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EXPLORING TEACHING APPROACHES AND SOCIOCULTURAL DYNAMICS IN THE
MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL ENGLISH SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHING
ENVIRONMENT FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE MULTICULTURAL EDUCATOR

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The School of Education

by

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To King Jesus Majestic Creator and Word of Life

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The Importance of the Name

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ABSTRACT

The act of teaching in the middle and high school involves highly complex sociocultural dynamics in challenging environments. English second language specialists are the type of educators that closely work with the most at risk students in that context. This study explored middle and high school multicultural ESL instructors' literacy delivery approaches, the understanding they have of difficulties in their field of action, and their particular awareness, interpretation of otherness and attitudes regarding the specific characteristics of their working milieu.

This qualitative study utilized participant observation and Developmental Research Sequence (Spradley, 1980) as the systematic approach to gather and to analyze data. The study was conducted in an inner city public school district in the south of Louisiana where seven multicultural ESL specialists were located; participants included were originally from the United States (two), Latvia, the Philippines, Jordan, Romania, and Japan (one each).

The findings of this study shed light over the fate of most Latino teenagers in public middle and high schools, the appropriateness of the State's response to the literacy and human needs of all students at risk of failure in the middle and high school, and the level of appreciation education has in the country as perceived by the multicultural educators participating in the study. The results of the study also indicated a possible relationship among literacy, shame, and students' behavior.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Vignette 1 Mutairu

I know I am intelligent because I have survived... actually I am a survivor. I also know it because I am learning a new way to survive. I was born in a refugee camp in Africa, never met my father, he was killed; my mother and older sisters managed to bring food to the tent every now and then; I have never been to school until now, never before held a piece of paper, a pencil or a book in my hands; never been in a classroom among other children that were able to read, write, and follow routines. I was totally lost ... I'm learning to function here and to act normal... like the others... Now I know that I am supposed to sit down and listen to the teacher, that I can't take objects in the classroom –they belong to other people; I know that I am supposed to read and do homework but I don't know how. I am twelve years old and I'm just learning to read and write. At the beginning my class mates didn't fully understand what was wrong with me and now I pretend I know what's going on. But truly I'm still trying to get a hold of life here in this country. What I do is just grabbing the pen and copying words from the book or from the board but don't have a clue about what they mean. I am so angry, I feel stupid... I have no friends, no one understands my words and I don't understand their language... it feels very lonely here but I know now that one day I will be like the others not just acting like normal people, I'll be normal, I will learn the language and understand them; the acting and guessing game will be over, I will have learned to live in this country and to survive here.

That is my great hope.

Vignette 2 Orlando

Hi, my name is Orlando; I am a twelve years old boy from a country in the Caribbean. Just a month ago I was still living with granny Eva in Santa Ana, a big city there. Every weekend my dad came to take me playing soccer to the park or to buy me an ice cream, during the weekdays I went to school; I was enrolled in seventh grade. I didn't know my mother. I mean I couldn't remember my experience with her or her face because she left the country when I was two years old and left me with granny. All I knew is that she was working hard all these years to save money and take me to live with her in the United States. Finally the promised trip to meet my mother came. I felt odd; years before when told that one day I will see mom I was very happy and anticipated that day with thrill but then putting together a small backpack, a pair of new shoes, and hugging granny and dad not knowing when I would be able to see them again was terribly saddening. After almost two weeks of being passed like a bag of potatoes from one Coyote¹ to the other I finally made it to Nuevo Laredo; maybe I was sedated or I fainted because the only thing I remember is that I was in a small clinic and was being given intravenous fluids. In about a week I was strong enough to travel and in three more days my mother and I were finally reunited after ten years of not seeing each other. Now I live with my mother, her husband, and my little sister. I started attending school but since I know nothing of the language they made me start at level sixth; I have learned a lot. I'm learning how to pronounce and form the English words. I have good teachers. I like to read magazines and books about science, animals, adventure, and real people. I like to read horror stories too or stories of heroes and myths. I like mathematics. I think I am a good reader and writer. I like computers very much so I would like to become a technician in technology and computers. I love soccer and wish I had friends to play with. I've never been to the zoo, to the circus, on an airplane, on a train, to the beach, to the

¹ Coyote: term for people smuggler in the Mexican-American border

mountains, on a boat, to a farm, to a summer camp or to a swimming pool but I have been to the grocery store, to the shopping center, and to a restaurant.

The names in the vignettes are pseudonyms and most facts used to complete the descriptions above were gathered over the course of observations and interactions with local students during previous inquiry endeavors I undertook. Even though the teachers I will now observe cater to a pre-teen student population, due to the nature of the subject matter taught – English second language (ESL) – the majority of their students are just beginning to acquire basic English literacy skills. The presence of children like Mutairu and Orlando in the same ESL classroom raises many political, social, humanitarian, and philosophical questions some of which I will address up to certain extent in this chapter; though my ultimate interest would be to explore how multicultural ESL professionals do negotiate the different dynamics that take place in this peculiar environment while delivering literacy instruction.

Statement of the Problem

First, sociocultural, communication, and behavior dynamics in the middle and high school ESL classrooms could be rather complex (O'Brien, Stewart, Moje, 1995) not only due to the natural implications of time and location and the tensions they generate, i.e. conflicts between traditional, industrial-like school models vs. the needs and demands of the schooling system in the current information-age, and the presence of students hailing from countries in conflict, with limited school experience and deficient or lacking literacy skills but also as O'Brien, Stewart, & Moje, (1995) state due to 1) the nature of the instructional processes, methods, and materials, 2) the act of teaching as a socially constructed experience, and 3) the understanding professionals in this milieu have of their context and delivery approach.

Second, since 1) on one side of the coin literacy influences both human behavior (Sacks, 2000) and academic success and on the other side, ELL students are considered at risk of academic failure due to their particular characteristics: not yet able to communicate in English, neither to use the language for academic purposes, immigrant, poor, and victims of abuse or violence, etc., 2) sociocultural and sociocognitive research have not yet significantly impacted secondary content literacy inquiry, teacher education, or instructional methods, and 3) literature in the field examines more learning in the elementary levels than teaching in the junior or secondary ones (Moje, Overby, Tysvaer, Morris, 2008).

