners. In spite of PD, the findings indicated many teachers still had feelings of inadequacy despite expressing contentment with the responsibility of teaching EL students. As Teacher 1A repeatedly said, "I needed more training to confidently say that I am equipped." The PD should focus on looking at student data to see if students are making progress in content area classes.

As teachers' responses could not be captured across all levels (elementary and high school teachers), the recommendation for future research should be for researchers to use the quantitative method and collect data using social media. Using both would likely gather more information from larger sample sizes. Compared to the qualitative method, which has limited opportunity to explore a problem in a broader context, the quantitative method can use a survey approach to reach a larger number and wider variety of participants. A quantitative study could provide further data about how other content teachers in other districts prepare content teachers to teach ELs in the mainstream classroom.

Implications for Leadership

The findings of this study lead to implications for leaders to consider as they address content teachers' ongoing issues with instructing ELs in the mainstream classroom. As the findings revealed, the focus should be on teachers' continued relevant training to increase the likelihood of getting a better result in ELs' education. The current literature identified factors contributing to content teachers' struggles teaching ELs (Chin et al., 2016; Turgut et al., 2016;

Turkan, 2016). The findings of this study are congruent with the research literature in the field. The theoretical framework, which speaks about content teachers' understanding of how students learn best using Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory and the concept of the ZPD, could guide the development of effective strategies for content teachers to use in addressing the central problem of this study. An approach suggested by the theoretical framework would include relevant training, including understanding ELs' cultural background and could give light to the study's problem.

In light of the study findings, literature review, and theoretical framework, recommendations will be shared and discussed with the middle school ESOL department. Leaders in the ESOL programs, including professional development coordinators, and ESOL instructional coaches can use the findings to develop better ways to engage content teachers in meaningful training on instructing ELs effectively and efficiently. As an ESOL teacher supporting content teachers, the principal investigator can apply this study's findings at the school level. The information gained from the study, combined with leadership skills, can be used to engage content teachers who have concerns, issues, and struggles in educating ELs, specifically the newcomers, locally and nationally.

Finally, after consolidating what has been learned from the literature review, theoretical framework, and data results, a final leadership implication is to update and connect all the findings into existing practices. When the educational world turned upside down because of the 2020 global pandemic, exploring the unknown became the new normal. Technology is changing educational practices quickly. In this study, those who work in the education of ELs were already found to be familiar with technology and adapting technology for use with ELs (Andrei, 2017; Jefferis & Bisschoff, 2017; Lee et al., 2019; Stairs & Skotarczak, 2018).

Conclusion

This chapter included a summary of the previous chapters, underlining the research study's purpose, problem, and methodology used to address the research questions. Data from questionnaires and one-on-one interviews provided a clearer understanding of the factors contributing to content teachers' struggles. Through the research process, a great deal of new knowledge was produced by examining the data in light of the three research questions. The research process opened the lines of communication with teachers. There was excitement on the teachers' part to support ELs, but appropriate and continued support from the district is needed.

The data revealed the need for continued efforts to increase professional development and in-service training for content teachers in teaching ELs in the mainstream classroom. There is a need for more effective implementation of school site awareness so teachers are fully aware of the ESOL program and the professionals involved in working with ELs. Taking such actions would increase teacher knowledge and improve instruction with ELs, decreasing the achievement gap between native and nonnative English-speaking students.

As the EL population continues to grow in most schools across the United States, increasing the overall awareness of ESOL programs is vital. Specifically, middle school content teachers need support to teach ELs in the mainstream classroom more effectively. If supported and equipped, middle school content teachers can provide ELs the opportunity to be academically successful. The inquiry on teachers' struggles in teaching ELs in the content classroom was succinctly answered by the data collected in this study. It is important to share what has been learned with the organization where the study was conducted. Study results may

help connect ESOL administrators, school administrators, ESL instructional coaches, and content teachers to focus better on meeting ELs' needs throughout the school site and the district.

This research journey began without knowing what might unfold. The quest for knowledge on content teachers and EL students was a mission carried out to solicit answers to the ESOL department's mission statement. The PGCPS' ESOL mission is to successfully prepare ELs to effectively use English language skills and educational strategies and be involved as valuable active citizens in the school community and beyond (PGCPS, 2020).

