The Self-Efficacy of ESL Certified and Non-ESL Certified Educators in their Ability to Instruct and Engage English Language Learners

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Doctoral Dissertation

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Chapter 1

The Problem and Its Setting

Introduction

Educators have consistently encountered numerous challenges in teaching the diverse students who enter their classrooms each year. These challenges include addressing learning disabilities, social and emotional issues, varying learning styles, and external problems that significantly influence students' ability to succeed within the demanding curricula established by state education departments. Each of these factors profoundly impacts how teachers can effectively engage with their students. An additional barrier for many students in the United States is language; almost 10% of public-school students in grades kindergarten through twelve are classified as an English Learner (EL) or English Language Learner (ELL), according to the National Center of Educational Statistics (Institute of Education Sciences, 2021). Educators are attempting to teach complex curriculum and content standards to students who are simultaneously learning the English language. The number of English Learners has grown 2.3% between the 2017-2018 school year and 2019-2020 school year according to the Office of English Language Acquisition (U.S. Department of Education, 2022). By 2025, it is projected that one out of every four K-12 students in the United States will be classified as an English Learner (National Education Association, 2020). This sub-group of students is getting larger and larger every school year.

The unique and highly complex needs of English Learners stem from the diversity within this student group. There are over 400 different languages spoken by English Learners in U.S. public schools. The most common languages spoken by ELs during the 2019-2020 school year were Spanish, Arabic, Chinese and Vietnamese (U.S. Department Education, 2023). Even if an

educator is a multilingual speaker, there is a very high possibility that she will not speak all of the languages represented by the ELs in her classes. The challenges for teachers oftentimes can seem insurmountable when educating ELs. Identity, language and culture all have an impact on how well an English Learner can do in school (Creagh, 2016; Finley, 2018). If a child has moved to the United States at a young age, the student may not remember much of the home country and may adapt more easily than a student who comes to the United States during his/her high school years. However, learning new routines can be very challenging when it has not been a part of the child's schooling in the past. Teachers have to be flexible and understanding of how the loss of L1 (first language) culture can negatively impact an English learner (Diaz et al., 2016; Ridley et al., 2019). Additional challenges include issues like some English Learners may not be literate in their first language, or some may have had trauma in their past that will affect them in the United States. Some ELs carry the burden of not having any immigration status and being worried for the safety of their families (Hanus, 2016). And more likely than not, ELs may have parents who also do not speak English and cannot offer any assistance academically (Ridley, Kim, & Yoon, 2019; Tarasawa & Wagoneer 2015).

Teachers have been tasked with ensuring an equitable education for all students – including English Learners. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires all states "to assess the English language proficiency of ELs, provide reasonable accommodations or them on state assessments, and develop new accountability systems that include long-term goals and measure of progress for ELs" (Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015). Therefore, school districts and their educators are being monitored by the federal Department of Education on whether or not the ELs in their schools are growing academically. Unfortunately, most teacher preparation programs and teacher professional development do not provide the training needed on how best

to instruct English Learners. Only 14 states have requirements related to ELL education; and even within those states, there is no set approach or teaching standards on how to prepare pre-service teachers to teach ELs in content classes (Thomsen, 2014; Hughes & Mahalingappa, 2018). Educators need to know what the best strategies are to instruct the linguistically diverse students that are in their classes. Preparing to teach ELs can be very challenging for even the most experienced teacher (August & Blackburn, 2019). Modifying curriculum and making accommodations based on a student's language need is complex (Echevarria et al., 2017). Most textbooks that schools use are not meant for emerging bilinguals. Furthermore, teachers need to be confident in their own ability to teach their students. When a high sense of self-efficacy is absent in a teacher, that educator may become frustrated and unwilling to take on the responsibility of educating ELs (Villegas, 2018). Educators need to be given the time to self-reflect on their needs and the needs of their English Learners. Preparation can help educators embrace their English Learners and empower them in reaching high expectations set for all students, regardless of language ability.

According to August and Shanahan (2006), knowledge of a student's L1 literacy is extremely important. If a child cannot read in his/her first language, second language learning will be more difficult, especially if the student is older. Content teachers do not tend to teach reading skills, so if a child does not have basic literacy skills in their first language, he/she will not be able to interact with the second language (Shum, Ho, Siegel, & Au, 2016). Achievement in content areas for English learners is an immense concern across the country (Coady, Harper, & De Jong, 2016). Content teachers generally have not been certified in ESL (English as a Second Language). School district administrators need to be aware of the lack of preparation that so many teachers are experiencing with ELs and offer as much professional development as

possible on best practices for English learners (Johnson & Wells, 2017; Polat, Mahalingappa, Hughes, & Karavigit, 2019). By giving teachers opportunities to learn and develop strategies to reach their ELs, the more success both the teachers and students will experience. Examining the instructional effectiveness of teachers of ELs is necessary to identify any skills educators might not know or understand (Johnson & Wells, 2017). Studies show providing teachers an opportunity to self-reflect on the EL strategies that they use and additional EL areas that they struggle with will help administrators know what additional professional development workshops will be beneficial (Stairs-Davenport, 2021; Li, Bian, & Martinez, 2019).

Yücesan, Durgunoğlu, and Hughes (2010) conducted a study with university students completing their final student teaching before graduating. The findings in the article indicate that the student-teachers were not prepared to work with English learners and that their mentors were not able to instruct or step-in to offer assistance either. The lack of knowledge in EL teaching and strategies both at the pre-service teaching level and in-service teaching level could be one of the major problems affecting English learners' success in schools. The new teachers along with veteran teachers were not aware of how to work with English learners. Santibañez and Gándara also encountered similar results in a 2018 study. The researchers found from teachers that the teachers do not believe they received enough training in their pre-service teacher programs to teach the English learners in their classes. Additionally, Hammer et al. (2018) found that many teachers do not feel it is their responsibility to teach language. Teachers believing that only the ESL teacher has to teach language development is a common misconception by those teachers not certified in ESL.

Deficiencies in the research on why English Learners (ELs) may be struggling academically and socially in school include the need to identify whether or not teachers have the

knowledge and skills to adapt their teaching and lesson delivery so that all levels of English learners can interact and engage with the content being taught. According to Torff and Murphy (2020), teachers lower the rigor of curriculum for English learners because they feel that is the only way for the ELs to interact with the curriculum. By lowering the rigor of the curriculum, English learners are not being taught the same curriculum as their peers. There is a major achievement gap between English learners and native English speakers in the K-12 setting in the United States. Only 63 percent of ELs graduate from high school as compared to the national average of 82 percent (Institute of Education Sciences, 2021). Teachers need to be instructed in how to make the curriculum accessible to all learners, regardless of their English proficiency status in order to close the achievement gap.

More emphasis and focus needs to be placed on this specific group of students - English Learners. The population is continuing to increase every year. Teachers want to be able to teach all of their students, and now is the time to give these teachers the techniques they need to make their content accessible to English learners. Harrison and Lakin (2018) found that pre-service teachers do have a positive outlook on teaching English learners. Their expectations are that there are supports in place to help them work with their curriculum to make it accessible to English learners.

This study is significant for school administrators, teachers, and pre-service teacher programs. These groups will benefit from a study about the feeling of preparedness of ESL certified teachers versus non-ESL certified teachers. They will be able to identify gaps in training for non-ESL certified teachers and help them feel and be more prepared to teach English Learners in their classrooms.

Theoretical Framework

Albert Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory has been used many times to describe how prepared teachers feel in their abilities to instruct their students. Bandura's definition of perceived self-efficacy is "Perceived self-efficacy is defined as people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives. Self-efficacy beliefs determine how people feel, think, motivate themselves and behave. Such beliefs produce these diverse effects through four major processes. They include cognitive, motivational, affective and selection processes" (Bandura, 1997). If one has high self-efficacy, he/she believes that they can perform well. If a person has low self-efficacy, he/she believe that they lack the ability to perform well.

Components of Self-Efficacy

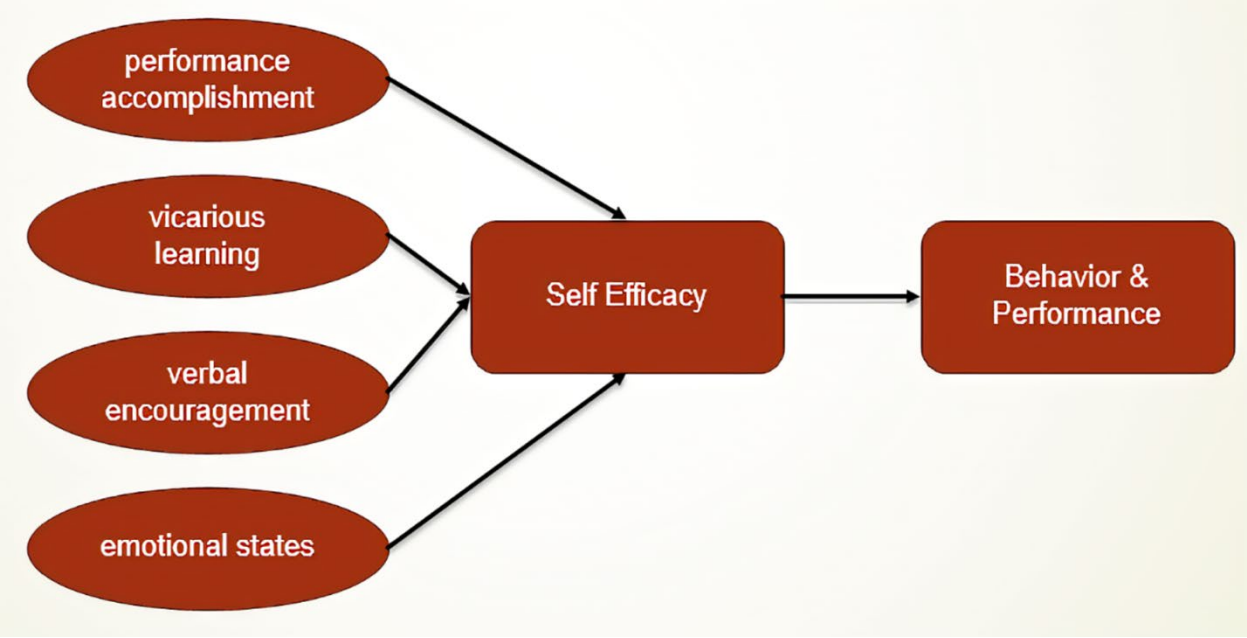

Figure 1 Theoretical Framework (Bandura, 1997)

Performance accomplishment refers to one's ability to reflect on what he/she has been able to accomplish or do in their professional career. If the person believes that his/her

performance was satisfactory or above, this will lead to self-efficacy. Vicarious learning is when one analyzes the behavior of others and adjusts his/her own actions and behaviors. Adjusting one's own actions and behaviors can lead to improvement and thoughts on where one needs to acquire additional knowledge. Through vicarious learning, one can reach self-efficacy. Bandura also believes that verbal encouragement affects self-efficacy. When a person receives praise for the work he/she has done, self-confidence will build and self-efficacy will follow. Finally, emotional states affect self-efficacy as well, according to Bandura. He states that we cannot believe in our self and our abilities if we are in a negative emotional state. Self-doubt, self-loathing, stress, fear, and negative emotions will inhibit the ability to reach goals especially self-efficacy.

Bandura believes that when a person has reached self-efficacy especially in relation to teaching, a teacher's behavior and performance will excel. Teachers will believe in their ability to instruct and engage all of their students and help them find success with the content that they are teaching.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework relates to Bandura's Self-Efficacy theory. It is believed that if a teacher belongs to the ESL certified group, he/she will have a positive feeling of preparedness in teaching English learners. In comparison, a teacher who belongs in the non-ESL certified group will have a negative feeling of preparedness in teaching English learners.

Feeling of Preparedness to Instruct English Learners

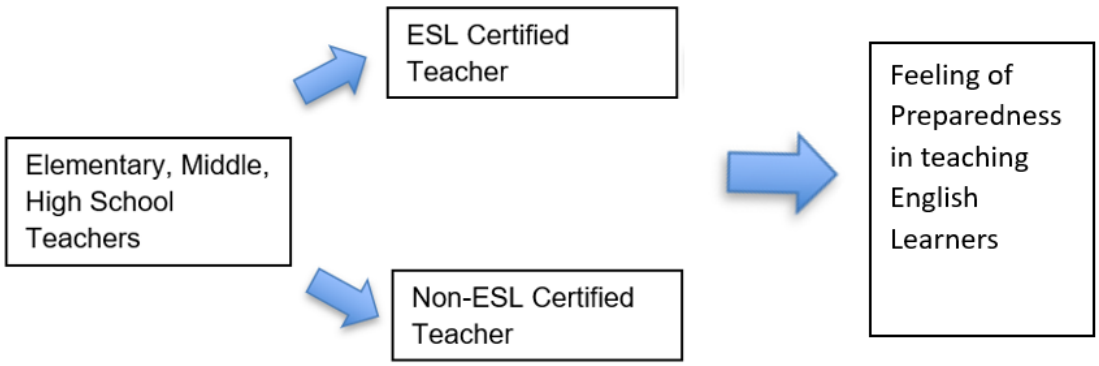

Figure 2 Conceptual Framework

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this quantitative study was to test the theory of self-efficacy that compares certified English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers and non-certified ESL teachers in their feelings of preparedness in teaching English Learners (ELs) in their classes at an urban school district, a suburban school district, and a cyber school district. The independent variable was defined as the group membership to which the teacher belongs whether ESL certified or non-ESL certified. The dependent variable was defined as the feeling of preparedness in the ability to teach ELs.

Research Question

What are the differences between ESL certified and non-certified ESL teachers in Pennsylvania in their feelings of preparedness to teach English Learners (ELs)?

1. Subproblem one, what are the feelings of preparedness in ESL certified teacher in Pennsylvania, was analyzed using a frequency distribution and other descriptive statistics.
2. Subproblem two, what are the feelings of preparedness in the non-ESL certified teachers in Pennsylvania, was analyzed using a frequency distribution and other descriptive statistics.
3. Subproblem three, what are the differences between non-ESL certified and certified ESL teachers in Pennsylvania in their feelings of preparedness to teach English learners (ELs), was analyzed using an independent sample t-test.

Null Hypothesis

There is no difference in the feeling of preparedness between non-certified and certified ESL teachers in Pennsylvania.

Alternative Hypothesis

There is a difference in the feeling of preparedness between non-certified and certified ESL teachers in Pennsylvania.

Research hypothesis

Certified ESL teachers feel more prepared to teach English learners in their classes than non-certified ESL teachers.

Definitions

English Learners (ELs)

The term English Learners refers to students who are unable to communicate fluently or learn effectively in English, who often come from non-English-speaking homes and backgrounds, and who typically require specialized or modified instruction in both the English language and in their academic courses (Santibañez & Gándara, 2018). In this study English Learners will refer to elementary, middle, and high school students whose first language is not English and are studying in an urban school district, suburban school district, or cyber school district in Pennsylvania.