Then, it seems appropriate to further explore the act of teaching in the middle and high school settings from the perspective of the ESL instructors; in any case these educators are among the ones that daily negotiate in a very existential way the complex realities and needs of the ELL students.

For on the first hand, while studying the influence of literacy on human behavior, education professionals and researchers, along with scholars in other fields of knowledge such as neurology, psychology, psychiatry, philosophy, and anthropology tend to converge in common fields: Human decency, happiness, freedom, and civility. On the second one, while exploring the school system in the transition from the 20th to the 21st century and the society shift from the industrial-technological age to the global information age another set of scholars and professionals in education, literacy, and curriculum seem to agree on that challenges in the classroom stem from diverse complexities not only in the paradigm shift but also in the school system, in the curriculum, and in the world of the adolescent. My overall discussion thus, will address the concept of literacy instruction/acquisition and its relation to human decency in

contrast with the paradox of the social man from the perspective of the ESL educators in their classes positioned within the frame of the sciences of complexity and school's systemic change.

To illustrate theoretical and philosophical notions regarding literacy and behavior I will refer to the work of educators, scholars in various fields, and philosophers including Jacques Derrida, Paulo Freire, Dr. Oliver Sacks, and Dr. T. S. Zsasz; and to address complexity of the system, paradigm shift, and systemic change I will discuss the contributions of scholars including William e. Doll, Charles Reigeluth, D. G. O'Brien, E. B. Moje, and K. Hakuta among others.

Overview of Philosophical and Theoretical Approaches on Literacy and Behavior

Our Persona, *The Other*, and the Concept of Awareness

The concepts of *the other* and that of *awareness*, as explained by Derrida could be of interest in the study and approaches to literacy building either in the mother tongue or in the teaching/learning of foreign languages. Since the unique world of the English second language (ESL) educator (and that one of the English language learner (ELL)) is constantly in commotion due to the interactions among persons that don't have a common language or culture, which makes all outsiders to all in the classroom atmosphere, their encounters will potentially disrupt and bring imbalance; there could be moments when participants of this micro cosmos will be particularly aware of *the other* and of their context, and react in various different ways (rejection, withdrawal, fear, or interest, curiosity, etc.), then in the process of learning a common language and of creating a common culture they will gain awareness of self and question their own values, attitudes, and choices. Ideally, when they acquire different levels of awareness (*devenir conscients*) they will be equipped to make responsible choices. As indicated before, it is my interest then to explore multicultural ESL educators' world within the context of their teaching practice.

In one of his last interviews French philosopher Jacques Derrida, expressed his understanding of notions such as “*l’autre*” (the other), “*devenir conscients*” (*awareness*), and “*differer*” (the difference); there he exposed his ideas of self-criticism or Deconstruction Theory. According to Derrida (Kerney, 2012) Europe has always been exposed to “*the other*” and eclipsed by “*her other*” and that position had forced her to constantly question her ways through external or deconstruction criticism; in this regard he says that “every culture is haunted by her other.”² While in this interview Derrida elaborates his *Deconstruction* explanation personifying a whole continent –Europe – which arguably, could give us understanding on how the collective conscious and unconscious of many cultures function; his ideas of human perception of the other, awareness, and perception of human differences could be also applied to the daily experience of each individual in any given context –which I think is his main point in that discussion–. Following Derrida’s line of thought, individually and collectively we all are constantly exposed to *the other* at different levels depending on the geographical and emotional proximity. For instance, *my other* is the person with whom I share the same office or the same classroom, *my other* could be my neighbor, the waiter in the restaurant; *my other* could be as well my son, my friend, or my partner in life; in other words, like Derrida says referring to Europe we all could be in the position of being also exposed, eclipsed, occupied, or haunted by *our other*. The question would be up to what extent are we aware of the humanity of the other, of the effect this presence causes on and in us, and also up to what extent we want to take the time and effort or the interest in deconstructing or questioning our humanity –feelings, beliefs, and

²Derrida, Jacques. Interview by Richard Kerney (2012, October). Jacques Derrida : L’Événement Déconstruction. *Les Temps Modernes*, 669/670, 7-29. doi:0316 K 82876 Une critique extérieure ou de déconstruction [car] elle (Europe) a toujours été exposée à son autre et éclipée par lui, elle a été obligée de se remettre en question. Chaque culture est hantée par son autre.

attitudes in relation to the other— and engage in the construction of a better present by deeply examining our ways in reference to the other and to the context we are in.

I would argue that the classroom and particularly the ESL one is an interesting entity in that in a very reduced area and for a certain time, a semester or a year, many *others* (in this case immigrant children) will necessarily arrive as illustrated in the introductory vignettes; the teacher might find in this classroom students that had not have schooling experience whatsoever and other ones that probably acquired some literacy skills in their mother tongue. Culturally speaking and using Derrida's terms, in such a classroom each and every one is potentially exposed, eclipsed, and haunted by the other —including the teacher. In that temporary reality, and in the necessary processes of self-criticism or deconstruction propitiated by the awareness dynamics and interactions of all participants, appreciation or pondering of *the other* could become especially dramatic because of the feeling of not having a common ground —although arguably the common ground is that 'we all are outsiders, we don't know the language, we are displaced, we all have suffered some kind of social violence or abuse —' and the learning experience lead by the educator in charge will set the climate for all participants to successfully pass this adaptive first stage in this land of refuge. All persons in this classroom will have to overcome diverse obstacles, deconstruct or modify what they know, and build something new by constantly reflecting and taking part in purposeful revision of terms and concepts that form part of their understanding of the world and by giving place to new ones. How ESL educators map and navigate the meanders of communication and engage in their daily duties of socially building knowledge while delivering literacy instruction? That fundamental question will permeate this inquiry endeavor.