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Appendix A

Online Teacher Questionnaire

Dear Teachers,

My name is Elvira Beches. I am a middle school ESOL teacher at ██████████████████████ and a doctoral candidate in the field of educational leadership at the American College of Education. I am undertaking a research exploring content teachers' preparation, perceptions, and experiences encountered teaching ELs. Your thoughtful responses to these questions will be beneficial as the information gained from the study will help content teachers improve the delivery of instruction in the mainstream classrooms with ELs enrolled. Thank you for completing this questionnaire. To ensure your privacy, information from this survey will be released in summary form only. If you do not wish to participate, there is nothing else that is asked of you. If you do wish to participate, please continue to answer the questions below.

Part 1: Participant Qualification Question
To participate in this study, you need to be a content teacher teaching ELs in the mainstream classroom. Please answer the three questions below.
1. Do you teach Science, Social Studies, or Science? ____Yes____No
2. Do you have ELs enrolled in mainstream classroom? ___Yes ___No. If yes, you are qualified to participate as volunteer participant in this study

Part 2: Participant Background Information
Thank you for participating. Your response to the questions will be kept confidential and will not be published.

3. What is your gender? (Optional) _____female _____male
4. What is your ethnicity? (Optional) _____Caucasian _____African American _____Hispanic _____Asian American _____Native American _____Other
5. Are you a native speaker of English? _____Yes _____No
6. What certification you currently hold? _____

Part 3: Content Teachers' Questionnaire
This questionnaire is intended to understand what factors are contributing to the teachers' struggles to teach ELs in the mainstream classroom effectively. Your answers can be about your preparedness to teach ELs, perceptions about ELs, and experiences teaching ELs.

1. As a content teacher, do you agree or disagree of the full inclusion of ELs presence in the content area classrooms? _____Yes _____No
2. Reflecting on your experiences teaching ELs in the mainstream classroom, do you give accommodations and modifications when teaching ELs? ___Yes ____No
3. In your opinion, what kinds of previous experiences would help middle school mainstream teachers teach ELs? _____College Preparation _____Professional Development _____In-service Training _____Peer coaching (Check all that apply)
4. Would you like to participate in a semi-structured interview to discuss further your preparations, perceptions, and experiences teaching ELs in the mainstream classroom? _____Yes_____No

If yes, please enter your email address. _____

Appendix B

Interview Questions Guide and Protocol

Opening remarks for the study participants:

My name is Elvira Beches and I am conducting this research to earn my doctorate in education at American College of Education. First, I would like to thank you for taking the time to share your opinions with me.

The information that you will provide today is extremely important to the study that I am working on. I will be utilizing your answers to explore middle school mainstream teachers' preparations, perceptions, and experiences teaching English learners.

Please, be assured that no one, except for me, will have access to any of the answers and information that you share with me today. All the information that I collect today will be stored in my password-protected computer and field notes will be stored in a locked cabinet at my home. If I can have your permission, I would like to complete an audio-only (no video) recording of our conversation and also take notes during our conversation.

(Ensure the recording device is ON and start interview using Zoom app)

I would like to start this interview by asking you some questions about your experience in this class. I would like to remind you that you do NOT have to answer a question if you are not comfortable with it and you can stop this interview at any time you feel it is necessary. If you are ready, we may start.

1. Describe your experiences working with EL students in your classroom?
2. How do you try to ensure your EL students understand your directions or instruction during lessons?
   Follow up Questions:
   a. What instructional strategies work with your ELs?
   b. What instructional material do you prepare for your instruction?
3. How do you encourage your EL students to participate in classroom lessons?
   Follow up Questions:
   a. Do you practice small group instructions? How?
   b. Do you practice cooperative groupings and collaborative learning? How?
4. Describe how you modify and accommodate instruction to meet the unique needs of ELLs in the mainstream classroom?
   Follow up questions:
   a. How do you modify the lessons for your ELs to understand?
   b. How do you accommodate ELs with different proficiency level?
   c. How do you differentiate your lessons?
5. Describe knowledge and/or strategies for ELs from your teacher preparation program you currently use in your classroom?
6. Describe knowledge and/or strategies for ELs from any professional development you currently use in your classroom?
7. Do you feel equipped in meeting the needs of ELs in the mainstream classroom? Explain.
8. What are your perceptions of ELs in terms of their performance in your class?
   Follow up Questions:
   a. What do you consider as the major strengths of your ELs?
   b. What about their areas of growth?
   c. How do your perceptions and beliefs regarding your ELs affect how you teach them in your classroom?