ESL Certified Teacher

An English as a Second Language (ESL) certified teacher specializes in helping non-native speakers of all ages and levels learn the formal grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation of spoken and written English, while giving them confidence in the common usage of the language in order to communicate clearly and comfortably with native English speakers according to the TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages) International Association (TESOL, 2018). In this study the term, ESL Certified teacher, refers to any teacher who has completed the Pennsylvania state requirements and added the ESL Program Specialist certification to their Pennsylvania teaching license. The Pennsylvania State Department of Education recommends that ESL Program Specialist programs range from 16-18 credits. Within these 16-18 credits are the required field experiences.

Non-ESL Certified Teacher

In this study, non-ESL certified teacher refers to any person who has a teaching license in the state of Pennsylvania but does not have the add-on of the ESL certification.

Teacher Self-Efficacy

Teacher self-efficacy is defined as a teacher's belief in his or her own capability to prompt student engagement and learning, even when students are difficult or unmotivated (Bandura, 1997). In this study, teacher self-efficacy will refer to the teacher's self-efficacy of instructing English Learners.

EL Strategies

The term EL (English Learner) strategies refer to supports, techniques, and specialized tools used to engage English Learners in the content of the class at their English proficiency level (Faltis, Arias, & Ramirez-Marin, 2010). This study will refer to EL strategies as the activities and instructional techniques that ESL certified and non-ESL certified teachers use in their classes.

Preparedness

Teacher preparedness encompasses the knowledge and skills that teachers bring to the classroom through both pre-service and on-the-job learning experiences. To the extent that professional development is geared to provide on-the-job-learning in key areas of classroom teaching, recent participation in professional development programs should contribute to teachers being better prepared for the requirements of classroom teaching according to the National Center for Education Statistics (1999). In this study, teacher preparedness will refer to the amount of training in EL strategies that ESL certified and non-ESL certified teachers have received.

Delimitations

Although the researcher will be surveying elementary, middle and high school teachers, this study only occurred in one urban school district, one suburban school district and one cyber

school district in Pennsylvania. The participants were delimited to teachers in these Pennsylvania school districts. The study was delimited to current ESL certified teachers and non-ESL certified teachers. Teachers must have a minimum of one year experience.

Assumptions

The assumptions for this study included: participants would be truthful about their feeling of preparedness to teach ELs; participants are ESL certified or non-ESL certified teachers in an urban school district, a suburban school district, or a cyber school district; participants are able to read and comprehend the survey written in English.

Significance of Study

This study is important because twenty-five percent of public-school students in grades K-12 will be identified as an English Learner by 2025 (National Education Association, 2020). Educational policies protecting the educational rights of English Learners came to the forefront in 1970 and have since been updated when the Office of Civil Rights wrote a memorandum that English Learners have to be given equal educational opportunities and schools have to take affirmative steps to ensure this (U. S. Department of Education, 2000). What is problematic is that there are no specific guidelines as to what constitutes the "affirmative steps" states, districts, and schools have to take in order to ensure that the language barrier does not inhibit equal participation in educational opportunities. Guidelines are ambiguous and vary from state to state. When only 14 states have requirements related to ELL education, how can we ensure that all school systems know how to best educate ELs (Thomsen, 2014; Hughes & Mahalingappa, 2018)? Pennsylvania, where this study took place, only requires an accredited educator preparation program to include 3 credits (90 hours) regarding the instructional needs of English Learners as compared to 9 credits (270 hours) for the accommodations and adaptations

for students with disabilities in mainstream classrooms (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2008).

English Learners are an extremely diverse sub-group of students. Educators have to be aware of the linguistic, sociocultural, and educational background and needs of these students. Many factors impact an English learner's school experience. Educators who have been trained in English as a Second Language (ESL) may be better equipped to provide quality instruction to English Learners. Teachers, principals, superintendents, directors of pre-service teacher programs and guardians of English Learners should know whether the best practices and strategies are being utilized to teach and engage ELs in the language and content that they are learning. This study aims to find whether there are gaps in English Learner teaching knowledge between ESL-certified teachers and those teachers who do not have and ESL certification. Information found through this study may impact the topics for professional development within school districts and courses required during pre-service teaching programs.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Introduction

English Learners (ELs) have a wide variety of background knowledge and schooling experience. Some ELs may be literate in their first language and have had extensive schooling in their first language, whereas other ELs may not know how to read and write in their first language and have had less time in school. Even though there are not comprehensive programming guidelines for school districts to follow to ensure equal participation in educational opportunities for English Learners, researchers have identified areas of focus that greatly affect an EL's performance, both academically and socially, in schools. English Learners require specialized instruction because these students are learning content while simultaneously learning the language of instruction. Teacher preparation, both at the pre-service and in-service level, must focus on strategies and instructional models that assist ELs at any language proficiency level. English learner academic difficulties and external factors impacting ELs are numerous throughout the literature.

Teacher Preparation

As the number of English Learners continue to increase in the United States, along with more rigorous accountability standards for states and school districts, more focus is being placed on whether or not teachers have been prepared through their teacher preparation programs or are receiving the necessary professional development to give them the skills needed to engage and instruct English Learners in the mainstream classrooms. Researchers have found that teachers are not prepared or trained to modify the curriculum to make it accessible for all students regardless of language proficiency level. The Education Commission of the States' report from 2014

explains that the majority of states do not require any training in ELL strategies for general education teachers (Thomsen, 2014). The Education Commission of the States is a non-profit group that provides educational trends and data to state legislators and state education officials to support them in creating educational policies (Thomsen, 2014). Only 5% of all teachers in the United States in the 2019-2020 school year had a college major, college minor, or a certificate in ESL (English as a second language) according to the Office of English Language Learners (United States Department of Education, 2023). In 2008, Pennsylvania's Department of Education final rulemaking stated that all instructional and educational specialist preparation programs must include at least 3 credits regarding the instructional needs of English language learners (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2008). The academic needs and adaptations for EL students are addressed along with language and cultural competencies, standards-based instruction, EL specific assessments, and professionalism in only 3 credits.

Additional literature addresses the problem of the confidence of the teachers of English Learners. When educators have minimal guidance, support, or a framework to assist them in their lesson planning on how to make their content comprehensible and meaningful for English Learners, they do not have the confidence to do so (Villegas, 2018). A teacher who lacks confidence in herself/himself may not have a positive attitude towards English Learners. Through the Language Attitude of Teachers' Scale, researchers found that teachers who had a positive outlook toward English Learners were those who had received more training in best practices and strategies for ELs (Stairs-Davenport, 2021). Furthermore, when confidence in teaching ELs is lacking, those teachers may remove the responsibility of educating those ELs and rely on bilingual or certified ESL teachers. When this happens, these teachers will make little to no effort to modify their curriculum to meet the language needs of their students

(Villegas, 2018). Collaboration between general education teachers and ESL teachers is needed to share the best practices and strategies for teaching English Learners (Marsh, 2018). The success of all English Learners is the responsibility of all staff in a school. Creating a shared sense of responsibility will increase the confidence in the teachers of ELs so that they are able to meet the language and content needs of their students.

In a study conducted by Stairs-Davenport (2021), mainstream K-12 teachers were surveyed about differentiating instruction for English Language Learners. Stairs Davenport (2021) found that teachers want to know and need to be given the skills to honor and build upon English Learners' existing strengths. Educators should not ever look at a group of students through a deficit lens – meaning those students are lacking in an area that will prevent them from finding success in a classroom (Villegas, 2018). In order to not have a deficit view, teachers of English Learners need to know how to help ELs (especially newcomers – those who are new to the country and language) thrive socially, emotionally, and academically. Fenner et al. (2017) explains that educators who value students' home languages and cultures and do not see them as barriers to education can use them in a way to increase academic performance by ELs. Culture and language are at the core of every human being. Teachers should not forget that when an EL comes to the United States into their classroom, he/she can be experiencing a completely new world. Culture is tied to a student's ability to acquire the new language and content to which they are being exposed. Teachers need to use a student's home language and culture to further enhance their lessons for all of the students in their classrooms including native English speakers.

Teachers who have a multicultural classroom need to be able to relate the content of their course to the cultures of their students. Geneva Gay is one of many scholars who introduced the

idea of culturally responsive teaching. Gay (2018) stated that “by seeing, respecting, and assisting, diverse students from their own vantage points, teachers can better help them grow academically, culturally, and psycho-emotionally.” Not only do teachers of English Learners need to know how to differentiate instruction based on language levels, but these educators also must be knowledgeable about what affect culture has on learning. According to Vigil (2023), culturally responsive teaching is a method in which teachers make connections in their lessons to their students’ cultures, languages and life experiences. Culture is a cognitive construct. Losing one’s culture will not only affect a student’s social and emotional well-being, but they will lose any of the background knowledge and sensemaking that could have helped them make connection with the content they are learning.

Lucas and Villegas (2010) created the Framework for Linguistically Responsive Teaching that listed language-related knowledge and skills that all teachers need to know if they have English Learners in their classrooms. Educators need to be aware of sociolinguistic consciousness, value linguistic diversity and always advocate for ELs (Lucas & Villegas, 2010). Through this awareness teachers will be able to build relationships with their ELs and create welcoming school environments. Furthermore, professional programs that focus their attention on culturally responsive and linguistically responsive teaching will be able to create preservice programs that will address these skills that all teachers need to have in order to teach English Learners (Stairs-Davenport, 2021).

Baker et al. (2014) also indicated the specialized knowledge and skills to help students acquire proficiency and content area knowledge in English. This includes using visual and verbal supports, providing opportunities to interact with peers in English, allowing ELs to use their home language, culture and knowledge to enhance their learning (August & Blackburn, 2019).

Furthermore, many states have adopted the WIDA Standards framework to support equitable access to high quality learning opportunities for multilingual learners. WIDA (World Class Instructional Design and Assessment) is a consortium of states and schools that develops and supports standards, assessments, research and professional learning for English Language Learners. The 2020 WIDA English Language Development Standards reflect "the belief that multilingual learners are best served when they learn content and language together in linguistically and culturally sustaining ways" (WIDA, 2020). Learning the English language and the grade-level content cannot be separated. Teachers need to be able to blend the two by creating language and content objectives together.

English Learner Academic Performance

Despite growing literature addressing the needs of school-aged English Learners, their academic needs are still not being met (Santibanez & Gandara, 2018; Wissink & Starks, 2019). Students are not provided the same opportunities for success in school and, therefore, cannot perform at the same level as their English-speaking peers (Roy-Campbell, 2012). Academic performance affects students' desire to attend school, ability to graduate on time, and to become part of the workforce. The Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights has mandated since 1968 the use of the Civil Rights Data Collection survey. This survey analyzes educational equity and opportunities for students and any factors that may affect them. English Learners are a specific subgroup of students that they investigate. The Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA) reported that English Learners who were chronically absent (which means a student who has missed 10% or more of the school year) increased by two percentage points during the 2015-2016 school year from 13.4% to 15.6% (U.S. Department of Education OELA, 2022). This means that more than 15% of all English Learners missed more than 10% of the entire school

year. Chronic absenteeism has been proven to negatively impact academic performance. Schools need to identify why this number is growing. In the 2017-2018 school year, one in six ELs were reported to be chronically absent (U.S. Department of Education OELA, 2022). There are many factors that can be attributed to chronic absenteeism. One of the major contributing factors is that many school-aged English Learners are tasked with assisting their families during the school day. Roy-Campbell (2012) addresses how many ELs act as interpreters for their parents at the hospital, social security office, bank, or post office which often outweigh the importance of attending school.

Another major achievement gap between English Learners and native English speakers in the K-12 setting in the United States is that only 63% of ELs graduate from high school as compared to the national average of 82% (Institute of Education Sciences, 2021). This linguistically, culturally, and educationally diverse group of students are oftentimes expected to have the knowledge to read and comprehend texts at their native English peer level which ends in frustration, behavior problems, and finally dropping out of school because they do not have the necessary language proficiency to be successful in school (Roy-Campbell, 2013). U.S educational policies are now reliant on standardized assessments for all learners which have been proven to be extremely difficult for ELs. According to Short et al. (2018), English Learners exert additional effort by learning the language of instruction and the core subjects at the same time but are not given sufficient time to get to the intermediate or advanced proficiency levels before having to partake in critical assessments.

Parra et al. (2014) examined the psychological impact on English Learners when they are placed in mainstream classrooms with native-English speaking students. Parra et al. (2014) posit that there is a lack of attention on the psychological impact on English Learners when they

cannot comprehend what their teachers are saying and are unable to communicate with their peers. This study interviewed immigrant families who were living in the United States for 5 or fewer years. Parra et al. (2014) found that the elementary-aged English Learners in the study experienced anxiety, anger, fear of school, and eating and sleeping problems. The parents of these ELs reported that their children called themselves dumb and worthless because they could not get anything correct during the school day. Day after day these feelings affect the social emotional well-being of ELs and impact their academic performance (Parra et al., 2014).

Research also shows that English Learners are often misidentified as having a learning disability or go unidentified because of their English language status (Marsh, 2018). The WIDA Consortium reported that 50% of ELs compared to 39% of general education students were identified as having a learning disability (WIDA, 2017). Through the required standardized assessments, ELs fare worse than their native-English speaking peers. Therefore, they more often than not are recommended for special education services. According to WIDA (2017), "the majority of ELLs who are identified as having a learning disability are classified as having a Specific Learning Disability (SLD) that involves language and literacy or as Speech and Language Impaired (SLI), indicating a psychological processing disorder, yet this category has been increasingly questioned as subjective." ELs' background knowledge, culture, and language are different than their peers which may lead to these unnecessary labels.

The ability to read and write in English Learners' first language influences (negatively or positively) their second language acquisition and success in the general education classes. Researchers found that a learner's vocabulary knowledge in their first language does affect their listening comprehension in a second language (Vandergrift & Baker, 2015). This largely affects English Learners in the middle and high school grade levels. In these grades, teachers are not

explicitly teaching reading skills since those fall under the standards of the elementary ages. Middle and high school ELs who are illiterate in their first language then do not have transferable reading and writing skills from L1 (first language) to the L2 (second language). These learners are at a great disadvantage academically (Takanishi & Menestrel, 2017).

Some English Learners are identified as long-term English Learners (LTELS). Long-term English Learners have been in an English language development program for more than 5 years. These students are identified as LTELs because they have not met the reclassification requirements to be exited or to be not classified as an EL in their school district. These students have been educated in English-only instruction for years in the United States yet are not increasing their proficiency levels and oftentimes are barely passing each grade (Uysal, 2023). Long-term English Learners are at a stagnant level and need intense language intervention. LTELs often have better verbal skills in English than they do with reading and writing skills. Because of this, there are assumptions made that LTELs "know" English and should be able to access and engage with the content in the general education classes, but the language barrier still remains, and their academic performance is subpar (Uysal, 2023).