Back to Derrida and his global *otherness*; a good example of this deep -moral and sociocultural- examination of a culture's (government's, province's, neighborhood's, or neighbor's) ways to handle and respond to outsiders and the consequent awareness and political reactions it produces is constantly seen when new waves of displaced migrants knock at the doors of foreign territories or in many cases pass geographical boundaries without proper documentation. For instance while last October 2014 the United States Department of Homeland Security reported the presence of 52,000 unaccompanied children (migrating from Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador) apprehended trying to cross the south-western American border, all along this year 2015 European countries have been experiencing massive migration tides of refugees seeking shelter from troubled countries; at least 100,000 of these will be admitted in the U. S. beginning this October according to the Secretary of State. In the U. S. the feeling is that the immigration policy needs reform but in the meanwhile the presence of the unaccompanied children in the country and the overwhelming exodus in the other hemisphere convey a humanitarian problem. On the other hand in Europe, German Chancellor Angela Merkel was reported saying that the breathtaking influx of migrants they have welcomed lately will occupy and change Germany.³

Issues such as poverty, war, terrorism, violence, social injustice, etc., are not the central topic of discussion in this document; thus later on I will only refer to some comments that link social oppression and illiteracy as expressed by Brazilian educator Paulo Freire. Suffice by now to state however, that migrating even within the boundaries of the same country is in a way an act of boldness. People mobilizing from latitude A to latitude B do it by legitimate purposes that could be summarized as self-betterment. In the processes of mobilization participants expose

³ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-28203923>

themselves to diverse kinds of stress, risks, and challenges that vary depending on the conditions of their displacement and on the resources they begin with; the migrant person faces different stages of adaptation with accompanying feelings ranging from inadequacy, optimism, despair, frustration, or expectations not met. On the other hand, in the process of interacting with unknown people in the new environment both settled residents and newcomers will be confronted with *the other* thus they will quickly make interaction and behavior choices in line with their values, beliefs, and previous experiences. When considering the two tides of massive migration described above –unaccompanied children entering the United States and exodus of complete families from Africa and the Middle East– the education system in accommodating countries/regions must answer questions related to literacy as of the mean to empower children (and foreign adults) and enable them to succeed in the host society while taking into consideration their human rights.

Children’s welfare and rights⁴ in all latitudes of the globe are the concern of philanthropic and humanitarian organizations and society in general; as stipulated in articles 28, 29, 30, and 31 of the United Nations Human Rights Office all children deserve education on the basis of equal opportunity⁵. Primary education must be compulsory and free and the elimination of ignorance and illiteracy must be a priority in the agenda of the States Parties. In these articles it is clearly stated as well that the education of the child shall be directed to the development of respect for the child's parents, their own cultural identity, language and values, as well as for the

⁴ United Nations Human Rights. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Retrieved from <http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx> 09/07/2015

⁵ Since not all of our school age children have “equal opportunity” the communities (local government authorities, businesses, educators, entrepreneurs, philanthropists, and families) should initiate actions to improve the schools in most impoverished areas and better the places where their children spend most of the day; this with the intention to level the field for these less fortunate children.

national values of the country in which they live, the country from which they may originate, and for civilizations different from their own. Furthermore, according to the same UN Charter children must be prepared to become responsible in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples regardless of ethnic, national, or religious background. Children's education should also allow time to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities, and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts; all of these among other more specific provisions.¹

It could be inferred that such concern to put into writing children's rights reflects both the human expectation and confidence on adults in each society –and also on governments– for compassion and responsibility regarding the vulnerability of minors worldwide as well as the knowledge of and desire to prevent historical records of abuse, oppression, and cruelty. Then the presence of displaced children in any given classroom is the evidence that in some nearby latitude barbaric groups advance their egotistical and violent agenda of power and control at the expense of the least able to defend themselves. Thus the battle against ignorance and illiteracy would be of pivotal importance in the process of enabling these moving populations in their quest for independence, stability, and dignity. The foot soldier in this advance is the ESL educator –among other education professionals– that faces every day the diverse needs of all these students while simultaneously delivering the second language instruction for once the child enters the classroom he/she is no longer a statistic, a number, or any kind of label, in fact they are considered among the most vulnerable of human beings. The educator of the multicultural ESL class will witness firsthand the awareness evolution of the students in the classroom, the reaction they have towards the other, and the avenues this class opens in the redemptive work of literacy.

Literacy Acquisition, Awareness, and the Paradox of the Social Person

First, British neurologist Dr. Oliver Sacks in his book *Seeing Voices* (2000) states that “if one is to explore the fundamental role of language, one needs to study [...] its failure to develop.”⁶ Even though average immigrant children in the classes to be observed would have already developed listening and talking abilities in their first language, once they arrive in the United States they are at odds because their potential to communicate and interact is severely restricted due to the culture foreign to them and to the second language barrier. According to Dr. Sacks, the work of language is of pivotal importance in the formation of mind and character; he says that “without language a human being is severely restricted in the range of his thoughts, confined, in effect, to an immediate, small world.”⁷ The most important idea from Dr. Sacks in my study is that of the relationship between language, thought, and character. Since language is the mean we have to build, generate, and connect ideas, to express ourselves and interact with others, how relevant and applicable is that when we address 1) the building of literacy skills in a second language, and 2) the teaching of a second language and culture? How teachers in the second language class will convey, teach, and make understood notions unknown and foreign to students in their classrooms since each and every new class they teach are so uniquely distinct and their students’ life experiences, culture and upbringing are so dissimilar to the ones of the average school child?

As gleaned from the thoughts, practice, and findings of scholars previously mentioned – Sacks (2000), R. Henkin (2005) – language acquisition and literacy development that occur naturally in the process of learning new concepts in the ESL classroom would facilitate deep

⁶ Sacks, Oliver W. (2000). *Seeing Voices*. (New York: Vintage Books) 32

⁷ Sacks, Oliver W. (IBID) 34

levels of awareness development and consequently set the ground for future ethical choices. Thus, led by the educator and discussing new notions may help students reach different levels of awareness vis-à-vis the suffering of others as well as empathy. For instance, in traditional classrooms students may react to new information by doing something to remedy misery of other human beings; then being exposed to the challenging experiences of others and pondering their struggles could not only foster social awareness and understanding of the human condition but also solidarity carried out by acts of kindness thus involving both the feelings and the actions of young people.