Appendix C

Recruitment Letter

Dear ▮▮▮

My name is Elvira Beches. I am a middle school teacher at ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ and a doctoral candidate in Educational Leadership at the American College of Education. I am conducting a study exploring the middle school content teachers' preparation, perceptions and experiences teaching English Learners (ELs) /ESOL students. The knowledge gained from this study will help the middle school ESOL department improve the delivery of appropriate instructional services and support to content teachers and ELs. Participants in the study will provide insights into the following research questions.

1. How do middle school content-area teachers describe the preparations made to effectively instruct middle school ESOL students in the mainstream classroom?
2. How do middle school content-area teachers' perceptions of ESOL students affect teaching practices in the mainstream classroom?
3. How do middle school content-area teachers describe experiences working with middle school English Learners in the mainstream classroom?

I am inviting you to participate and share your thoughts and experiences teaching ESOL students in the mainstream classroom. The two methods of data collection for this study include questionnaires and one-one interviews. Your participation in the study is voluntary, and there is no penalty for not participating. If you do not wish to participate, you may withdraw at any time.

I may publish the results of this study; however, I will not use your name or share any information you provided. Your information will remain confidential and secured. If you wish to participate, please read the attached Informed Consent Document. If, at any time, you have questions about the terms, please do not hesitate to email or call me at ▮▮▮▮▮ If you wish to participate, please type your name and date the attached document and send it back to me. Thank you so much for your attention and participation.

Respectfully,
Elvira Beches- M.Ed in ESL
ESOL Teacher
▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

Appendix D

Informed Consent Document

Prospective Research Participant: Read this consent form carefully and ask as many questions as you like before you decide whether you want to participate in this research study. You are free to ask questions at any time before, during, or after your participation in this research.

Project Information

Project Title: Content Area Teachers' Experiences Teaching English Learners

Researcher: Elvira Beches
Organization: ███████████████████
Email: xxxxx@yahoo.com Telephone: (XXX) XXX-XXXX

Researcher's Faculty Member: Dr. John Avella
Organization and Position: American College of Education, Dissertation Chair
Email: xxxxx@ace.edu

Introduction
I am Elvira Beches, and I am a doctoral candidate student at the American College of Education. I am doing research under the guidance and supervision of my Chair, Dr. John Avella. I would like to invite you to be part of this research. Before you decide, you can talk to anyone you feel comfortable with about the research. This consent form may contain words you do not understand. Please feel free to contact me if you have questions.

Purpose of the Research
You are being asked to participate in a research study which will assist with understanding middle school content teachers' experiences teaching English learners in the mainstream classroom. This qualitative case study will examine how middle school mainstream teachers' perceptions, preparation, and experiences impact ELs' achievement. Through the investigation of middle school mainstream teacher perceptions, preparation, and experiences teaching ELs, it may provide support to the school and to the district as well.

Research Design and Procedures
The study will use qualitative methodology and a case study design. Questionnaires will be disseminated via SurveyMonkey to teacher participants. Individual teacher interviews will be conducted through web conferencing tools. The study will comprise of 30 participants to answer questionnaires and 15 participants for the individual virtual interviews using the app Zoom at a time convenient to participants.

Participant Selection
You are being invited to take part in this research because of your experiences as a Science, Mathematics, and Social Studies teacher who is also teaching ELs in the mainstream classroom. As a teacher of ELs, your contributions to the success of the ELLs are highly valued and respected.

Voluntary Participation
Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. It is your choice whether to participate. If you choose not to participate, there will be no punitive repercussions and you do not have to participate. If you select to participate in this study, you may change your mind later and stop participating even if you agreed earlier.

Procedures

If you agree to participate in the study, you will be asked to complete a questionnaire and invited to take part in a recorded interview. If you agreed to participate in completing a questionnaire and teacher interview, you may sign the permission written at the bottom of the page. The type of questions asked will range from a demographic perspective to direct inquiries about the topic on middle school teachers' experiences teaching ELs in the mainstream classroom.

Duration

If you volunteer to participate, the questionnaire portion of the research study will require approximately 5-10 minutes to complete. If you volunteer and chosen to participate in the interview, the time expected from you is a maximum of 30 minutes. The interview process will take place virtually at the time of your choice that is convenient to you.

Risks

The principal investigator will ask you to share personal and confidential information, and you may feel uncomfortable talking about some of the topics. You do not have to answer any question or take part in the discussion if you don't wish to do so. You do not have to give any reason for not responding to any question.