Specialized Instruction for English Learners

English language challenges are often not just related to students showing that they know and comprehend the content or daily lesson. There are many barriers that are invisible to their teachers and native-English speaking peers. That is why providing specialized instruction for English Learners goes beyond merely "good teaching" (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2017). It is a multi-faceted approach that researchers have found must include teachers' feelings toward teaching ELs, knowing what kind of learner each EL is, and receiving pedagogical training on how to teach ELs (Li et al., 2019). Although many educators hear that "best practices for English

Learners is just good teaching", this idea may be leaving out many important instructional strategies that benefit English Learners. Stephen Krashen is a renowned linguist and educator who created the theory about the affective filter in 1975. The affective filter is a student's level of comfort with the new language which affects (negatively or positively) the student's willingness to participate in a classroom (Krashen, 1975). According to Marsh (2018), social and emotional factors that impact English Learners' education must be at the forefront of instruction. English Learners who feel comfortable and welcome in a school and class environment will have a lower affective filter, and will be more likely to engage in the class activities which will result in acquiring more language and understanding of the content.

Echevarria et al. (2017) developed the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) model. The researchers stated that "implementing language objectives can be a powerful first step in ensuring that English Learners have equal access to the curriculum even though they may not be fully proficient in the language" (Echevarria et al., 2017, p.32). SIOP was developed over a seven-year period of working with teachers to create a sheltered instruction framework. This model eventually became an eight-step lesson planning and procedure guide to assist general education teachers in instructing the ELs in their content area while simultaneously focusing on language objectives to increase their ELs language proficiency. Following the ideas of Krashen (1975), the SIOP model centers on making content comprehensible for English Learners.

The components of specialized instruction for English Learners through the SIOP Model are lesson preparation, building background, comprehensible input, strategies, interaction, practice and application, lesson delivery, and review and assessment. Each component helps a teacher improve their instruction and make their content comprehensible for ELs while also helping ELs learn the English language. The 2020 WIDA ELD standards state "that multilingual learners are

best served when they learn content and language together in linguistically and culturally sustaining ways" (WIDA Standards, 2020). Educators can build EL student's confidence and success by enhancing EL engagement and thus promoting proficiency in English.

Academic language is very complex for English Learners. If an EL does not understand the vocabulary that a teacher is using, the learner will not connect to the background knowledge that they may have, and then will not be able to learn the topic (Roy-Campbell, 2013). Slower rate of speech is also associated with comprehensible input. Teachers may not realize how fast they speak when explaining a new concept or giving directions which cause ELs to become lost and unable to participate or follow along. Visual aids and modeling increase ELs ability to make meaning of new words (Marsh, 2018). Educators can self-reflect on the use of informal or complex language used in the classroom. Idioms, slang, and complex sentence structure are barriers to comprehension for English Learners. ELs also benefit from linguistic supports such as sentence starters and sentence frames. These are especially beneficial with class discussions. These academic phrases are not as easy to use as social language. By providing them to the students, ELs will actively participate more (Fenner et al., 2017).

Teachers can also use English Learners' background knowledge and prior experiences during classroom discussions or when choosing additional class materials. Teachers can do this by investigating the culture and previous educational experiences of their ELs. Educators and school counselors may have to reach out to the families with interpreters to get specific educational information, but having this knowledge will assist teachers in connecting the culture of their English Learners to what they are studying in their classes (Echevarria, et al., 2017). When teachers access materials outside of the curriculum, English Learners can make connections to their background knowledge which in turn will help them understand the instruction.

Furthermore, cultural representations of ELs in the curriculum will increase their feelings of acceptance and lower their affective filters.

External Factors Impacting English Learners in School

English Learners in the United States are not only diverse because they speak more than 400 different languages, but they also have many different life experiences that educators should recognize. Newcomers, those English learners who have recently arrived in the United States, are the fastest growing student group in U.S. school systems. Some of these newcomers may be identified as Students with Interrupted Formal Education (SIFE). These students are immigrants or refugees who come to U.S. schools lacking academic skills and preparation and often need specialized support (Auslander, 2022). Although SIFE ELs are a small percentage of ELs (around 10 to 20%), they have even more challenges than just learning the language (Custodio & O'Loughlin, 2020). Some of these students may be unaccompanied minors. They may have experienced war, resettlement, and other atrocities leading to them not being in school for multiple years. They may have urgent social and emotional issues that require intervention by multiple school personnel. Although newcomers encounter multiple gaps in their education, they can still reach their fullest potential if educators are able to see past their faults and find the best methods to fill in those holes of their education. According to Custodio and O'Loughlin (2020), characteristics of SIFE ELs include: being much older than their grade-level peers because of their weak academic skills and lack of academic records, having additional language needs than can be met in ESL programs, having little to no literacy skills in either L1 or L2, and often being isolated from their mainstream peers.

Research has also shown that socioeconomic status (SES) plays a significant role in the success of English Learners (Hanus, 2016). According to the National Center for Education

Statistics (NCES) the poverty rate for English learner households is 23% which is 10 points higher than their native-English speaking peers (Institute of Education Sciences, 2021). Living in poverty, regardless of language ability, is not just a financial hardship. Children in poverty often lack social and emotional resources and have a challenging home life. The stress acquired from living in poverty can affect a child's ability to learn and focus in school; inadequate food and healthcare can lead to chronic absenteeism. These factors make it even more challenging for children to succeed in school (Misbah et al., 2017; Santibanez & Gandara, 2018). English Learners in poverty are no different. Refugee English Learners may have entered the United States with only the belongings they carried on the day of their arrival. (Ridley, Kim, & Yoon, 2019). Their parents most likely do not speak any English and have a difficult time finding a job to make an income for their families. Although there are programs for the resettlement of refugees, the stipends only last for so long. (Ridley, Kim, & Yoon, 2019). Because of this, the older children in these families feel it is their responsibility to help with family expenses. These students choose to drop out of school so that they can become employed to support their families financially (Hanus, 2019). It is important to note that English Learners have considerably lower education attainment than non-ELs but are more likely to be employed (Velez et al., 2016). Forty-three percent of ELs ages 16-18 are employed as compared to non-ELs at 36% (Velez et al., 2016). Educators who understand the socioeconomic status of their ELs will recognize signs of need and areas where they may be able to intervene to help these families. Secondary aged English Learners understand the hardships that their parents went through to get them to the United States with the hope for a better and safer life. Students will take on the burden of getting a job while trying to go to school because they want to give back to their families as much as

possible (Hanus, 2018). This is particularly evident when students are able to communicate in English and their parents are not.

It is imperative that schools make the home to school connection for these families (Besterman et al., 2018; Lavandez, 2011). Increasing parental involvement for ELs is paramount for their academic achievement. According to Tarasawa and Waggoner (2015), schools can and should involve English learner families in decision-making processes, provide them with information about their children's academic progress and offer them opportunities to volunteer in school activities. Schools use varied communication services to communicate with EL families. Translator and interpreter services need to be readily available in order to make the connections to school seamless and less stressful for the families who do not speak the language. These communication services are also utilized during meetings between staff and parents so that the EL students do not have to act as the interpreter. It is also important to note that a recent report published by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) stating that there is a common misconception by school personnel that the families of English Learners are not interested in their children's education (Takanishi & Menestrel, 2017). However, another report found that the parents of English Learners reported receiving less communication from schools than English-speaking parents even though they wanted their children to succeed in school just as much as the English-speaking parents report receiving less communication from schools than non-EL parents (Takanishi & Menestrel, 2017). This lack of communication can result from limited accessibility of translation and interpretation services in the school. The linguistic barriers become even more of a hindrance to families who are new to the country and do not fully understand how the educational system functions in the United States (Takanishi & Menestrel, 2017). Perceived and real cultural differences between families and the schools also

affect parental involvement in the education of ELs. Research by Tarasawa and Waggoner (2015) supports the idea that school administrators and teachers who understand these barriers experienced by English learners and reach out to their EL families to find ways for them to participate in their children's education will see the academic success of their ELs.

Summary

Throughout the literature, common themes of teacher preparation, ELs' academic performance, specialized instruction, and external factors surfaced. Each of these topics can be analyzed individually to gather even more information on how to close the achievement gap for English Learners. However, the idea of teacher preparation and professional development on the strategies and teaching techniques to modify curriculum for English Learners was at the forefront of the research. Educators are tasked with a multitude of responsibilities within the school system to make sure students perform on standardized testing. The current demands on general education teachers coupled with the task of educating ELs can seem impossible. Bandura's Theory of Self-Efficacy was also intertwined with the research on teacher preparation and English Learners. Most educators of ELs have not received sufficient training in how to teach ELs and thus, do not feel able to do so (Roy-Campbell, 2013). With Bandura's theory, these teachers often have low self-efficacy and cannot adjust the curriculum to meet the needs of the English Learners in their classrooms. Low self-efficacy of teachers can impact bias toward the expectations of ELs. Teachers with low expectations of ELs decrease or remove learning standards resulting in unequal educational opportunities. It is essential for all educational stakeholders to know whether or not teachers have the necessary tools and skills to instruct English Learners (Thomsen, 2014; Hughes & Mahalingappa, 2018).

Chapter Three

Methodology

Research Design

The primary purpose of this quantitative study was to empirically evaluate the theory of self-efficacy that compares non-certified English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers and certified ESL teachers in their feelings of preparedness in teaching English learners (ELs) in their classes at an urban school district, a suburban school district, and a cyber school district in Pennsylvania. A cross-sectional survey design was implemented to collect the data. The independent variable was defined as the group membership to which the teacher belongs whether ESL certified or non-ESL certified. The dependent variable was defined as the feeling of preparedness in the ability to teach ELs.

Participants

The population selected for this study came from an urban school district, a suburban school district, and a cyber school district in Pennsylvania. The urban school district has 669 teachers; twenty-eight are certified in ESL. The suburban school district has 421 teachers; 9 are certified ESL teachers. The cyber school district has 1,464 teachers; 41 are certified ESL teachers. Both male and female teachers were asked to participate. Participants were elementary, middle, or high school teachers.

Inclusion Criteria

Participants must have been teaching for at least one year. They must have a Pennsylvania teaching license. Participants must have English learners in their classroom either currently or in past years. Ages of participants must have been >21. Participation was voluntary.

Participants were current teachers in the urban school district, suburban school district, or cyber school district in Pennsylvania.

Exclusion Criteria

Teachers who were currently suspended from their teaching duties were not able participate. Teachers who had less than one year of teaching experience did not qualify. Teachers who were leaving the profession in the next month could not participate. Teachers who did not have a current teaching license could not participate.

Recruitment

The researcher contacted via email the superintendent of the urban school district, the chief of academics of the suburban school district, and the ESL supervisor at the cyber school district to be given approval to forward the recruitment email (See Appendix B) to teachers. Upon approval from the superintendent, chief of academics, and the ESL supervisor, the researcher sent the survey email asking that they forward it to the teachers. The email included the link to the informed consent and the survey for the participants. The researcher's name, email, and phone number was in the email in case any prospective participants needed further clarification or additional information. The email also included a link to the informed consent (See Appendix A), ELL Education Self-Efficacy Scale survey (See Appendix C) and the demographics questionnaire (See Appendix D).

One instrument was used in this study: ELL Education Self-Efficacy Scale. The survey was designed and used by Yao Fu and Jiaxi Wang in their 2021 study titled "Assessing Pre-Service Teachers' Self-Efficacy to Teach English Language Learners". The researchers used a 100-point scale format for each item is used following Bandura's (2006) recommendations. The

score of 0 represents “Cannot do at all” and 100 represents “Highly certain can do”. The higher the score reflects a teacher with high self-efficacy in his ability to instruct and engage ELLs.

Fu and Wang (2021) in a study of 278 participants examined the underlie factor structure of the ELL Education Self-Efficacy Scale. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO) and Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity were conducted to ensure that the sample was adequate and appropriate for factor analysis. The exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and parallel analysis was applied to determine the retention or extraction of the factors. To improve interpretation, Direct Oblimin rotation was selected to reduce cross-loadings given that the three factors were correlated to each other (Zygmont & Smith, 2014). Cronbach’s alphas for items within each factor were also computed to examine the internal consistency of the scale (Furr & Bacharach, 2014).

The content validity of the scale was established by taking rigorous steps to develop the instrument, including defining the construct, creating the domains and item pool based on the literature, conducting expert reviews, and piloting the scale with pre-service teachers. The EFA and parallel analysis results supported the ELL education self-efficacy as a three-factor construct and showed promise of the structural validity for the scale. The high Cronbach’s alpha within all three factors indicated excellent internal reliability of the scale. Additional information concerning reliability and validity of the ELL Education Self-Efficacy Scale may be found in Fu and Wang (2021).

However, in the present study, to increase the likelihood of respondents completing the survey, a five-point Likert scale was utilized. The number 1 represents “Cannot do at all” and 5 represents “Very certain can do”. The minimum score was 45, while the maximum score was 225. Higher scores indicated a teacher with high self-efficacy in his ability to instruct and

engage ELLs. Although Fu and Wang (2021) analyzed the self-efficacy in English learning education of pre-service teacher, this study's participants were in-service educators.

There were three categories: pedagogical-content domain, linguistic domain, and sociocultural domain with a total of 45 items. The pedagogical-content domain included 18 items that address teachers' efficacy in providing ELLs with a challenging curriculum at the students' proficiency levels. The minimum score will be 18. A maximum score will be 90 with higher scores suggesting the participant has high self-efficacy in the domain of pedagogical content. The linguistic domain had 11 items which address teachers' knowledge on second language acquisition and foundational linguistic knowledge. A minimum score was 11. A maximum score was 55 with higher scores suggesting the participant has high self-efficacy in the linguistic domain. The sociocultural domain included 16 items that look at how well teachers are able to address the social and cultural needs of ELLS and abilities to work with this student group, their families and the community. A minimum score was 16. A maximum score was 80 with higher scores suggesting the participant has high self-efficacy in the sociocultural domain. Currently, there is no reliability and validity.

In spite of the above mentioned information on reliability and validity, a professional review was conducted to ascertain both face and content validity, especially for the new scoring system introduced in this study.

A demographics questionnaire was also given to retrieve information on participants' age, gender, years of teaching, teaching license and ESL certification status (See Appendix D).

Procedure

The researcher asked the Marywood University Exempt Review Committee to approve the study. Once approval was given, the researcher contacted via email the superintendent of the

urban school district, the chief of academics of the suburban school district, and the ESL supervisor at the cyber school district to be given approval to forward the recruitment email (See Appendix B) to the teachers. Upon approval from the superintendent, chief of academics, and the ESL supervisor, the researcher sent the email to them asking that they forward it to the teachers. The email included the link to the informed consent and the survey for the participants. The email also included specific directions as to read the informed consent and then how to complete the survey. It explained how the Likert scale works for each section. There was a follow-up email sent after one week. Data was analyzed with SPSS version 28.

Analysis of Data

An alpha level of .05 was used to assess significant differences.

1. Subproblem one, what are the feelings of preparedness in the ESL certified teacher in Pennsylvania, was analyzed using a frequency distribution and other descriptive statistics.
2. Subproblem two, what are the feelings of preparedness in the non-ESL certified teachers in Pennsylvania, was analyzed using a frequency distribution and other descriptive statistics.
3. Subproblem three, what are the differences between non-ESL certified and certified ESL teachers in Pennsylvania in their feelings of preparedness to teach English learners (ELs), was analyzed using an independent sample t-test.