Second, *the other*, even when she/he seems so stranger, is in fact a fellow human being. In the epilogue to his book *The Manufacture of Madness* T. S. Szasz (1977) explores a concept that could be applied to the phenomena of hatred, discrimination and social prejudice; he calls it “The paradox of the social man.” He says that the human paradox is based on the fact that we need each other but we have the tendency to destroy each other, he says that the social man fears *the other* and tries to destroy him, but at the same time he needs the other to validate himself: “*The other*, which is seen as a dangerous outsider, is a member of a hostile species which must be destroyed,”⁸ He illustrates his point with a story in the novel of Jerzy Kosinski *The Painted Bird* (1995). According to T. S. Szasz, the painted bird is the symbol of the marked man: “*the tainted man*.” In Kosinski’s novel, Lekh a young mad man catches a bird and paints it with brilliant colors, then he releases it when the rest of the flock is nearby. As the painted bird flies away and reaches the flock, the other birds are confused with this weird specimen that in spite of

⁸ Szasz, T. S. (1977). Epilogue. *The Manufacture of Madness*. (pp. 290-292) New York: Harper & Row.

the colors sounds familiar and they fly away; as the painted bird persists on following them they turn around and attack it; finally the painted bird will drop dead. In a school setting the metaphor of the painted bird (or the tainted person) would be different; minority students (immigrant, special needs, etc.) wear different colors although their humanity puts them in the same category as the majority: ‘children deserving equal access to education.’ However; their culture, communication skills, and behavior locate them in the category of the stranger, the intruder, and the outsider. Inside the ESL classroom all participants would be ‘*the other*’ to the others.

In the study of second languages acquisition there is a great opportunity to explore the concept of the other, the stranger, and of ourselves as strangers. Now in our present globalized world and *information age*, especially in areas of the world where there is constant or massive migration, members of any community have to confront fears about *the other* often. In the average classroom at any public or private education institution could be several students that represent certain minority (ethnic, racial, religious, income, health, wealth, literacy, etc.) they are “*the other*” to the rest of the class but in turn the rest of the class would be “the others” to them. Regardless of the literacy level, the age, and the general education level of the students, any classroom in any school context (a language arts class, a literacy skills class, and/or a foreign language class) could take the stage to actively promote human values and virtues such as respect, compassion, tolerance, generosity, etc.; this could be achieved (as demonstrated by R. Henkin, 2005) through actively discussing intolerance, fear, and hate issues by building new vocabulary and concepts that might not be that common or are even unknown to the students. Deeper levels of awareness could be furthered by engaging in problem-solving scenarios where all students participate.

Third, as R. Henkin states getting students to think about bullying and social justice through their reading and writing is part of a multicultural education; she says that when students are engaged in making meaning, their literacy skills develop and grow; she is convinced that literacy is a tremendous vehicle that ultimately helps understand and accept all human beings. Henkin further advocates for the creation of “democratic, fair, and hate-free schools that confront all forms of bullying and harassment.”⁹ Her strategies to confront bullying in the classroom were based in techniques to promote literacy and also in the use of works of literature to further the understanding of the harassment and discrimination vocabulary. Through the use of her techniques she fostered deep critical levels of awareness that helped her students making ethical choices while becoming literate learners. Henkin’s (2005) approach also strongly links with O. Sacks (2000) research about the connection between language and thought, and with that of T. S. Szasz (1977), and J. Derrida (Kerney, 2012) about the perception of *the other* and self-criticism or *deconstruction*.

I would like to end this part of the discussion by returning to the image T. S. Szasz (1977) used in the epilogue of his book and to the comments he made. He said that even if someone is not by nature already different (a person with a physical disability for instance), the society “taints” the individuals. Szasz uses the term referring to the world of psychiatry but I apply it to social, cultural, and political labels we all put on others (i.e. different kinds of stereotypes and regional/racial/gender/religious etc. profiles). My question would be: up to what extent the ESL professional in his/her multicultural classroom fosters respect for the other while navigating pupils through the meanders of literacy skills? Is the pedagogical act occurring in this classroom

⁹ Henkin, Roxanne. (2005) *Confronting Bullying: Literacy as a Tool for Character Education*. N. H: Heinemann.

somehow leveling the ground for all players by removing controversial labels? Is this endeavor a metaphorical whitewash that would ultimately cover or disguise *painted birds*, tainted, or labeled individuals? Or is it the leveled playground where each and every one learn new vocabulary and concepts related to personal experience and by means of respectfully interacting create a new reality that is more humanly dignifying –compared to the one they come from–? Are there observable differences linked to the teacher’s background? How the ESL teacher positions his/herself at the intersections of literacy, culture, tolerance, reconstruction, change, context, and human connections?

My words might sound controversialⁱⁱ and some readers could interpret them as promoting or endorsing acculturation or oppression of a minority culture by a stronger one; I would like to make clear that this is not the intention. However; even with the risk of sounding politically incorrect I dare to say that migrant peoples along with all other minorities and the host culture individuals should mutually respect the ways of the others or step aside if some civic and social practices are offensive; the rights of a person only reach as far as the rights of the other begin. Imposing one’s way regardless of the rightful boundaries of the other is by all means an act of violence. But how are immigrant children (and adults alike) going to learn American ways of living if the most pervasive points of reference they have are Hollywood and the somber daily news? What if at school core American values are not taught? And how are they going to be taught if teachers don’t teach the values and moral principles of the land? And how are teachers going to teach them if they are constantly muzzled by fear of being politically incorrect? In order to thrive in a country different to the one where they were raised people need to learn the language, the manners, the values, the expectations, and the way people do business in the land they are migrating to. It would be an act of violence from the part of immigrants against the host

country to try to impose their ways and change the laws of the country to their advantage. As Szasz (1977) stated, the social person has the tendency to (figuratively or perhaps literally) destroy “*the other*” while at the same time they need each other. Let not that destruction take place in this land of the free and home of the brave.