Benefits

While there will be no direct financial benefit to you, your participation is likely to help us find out more about helping mainstream teachers effectively teach ELs. The potential benefits of this study will help both middle school content teachers and middle school ELs in the mainstream classroom.

Reimbursement

As a result of your participation in this research study, you will receive a gift card from Starbucks.

Confidentiality

I will not share information about you or anything you say to anyone outside of the principal investigator's research. During the defense of the doctoral dissertation, data collected will be presented to the dissertation committee. The data collected will be kept in a locked file cabinet or encrypted computer file. Any information about you will be coded and will not have a direct correlation, which directly identifies you as the participant. Only I will know what your number is, and I will secure your information.

Sharing the Results

At the end of the research study, the results will be available for each participant. It is anticipated to publish the results so other interested people may learn from the research.

Right to Refuse or Withdraw

Participation is voluntary. At any time, if you wish to end your participation in the research study, you may do so without repercussions.

Questions About the Study

If you have any questions, you can ask them now or later. If you wish to ask questions later, you may contact the American College of Education. This research plan has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board of the American College of Education. This is a committee whose role is to make sure research participants are protected from harm. If you wish to ask questions of this group, email IRB@ace.edu.

Certificate of Consent

I have read the information about this study, or it has been read to me. I acknowledge why I have been asked to be a participant in the research study. I have been provided the opportunity to ask questions about the study, and any questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I certify I am at least 18 years of age. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study.

Please sign your name on the first item if you choose to participate in the questionnaire only. If you choose to participate on both questionnaire and teacher interview and is qualified, you may sign your name on both items below.

Consent Form for Questionnaire

Print or Type Name of Participant: _____

Signature of Participant: _____

Date: _____

Consent form for the Interview

Print or Type Name of Participant: _____

Signature of Participant: _____

Date: _____

I confirm that the participant was given an opportunity to ask questions about the study, and all the questions asked by the participant have been answered to the best of my ability. I confirm that the individual has not been coerced into giving consent, and the consent has been given freely and voluntarily. A copy of this Consent Form has been provided to the participant.

Print or type name of Principal Investigator: Elvira Beches

Signature of Principal Investigator: ebeches

I have accurately read or witnessed the accurate reading of the assent form to the potential participant, and the individual has had the opportunity to ask questions. I confirm the individual has freely given assent.

Print or type name of Principal Investigator: Elvira Beches

Signature of Principal Investigator: ebeches

Date: September 9, 2020

Signature of faculty member: _____

Date: _____

PLEASE KEEP THIS INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR YOUR RECORD

Appendix E

Approved IRBs

June 29, 2020

To : Elvira Beches
    John Avella, Dissertation Committee Chair

From : Institutional Review Board
    American College of Education

Re: IRB Approval

"Content Area Teachers' Experiences Teaching English Learners A Qualitative Case Study"

The American College of Education IRB has reviewed your application, proposal, and any related materials. We have determined that your research provides sufficient protection of human subjects.

Your research is therefore approved to proceed. The expiration date for this IRB approval is one year from the date of review completion, June 29, 2021. If you would like to continue your research beyond this point, including data collection and/or analysis of private data, you must submit a renewal request to the IRB.

Our best to you as you continue your studies.

Sincerely,

Becky Gerambia
Assistant Chair, Institutional Review Board

[REDACTED]
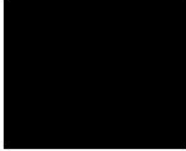
September 2, 2020

Elvira Beches

[REDACTED]

Dear Ms. Beches:

The review of your request to conduct the research entitled, "Content Teachers' Experiences Teaching English Learners: A Qualitative Case Study" has been completed. Based on the examination, I am pleased to inform you that the Department of Testing, Research and Evaluation (DTRE) has granted authorization for you to proceed with your study.

This approval applies to the 2020-2021 school year. We reserve the right to withdraw approval at any time or decline to extend the approval if the implementation of your study adversely impacts any of the school district's activities. If you are not able to complete your data collection during this period, you must submit a request for an extension through the online tool located on our website. You will be required to submit a status report of your study, any changes to your procedures and methods, and all appropriate consent forms and instruments.

Prior to your data collection activities, you are required to secure written approval of the principals where you plan to recruit your research subjects. The Principal Permission to Conduct Research Study forms must be signed and forwarded to the Office of Research & Evaluation and a copy given to the respective principal. Regarding the recruitment materials please be aware that only approved copies (stamped 'APPROVED') can be distributed to your target subjects or distributed in schools from which you plan to recruit research subjects. The wording of the consent forms must be exactly as the version submitted to our office. Should you change the procedure or materials, any revisions must be approved by this office before being used in this study. Please be aware that participation in your project is on a strictly voluntary basis.