Supplemental Analysis

1. What are the differences between ESL certified elementary teachers and ESL certified secondary teachers Pennsylvania in their feelings of preparedness to teach English Learners (ELs), was analyzed using an independent sample t-test.
2. What are the differences between non-ESL certified elementary teachers and non-ESL certified secondary teachers Pennsylvania in their feelings of preparedness to teach English Learners (ELs), was analyzed using an independent sample t-test.
3. What are the differences between ESL certified male teachers and ESL female teachers Northeastern Pennsylvania in their feelings of preparedness to teach English Learners (ELs), was analyzed using an independent sample t-test
4. What are the differences between non-ESL certified male teachers and non-ESL female teachers Northeastern Pennsylvania in their feelings of preparedness to teach English Learners (ELs), was analyzed using an independent sample t-test.
5. What are the differences among where participants taught (urban, suburban, cyber school district) in their feelings of preparedness to teach English Learners, were examined by total score and the three sub-scales using a one-way ANOVA.

Chapter 4

Results

Introduction

We amassed 306 surveys during the data collection phase. Identical surveys were distributed to the three participating school districts to allow for differentiation among the districts. All responses were consolidated into a single SPSS file, with an additional variable included to identify the originating school district for each case. Missing data from various cases in SPSS was examined in Qualtrics to be sure it was missing.

During data cleaning, 111 cases were deleted from the original 306: 30 of 116 surveys from the urban school district, 18 of 45 surveys from the suburban school district, and 63 of 145 surveys from the cyber school district. These cases were deleted because they were missing many responses in the pedagogical, linguistic or sociocultural sections of the ELL Self-Efficacy Survey.

Demographics

The mean age of participants was 42.48 (*sd* = 9.39), while the median was 43 (range = 24-72). Sixty seven percent of participants never taught in a private school and approximately 53% of participants have taught in a public school for 15 years or less. See Appendix E and Appendix F for the frequency distribution of age and years in full-time teaching in public and private schools.

Table 1

Teacher School District	(n)	Percent
Urban	86	44.1
Surburban	27	13.8
Cyber	82	42.1
Total	195	100

Gender		
Female	169	86.7
Male	26	13.3
Total	195	100

Notice in Table 1 that approximately 86% of participants work in either an urban or cyber school. Additionally, most participants were female teachers.

Table 2

Type of Teacher License	(n)	Percent
Elementary	87	44.6
Secondary	50	25.6
Both	54	27.7
Neither	4	2.1
Total	195	100.0
Reading Specialist		
Yes	14	7.2
No	181	92.8
Total	195	100.0
Special Education Teacher	(n)	Percent
Yes	25	12.8
No	170	87.2
Total	195	100.0

Table 2 shows the type of teaching license participants hold. Notice that the majority of teachers are elementary certified teachers at 44.6%, while only a small percentage are also reading specialists or special education teachers.

Table 3

ESL Certification	(n)	Percent
Yes	42	21.5
No	153	78.5
Total	195	100.0

English Learners in Class		
Yes	170	87.2
No	25	12.8
Total	195	100.0
School District Offers EL Professional Development		
Yes	143	73.3
No	51	26.3
Missing	1	.5
Total	195	100.0
Need More EL Professional Development		
Yes	181	92.8
No	14	7.2
Total	195	100.0

Note in Table 3 that only 21.5% of participants hold their ESL certification, while 87% of participants currently have English Learners in their classes. Most participants do work for school districts that offer professional development about English Learners at 73%. However, approximately 93% of participants reported that there needs to be more EL professional development offered in their school districts.

Subproblem One

Subproblem one, what are the feelings of preparedness in the certified ESL teachers in Pennsylvania, was analyzed using a series of frequency distribution and other descriptive statistics. Demographic information for ESL certified teachers can be found in Table 4. The mean total score for ESL certified participants was 195.36 (*sd*=24.9), while the median was 193 (range = 142-225). See Appendix G for the frequency distribution table of the total scores.

Table 4 (n=42)

Teacher School District	(n)	Percent
Urban	13	31.0
Surburban	7	16.7

Cyber	22	52.4
Total	42	100
Gender		
Female	38	90.5
Male	4	9.5
Total	42	100

The survey was broken down into three sub-scales: pedagogical, linguistic, and sociocultural. The mean pedagogical score for ESL certified participants was 77.71 (*sd*=12.14) while the median was 79.5 (range 48-90). Table 5 (see below) contains the individual items that make up the pedagogical sub-scale.

Table 5 Pedagogical Items *for ESL Certified Participants* (n=42)

	1 Cannot do at all	2	3 Moder-ately can do	4	5 Very certain can do
Can differentiate assessments to evaluate the English skills & academic learning of ELLs	0 (0%)	1 (2.4%)	6 (14.3%)	8 (19.0%)	27 (64.3%)
Can use a variety of assessments to track ALL students' academic achievement	1 (2.4%)	2 (4.8%)	10 (23.8%)	11 (26.2%)	18 (42.9%)
Can accommodate ELL students' learning needs while planning and administering	0 (0%)	2 (4.8%)	5 (11.9%)	13 (31.0%)	22 (52.4%)
Can skillfully analyze and interpret ELL students' assessment results	0 (0%)	2 (4.8%)	7 (16.7%)	15 (35.7%)	18 (42.9%)
Can provide constructive feedback to ELL students based on their assessment results	0 (0%)	1 (2.4%)	7 (16.7%)	10 (23.8%)	24 (57.1%)
Can use appropriate grouping strategies to engage ELL students in collaborative learning	0 (0%)	2 (4.8%)	6 (14.3%)	11 (26.2%)	23 (54.8%)

Can set clear learning goals for ELL students	0 (0%)	1 (2.4%)	4 (9.5%)	12 (28.6%)	25 (59.5%)
Can use non-linguistic activities (visual, kinesthetic) to help ELL students formulate and elaborate on knowledge	0 (0%)	1 (2.4%)	4 (9.5%)	12 (28.6%)	25 (59.5%)
Can provide enough wait time for ELL students to respond to my questions	0 (0%)	1 (2.4%)	2 (4.8%)	11 (26.2%)	28 (66.7%)
Can assign meaningful homework and practice for ELL students to apply and reinforce knowledge taught in class	0 (0%)	3 (7.1%)	9 (21.4%)	11 (26.2%)	19 (45.2%)
Can establish consistent schedules to help ELL students adjust to the classroom environment	1 (2.4%)	1 (2.4%)	5 (11.9%)	11 (26.2%)	24 (57.1%)
Can use a variety of strategies to manage ELL students' disruptive behaviors and other special needs/difficulties	0 (0%)	1 (2.4%)	9 (21.4%)	13 (31.0%)	19 (45.2%)
Can help ELL students practice classroom routines through modeling	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (4.8%)	13 (31.0%)	27 (64.3%)
Can create clear classroom rules and communicate them effectively to ELL students	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (7.1%)	10 (23.8%)	29 (69.0%)
Can effectively work with ELL students to address their discipline problems	0 (0%)	3 (7.1%)	4 (9.5%)	14 (33.3%)	21 (50.0%)
Can develop higher-order thinking skills in my ELL students through teaching the curriculum	0 (0%)	1 (2.4%)	12 (28.6%)	11 (26.2%)	18 (42.9%)
Can provide ELL students with a curriculum that is challenging and creative	0 (0%)	2 (4.8%)	8 (19.0%)	13 (31.0%)	19 (45.2%)
Can integrate abundant technological resources in the curriculum to help ELL students learn more effectively	0 (0%)	2 (4.8%)	6 (14.3%)	13 (31.0%)	21 (50.0%)

After combining the scores in columns 4 and 5 reflecting a feeling that participants can do the task, approximately almost 93% can provide enough wait-time for English learners, help ELL students practice classroom routines, and create clear classroom rules. Additionally, 83% of participants can differentiate assessments to evaluate the English skills and academic learning of ELLs. ESL certified participants felt confident in the pedagogical section with the majority of items. After combining the scores in columns 1 and 2 reflecting a feeling that participants cannot do the task, about 7% cannot address discipline problems with ELs or assign meaningful homework to ELs. For all other items, ESL certified participants showed increased confidence in their ability to complete them.

The mean linguistic score for ESL certified participants was 44.69 (*sd*=9.22) while the median was 45.5 (range = 18-55). Table 6 (see below) contains the individual items that make up the linguistic sub-scale.

Table 6 *Linguistic Items for ESL Certified Participants* (n=42)

	1 Cannot do at all	2	3 Moder-ately can do	4	5 Very certain can do
Can motivate ELL students to pay attention to language irregularities that may confuse them	0 (0%)	2 (4.8%)	14 (33.3%)	10 (23.8%)	16 (38.1%)
Can teach some basic principles of word formation to aid ELL students' vocabulary acquisition	0 (0%)	2 (4.8%)	4 (9.5%)	16 (38.1%)	20 (47.6%)
Can understand the English variability displayed by ELL student, such as vernacular dialects and accents	1 (2.4%)	4 (9.5%)	5 (11.9%)	16 (38.1%)	16 (38.1%)
Can use metalinguistic knowledge to analyze the similarities and differences between English and other languages	2 (4.8%)	4 (9.5%)	9 (21.4%)	10 (23.8%)	17 (40.5%)

Can use my knowledge in second language acquisition to support ELL students' learning	1 (2.4%)	4 (9.5%)	4 (9.5%)	11 (26.2%)	22 (52.4%)
Can create opportunities for ELL students to speak in their native language	2 (4.8%)	2 (4.8%)	7 (16.7%)	13 (31.0%)	18 (42.9%)
Can ensure that ELL students understand the information conveyed to them in class	0 (0%)	2 (4.8%)	8 (19.0%)	14 (33.3%)	18 (42.9%)
Can distinguish between ELL students' academic language proficiency and social/conversational language proficiency	1 (2.4%)	1 (2.4%)	6 (14.3%)	12 (28.6%)	22 (52.4%)
Can explicitly teach academic terminologies that are challenging to ELL students	0 (0%)	5 (11.9%)	6 (14.3%)	10 (23.8%)	21 (50.0%)
Can explicitly teach text structures to ELL students, such as differences in narratives and expository texts	0 (0%)	5 (11.9%)	6 (14.3%)	13 (31.0%)	18 (42.9%)
Can address the discourse patterns and rhetorical devices pertinent to academic tasks	0 (0%)	7 (16.7%)	10 (23.8%)	8 (19.0%)	17 (40.5%)

After combining the scores in columns 4 and 5 reflecting a feeling that participants can do the task, approximately 86% Can teach some basic principles of word formation to aid ELL students' vocabulary acquisition. Additionally, almost 81% can distinguish between ELL students' academic language proficiency and social/conversational language proficiency, and about 79% can use knowledge in second language acquisition to support ELL students' learning. After combining the scores in columns 1 and 2 reflecting a feeling that participants cannot do the task, approximately 16% cannot address the discourse patterns and rhetorical devices pertinent to academic tasks. Additionally, around 14% cannot use metalinguistic knowledge to analyze the similarities and differences between English and other languages, and 12% cannot explicitly teach academic terminologies that are challenging to ELL students.

The mean sociocultural score for ESL certified participants was 72.95 (*sd*=6.39) while the median was 74.0 (range = 58-80). Table 7 (see below) contains the individual items that make up the sociocultural sub-scale.

Table 7 *Sociocultural Items for ESL Certified Participants* (n=42)

	1 Cannot do at all	2	3 Moder-ately can do	4	5 Very certain can do
Can show empathy and support for ELL students who experience hardships	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (4.8%)	40 (95.2%)
Can understand challenges and anxieties that ELL students may undergo in adapting to a different culture	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (2.4%)	5 (11.9%)	36 (85.7%)
Can boost the self-confidence and self-esteem of ELL students	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (2.4%)	5 (11.9%)	36 (85.7%)
Can appreciate the cultures and values that ELL students bring to the class	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (7.1%)	39 (92.9%)
Can promote diversity and mutual respect in class	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (7.1%)	39 (92.9%)
Can maximize opportunities for ELL students interacting with their English-proficient peers	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (4.8%)	9 (21.4%)	31 (73.8%)
Can help my English-speaking students deepen their understanding about other cultures	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	5 (11.9%)	11 (26.2%)	26 (61.9%)
Can spend time on helping ELL students develop a sense of belonging to the learning community	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (2.4%)	11 (26.2%)	30 (71.4%)
Can encourage ELL students to make their voice heard	0 (0%)	1 (2.4%)	2 (4.8%)	8 (19.0%)	31 (73.8%)
Can accumulate knowledge of ELL students' home culture	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	5 (11.9%)	10 (23.8%)	27 (64.3%)

Can develop a critical and impartial perspective of ELL students' families	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	5 (11.9%)	16 (38.1%)	21 (50.0%)
Can maintain frequent communications with ELL students' parents	1 (2.4%)	0 (0%)	9 (21.4%)	8 (19.0%)	24 (57.1%)
Can work collaboratively with parents to address the special needs of ELL students	1 (2.4%)	0 (0%)	9 (21.4%)	12 (28.6%)	20 (47.6%)
Can recognize the discontinuity between ELL students' home culture and school culture	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	6 (14.3%)	11 (26.2%)	25 (59.5%)
Can build background connections between ELL students' cultural background and their classroom learning experiences	0 (0%)	1 (2.4%)	6 (14.3%)	15 (35.7%)	20 (47.6%)
Can identify rich resources in the local communities to support ELL students' learning	1 (2.4%)	5 (11.9%)	9 (21.4%)	12 (28.6%)	15 (35.7%)

After combining the scores in columns 4 and 5 reflecting a feeling that participants can do the task, 100% of ESL certified participants can show empathy and support for ELL students who experience hardships. Additionally, about 98% can spend time on helping ELL students develop a sense of belonging to the learning community, and almost 93% can encourage ELL students to make their voice heard. After combining the scores in columns 1 and 2 reflecting a feeling that participants cannot do the task, there was only one item that showed this feeling. Approximately 14% of ESL certified participants cannot identify rich resources in the local communities to support ELL students' learning.

Subproblem Two

Subproblem two, what are the feelings of preparedness in the non-ESL certified in Pennsylvania, was analyzed using a series of frequency distribution and other descriptive statistics. Demographic information for non-ESL certified participants can be found in Table 8.

The mean total score for non-ESL certified participants was 156.48 (*sd*=29.95), while the median was 159.0 (range = 45-225). See Appendix H for the frequency distribution table of the total scores.

Table 8 (n=153)

Teacher School District	(n)	Percent
Urban	73	47.7
Surburban	20	13.1
Cyber	60	39.2
Total	153	100
Gender		
Female	131	85.6
Male	22	14.4
Total	195	100

As above, the three sub-scales for non-ESL certified participants are presented below. The mean pedagogical score for non-ESL certified participants was 59.91 (*sd*=13.34) while the median was 60.0 (range 18-90). Table 9 (see below) contains the individual items that make up the pedagogical sub-scale.