Humanizing Education and Levels of Awareness

P. Freire (1998) stated that a humanizing education was the path for students to become conscious about their presence in the world not only taking into consideration their personal needs but also the needs of others.¹⁰ He added that illiteracy suffocates the consciousness and the expressiveness of human beings because without the ability to read and write a person’s capacity to reflect and re-think their interpretation of their world will be very limited; this was also discussed above by examining O. Sacks’ (2000) observations about the necessity of acquiring language in order to build new concepts and ideas. In other words, a person with a very limited vocabulary is unable to significantly interact with others by understanding and making self understood, this then could throw individuals at the edge of despair because their human nature would be thus negated; as a result, accumulated frustration would translate in resentment and anger which in turn could unchain series of uncivilized behaviors. As referred before as well, Henkins’ (2005) classroom practices on building vocabulary and actively engaging students in conversations about concepts of hatred and segregation proved effective in dealing with bullying. Then we could agree with P. Freire (1998) in that illiteracy is a handicap that becomes an obstacle to achieving full citizenship; he says that in “literate cultures illiterates can’t complete the cycle in the relationship language, thought, and reality,”¹¹ thus, persons transitioning from

¹⁰ Freire, P. (1998). *Teachers as Cultural Workers*. Westview Press. Boulder. (p. xiii foreword. Cited by Donaldo Macedo & Ana Maria Araujo Freire)

¹¹ Freire, P. (1998). *Ibid* p.2

one cultural context to the other will need to learn new words in order to build new thoughts and accomplish the most human necessity of communication, in doing so they will be able to understand *the other* (not merely grasping the meaning of disconnected words but reaching deep understanding of the mindset, the mentality –the connections and the relationships among individuals, sociocultural objects, situations, events, etc. – and the rationale behind a culture patterns of social behaviors) and make themselves understood.

Freire also stated that the reading of the world precedes the reading of the word, meaning that persons get awareness of their context prior to the understanding brought through the reading of the text;¹² he uses the term *consciousness* referring to “fragmented knowledge” or the reaction to the concrete objects of the world, and the term *conscientização* referring to “critical knowledge” or the relationship between objects, facts, and the world. He goes onto saying that the one that has reached *conscientização* is capable of perceiving hunger as the manifestation of a political, economic, and social reality of deep injustice (not only lack of food) and has a different perception of history and of his/her role in it.¹³ Building on his insight about fragmented and critical knowledge I would like to insert the term *awareness* but will differentiate it by distinguishing different layers and spheres of awareness cycles.

First, combining statements from scholars discussed before, it seems that of necessity for a person to grow deeper in awareness and to move from one sphere of awareness to the next there must be purposeful, systematic, and effective vocabulary building consistent with purposeful pondering of the new word or concept and of the meaning it conveys at the personal

¹² Freire, P. (1971). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Herder and Herder. New York. Translated from the original Portuguese manuscript by Myra Bergman Ramos. (p. 182)

¹³ Freire, P. (1996). *Letters to Cristina. Reflections on my life and work*. Routledge. New York.

level, this must be equally paired with rich learning experiences. I would reason that every life experience is a learning experience regardless of whether the person is aware of it and also independently of the fact that she/he learns the lesson or not. Arguably, in any given context some people might not realize or readily perceive the value of slowing down to give attentive thought and to reason about facts of life, daily routines, personal habits, social habits, social circumstances, and personal situations such as being married or being single, attending school, being hungry or being satisfied, being sick or being healthy, being able to purchase a new car or not, being able to take a shower when you please or having to go to a well to fetch water for your next meal, etc. these potentially are all learning experiences if the person involved intentionally gives thought to them instead of mechanically following the same motions day after day.

I would argue then that each person develops diverse levels of awareness at unique rates and prompted by personal attitudes, circumstances, and experiences; that not necessarily “the reading of the world precedes the reading of the word”¹⁴ but that awareness processes are very complex and intertwined occurring quasi simultaneously with the natural flow of life. When a person realizes “I am” this realization is possible as life happens and flows in the material, natural, and social environment surrounding the individual, manifested as well in the physical, spiritual, emotional, and intellectual growing stages of the human being –body, soul, spirit, and mind- and through the interconnections of these. Life implies motions and interactions; in this continuum, understanding and apprehension of *the word*¹⁵ will trigger complex processes of deeper understanding about the sociocultural and historical context surrounding the individual.

Consequently, building up on and reacting to what Freire calls fragmented and critical knowledge, I would identify at least three spheres of awareness: *self*, *other*, and *context* with at

¹⁴ Freire, P. (1996). Ibid.

¹⁵ The word: (global term including new vocabulary and new concepts)

least two layers or stages each: superficial (or disjointed knowledge) and deep (or fundamental and vitally articulated knowledge)ⁱⁱⁱ; and all of these inside an imaginary bubble formed and sustained by complex and dynamic relationships. The graphic could give a reasonable picture of these ideas.^{iv}

The point here would be to gain insight into the particular literacy practices –among other pedagogical approaches and tools– multicultural ESL educators engage in and use routinely in their classrooms. Ideally, ESL teachers’ part alphabetizing immigrant minorities would empower children to move from superficial or disjointed knowledge to the reaching of fundamental and vitally articulated knowledge while developing even deeper levels of self-awareness, context awareness, and relationships awareness; this in turn could propel most students to act in a social civilized way and generate in them attitudes of thankfulness, responsibility, and generosity manifested in a tangible commitment to give back to their host community. The question then would be: beside acquiring literacy skills, are the ELL students in these classes participating in civic, social, art-related activities, and other kind of events that would enhance their learning of life skills and could ultimately open them to new perspectives and understanding of other fellow humans and to appreciation of the community they are in? If nothing else, ESL educators’ commitment would at least promote and reinforce civility and the social expectation of living peacefully and respectfully interacting with others.

Even though in Freire’s time and latitude his methodology and educational philosophy were mainly addressed to illiterate adults in impoverished countries –echoing Richard Shaull’s thoughts in the foreword to Freire’s first English edition twenty years ago– it is still applicable to us as well in our time and geographical and historical context. Our educators face day after day the diverse struggles of our dispossessed young people plus the drama of those that keep on

arriving from foreign places (FOB)¹⁶ where their humanity has been threatened. Our teachers' challenge is to help each and all of these children "to become free Subjects and to participate in the transformation of their society,"¹⁷ this task will require deep levels of *self, other, and context* awareness in the performance, pedagogical approach, and attitude of the teacher as a professional and his/her unyielding commitment to empower, enable, inspire, and educate shattered young persons by modeling his/her personal awareness-reaching strategies while delivering instruction and interacting with students and families in and outside of the classroom.