An abstract and one copy of your study's final report should be forwarded to the Department of Testing, Research and Evaluation within one month of successful completion of your study. Do not hesitate to contact the Research and Evaluation office if you have any questions. I wish you success with your study.

Best regards,

[REDACTED]

Supervisor, Office of Research & Evaluation

Appendix F

SME's Invitation and Feedback

to me ▾

Hello Elvy,

attached is the document with my comments... hope it helps.
good luck on your research

Sincerely,

Manager, EL High Schools
Office of Teaching and Learning
Social Emotional Academic Development
District of Columbia Public Schools
Emery PD Center
1720 First Street, NE
Washington, DC 20002
C 202-280-8979
W http://dcps.dc.gov
LAD Welcome Center: 202-868-6506
Optimist, Self-believer, Coach, Strategist, Deliverer

Teaching Middle School English Language Learners in the Mainstream Classroom
Teacher Questionnaires

1. What grade level do you teach?
    a. 6th grade
    b. 7th grade
    c. 8th grade
2. What subject do you currently teach?
    a. Social Studies
    b. Science
    c. Math
3. What teaching certification do you hold?
4. Have you participated in professional development opportunities for teaching English language Learners? A. Yes B. No
5. Do you believe middle school mainstream teachers are responsible and accountable for teaching ELLs in content classroom? Explain.
6. Is your preparation to teach middle school ELLs makes you an effective teacher of ELLs?
7. Reflecting on your experiences teaching ELLs in the mainstream classroom, do you give accommodations and modifications when teaching ELLs? If yes, what kind of accommodations and/or modifications do you do to meet the unique needs of ELLs?
8. Reflecting on your experiences teaching ELLs in the mainstream classroom, what teaching strategies have been effective in helping ELLs in your content classroom? Which one is the most relevant for you and your kids?
9. What are your perceptions of the presence of ELLs in middle school content classrooms? (revise this question because it is very vague!) consider this- What are your perceptions of the full inclusion of ELLs in the middle school content area classroom? Do you agree or disagree with this? Why or why not?
10. How do your attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs towards ELLs affect your teaching practices in the mainstream classroom?... (Again, this is very vague. It will be very difficult for your target audience to answer this question because it is too general. Consider this--- What are your perceptions of ELLs in terms of their performance in your class? What do you consider as the

Austria, Maria Dolores

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major strengths of your ELLs? What about their areas of growth? How do your perceptions and beliefs regarding your ELLs affect how you teach them in your classroom?

Semi-Structured Interview Questions for Middle School Teachers Teaching English

Language Learners in the mainstream classroom

a. Describe your experiences working with ELL students in your classroom.

b. How do you ensure your ELL students understand your directions or instruction during lessons? (Ask follow-up questions based upon classroom observation)

c. How do you encourage your ELL students to participate in classroom lessons? Small group or partner activities? (Follow-up with questions based upon classroom observation)

d. Describe knowledge and/or strategies for ELLs from your teacher preparation program you currently use in your classroom?

e. Describe knowledge and/or strategies for ELLs from any professional development you currently use in your classroom? (If applicable.)

f. Describe how you modify and accommodate instruction to meet the unique needs of ELLs in the mainstream classroom?

g. Do you feel equipped in meeting the needs of ELLs in the mainstream classroom?

Mon, Oct 28, 10:52 AM ☆ ↰ ⋮

Good morning Ms. Beches,

I read your survey questions, and I found that your questions are clear, concise, direct and specific. They apply to all situations, or offer a way to address unique situations. The questions relate to the daily practices or expertise of the potential participants.

I have the following suggestions:

- Please insert page numbers in the document
- In question n. 13 on page 2 you should change "*if it is available*" to "*if it **were** available*" (subjunctive tense)
- Question n. 2 on page 2 contains two questions in one. I would separate the questions.
- Questions n. 5 and n. 11 on page 4 seem repetitive.
- In question n. 7 on page 4 the word *parents* is written twice
- Throughout the paper, you should not use the phrase *ELL students*, but simply English Language Learners (all letters capitalized) or ELLs
- On page 5 you should separate *Teach reading to ELLs* from *Teach writing to ELLs*, in two separate items
- On page 6, items 1-2-2, I would change the phrase "*many of my ideas*" to "*most of my knowledge*"
- On page 7, question 1, I would separate the two questions
- On page 8, question 8, I would separate the two questions
- On page 8, question 12 I would change the contraction *you'd like* to *you would like*

At the end of the survey validation rubric, there are 4 boxes related to "Measure of Construct". The survey does not contain any references to a variable or to activities and operations necessary to measure, categorize or manipulate the variable.