Table 9 *Pedagogical Items for Non-ESL Certified Participants* (n=153)

	1 Cannot do at all	2	3 Moder-ately can do	4	5 Very certain can do
Can differentiate assessments to evaluate the English skills & academic learning of ELLs	5 (3.3%)	24 (15.7%)	77 (50.3%)	35 (22.9%)	12 (7.8%)
Can use a variety of assessments to track ALL students' academic achievement	13 (8.5%)	34 (22.2%)	67 (43.8%)	32 (20.9%)	7 (4.6%)
Can accommodate ELL students' learning needs while planning and administering	6 (3.9%)	24 (15.7%)	63 (41.2%)	46 (30.1%)	14 (9.2%)

Can skillfully analyze and interpret ELL students' assessment results	14 (9.2%)	31 (20.3%)	64 (41.8%)	39 (25.5%)	5 (3.3%)
Can provide constructive feedback to ELL students based on their assessment results	8 (5.2%)	29 (19.0%)	63 (41.2%)	44 (28.8%)	9 (5.9%)
Can use appropriate grouping strategies to engage ELL students in collaborative learning	5 (3.3%)	27 (17.6%)	53 (34.6%)	51 (33.3%)	17 (11.1%)
Can set clear learning goals for ELL students	6 (3.9%)	27 (17.6%)	58 (37.9%)	47 (30.7%)	15 (9.8%)
Can use non-linguistic activities (visual, kinesthetic) to help ELL students formulate and elaborate on knowledge	1 (0.7%)	28 (18.3%)	52 (34.0%)	50 (32.7%)	22 (14.4%)
Can provide enough wait time for ELL students to respond to my questions	1 (0.7%)	12 (7.8%)	37 (24.2%)	58 (37.9%)	45 (29.4%)
Can assign meaningful homework and practice for ELL students to apply and reinforce knowledge taught in class	5 (3.3%)	36 (23.5%)	59 (38.6%)	37 (24.2%)	16 (10.5%)
Can establish consistent schedules to help ELL students adjust to the classroom environment	5 (3.3%)	14 (9.2%)	49 (32.0%)	48 (31.4%)	37 (24.2%)
Can use a variety of strategies to manage ELL students' disruptive behaviors and other special needs/difficulties	7 (4.6%)	19 (12.4%)	56 (36.6%)	46 (30.1%)	25 (16.3%)
Can help ELL students practice classroom routines through modeling	2 (1.3%)	11 (7.2%)	41 (26.8%)	52 (34.0%)	47 (30.7%)
Can create clear classroom rules and communicate them effectively to ELL students	3 (2.0%)	13 (8.5%)	41 (26.8%)	61 (39.9%)	35 (22.9%)
Can effectively work with ELL students to address their discipline problems	7 (4.6%)	19 (12.4%)	55 (35.9%)	53 (34.6%)	19 (12.4%)
Can develop higher-order thinking skills in my ELL students through teaching the curriculum	11 (7.2%)	33 (21.6%)	68 (44.4%)	29 (19.0%)	12 (7.8%)
Can provide ELL students with a curriculum that is challenging and creative	8 (5.2%)	23 (15.0%)	64 (41.8%)	45 (29.4%)	13 (8.5%)

Can integrate abundant technological resources in the curriculum to help ELL students learn more effectively	7 (4.6%)	21 (13.7%)	60 (39.2%)	46 (30.1%)	19 (12.4%)

After combining the scores in columns 4 and 5 reflecting a feeling that participants can do the task, approximately 67% of non-ESL certified participants can provide enough wait time for ELL students to respond to my questions. Additionally, almost 64% can help ELL students practice classroom routines through modeling, and about 63% can create clear classroom rules and communicate them effectively to ELL students. After combining the scores in columns 1 and 2 reflecting a feeling that non-ESL certified participants cannot do the task, approximately 31% cannot use a variety of assessments to track ELL students' academic achievement. Additionally, around 30% cannot skillfully analyze and interpret ELL students' assessment results, and 29% cannot develop higher-order thinking skills in my ELL students through teaching the curriculum.

The mean linguistic score for non-ESL certified participants was 31.52 (*sd*=9.02) while the median was 33.0 (range 11-55). Table 10 (see below) contains the individual items that make up the linguistic sub-scale.

Table 10 *Linguistic Items for Non-ESL Certified Participants* (n=153)

	1 Cannot do at all	2	3 Moder-ately can do	4	5 Very certain can do
Can motivate ELL students to pay attention to language irregularities that may confuse them	14 (9.2%)	41 (26.8%)	52 (34.0%)	34 (22.2%)	12 (7.8%)
Can teach some basic principles of word formation to aid ELL students' vocabulary acquisition	11 (7.2%)	24 (15.7%)	64 (41.8%)	38 (24.8%)	16 (10.5%)

Can understand the English variability displayed by ELL student, such as vernacular dialects and accents	21 (13.7%)	36 (23.5%)	53 (34.6%)	33 (21.6%)	10 (6.5%)
Can use metalinguistic knowledge to analyze the similarities and differences between English and other languages	20 (13.1%)	41 (26.8%)	54 (35.3%)	32 (20.9%)	6 (3.9%)
Can use my knowledge in second language acquisition to support ELL students' learning	16 (10.5%)	45 (29.4%)	60 (39.2%)	23 (15.0%)	9 (5.9%)
Can create opportunities for ELL students to speak in their native language	10 (6.5%)	46 (30.1%)	45 (29.4%)	40 (26.1%)	12 (7.8%)
Can ensure that ELL students understand the information conveyed to them in class	10 (6.5%)	30 (19.6%)	59 (38.6%)	47 (30.7%)	7 (4.6%)
Can distinguish between ELL students' academic language proficiency and social/conversational language proficiency	19 (12.4%)	28 (18.3%)	56 (36.6%)	42 (27.5%)	8 (5.2%)
Can explicitly teach academic terminologies that are challenging to ELL students	15 (9.8%)	28 (18.3%)	67 (43.8%)	31 (20.3%)	12 (7.8%)
Can explicitly teach text structures to ELL students, such as differences in narratives and expository texts	28 (18.3%)	40 (26.1%)	57 (37.3%)	22 (14.4%)	6 (3.9%)
Can address the discourse patterns and rhetorical devices pertinent to academic tasks	31 (20.3%)	41 (26.8%)	60 (39.2%)	17 (11.1%)	4 (2.6%)

After combining the scores in columns 4 and 5 reflecting a feeling that participants can do the task, approximately 35% of non-ESL certified participants can teach some basic principles of word formation to aid ELL students' vocabulary acquisition. Additionally, almost 35% can ensure that ELL students understand the information conveyed to them in class, and about 34% can create opportunities for ELL students to speak in their native language. After combining the scores in columns 1 and 2 reflecting a feeling that non-ESL certified participants cannot do the task, approximately 47% cannot address the discourse patterns and rhetorical devices pertinent to

academic tasks achievement. Additionally, around 44% cannot explicitly teach text structures to ELL students, such as differences in narratives and expository texts, and 40% cannot use their knowledge in second language acquisition to support ELL students' learning.

The mean sociocultural score for non-ESL certified participants was 65.05 (*sd*=12.12) while the median was 66.0 (range 16-80). Table 11 (see below) contains the individual items that make up the sociocultural sub-scale.

Table 11 *Sociocultural Items for Non-ESL Certified Participants* (n=153)

	1 Cannot do at all	2	3 Moder-ately can do	4	5 Very certain can do
Can show empathy and support for ELL students who experience hardships	1 (0.7%)	1 (0.7%)	15 (9.8%)	34 (22.2%)	102 (66.7%)
Can understand challenges and anxieties that ELL students may undergo in adapting to a different culture	1 (0.7%)	3 (2.0%)	21 (13.7%)	43 (28.1%)	85 (55.6%)
Can boost the self-confidence and self-esteem of ELL students	1 (0.7%)	3 (2.0%)	21 (13.7%)	48 (31.4%)	80 (52.3%)
Can appreciate the cultures and values that ELL students bring to the class	1 (0.7%)	3 (2.0%)	14 (9.2%)	30 (19.6%)	105 (68.6%)
Can promote diversity and mutual respect in class	1 (0.7%)	2 (1.3%)	10 (6.5%)	37 (24.2%)	103 (67.3%)
Can maximize opportunities for ELL students interacting with their English-proficient peers	1 (0.7%)	5 (3.3%)	37 (24.2%)	38 (24.8%)	72 (47.1%)
Can help my English-speaking students deepen their understanding about other cultures	2 (1.3%)	7 (4.6%)	29 (19.0%)	55 (35.9%)	60 (39.2%)
Can spend time on helping ELL students develop a sense of belonging to the learning community	1 (0.7%)	4 (2.6%)	33 (21.6%)	46 (30.1%)	69 (45.1%)

Can encourage ELL students to make their voice heard	2 (1.3%)	4 (2.6%)	27 (17.6%)	51 (33.3%)	69 (45.1%)
Can accumulate knowledge of ELL students' home culture	5 (3.3%)	3 (2.0%)	37 (24.2%)	46 (30.1%)	62 (40.5%)
Can develop a critical and impartial perspective of ELL students' families	2 (1.3%)	7 (4.6%)	30 (19.6%)	52 (34.0%)	62 (40.5%)
Can maintain frequent communications with ELL students' parents	6 (3.9%)	17 (11.1%)	37 (24.2%)	45 (29.4%)	48 (31.4%)
Can work collaboratively with parents to address the special needs of ELL students	8 (5.2%)	20 (13.1%)	36 (23.5%)	47 (30.7%)	42 (27.5%)
Can recognize the discontinuity between ELL students' home culture and school culture	3 (2.0%)	12 (7.8%)	39 (25.5%)	49 (32.0%)	50 (32.7%)
Can build connections between ELL students' cultural background and their classroom learning experiences	5 (3.3%)	12 (7.8%)	53 (34.6%)	36 (23.5%)	47 (30.7%)
Can identify rich resources in the local communities to support ELL students' learning	14 (9.2%)	32 (20.9%)	52 (34.0%)	27 (17.6%)	28 (18.3%)

After combining the scores in columns 4 and 5 reflecting a feeling that participants can do the task, approximately 92% of non-ESL certified participants can promote diversity and mutual respect in class. Additionally, almost 89% can show empathy and support for ELL students who experience hardships, and about 84% can understand challenges and anxieties that ELL students may undergo in adapting to a different culture. After combining the scores in columns 1 and 2 reflecting a feeling that non-ESL certified participants cannot do the task, approximately 30% cannot identify rich resources in the local communities to support ELL students' learning. Additionally, around 18% cannot work collaboratively with parents to address the special needs of ELL students and 15% cannot maintain frequent communications with ELL students' parents.

Subproblem Three

Subproblem three, what are the differences between non-ESL certified and certified ESL teachers in Pennsylvania in their feelings of preparedness to teach English learners (ELs), was analyzed using an independent sample *t*-test. An independent samples *t*-test comparing the means of the total score of the feelings of preparedness to teach ELs of the ESL certified and the non-ESL certified participants found a significant difference between the means of the two groups ($t(193) = 7.709$, $p < .001$). The mean of the ESL certified group was significantly higher ($M = 195.36$, $sd = 24.90$) than the mean of the non-ESL certified group ($M = 156.48$, $sd = 29.95$). The effect size was calculated for this analysis and found to be large ($d = 1.343$).

An independent samples *t*-test comparing the means of the pedagogical score of the feelings of preparedness to teach ELs of the ESL certified and the non-ESL certified participants found a significant difference between the means of the two groups ($t(193) = 7.806$, $p < .001$). The mean of the ESL certified group was significantly higher ($M = 77.71$, $sd = 12.14$) than the mean of the non-ESL certified group ($M = 59.91$, $sd = 13.34$). The effect size was calculated for this analysis and found to be large ($d = 1.36$).

An independent samples *t*-test comparing the means of the linguistic score of the feelings of preparedness to teach ELs of the ESL certified and the non-ESL certified participants found a significant difference between the means of the two groups ($t(193) = 8.342$, $p < .001$). The mean of the ESL certified group was significantly higher ($M = 44.69$, $sd = 9.22$) than the mean of the non-ESL certified group ($M = 32.52$, $sd = 9.02$). The effect size was calculated for this analysis and found to be large ($d = 1.453$).

An independent samples *t*-test comparing the means of the sociocultural score of the feelings of preparedness to teach ELs of the ESL certified and the non-ESL certified participants

found a significant difference between the means of the two groups ($t(128.27) = 5.69$, $p < .001$). The mean of the ESL certified group was significantly higher ($M = 72.95$, $sd = 6.39$) than the mean of the non-ESL certified group ($M = 65.05$, $sd = 12.11$). The effect size was calculated for this analysis and found to be moderate ($d = 0.709$).

Supplemental Analysis

Differences among where participants taught (urban, suburban, cyber) were examined by total score and the three sub scales using a one-way ANOVA. A one-way ANOVA comparing the total score of feelings of preparedness to teach English Learners of both certified and non-ESL certified participants from an urban school district, a suburban school district, and a cyber school district was conducted. No significant difference was found among the three types of schools. ($F(2, 192) = .256$, $p > .05$). The total score means for each school district were: urban ($M = 166.19$, $sd = 32.44$), suburban ($M = 166.63$, $sd = 28.74$), and cyber ($M = 162.87$, $sd = 35.15$).

A one-way ANOVA comparing the pedagogical score of feelings of preparedness to teach English Learners of both certified and non-ESL certified participants from an urban school district, a suburban school district, and a cyber school district was conducted. No significant difference was found among the three types of schools. ($F(2, 192) = .520$, $p > .05$). The pedagogical score means for each school district were: urban ($M = 64.80$, $sd = 14.38$), suburban ($M = 64.22$, $sd = 12.28$), and cyber ($M = 62.48$, $sd = 16.41$).

A one-way ANOVA comparing the linguistic score of feelings of preparedness to teach English Learners of both certified and non-ESL certified participants from an urban school district, a suburban school district, and a cyber school district was conducted. No significant difference was found among the three types of schools. ($F(2, 192) = .446$, $p > .05$). The linguistic

score means for each school district were: urban (M = 35.14, sd = 10.34), suburban (M = 33.37, sd = 10.34), and cyber (M = 33.85, sd =10.90).

A one-way ANOVA comparing the sociocultural score of feelings of preparedness to teach English Learners of both certified and non-ESL certified participants from an urban school district, a suburban school district, and a cyber school district was conducted. No significant difference was found among the three types of schools. (F(2, 192) = .620, p > .05). The sociocultural score means for each school district were: urban (M = 66.24, sd = 11.42), suburban (M = 69.04, sd = 10.32), and cyber (M = 66.54, sd =12.18).

Differences among where ESL-certified participants taught (urban, suburban, cyber) were examined by total score and the three sub scales using a one-way ANOVA. A one-way ANOVA comparing the total score of feelings of preparedness to teach English Learners of certified ESL certified participants from an urban school district, a suburban school district, and a cyber school district was conducted. No significant difference was found among the three types of schools. (F(2, 39) = 1.55, p > .05). The total score means for each school district were: urban (M = 198.00, sd = 24.95), suburban (M = 180.43, sd = 31.91), and cyber (M = 198.55, sd =21.79).