Let's not forget 1) that the toil of the poor and illiterate is similar regardless of latitude, social profiles, labels, and citizen or immigrant status; 2) that the beginning of a redemptive work on their behalf would be providing the best possible human, social, and learning experience by making basic education accessible to all children and by facilitating paramount human living conditions to families such as shelter, food, clothing, and access to a job. However; this should not be interpreted as means for an oppressive system to display *false charity* (Freire, 1971) by feeding the poor and keeping them quiet.

When entire communities are forced to emigrate from their ancestral lands these multitudes of migrant individuals will need initial help from the host country and is desirable that wealthy countries and communities sponsor suffering neighbors; the natural expectation would be to facilitate access to basic human needs and to enroll immigrants in a strong literacy and cultural project. On the other hand it would be the immigrants' prerogative to ultimately make a choice whether to embrace the land's values and beliefs in the long run or to return to their

¹⁶ Fresh-Off-the-Boat (or plane) as used in Scarcella, Robin C. (1990). *Teaching Language Minority Students in the Multicultural Classroom*. Prentice-Hall, Inc. New Jersey.

¹⁷ Freire, P. (1971). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Herder and Herder. New York. Translated from the original Portuguese manuscript by Myra Bergman Ramos. (p. 10)

ancestor's land when the sociopolitical situation permits. In the meanwhile they could not "occupy and change" the land –as Chancellor Merkele said, at least not in a negative/detrimental way for the host country/territory– that would be impolite, unfair, and uncivilized. Neither this is to be taken as the proverbial French "laissez faire – laissez passer" where adults afraid of becoming politically incorrect shy away the true values of their nation and shelve them in the drawer of shame instead of passing them on while educating immigrants. This is not to be misinterpreted either as act of violence to the culture and beliefs of minorities (local or FOB) for they should not be forced to embrace foreign ancestral and historical values that they don't identify with but as newly arriving individuals in a given latitude and time need to be informed/educated on/of the ways people do things there otherwise, the rights of the host culture could be violated. In the transition period for immigrants to "occupy" while waiting to make a choice whether to stay or to leave^v they should abide peacefully by the laws of the host country and respect its people and its culture. It is a fine line but it is also a worthwhile humanitarian endeavor.

I consider important to state that current migrant people did not build the country they are migrating to; that ancestral generations gave their share of sacrifice, knowledge, taxes, effort, and will-power to give shape to what we know now as some of the first world countries or wealthy countries. Tides of former immigrants, the ancestors of people currently living in these few countries, did things in ways that put the countries in the shape they are now it is then the responsibility of the adults of these wealthy and humanitarian communities to transmit principles, work ethics, moral and social values to new immigrants while opening land space for them to temporarily settle until their own ancestral lands are freed from violence and oppression.

As noted before, the social problem that worried the Brazilian educator was that of the paternalistic school/society system. Coming from a middle-class family and experiencing hunger due to the economic crisis of his country, Freire perceived the educational system of his time as an authoritarian instrument maintaining the culture of silence where dispossessed people were submerged in lethargy because they were not encouraged or equipped to acquire knowledge and to respond to the realities of their world; in other words they were poor, ignorant, and socially sedated.

Similarly, our educators are daily confronted in a very existential way with the realities of the *at risk students* in our country. The fundamental question I ask is how multicultural (former FOB, now naturalized and highly educated) ESL teachers perceive their role as agents of change in their classroom¹⁸? Are they deeply aware of their historical importance in the life of a recently arrived immigrant child? What kind of society are they helping to build or to maintain? Even though the ESL classroom could be described as a cultural melting pot, the term would not be the most appropriate to reveal what happens there, Scarcella (1990); for this micro cosmos apart of diverse ethnic minorities includes other small groups representing children with handicap status and different social class; even if some students among these had access to education many have not had access to the best resources and life opportunities as children of affluent neighborhoods in peaceful countries often have. If such is the reality inside that unique environment, is the ESL class experience opening the way to deep levels of self, social, and context awareness? How could this class empower students to become active agents of change in their own world? Are the vocabulary taught, the attitudes modeled, and the educational resources in these classrooms promoting self-respect, respect to the other, tolerance, compassion, solidarity, and generosity?

¹⁸ In the investigation process was found that ESL specialists don't have a classroom or an appropriate working space.

Are these also building safe physical and emotional environments where young immigrants and other children representing other minorities could interact, get to know each other, and commit to support each other in the common goal of promoting peace, civility, and respect?

Based on the literature explored so far literacy would be the first step for poor, illiterate, and any other kind of *at risk* children to acquire the ability to build their own sentences and to name their world by expressing their thoughts and ideas; these children should also be exposed to socially accepted behaviors and prompted to practice them seeking to understand *the other*, to responsibly interact with all around with the goal in mind to build a better living atmosphere and ultimately to succeed as a social person. Then life in the ESL classroom would not only be about learning to decode words but also using this new knowledge to better understand others and to make self-understood by others. As Freire pointed out, education is not a neutral practice because “It either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate the integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it or it becomes the practice of freedom;”¹⁹ but in the immediate reality of a host country giving humanitarian help to a multitude of displaced school age children desperately needing to be accommodated, regardless of the politics and of the predominant school system, education will forcibly serve the purpose of facilitating the integration into and the understanding of the local logic system opening also doors for immigrants to conform to and to embrace the host country ways’ of life while learning what freedom entails and what freedom practices are. Hopefully the constant engagement with awareness practices fostered through ESL experiences would ultimately provide the ground for responsible choices among multicultural diverse, minority, and immigrant students in a given classroom; the hope should be that whether immigrants decide to stay or to leave the host

¹⁹ Freire, P. (1971). *Ibid.* (p. 14-15)

country their children will become by all means life-long learners and responsible citizens wherever they go and would be fully and deeply aware of self, the other, and the context and display compassion and generosity to other fellow humans as well.