I hope this helps,

Jennifer Turner — Mon, Nov 25, 11:47 AM (1 day ago) ☆ ↩ ⋮

to me ▾

"The interview questions are clear, specific and directly related to the research questions posed. Having participants elaborate on the amount/types of professional development they have received may be beneficial to support claims presented as a result of the research."

LET ME KNOW IF YOU WOULD LIKE FOR ME TO WRITE MORE.

•••

--

Jennifer Turner, M.Ed.
ESOL Instructor
Thomas Pullen Academy/Thurgood Marshall M.S.

Research Instruments for Content Validation — ⚊ ⤢ ✕

Research Instruments for Content Validation

Good evening ▮,

I am undertaking a research project in order to examine middle school teachers' preparation, experiences, and perceptions of teaching English Language Learners in the mainstream classroom. I asked you to please review and validate the research instruments (Teacher Survey and Interview Questions) that I will use for my study. Please see the two attachments below.

Respectfully,
Elvira Beches- M.Ed in ESL
ESOL Teacher

Online Teacher Survey Questionnaires.docx (17K) ✕

Open-ended Questions Teacher Interview .docx (14K) ✕

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to me ▼

Dear Ms. Beches,

After reading the Survey/Interview Rubric for Expert Panel, the following were observed:

- The rubric enhances the reliability of scoring Survey/Interview Rubric for Expert Panel scoring. It allows the educators and the panel to facilitate valid judgment of performance assessments.
- It also promotes measurement for learning and improving instruction.
- It provides a valid and clear modifications and accommodations that teachers can utilize to cater the students needs in the classroom.

Thank you.

ESOL Teacher
Crossland High School

Appendix G

Validation Rubric Used by SMEs

Questionnaire/Interview Validation Rubric for Expert Panel - VREP©
http://dissertationrecipes.com/

Criteria	Operational Definitions	Score **1=Not Acceptable** (major modifications needed) **2=Below Expectations** (some modifications needed) **3=Meets Expectations** (no modifications needed but could be improved with minor changes) **4=Exceeds Expectations** (no modifications needed)	Questions NOT meeting standard (List page <u>and</u> question number) and need to be revised. *Please use the comments and suggestions section to recommend revisions.*
Clarity	• The questions are direct and specific. • Only one question is asked at a time. • The participants can understand what is being asked.		
Wordiness	• Questions are concise. • There are no unnecessary words		
Overlapping Responses	• No response covers more than one choice. • All possibilities are considered. • There are no ambiguous questions.		
Relationship to Problem	• The questions are sufficient to resolve the problem in the study • The questions are sufficient to answer the research questions. • The questions are sufficient to obtain the purpose of the study.		