A one-way ANOVA comparing the pedagogical score of feelings of preparedness to teach English Learners of ESL certified participants from an urban school district, a suburban school district, and a cyber school district was conducted. No significant difference was found among the three types of schools. (F(2, 39) = 1.618, p > .05). The pedagogical score means for each school district were: urban (M = 80.08, sd = 10.02), suburban (M = 70.43, sd = 15.37), and cyber (M = 78.64, sd =11.87).

A one-way ANOVA comparing the linguistic score of feelings of preparedness to teach English Learners of ESL certified participants from an urban school district, a suburban school

district, and a cyber school district was conducted. No significant difference was found among the three types of schools. ($F(2, 39) = 2.077$, $p > .05$). The linguistic score means for each school district were: urban ($M = 45.38$, $sd = 10.06$), suburban ($M = 38.43$, $sd = 13.18$), and cyber ($M = 46.27$, $sd = 6.53$).

A one-way ANOVA comparing the sociocultural score of feelings of preparedness to teach English Learners of ESL certified participants from an urban school district, a suburban school district, and a cyber school district was conducted. No significant difference was found among the three types of schools. ($F(2, 39) = .306$, $p > .05$). The sociocultural score means for each school district were: urban ($M = 72.54$, $sd = 7.68$), suburban ($M = 71.57$, $sd = 6.65$), and cyber ($M = 73.64$, $sd = 5.66$).

Differences among urban, suburban, and cyber non-ESL certified participants were examined by total score and the three sub-scales using a one-way ANOVA. No significant difference was found among the three types of schools for total score ($F(2, 150) = .083$, $p > .05$). The total score means for each school district were: urban ($M = 166.19$, $sd = 32.44$), suburban ($M = 161.80$, $sd = 26.71$), and cyber ($M=149.78$, $sd = 29.65$). However, there was a trend ($p = .083$) toward suburban schools scoring higher ($M = 161.8$, $sd = 26.71$) than cyber schools ($M = 149.78$, $sd = 29.65$).

A one-way ANOVA comparing the pedagogical score of non-ESL certified participants at an urban, suburban, and cyber school district was conducted. A significant difference was found among the participants ($F(2, 150) = 3.22$, $p < .05$). A moderate effect size for this Analysis of Variance model was calculated ($\eta^2 = .041$). Dunnet was used to determine the nature of the differences between the school districts. This analysis revealed that non-ESL certified participants at the urban school district scored higher ($M = 62.08$, $sd = 13.33$) than the

participants at the cyber school district (M = 56.56, sd = 13.65). The pedagogical scores of participants from the suburban school district (M = 62.05, sd = 10.61) were not significantly different from either of the two groups.

A one-way ANOVA comparing the linguistic score of non-ESL certified participants at an urban, suburban, and cyber school district was conducted. A significant difference was found among the participants ($F(2, 150) = 3.364$, $p < .05$). A moderate effect size for this Analysis of Variance model was calculated ($\eta^2 = .043$). Scheffe was used to determine the nature of the differences between the school districts. This analysis revealed that non-ESL certified participants at the urban school district scored higher (M = 33.3, sd = 9.32) than the participants at the cyber school district (M = 29.3, sd = 8.32). The linguistic scores of participants from the suburban school district (M = 31.60, sd = 8.88) were not significantly different from either of the two groups.

A one-way ANOVA comparing the sociocultural score of feelings of preparedness to teach English Learners of non-ESL certified participants from an urban school district, a suburban school district, and a cyber school district was conducted. No significant difference was found among the three types of schools. ($F(2, 150) = .910$, $p > .05$). The sociocultural score means for each school district were: urban (M = 65.12, sd = 11.65), suburban (M = 68.15, sd = 11.33), and cyber (M=63.93, sd =12.91).

An independent-samples t test comparing the mean total score of cyber school district participants and the brick-and-mortar (suburban and urban combined) participants found no significant differences between the means of the two groups ($t(193) = .714$, $p > .05$). The mean of the cyber school district (M = 162.87, sd = 35.15) was not significantly different from the mean of the brick-and-mortar participants (M = 166.29, sd = 31.47).

An independent-samples *t* test comparing the mean pedagogical score of cyber school district participants and the brick-and-mortar (suburban and urban combined) participants found no significant differences between the means of the two groups ($t(193) = 1.007$, $p > .05$). The mean of the cyber school district ($M = 62.48$, $sd = 16.41$) was not significantly different from the mean of the brick-and-mortar participants ($M = 64.66$, $sd = 13.86$).

An independent-samples *t* test comparing the mean linguistic score of cyber school district participants and the brick-and-mortar (suburban and urban combined) participants found no significant differences between the means of the two groups ($t(193) = .563$, $p > .05$). The mean of the cyber school district ($M = 33.85$, $sd = 10.90$) was not significantly different from the mean of the brick-and-mortar participants ($M = 34.72$, $sd = 10.32$).

An independent-samples *t* test comparing the mean sociocultural score of cyber school district participants and the brick-and-mortar (suburban and urban combined) participants found no significant differences between the means of the two groups ($t(193) = .223$, $p > .05$). The mean of the cyber school district ($M = 66.54$, $sd = 12.18$) was not significantly different from the mean of the brick-and-mortar participants ($M = 66.91$ $sd = 11.19$).

An independent-samples *t* test comparing the mean total score of male participants and female participants found no significant differences between the means of the two groups ($t(193) = .485$, $p > .05$). The mean of the male participants ($M = 161.92$, $sd = 30.96$) was not significantly different from the mean of the female participants ($M = 165.30$, $sd = 33.40$).

An independent-samples *t* test comparing the mean pedagogical score of male participants and female participants found no significant differences between the means of the two groups ($t(193) = .029$, $p > .05$). The mean of the male participants ($M = 63.69$, $sd = 13.90$) was not significantly different from the mean of the female participants ($M = 63.75$, $sd = 15.18$).

An independent-samples *t* test comparing the mean linguistic score of male participants and female participants found no significant differences between the means of the two groups ($t(193) = .-.395$, $p > .05$). The mean of the male participants ($M = 35.12$, $sd = 9.66$) was not significantly different from the mean of the female participants ($M = 34.24$, $sd = 10.70$).

An independent-samples *t* test comparing the mean sociocultural score of male participants and female participants found a trend between the means of the two groups ($t(193) = 1.729$, $p = .085$). The mean of the male participants ($M = 63.12$, $sd = 11.02$) was slightly lower but not significantly different from the mean of the female participants ($M = 67.31$, $sd = 11.60$).

An independent-samples *t* test comparing the mean total score of male ESL certified participants and female ESL certified participants found no significant differences between the means of the two groups ($t(40) = .385$, $p > .05$). The mean of the male participants ($M = 190.75$, $sd = 29.69$) was not significantly different from the mean of the female participants ($M = 195.84$, $sd = 24.76$).

An independent-samples *t* test comparing the mean pedagogical score of male ESL certified participants and female ESL certified participants found no significant differences between the means of the two groups ($t(40) = .208$, $p > .05$). The mean of the male participants ($M = 76.5$, $sd = 16.90$) was not significantly different from the mean of the female participants ($M = 77.84$, $sd = 11.83$).

An independent-samples *t* test comparing the mean linguistic score of male ESL certified participants and female ESL certified participants found no significant differences between the means of the two groups ($t(40) = -.070$, $p > .05$). The mean of the male participants ($M = 45.00$, $sd = 9.09$) was not significantly different from the mean of the female participants ($M = 44.66$, $sd = 9.36$).

An independent-samples *t* test comparing the mean sociocultural score of male ESL certified participants and female ESL certified participants found no significant differences between the means of the two groups ($t(40) = 1.227$, $p > .05$). The mean of the male participants ($M = 69.25$, $sd = 7.37$) was not significantly different from the mean of the female participants ($M = 73.34$, $sd = 6.26$).

An independent-samples *t* test comparing the mean total score of male non-ESL certified participants and female non-ESL certified participants found no significant differences between the means of the two groups ($t(151) = -.035$, $p > .05$). The mean of the male participants ($M = 156.68$, $sd = 28.77$) was not significantly different from the mean of the female participants ($M = 156.44$, $sd = 30.25$).

An independent-samples *t* test comparing the mean pedagogical score of male non-ESL certified participants and female non-ESL certified participants found no significant differences between the means of the two groups ($t(151) = -.552$, $p > .05$). The mean of the male participants ($M = 61.36$, $sd = 12.35$) was not significantly different from the mean of the female participants ($M = 59.66$, $sd = 13.53$).

An independent-samples *t* test comparing the mean linguistic score of male non-ESL certified participants and female non-ESL certified participants found no significant differences between the means of the two groups ($t(151) = -1.012$, $p > .05$). The mean of the male participants ($M = 33.32$, $sd = 8.79$) was not significantly different from the mean of the female participants ($M = 31.21$, $sd = 9.06$).

An independent-samples *t* test comparing the mean sociocultural score of male non-ESL certified participants and female non-ESL certified participants found no significant differences between the means of the two groups ($t(151) = 1.280$, $p > .05$). The mean of the male

participants (M = 62.00, sd = 11.33) was not significantly different from the mean of the female participants (M = 65.56, sd = 12.21).

Differences among participants with elementary, secondary, or both types of teaching licenses were examined by total score and the three sub scales. A one-way ANOVA comparing the total score of feelings of preparedness to teach English Learners of both certified and non-ESL certified participants with elementary, secondary, or both types of teaching licenses was conducted. No significant difference was found among the three types of teaching license (F(2, 188) = .981, p > .05). The total score means for type of teaching license were: elementary (M = 165.66, sd = 31.56), secondary (M = 160.28, sd = 33.84), and both (M = 169.04, sd = 31.33).

A one-way ANOVA comparing the pedagogical score of feelings of preparedness to teach English Learners of both certified and non-ESL certified participants with elementary, secondary, or both types of teaching licenses was conducted. No significant difference was found among the three types of teaching license (F(2, 188) = .413, p > .05). The pedagogical score means for type of teaching license were: elementary (M = 63.63, sd = 14.90), secondary (M = 63.12, sd = 15.60), and both (M = 65.56, sd = 13.81).

A one-way ANOVA comparing the linguistic score of feelings of preparedness to teach English Learners of both certified and non-ESL certified participants with elementary, secondary, or both types of teaching licenses was conducted. No significant difference was found among the three types of teaching license (F(2, 188) = .389, p > .05). The linguistic score means for type of teaching license were: elementary (M = 34.20, sd = 10.15), secondary (M = 33.50, sd = 10.96), and both (M = 35.28, sd = 10.35).

A one-way ANOVA comparing the sociocultural score of feelings of preparedness to teach English Learners of both certified and non-ESL certified participants with elementary,

secondary, or both types of teaching licenses was conducted. There was a trend toward a significant difference between participants with an elementary teaching license and secondary teaching license ($F(2, 188) = 2.904$, $p = .057$). A moderate effect size for this Analysis of Variance model was calculated ($\eta^2 = .030$). Tukey *HSD* was used to determine the nature of the differences between the groups. This analysis revealed that participants who have their elementary teaching license scored slightly higher on the sociocultural sub-scale ($M = 67.83$, $sd = 10.89$) than those who have their secondary teaching license ($M = 63.66$, $sd = 10.97$). Participants who have both elementary and secondary licenses ($M = 68.20$, $sd = 10.88$) were not significantly different from either of the other two groups.

A one-way ANOVA comparing the total score of feelings of preparedness to teach English Learners of ESL certified participants with elementary, secondary, or both types of teaching licenses was conducted. No significant difference was found among the three types of teaching license ($F(2, 39) = .279$, $p > .05$). The total score means for type of teaching license were: elementary ($M = 192.33$, $sd = 28.54$), secondary ($M = 195.92$, $sd = 23.93$), and both ($M = 199.33$, $sd = 21.15$).

A one-way ANOVA comparing the pedagogical score of feelings of preparedness to teach English Learners of ESL certified participants with elementary, secondary, or both types of teaching licenses was conducted. No significant difference was found among the three types of teaching license ($F(2, 39) = .165$, $p > .05$). The pedagogical score means for type of teaching license were: elementary ($M = 76.44$, $sd = 13.36$), secondary ($M = 78.67$, $sd = 11.38$), and both ($M = 78.67$, $sd = 11.80$).

A one-way ANOVA comparing the linguistic score of feelings of preparedness to teach English Learners of ESL certified participants with elementary, secondary, or both types of

teaching licenses was conducted. No significant difference was found among the three types of teaching license ($F(2, 39) = .336$, $p > .05$). The linguistic score means for type of teaching license were: elementary ($M = 43.33$, $sd = 11.28$), secondary ($M = 45.50$, $sd = 8.49$), and both ($M = 45.92$, $sd = 6.56$).

A one-way ANOVA comparing the sociocultural score of feelings of preparedness to teach English Learners of ESL certified participants with elementary, secondary, or both types of teaching licenses was conducted. No significant difference was found among the three types of teaching license ($F(2, 39) = .731$, $p > .05$). The sociocultural score means for type of teaching license were: elementary ($M = 72.56$, $sd = 6.94$), secondary ($M = 71.75$, $sd = 6.28$), and both ($M = 72.95$, $sd = 6.39$).

A one-way ANOVA comparing the total score of feelings of preparedness to teach English Learners of non-ESL certified participants with elementary, secondary, or both types of teaching licenses was conducted. No significant difference was found among the three types of teaching license ($F(3, 149) = .279$, $p > .05$). The total score means for type of teaching license were: elementary ($M = 158.70$, $sd = 28.62$), secondary ($M = 149.02$, $sd = 28.35$), and both ($M = 160.38$, $sd = 28.35$).

A one-way ANOVA comparing the pedagogical score of feelings of preparedness to teach English Learners of non-ESL certified participants with elementary, secondary, or both types of teaching licenses was conducted. No significant difference was found among the three types of teaching license ($F(3, 149) = 1.329$, $p > .05$). The pedagogical score means for type of teaching license were: elementary ($M = 60.29$, $sd = 13.46$), secondary ($M = 58.21$, $sd = 13.43$), and both ($M = 61.81$, $sd = 12.02$).

A one-way ANOVA comparing the linguistic score of feelings of preparedness to teach English Learners of non-ESL certified participants with elementary, secondary, or both types of teaching licenses was conducted. No significant difference was found among the three types of teaching license ($F(3, 149) = .950$, $p > .05$). The linguistic score means for type of teaching license were: elementary ($M = 31.81$, $sd = 8.40$), secondary ($M = 29.71$, $sd = 8.72$), and both ($M = 32.24$, $sd = 9.18$).

A one-way ANOVA comparing the sociocultural score of feelings of preparedness to teach English Learners of non-ESL certified participants with elementary, secondary, or both types of teaching licenses was conducted. No significant difference was found among the three types of teaching license ($F(3, 149) = 1.970$, $p > .05$). The sociocultural score means for type of teaching license were: elementary ($M = 66.60$, $sd = 11.42$), secondary ($M = 61.11$, $sd = 10.94$), and both ($M = 66.33$, $sd = 11.31$).