Among my references Freire is perhaps the one that makes the best case for education as the key that opens doors to the social liberating process through awareness. However; when he talks about the weakness of the oppressed and the “false generosity”²⁰ of the oppressor we need to understand that this somber picture could be haunting both host country and displaced populations if the access to education and to cultural interaction is not equal for all minorities because as we all could agree true generosity, respect, and responsibility towards any fellow human it is not feeding them a fish but teaching them the skill and the trade. Then from a humanitarian point of view we could conclude that this needs to be accomplished without being blamed on one side for neocolonialism and oppression and on the other for invasion and occupation; and that alphabetizing illiterates and encouraging them to fully develop their natural abilities by teaching them a *métier* and opening ways for them to work and become productive citizens of their new country would hopefully give them independence, freedom, and pride which is one of the wings of the bird; the other being teaching them the socially accepted and expected behaviors and manners of the host country; without the two the bird could not fly and might instead become frustrated, angry, and burdensome staying in the condition of a *painted bird*.

Furthermore; even though some of Freire’s concepts are still valid caution must lead the way when translating his insight into our reality because the political and social situation of his country and time are not the same we currently experience when referring to immigrant

²⁰ Freire, P. (1971). Ibid. (p. 29)

minorities here in the United States; in Freire's context the opulent of the country were neutralizing (oppressing) the poor; here I refer to the responsibility of the authorities and citizens of this country towards crowds that choose to seek shelter under American roof; which also could be applied to several countries experiencing massive tides of immigrants in other latitudes. Then for the purpose of this study I would let aside the kind of political-power-controversy (that is usually linked to Freire's ideas) to focus on the moral and humanitarian task of helping the new-comers to settle and be a part of our ecology.

Our *at risk* students and our minorities may come from war zones, poverty, and abusive situations; they need to learn the language of the land, the culture, and the moral values in order to successfully transition into independence. Teachers, school staff, community leaders, and philanthropic individuals need to work with these disadvantaged children at different levels and in that process help them to reach deep stages of self, other, and context awareness. For these children to recognize that their position of disadvantage is not suitable neither socially accepted they need to acquire strong literacy skills as the first step towards personal emancipation and responsible citizenship. Literacy and awareness would assist then in laying the foundation to further understanding of the context from where *the other* comes from and the context and expectations in the land they arrive; all involved are expected to be compassionate, respectful, and tolerant without compromising own beliefs and values and to foster and exhibit civility for in due course migrant persons would work their way to financial independence and hopefully demonstrate respect to self and to *the other*, appreciate their cultural heritage, and also would respectfully interact with the host culture individuals.

Finally, most families and persons migrating to the US do so in the pursuit of a dream. But what is in their dream? Why these people migrate? How did they arrive here? Are they truly

interested in becoming responsible citizens of the country? How do they intend to do so? Perhaps the basic dream of most of these migrants world-wide is just to stay alive and to save their children from brutality and hunger. Their dream is not necessarily what we understand as the “American Dream” ours could be extremely sophisticated when comparing to the one of those fleeing to spare their skin.

Then most people leaving their ancestral lands and crossing foreign boundaries do so pursuing an existential and vital idea –or dream: the opportunity to have a life. Few among them could be highly educated, others have some education, and others have none; so the great majority may have very limited literacy skills, also many could be hard-working people, family oriented, and could have strong religious beliefs. The desire (dream) of the immigrant is in most cases for their children to reach an acceptable level of literacy that will help them earn an education or acquire a skill that could position the young person so as to by means of working to provide for personal and family needs, to eventually become self-sufficient and at least not to be a burden to the family. But how an ESL educator –who at a certain time was also immigrant or refugee–, perceives and interprets the reality of these children and their families? How their mentality, ideas, and ideals change in the process of becoming important actors in the life-changing dream of destitute children, taking into consideration the fact that these ESL teachers could previously have been in a position similar to that one of their immigrant students? How he/she interacts, delivers instruction, modifies, or accommodates? If these educators migrated at certain point how they de-construct their current context and reality and their past settling down experience? How do they position themselves in this juncture and opportunity? Do they have an “immigrant mentality”? Do the teachers of these classes see at any point the children entrusted to them as agents of their own freedom? Do teachers recognize their job as liberating and necessary

to improve society? How these educators engage in responsible-humanizing dialogues considering that dialogue is an existential necessity while educating the whole child? How is education perceived in these classrooms, is it banking or liberating, or something else? Do teachers in these classrooms promote extreme creative awareness among their students by using an approach that is more “problem-posing” than “deposit-making”? (Freire, 1971).

Arguably in any classroom and school system and in the social collective conscience could be the fear of promoting cultural invasion, of offending others by being politically incorrect, of advancing oppressive political agendas, or perhaps none of these but a passive laissez-faire laissez-passer attitude. Is someone in the ESL classrooms serving the ends of cultural conquest or annihilation, or by any means promoting neocolonialism and negating ancestral values? I would assume the answer to these questions is no; the question then would be: is there space in the school curriculum and in the ESL syllabus to include the teaching and modeling of human core values such as civility, respect, tolerance, love, and compassion? Teachers have an important role in the shaping of the nation for generations to come; ESL educators are among the ones that could level the ground for immigrant and poor children to become free agents in the building of their future in the nation they inhabit.

This lengthy discussion positions us then to better comprehend the goals of the present inquiry endeavor.

Purpose of the Study

Usually at the beginning of the academic year, most persons in school environments (teachers and students alike) around the country will step into somehow unfamiliar territory due to the great diversity of individuals –*the others*– sharing the same space. Here I argue that whereas that untried situation in any other content area class is surely expected to settle down

during the first few days of interaction, the terrain of the ESL educator/specialist could be constantly uncharted and in need of ongoing adjustments. To begin with, the ESL educator might not speak the students' language and students –coming from all over the world– are just beginning to learn English; they all will face different kinds of communication challenges ranging from the knowledge of basic vocabulary to the understanding of sociocultural attitudes, behaviors, and meanings; as I said this is just the beginning-.

The purpose of this study is then to explore dynamics at play –such as awareness, deconstruction, and otherness appreciation– from the perspective of multicultural ESL educators in middle and high school settings in the public school system, in our current information-age paradigm, and in the context of literacy instruction and how their teaching approaches are similar or different.