Appendix H

Sample Transcribed Interview

Teacher #1. Ms. D2

SPEAKER1	00:01	OK. Good afternoon, Miss D. As an eighth grade Mathematics teacher with ELs students in the mainstream classroom, I am going to interview you in relation to your experiences with ELs. My number one question is: Describe your experiences working with ELs students in your classroom.
SPEAKER2	00:19	All right. So, I have been working with ESOl students for the last 4-5 years. I feel like the last 4 or 5 years and they have again come with so many different levels from beginner to advanced. And I've tried to support them by giving them some, you know, certain starting language, modified from the lessons in regard to assessments. I guess it's been sometimes very difficult, especially when the levels are so varied or if I don't have any kids that are bilingual in the classroom. But I just try to use supports that are provided from the county to really try to make the lesson and really try to get them to feel comfortable with the content. I've had a lot of kids who are in eighth grade but have never been to schools over the years, you know. So they're really expected to teach in this content. But some of them are just learning their numbers. They don't even know the letters, you know. So it's been some good experiences where we have some kids who call it out to the language really quickly and knew the content. Let we have the other one who really struggled, but I try to provide support that can make them at least get to some type of understanding.
SPEAKER3	01:37	OK, so be specific, what are the strategies and materials do you prepare for your instruction?
SPEAKER4	01:47	So, I have used again, the county's standards, the mathematical part, mathematical standards, for example, geometry. So we have to do a lot of things with regard to shapes, movements and transformations. So let's look like that. We did a lot of hands on activity activities, a lot of pictures, a lot of manipulative to really demonstrate the relationship between things of movements and shapes. So I've tried to use a lot of pictures, a lot of diagrams, a lot of group work, a lot of turn and talks, a lot of sentence starters. The ideas and the concept behind their use of videos to make connection to it. I've used again for me a lot of what the main strategy to me that worked well with ESOL students is when we're in groups, small groups, not a whole class. Look, a lot of them don't like to talk in regard to if they're not really comfortable with the, you know, the sound, the language, they feel a little uncomfortable with it. So I love I'd love using that collaborative strategies where they're working together. I'm working with them one on one and we're working on a task together.
SPEAKER5	03:00	So those informal discussion of strategy, I've use videos, pictures, I've tried to translate some of our Google Translate, but some of it is not translated correctly. So, they'll get a good laugh out of that. But a lot of activities for me, modeling, showing I love to make sure they have notebooks and then to go back to refer to it with certain steps.
SPEAKER4	03:24	I try to make the steps very simple, not long sentences, but do simple steps like step one, do this. And then one example at the bottom that try to or picture at the bottom. I try to make sure they understand the vocabulary. Like maybe the

day before that, I know it's going to be a lot of new information. I would try to give them like vocabulary words for homework to either research it. What's the word, what's it not? What's the definition, what's an example, not example, just a few. They can get familiar with some of the new words I'll be saying in the classroom. So, I guess it's called for a lot of vocabulary. So, I tried to do a lot of that, too. we get them to know and understand the concepts.

SPEAKER6   04:07   Now, I want you to tell me, what are those teacher preparations like college coursework. Did you attend the coursework when you were in college to prepare you in teaching our ESOL students?

SPEAKER7   04:48   You know what's crazy? I never attended any college courses to teach ESOL students. Yes. I feel like it wasn't really an issue.

SPEAKER8   04:59   I feel like when I was going to college, like the language in so many kids having multiple languages in our classroom like it was never an issue, but I did have a lot of experience with special, you know, special ed classes or, you know, things that nature. But it never really took an ESL course per say. Yeah. But I'm pretty sure it was probably also discussed a little bit, but it wasn't really like the main focus in our classrooms or my college coursework. It is within like the last few years I've sort of tried to take, you know, more YOLO classes to get an understanding to better assist my students. And it just wasn't until like the last year that I've been trying to push to get to really learn a lot more about the practices and ways they learn the sentence structure, the linguistics and how they really acquire this. And what can I do to really help them and support them in my lesson planning in my practice. So, it wasn't within the last few years I've been trying to really get some understanding on it because it's been a lot more ESOL kids in my class than it's ever been over the last 10 years of teaching.

SPEAKER6   06:09   Okay. So are you telling me that those are professional development you are attending helps you to you with strategies to support our ELs students.

SPEAKER7   06:15   Yeah. So currently the county is offering a grant last year about McDaniel's ESOL certification or Scholarship. a scholarship. yellow teeth sort of ignites location into the like five courses. They provide it for free. Yeah. The county linguistics reading E is an assessment. Second yellow is like there's been like five courses that taken. We have had to take these. So, I've been really getting a great understanding of how really to support my students from the coursework. So, it's been a wonderful experience. There any experience with them? I mean, I was thinking about mind even like this. That's what I was giving them over the years that I thought I was modifying it. But it's really, I realized that it was kind of like it's been like a bias against them. I feel like we know these standardized tests are these assessments are there to help us, you know, provide data. But is it really accurate data for us if the kids can't really, you know, if it's a bias against them, you know, a language bias or a culture bias that I'm just really starting to understand, like how these tests really are really geared toward kids sometimes who have language, you know, deficiencies and stuff like that.

SPEAKER4   07:28   So, I mean, really investigating information and gaining information about that.

SPEAKER6   07:33   Yeah, I'm hearing that you feel good right now because of those learnings you. learn. So now what about your perceptions of our students when it comes to their performance in your class? What do you consider as the major strengths? Major weaknesses?