A series of Pearson correlations were calculated examining the relationship between all participants' total score, pedagogical score, linguistic score, sociocultural score and their age. A weak correlation between age and total score (r (189) = -.004, $p > .05$), between age and pedagogical score (r (189) = -.006, $p > .05$), between age and linguistic score (r (189) = -.034, $p > .05$), and age and sociocultural score (r (189) = .027, $p > .05$) were all not significant. Age is not related to total score, pedagogical score, linguistic score, or sociocultural score in the ELL Self-Efficacy Survey.

A series of Pearson correlations were calculated examining the relationship between ESL certified participants' total score, pedagogical score, linguistic score, sociocultural score and their age. A weak correlation between age and total score (r (39) = .212, $p > .05$), between age and pedagogical score (r (39) = .159, $p > .05$), between age and linguistic score (r (39) = .226, p

> .05), and age and sociocultural score (r (39) = .189, p > .05) were all not significant. Age is not related to total score, pedagogical score, linguistic score, or sociocultural score in the ELL Self-Efficacy Survey among ESL certified participants.

A series of Pearson correlations were calculated examining the relationship between non-ESL certified participants' total score, pedagogical score, linguistic score, sociocultural score and their age. A weak correlation between age and total score (r (148) = -.085, p > .05), between age and pedagogical score (r (148) = -.081, p > .05), between age and linguistic score (r (148) = -.146, p > .05), and age and sociocultural score (r (148) = -.011, p > .05) were all not significant. Age is not related to total score, pedagogical score, linguistic score, or sociocultural score in the ELL Self-Efficacy Survey among non-ESL certified participants.

A Pearson correlation was calculated examining the relationship between all participants' total score and their years of teaching experience. A weak correlation that was not significant was found (r (193) = .097, p > .05). Years of experience are not related to total score in the ELL Self-Efficacy Survey. A Pearson correlation was calculated examining the relationship between all participants' pedagogical score and their years of teaching experience. A weak correlation that was not significant was found (r (193) = .073, p > .05). Years of teaching experience are not related to pedagogical score in the ELL Self-Efficacy Survey. A Pearson correlation was calculated examining the relationship between all participants' linguistic score and their years of teaching experience. A weak correlation that was not significant was found (r (193) = .091, p > .05). Years of teaching experience are not related to linguistic score in the ELL Self-Efficacy Survey. A Pearson correlation was calculated examining the relationship between all participants' sociocultural score and their years of teaching experience. A weak correlation that was not significant was found (r (193) = .100, p > .05). Years of teaching experience are not

related to sociocultural score in the ELL Self-Efficacy Survey. Additionally, Pearson correlations calculated for only ESL certified participants and then for only non-ESL certified participants examining the relationship between their total scores, pedagogical scores, linguistic scores, sociocultural scores and their years of teaching were all not significant.

Scores for all participants were converted to percentages of maximum score of all sub-scales. A one-way repeated-measures ANOVA was calculated comparing the scores of all participants in the three sub-scales: pedagogical, linguistic, and sociocultural. A significant effect was found ($F(1, 388) = 233.50$, $p < .001$). Follow-up protected t tests revealed that the sociocultural score (M .834, sd = .145) is significantly higher than the pedagogical score (M .708, sd = .166) and linguistic score (M .625, sd = .192) and the pedagogical score (M .708, sd = .166) is significantly higher than the linguistic score (M .625, sd = .192).

Chapter 5

Discussion

Introduction

English learners face numerous challenges, including linguistic difficulties with grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation as well as cognitive and academic hurdles like varying literacy skills and learning styles. Social and cultural differences such as understanding idioms and social norms, combined with emotional factors like anxiety and motivation, can impact their confidence and integration. Additionally, educational challenges, such as access to resources and effective instructional methods, along with practical issues like time constraints and economic barriers further complicate their language acquisition process. Overcoming these challenges necessitates a supportive environment, tailored teaching strategies, and accessible resources.

Engaging and instructing English Learners (ELs) is challenging for teachers due to the diverse proficiency levels, language barriers, and cultural differences. Adapting instructional strategies to meet varied needs, ensuring active participation, and designing fair assessments are complex tasks. Additionally, limited resources and insufficient professional development can hinder effective teaching. Emotional factors, such as student anxiety and teacher stress, further complicate the process, requiring targeted support and adequate resources to help teachers successfully support ELs.

This study examined the differences between non-ESL certified and certified ESL teachers in Pennsylvania about their feelings of preparedness to teach English Learners (ELs). The null hypothesis that there is no difference in the feeling of preparedness between non-certified and certified ESL teachers in Pennsylvania was rejected in that ESL certified participants had a higher total score, pedagogical score, linguistic score, and sociocultural score than non-ESL certified participants on the ELL Self-Efficacy Survey.

Discussion

Bandura's Theory of Self-Efficacy is highly relevant to teachers and emphasizes the importance of self-belief in teachers' abilities to foster a positive and effective learning environment, ultimately benefiting both educators and their students (Bandura, 1977). This study used the ELL Self-Efficacy Scale to measure both certified ESL teachers and non-ESL certified teachers' beliefs in their pedagogical, linguistic, and sociocultural abilities to instruct and engage the English Learners in their classrooms. The results of this study found that ESL certified participants have significantly higher scores in ELL education self-efficacy than non-ESL certified participants. Although this is not surprising, because ESL certified teachers have had more training in how to instruct and engage ELs, it is extremely important for educators to recognize that non-ESL certified teachers have English Learners in their classes yet are not confident in their abilities to teach them. Teachers need to have high self-efficacy in ELL education because it significantly influences teachers' effectiveness to manage ELs in the classroom, to implement EL instructional strategies, and to engage English Learners, leading to improved student outcomes.

Early work found that teachers need specialized knowledge and skills to help English Learners acquire proficiency and content knowledge (Baker et al., 2014; August & Blackburn, 2019). Ninety-three percent of participants in this study want more professional development on how best to instruct and engage the English Learners (ELs) in their classrooms. More professional development on EL teaching strategies can effectively address the increasing diversity in classrooms and improve EL student outcomes. As the population of ELs continues to grow, school districts must provide the necessary skill development for teachers so that they are

prepared to modify their teaching methods to make the content comprehensible at all English proficiency levels.

Villegas (2018) and Stairs-Davenport (2021) previously found that many teachers do not have the confidence to make content comprehensible for English Learners. This study found similar results in that only 31% of non-ESL certified teachers felt confident that they can differentiate assessments to evaluate the English skills and academic learning of ELs in their classrooms. That means that more than two-thirds of non-ESL certified participants cannot tailor assessments to measure the academic progress of their students who are not proficient in the English language. Furthermore, only 25% of non-ESL certified participants know how to develop higher-order thinking skills in ELs through teaching the curriculum. Teachers need to develop higher-order thinking skills in their students to enhance critical thinking, problem-solving, and academic success. Developing higher-order thinking skills is challenging for English Learners because they must simultaneously master complex cognitive tasks and a new language. The language barrier can hinder their ability to fully understand and engage with advanced concepts and participate in discussions. ELs may also lack the background knowledge or cultural context needed to grasp certain ideas which is why teachers need to be trained in the best practices and strategies specific to ELs.

Earlier work also focused on the importance of culture and first language for English learners. Vigil (2023) stated that when English learners lose parts of their culture or their first language, they lose background knowledge that they had gained through previous experience. Only 24% of this study's non-ESL certified participants know how to create opportunities of EL students to speak in their native language. Creating opportunities for ELs to use their first language in class is important for cognitive development, as it helps them understand and

process new information more effectively. It supports their cultural identity and self-esteem, facilitates learning transfer to English, and enhances comprehension and participation in class. Additionally, it bridges gaps in understanding and promotes family engagement, enabling parents and guardians to better support their child's education.

Besterman et al. (2018) and Lavandez (2011) both noted how important the home-school connection is for English Learners and their families. The home-school connection is vital for student achievement, behavior, and emotional support, as engaged parents contribute to better academic performance and regular attendance. Results from this study showed that 60% of non-ESL certified participants and 76% of certified ESL participants can maintain frequent communications with ELs' parents and guardians. This is positive to note because effective communication fosters collaboration, encourages parental involvement, and ensures consistency in expectations, which helps English Learners thrive.

Fu and Wang (2021) along with Stairs-Davenport (2021) found that teachers want to know how best to support and instruct English learners, and this study found the same. Eighty-nine percent of non-ESL certified participants and 100% of ESL certified participants can show empathy and support for ELs who experience hardships and can understand challenges and anxieties that EL students may undergo in adapting to a different culture. All participants scored significantly higher on the sociocultural sub-scale than the pedagogical and linguistic sub-scales. This shows that teachers have a grasp on a variety of sociocultural skills needed to engage effectively with diverse student populations and create inclusive classrooms. These key skills include cultural awareness, empathy, and effective communication abilities to foster relationships with students and families. These skills enable teachers to support all learners and contribute to a positive educational experience.

Pre-service teaching programs, school districts, state educational stakeholders, and families should take note that all teachers scored lowest on the linguistic sub-scale. As schools become linguistically more diverse, mainstream teachers must develop linguistic competence to effectively support English Learners. Teachers need linguistic competence to effectively instruct and support English Learners because it enhances communication, enabling clear understanding of instruction and content. This competence allows for culturally relevant instruction, fostering engagement, and helps in modeling language use while providing constructive feedback for language development. It also aids in differentiating instruction to meet diverse needs. Linguistic competence is crucial for creating an inclusive and effective learning environment for ELs. Pennsylvania's pre-service teaching programs do not dedicate enough time to linguistic competencies. ESL certification programs also do not provide substantial instruction in linguistics. Pennsylvania's ESL certification program is an add-on certificate for those teachers with a K-12 teacher license. The certification program consists of only six courses dedicated to pedagogical, linguistic, and sociocultural awareness. There are no Praxis tests required to obtain your ESL Specialist certificate. Praxis tests are used to assess teacher candidates' knowledge and classroom skills and must be passed to gain your teacher certification in most content and grade-level areas.

This study also found that there is no correlation between age or years of experience and feelings of preparedness to instruct and engage English Learners. Thus, a new teacher could feel the same way as a veteran teacher in how skilled or unskilled in teaching English Learners. So, even as the number of English Learners has increased over time, new teachers are still not being instructed on how to best teach ELs. This is important because the lack of training for new teachers on how to effectively teach ELs can lead to inadequate support and instruction for a

growing population of students. Without the necessary skills and strategies, teachers may struggle to meet the diverse needs of English Learners, which can hinder their academic progress and integration into the classroom. This gap in teacher preparation can contribute to inequities in education, as ELs may not receive the tailored support they require to succeed. Addressing this issue is crucial for ensuring that all students, regardless of their language background, receive a high-quality education that promotes their learning and development.

Participants in this study were from an urban school, suburban school, and a cyber school. Teaching at any of those types of school districts presents distinct differences due to various factors such as demographics, resources, and learning environments. Each environment requires tailored teaching approaches to meet the unique needs of the students and the specific challenges they face. Thus, it was interesting to find in this study that no differences were found among the three types of school in feelings of preparedness to teach English Learners whether participants were ESL certified or not. The finding that there is no difference in teachers' self-efficacy in instructing English Learners across a cyber, urban, or suburban school districts is intriguing because it challenges expectations that different teaching environments would impact confidence levels. This can provide insight to policymakers and future studies on what types of professional development on the teaching of English Learners can be used at all types of school districts to improve the feeling of preparedness in teaching English Learners for all teachers.

This study further showed that no matter what type of teaching certification a participant had (elementary, secondary, or both), there was no significant difference in score on the ELL Education Self-Efficacy scale. Most would assume that elementary certified teachers are better equipped at teaching ELs because they focus on foundational skills in literacy and language development and use developmentally appropriate practices. Elementary schools tend to have

smaller class sizes which allow for more individualized attention, while integrated learning approaches help combine language instruction with content learning effectively. In contrast, secondary teachers often face larger class sizes, a stronger emphasis on content-specific knowledge and less training in language acquisition and literacy strategies, making it more challenging to effectively support ELs. However, no significant difference in total score, pedagogical score, linguistic score, or sociocultural score was found. This finding can encourage greater collaboration between elementary and secondary educators. Sharing best practices and resources can be mutually beneficial, leading to more cohesive and effective approaches to teaching ELs. Knowing that teachers at both levels feel similarly prepared can help administrators focus on resources and support on universal strategies to improve EL instruction across all grades.

Implications

The number of English Learners in the United States including Pennsylvania is growing at a rapid rate. The Office of Data Quality in the Pennsylvania Department of Education (2024) reported that in the 2013-2014 school year, there were 48,439 identified English Learners, and in the 2017-2018 school year there were 61,835 ELs. That is a 28% increase in the number of ELs in 4 years. In the 2022-2023 school year, there were 87,717 ELs. This is almost a 42% increase from the 2017-2018 school year. The time has already passed to start thinking about how to make sure that all teachers are prepared and equipped to teach the English Learners in their classes. Whether a teacher is teaching Algebra, Biology, World History or English Literature, they must know the strategies and techniques to make the content comprehensible for all English proficiency levels. The achievement gap between native-English speakers and English learners will only continue to grow if nothing changes as far as teacher preparation programs and

professional development for in-service teachers. Lower academic achievement and increased frustrations for English Learners will never cease if their teachers do not know the techniques to instruct this group of students.

Duggan et al. (2020) found that all 50 states and the District of Columbia require teachers to complete coursework or professional development workshops every five years to keep their teaching licenses active. The overwhelming majority of states do not have any requirement that these courses or professional development include anything related to teaching English Learners. Only Colorado, Massachusetts, Minnesota, and New York have some type of professional development about English Learners required for recertification (Duggan et al., 2020). Thus, a teacher can go their entire professional career without having any additional training on the best practices and strategies for English Learners to keep their teaching license active.

This lack of preparedness to teach English Learners will and is currently causing a multitude of academic struggles. If teachers are not prepared to teach English Learners (ELs), students may face significant academic struggles, including language barriers that hinder understanding instructions, participating in discussions, and comprehending reading materials. This can lead to falling behind in core subjects, incomplete assignments, and lower test scores. ELs may struggle with vocabulary development and writing, reducing classroom participation and engagement. Additionally, ELs might be misidentified for special education services due to their language difficulties, highlighting the need for teacher preparedness in supporting ELs effectively.

Professional development should address the current realities of education, including the academic and social-emotional support for English Learners. Educational stakeholders and lawmakers should assess teacher professional development and pre-service teacher programs to

ensure that there is adequate preparation for all teachers of English Learners. Creating more opportunities for educators to learn about the pedagogical, linguistic and sociocultural needs of ELs is vital to ensuring that more schools be ready to meet the diverse needs of the English Learners who enter their schools every year.

Limitations

The design of the self-efficacy study may be a limitation to the study because teachers often find it challenging to be honest about their ability to instruct English Learners due to a combination of inadequate training, fear of judgement, and professional pride. Additionally, teachers may be unfamiliar with English Learner strategies and choose not to participate in the study. The sample size may be too small and lack generalizability to other school districts across the country. There was no option given to participants to select if they only have an emergency ESL certificate. The school districts have far fewer ESL certified teachers than non-ESL certified teachers which may make the comparisons inaccurate. There was a very small number of male ESL certified participants.

Future Research

To help close the achievement gap between English Learners and native English-speaking students, future research needs to focus on a variety of areas. Teachers and other educational professionals should investigate and identify effective teaching strategies for English Learners. The most effective instructional strategies for ELs across different grade levels and subject areas need to be at the forefront of professional development and included in courses for pre-service teacher programs. Also, current professional development on teachers' ability to support ELs should be examined to find out their effectiveness in the classrooms. Those states that do require some EL professional development, such as Pennsylvania, should be correlated to

English Learner academic performance to identify whether the professional development that is being offered is affecting EL academic outcomes. Long-term studies should be conducted to track the academic progress and outcomes of ELs to identify the factors that are either helping or hindering this group of students to succeed over time.

School districts can explore various curricula to see if what they are using currently is culturally responsive and linguistically appropriate to meet the needs of the English Learners in their schools. By doing this, teachers can develop and evaluate alternative assessment methods that can accurately reflect ELs' knowledge and skills. English Learners are a very diverse sub-group of students. A curriculum for one school district may not work as well for another district that has ELs with different needs.

Additional research should encompass a larger sample of certified ESL teachers to enhance the generalizability of the findings, given that the limited number of ESL certified participants in this study restricts broader applicability. To add to that, having more male ESL certified participants in future studies can ensure a more holistic and inclusive approach leading to additional data. Subsequent studies can also focus on the varying English language proficiency levels to examine whether teachers can discern the difference and know how to modify their instructional content for each level. For instance, students with minimal English proficiency would require significantly more support than students who are approaching native fluency. Educational technology is another growing area in language acquisition. Studies can focus on how teachers are using educational technology to mitigate language barriers and enhance content comprehensibility for English Learners. At the same time, educational technology can be looked at to see if it is negatively impacting ELs ability to learn the language.

Conclusion

ESL certified teachers have a higher self-efficacy in teaching English Learners than those teachers who are not certified in ESL. ESL certified teachers feel more confident in making the content comprehensible at all English proficiency levels and can create assessments to accurately evaluate what their English Learners know. The vast majority of participants in this study want more professional development on the strategies and best instructional practices for English Learners. Educational policies need to provide these trainings so that the English Learners do not fall further behind their English-speaking classmates both academically and socioemotionally.

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Appendix A

Informed Consent Form

Title: The Self-Efficacy of ESL certified and Non-ESL Certified Teachers in their Ability to Instruct and Engage English Learners

Principal Investigator (PI): Emily Coleman – Ph.D. Student at Marywood University
Principal Investigator Contact Information: 570-815-1237 coleman.emily@maryu.marywood.edu
Research Advisor: Dr. Alan Levine – Marywood University
Research Advisor Contact Information: 570-290-4222 levine@marywood.edu

Invitation for a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study about your feeling of preparedness to instruct English Learners (ELs). You were chosen because you teach at a school with English Learners. Please read this form. Ask any questions you may have before agreeing to take part in this study.

Purpose – About the Study

The purpose of this study is to compare non-certified English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers and certified ESL teachers in their feelings of preparedness in teaching English Learners (ELs) in their classes at a school district with English Learners.

Procedures - What You Will Do

You will be asked to answer a demographic questionnaire. No identifying information will be asked nor collected. You will then be given a survey related to your feelings of preparedness in teaching English Learners. It will take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

Risks and Benefits

The risks are no greater than the risks in daily life or activities. If you take the survey a work computer, your employer might have access to responses.

The benefits are that you may read about items related to pedagogical, linguistic, and sociocultural domains related to English Learners.

Payment or Other Rewards

You will not receive a payment or reward.

Confidentiality

No web-based action is perfectly secure. However, reasonable efforts will be made to protect your transmission from third-party access. The records of this study will be kept private. Information used in any written or presented report will not make it possible to identify you. Only Emily Coleman and her

advisor, Dr. Alan Levine will have access to the research records. Records will be kept in a password locked file and a password locked computer. Electronic records will be kept for 5 years. Then, they will be deleted.

Taking Part is Voluntary

Participation is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relationship with Emily Coleman. It will not affect your relationship with Marywood University or your employment at your school district. You may withdraw at any time until you submit your answers. There will be no penalty. Simply, close the survey window. Your information will be deleted and destroyed.

Contacts and Questions

If you have questions about this study at any time, contact the principal investigator or the advisor. Their contact information appears at the top of page one.

If you have questions related to the rights of research participants or research-related injuries (where applicable), please contact the Institutional Review Board at (570) 961-4782 or irbhelp@marywood.edu.

You may print a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent

By proceeding:

- You understand what the study involves.
- You have asked questions if you had them.
- You agree to participate in the study.

Appendix B

Email Recruitment Message

Subject Line: Survey on Teaching English Learners

Dear Faculty Members:

My name is Emily Coleman, and I am a Ph.D. Student at Marywood University. I am conducting a research study. Its purpose is to test the theory of self-efficacy that compares non-certified English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers and certified ESL teachers in their feelings of preparedness in teaching English learners (ELs) in their classes at an urban school district with a high number of English learners.

You are invited to participate if you qualify. To qualify, you must be a teacher at the school district and have 1 or more years of teaching experience. The research will take place via an online survey, through Qualtrics. It will take about 15 minutes to complete.

Benefits may include reading about items related to pedagogical, linguistic, and sociocultural domains related to English Learners.

Survey Link: https://marywood.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/preview/previewId/a565fe8c-2da7-49ac-93db-faaf79e42872/SV_d50HuqeqDikKT54?Q_CHL=preview&Q_SurveyVersionID=current

This study has been approved by Marywood University's Exempt Review Committee.

Sincerely,

Emily Coleman
coleman.emily@maryu.marywood.edu
570-815-1237

Appendix C

ELL Education Self-Efficacy Scale

Directions: This scale includes 46 items that ask about how you perceive your own capabilities in working with English language learners (ELLS). In this study, **ELL students** refer to non-native English speakers who are not yet proficient in English and require instructional support in order to thrive in regular classrooms. As a teacher who teaches in mainstream classrooms, please rate your competence in ELL instruction on a 100-point scale **with 1 representing "Cannot do at all"** and **5 representing "Highly certain can do"**. You should answer these questions to the best of your knowledge by selecting the choices that most accurately reflect your current situation. All your responses will be anonymous.

1	2	3	4	5
Cannot do at all		Moderately can do		Very Certain Can do

1. I can differentiate assessments to evaluate the English skills and academic learning of ELL students.
2. I can use a variety of assessments to track ELL students' academic achievement in content areas.
3. I can accommodate ELL students' learning needs while planning and administering assessments.
4. I can skillfully analyze and interpret ELL students' assessment results.
5. I can provide constructive feedback to ELL students based on their assessment results.
6. I can use appropriate grouping strategies to engage ELL students in collaborative learning.
7. I can set clear learning goals for ELL students.
8. I can use non-linguistic activities (e.g. visual and kinesthetic activities) to help ELL students formulate and elaborate on knowledge.
9. I can provide enough wait time for ELL students to respond to my questions.
10. I can assign meaningful homework and practice for ELL students to apply and reinforce knowledge taught in class.
11. I can establish consistent schedules to help ELL students adjust to the classroom environment.
12. I can use a variety of strategies to manage ELL students' disruptive behaviors and other special needs/difficulties.
13. I can help ELL students practice the classroom routines through modeling.
14. I can create clear classroom rules and communicate them effectively to ELL students.
15. I can effectively work with ELL students to address their discipline problems.
16. I can develop higher-order thinking skills in my ELL students through teaching the curriculum.
17. I can provide ELL students with a curriculum that is challenging and creative.
18. I can integrate abundant technological resources in the curriculum to help ELL students learn more effectively.

19. I can motivate ELL students to pay attention to language irregularities that may confuse them.
20. I can teach some basic principles of word formation to aid ELL students' vocabulary acquisition.
21. I can understand the English variability displayed by ELL student, such as vernacular dialects and accents.
22. I can use my metalinguistic knowledge to analyze the similarities and differences between English and other languages.
23. I can use my knowledge in second language acquisition to support ELL students' learning.
24. I can create opportunities for ELL students to speak in their native language.
25. I can ensure that ELL students understand the information conveyed to them in class.
26. I can distinguish between ELL students' academic language proficiency and social/conversational language proficiency.
27. I can explicitly teach academic terminologies that are challenging to ELL students.
28. I can explicitly teach text structures to ELL students, such as differences in narratives and expository texts.
29. I can address the discourse patterns and rhetorical devices pertinent to academic tasks.
30. I can show empathy and support for ELL students who experience hardships.
31. I can understand challenges and anxieties that ELL students may undergo in adapting to a different culture.
32. I can boost the self-confidence and self-esteem of ELL students.
33. I can appreciate the cultures and values that ELL students bring to the class.
34. I can promote diversity and mutual respect in class.
35. I can maximize opportunities for ELL students interacting with their English-proficient peers.
36. I can help my English-speaking students deepen their understanding about other cultures.
37. I can spend time on helping ELL students develop a sense of belonging to the learning community.
38. I can encourage ELL students to make their voice heard.
39. I can accumulate knowledge of ELL students' home culture.
40. I can develop a critical and impartial perspective of ELL students' families.
41. I can maintain frequent communications with ELL students' parents.
42. I can work collaboratively with parents to address the special needs of ELL students.
43. I can recognize the discontinuity between ELL students' home culture and school culture.
44. I can build connections between ELL student's cultural background and their classroom learning experiences.
45. I can identify rich resources in the local communities to support ELL students' learning.

Fu, Y., & Wang, J. (2021). Assessing mainstream pre-service teachers' self-efficacy to teach English language learners. *International Journal of Instruction*, *14*(3), 153–174. https://doi.org/10.29333/iji.2021.1439a

Appendix D
Demographics Questionnaire

1. What is your age? _____
2. What is your gender?

   a. Female b. Male C. Prefer not to say
3. How many years have you been full-time teaching in public and private schools?

   Public_____

   Private_____
4. Are you a certified elementary teacher, secondary or both?

   a. Elementary b. Secondary c. both d. neither
5. If you are a secondary certified teacher, in what content areas are you certified? _____
6. Are you a special education teacher?

   a. Yes b. No
7. Are you a reading specialist?

   a. Yes b. No
8. Do you currently have English Learners (ELs) in your classes?

   a. Yes b. No
9. Do you have your ESL certificate?

   a. Yes b. No
10. In addition to the 1 required course dedicated to teaching English Learners (ELs) in your pre-service teacher program, how many other courses have you taken about teaching ELs? _____
11. Does your school district offer professional development related to English Learners (ELs)? a. Yes b. No

12. Do you believe there needs to be more professional development on how to instruct and engage English Learners (ELs) in your class? a. Yes b. No

Appendix E

Age Frequency Distribution

Age of All Participants

Age	(n)	Percent
24	2	1.0
25	2	1.0
26	7	3.6
27	3	1.5
28	4	2.1
29	1	0.5
30	3	1.5
31	2	1.0
32	5	2.6
33	4	2.1
34	7	3.6
35	6	3.1
36	6	3.1
37	4	2.1
38	12	6.2
39	6	3.1
40	5	2.6
41	8	4.1
42	8	4.1
43	13	6.7
44	5	2.6
45	9	4.6
46	5	2.6
47	5	2.6
48	4	2.1
49	8	4.1
50	8	4.1
51	4	2.1
52	7	3.6
53	1	0.5
54	8	4.1
55	5	2.6
56	3	1.5
58	3	1.5

59	1	0.5
60	3	1.5
62	2	1.0
64	1	0.5
72	1	0.5
Missing	4	2.1
Total	195	100

Appendix F

Years of Teaching Experience Frequency Distribution

Participants' Years of Experience

Years	(n)	Percent
1	1	13.3
2	6	3.1
3	8	4.1
4	15	7.7
5	3	1.5
6	8	4.1
7	3	1.5
8	8	4.1
9	2	1.0
10	10	5.1
11	10	5.1
12	5	2.6
13	5	2.6
14	5	2.6
15	4	2.0
16	8	4.1
17	11	5.6
18	11	5.6
19	6	3.1
20	6	3.1
21	4	2.1
22	6	3.1
23	6	3.1
24	3	1.5
25	8	4.1
26	5	2.6
28	3	1.5
29	2	1.0
31	1	0.5
32	1	0.5
34	1	0.5
Missing	16	8.2
Total	195	100

Appendix G

Total Score for ESL Certified Participants Frequency Distribution

Total Score for ESL Certified Participants

Total Score	(n)	Percent
142	1	2.4
143	1	2.4
151	1	2.4
152	1	2.4
165	1	2.4
167	1	2.4
171	1	2.4
173	1	2.4
174	1	2.4
178	3	7.1
183	1	2.4
184	1	2.4
185	1	2.4
186	1	2.4
188	1	2.4
189	1	2.4
191	1	2.4
192	1	2.4
193	2	4.8
194	1	2.4
205	2	4.8
211	1	2.4
213	2	4.8
215	2	4.8
216	1	2.4
220	1	2.4
221	1	2.4
223	2	4.8
225	7	16.7
Total	42	100

Appendix H

Total Score for non-ESL Certified Participants Frequency Distribution

Total Score for non- ESL Certified Participants

Total Score	(n)	Percent
45	1	0.7
78	1	0.7
88	1	0.7
96	2	1.3
97	1	0.7
99	1	0.7
101	1	0.7
105	1	0.7
107	2	1.3
110	1	0.7
111	1	0.7
113	1	0.7
117	1	0.7
123	1	0.7
125	1	0.7
127	2	1.3
128	1	0.7
130	3	2.0
131	2	1.3
132	3	2.0
134	2	1.3
135	6	3.9
136	2	1.3
137	1	0.7
138	3	2.0
139	1	0.7
140	3	2.0
141	2	1.3
142	3	2.0
143	4	2.6
144	1	0.7
145	2	1.3
146	1	0.7

147	1	0.7
148	3	2.0
149	2	1.3
150	1	0.7
151	3	2.0
152	2	1.3
154	1	0.7
155	1	0.7
157	2	1.3
158	1	0.7
159	1	0.7
160	4	2.6
161	1	0.7
163	1	0.7
164	2	1.3
165	2	1.3
166	3	2.0
168	1	0.7
169	1	0.7
170	4	2.6
171	2	1.3
172	3	2.0
173	3	2.0
174	1	0.7
175	5	3.3
176	2	1.3
177	1	0.7
178	2	1.3
179	4	2.6
180	1	0.7
181	5	3.3
182	1	0.7
183	2	1.3
184	1	0.7
185	2	1.3
186	1	0.7
187	3	2.0
192	1	0.7
193	1	0.7
194	1	0.7

196	4	2.6
197	2	1.3
198	1	0.7
202	1	0.7
203	1	0.7
206	1	0.7
207	2	1.3
209	1	0.7
225	2	1.3
Total	153	100