SPEAKER8	07:50	I definitely lead their culture in there. And the differences they have that, you know, that they are coming from. I think that's a major strength. You know, there's a lot of I mean, they have experience different things from other students in the classroom. Some of them have never surprises. You know, when you have a topic that's related, something, a culture, whatever, you know, you may bring it up and they have more to say. I have more understanding takes by the other students, you know, like just finding out. What they know, or what their background is and really just try to expand on that and get them to be more open in the classrooms and really celebrate their differences. So, I feel like their background and what they have to bring in the classroom is definitely to me the main thing because we have kids who have never been in school. But you know what? They know a lot about certain like cultural aspects, you know, or certain things. They're doing their own home that, you know, like, hey, I know this right here. You know, like, oh, what's he say? He knows about this car. And because at home they also do this, blah, blah, blah. And they you know, you know, they had a kid sometimes I think was gone for about a year. But it was like a cult, I think was a picture. I showed one item to one student who couldn't speak English. He had a lot to say about it. And the kids translate because he was excited cause it was something he knew based on his home life. So, I just feel like their background, you know, and kind of like open the eyes against everybody in the class was like, oh, we didn't know that about him. So, it made him feel like more of a part of the community in the classroom. So, I feel like their experiences to me is one of the most important struggles from their background and where you're coming from.
SPEAKER3	09:29	So, it looks to me that your perceptions about them is helping you to really develop them in your classroom. You have a good perception of them.
SPEAKER7	09:41	Just, you know, again, it's link. I've watched them love you. I've seen the struggles. And I'm like, you know, I'm wondering, like, why this person's not going to school, why despite, you know, like, you always have these biases in the beginning, you know, and just over the years watching and now the research behind it. And, you know, listen to that. When we the culture like I watch an interview with CBS, you know, reasons why they're coming here, a reason, you know, like they have a lot of, you know, a lot of issues going on their whole life, you know, and that to me has really made me really want to connect with a lot more support toward them, because it's not easy coming from guys like us.
SPEAKER9	10:22	It's like a complete shock for them coming to this darkness, this world.
SPEAKER3	10:25	If I will conclude this interview, I think the reason you are successful in teaching our students is you are making a connection and you're trying to understand them. You're not you're not putting them aside. I think that's how I see it. OK. Thank you so much for sharing that information. And this is a great interview. Thank you so much.
SPEAKER7	10:55	Oh, you're welcome. Thank you so much.
SPEAKER9	11:03	I appreciate you for that. Thank you so much too.

Appendix I

Site Permission to Conduct Research

Permission to Conduct Study 2   Yahoo/Inbox ☆

Wed, 9 Sep at 4:17 PM ☆

Dear ▮

My name is Elvira Beches. I am a middle school ESOL teacher ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ and a doctoral candidate in educational leadership at the American College of Education. I just received the approval to conduct a study ▮▮▮ specifically with middle school teachers teaching Science, Social Studies, and Mathematics with ESOL students as inclusion. My dissertation topic is " Content Area Teachers' Experiences Teaching English Learners: A Qualitative Case Study. ▮ Research and Evaluation office requires the researcher to seek permission from the school principal before sending the online questionnaire to teachers using SurveyMonkey. I know you have so much on your plate at this time, where we all are embracing and navigating distance learning. If I can ask a minute of your time to read my email and if granted the permission, you may sign the attached document. I will then return the signed copy to the Office of Research and Evaluation (ORE). Thank you in advance, and continue to be safe.

Respectfully,
Elvira Beches- M. Ed in ESL
▮▮▮

📄 Principal P... .pdf
116.6kB

DIVISION of ACCOUNTABILITY
DEPARTMENT of TESTING, RESEARCH and EVALUATION

Do not write in this box — DTRE use only

September 2, 2020	June 30, 2021	RE-2021-003
Authorization Date	Authorization Expiration Date	DRE Application Number

Elvira Beches has received conditional authorization from the Office of Research and Evaluation to conduct the following research study:

" Content Teachers' Experiences Teaching English Learners: A Qualitative Case Study."

in ▮▮▮ The researcher would like to conduct the study in:

▮▮▮

School Implementation of this study is contingent upon the researcher securing the **permission** of the principal in the above-listed school in which the study will be conducted.

APPROVED
EXPIRES ON
JUNE 30, 2021
▮ - Research Office

DTRE Staff Signature

Principal Permission to Conduct Research Study[1]

✓____ Approved   ____ Disapproved

Remarks: ▮▮▮

Principal Name	Signature	Date

Should you have any questions or concerns about this matter, please call the Research and Evaluation office at (301) 780-6807 **before** granting permission.