Now, in order to complete the proposed theoretical framework for the present study it is necessary to further explain terms related to the sciences of complexity in a more thorough way; I will present the following summary in the form of a literature review that it is by no means exhaustive.

Overview of Sciences of Complexity Historical and Genealogical Traces

Complexity Sciences lie on the foundation of perceiving nature, life, and universe intrinsically connected, interdependent, and interacting. They study phenomena that might be described in terms of *living, adaptive systems* which range from human beings, animals, plants, cells, biological entities, etc. to sociological constructs like families and enterprises; it can refer as well to cultural bodies like a kind of music, a practice within a group, etc.; Davis (2004) stated that “Living systems are perceived as adaptive and self-organizing,” this opposes and challenges

analytic science as “not sufficient to understand undeterministic phenomena”²¹ which in turn implies that the absolute certitude of scientific knowledge started by Descartes is no longer valid since the discovery of “Approximate Knowledge;²²” meaning that all scientific concepts and theories are limited and approximate, so we know now that science will never give us complete and definitive understanding.

On the one hand, Capra (1996) traces the interactions, connections, and interdependency underlying this approach to knowledge even as far as to very primitive peoples and says they have evolved and changed alongside social evolutions and have been shaped in turn by the increase of knowledge and science as well. However; the 20th Century is considered the century of the “official paradigm shift” inauguration. It first occurred in modern sciences with the intellectual crisis of quantum physicists in the early 20’s but fast moved to all realms of knowledge ushering systems thinking advance. At the beginning of the 20th century, during the 20’s and 30’s, numerous philosophers and scientists notably contributed to the advance of systems thinking, among those C. D. Broad talked about “emergent properties,” and J. Woodger ended the debate between mechanists and vitalists. Throughout the 50’s the triumph of genetics brought a shift in biological research and originated the rise of molecular biology; between the 50s and 60s applied systems thinking greatly influenced engineering and management in these fields. Systems concepts (including cybernetics) were applied to solve practical problems; thus new disciplines were created: systems engineering, systems analysis, and systems management. Of tremendous importance during the 60’s was the work of French mathematician B. Mandelbrot who created “a powerful mathematical language to describe the fine-scale structure

²¹ Davis, B. (2004). *Inventions of Teaching*. New York: Lawrence Earlbaum. (p.151)

²² Capra, F. (1996). *The Web of Life*. New York: Anchor Books.(p.41)

of chaotic attractors²³” with the publication of *The Fractal Geometry of Nature* (Capra, 1996). By the mid 70’s systems theory began to be seen as an intellectual failure due to the lack of mathematical techniques for dealing with the complexity of living systems; however, by the late 70’s the discovery of the new mathematics of complexity and the emergence of the concept of self-organization helped in the understanding of the importance of pattern²⁴ as crucial to comprehend phenomenon; this restored credibility in the field and encouraged further research. During the 70’s-80’s initiatives such as the *St. Gallen model management approach*²⁵ based on the view of the business organization as a living social system constitutes a good example of the engagement of scientific, professional, and pedagogic communities with the new systems thinking. Before the end of last century other scientists and philosophers made important contributions to this philosophical approach with works on dissipative structures, complex systems, and irreversibility, among them are Belgian physical chemist Ilya Prigogine, (Chemistry Nobel prize); and Chilean neuroscientists, philosophers, and biologists, Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela who coined the term “Autopoiesis” (process of self-making).

On the other hand, Complexity Sciences are associated with the notion of interobjectivity and located in the realm of participatory epistemologies along with Ecology (Davis 2004); under this philosophical approach knowledge, learning, and teaching come from agent’s actions and interactions with the world; Davis (2004) argued that the emphasis philosophers of the 20th century gave to the contribution of language to our human experience apart of being so “overwhelming” did not address issues as evident as human’s attitude towards the physical and

²³ Capra, F. (1996). *The Web of Life*. New York: Anchor Books. p.134

²⁴ Pattern is defined by Capra as the “configuration of relationships characteristic of a particular system.” (ibid)

²⁵ This new discipline known as “systemic management” is widely taught in Europe (ibid).

biological²⁶, thus the need for an answer to the question of how we might make a different sense of relationships in our world? Under the Complexity Sciences approach the universe is also described in terms of transformations and diversifications; which implies ongoing processes throughout different organizational levels; this is known as Chaos Theory defined by Davis as “the study of unstable behavior in deterministic but non-linear dynamical systems.”²⁷ He also mentioned Humberto Maturana as the one who better stated the shift from the interpretivist discourses (intersubjectivity) to the participatory ones with his famous statement: “Everything said is said by an observer.”²⁸

Probably the most remarkable asset brought forth by the Complexity Sciences approach to knowledge has been to direct attention to context and connections. Since the industrial society model of past century is being replaced by the information one traditional old ways of human activity where scientific research, medicines, politics and policies, social organisms like the school system, among others should be re-evaluated and reformulated to give better answers to the current needs of our time because, as Capra argues, scientific, industrial, and political practices have been up to this point negligent of context:

Scientific technologies disregarding environmental consequences, medical practices aiming to prescribe pharmaceuticals instead of supporting good health, legal systems favoring individual rights instead of promoting collective responsibilities, educational systems being structured around age appropriateness instead of person’s appropriate curriculum. (Capra 1996).

²⁶ Davis, B. (2004). *Inventions of Teaching*. New York: Lawrence Earlbaum. (p.150)

²⁷ Ibid (p.210)

²⁸ Ibid (p.145)

Systemic Change in Relation to Education

While the predominant model of compartmentalized subjects in the secondary school served its purpose during the industrial-technological age of last century it does not fit any more the demands of the global information age of the 21st century, there is then a necessity to carefully revise our current school models, to adjust, and to modify them to fit the true needs of society in our time; in that process we must not forget that all changes must have solid foundation in social justice and equity. Most scholars agree with the idea that an education model based on the leading needs of an industrial/technology age needs to be restructured taking into consideration the needs of current and future educators and students in a globalized society that is more representative of the information age than of the industrial one. They also bring attention to the constraints of the system noting that apparently the most eroding element affecting the school system in the transition from the industrial to the information age is the constraint of time. Thus, in this section I will first discuss scholars that advocate for systemic change in school as an appropriate response in the age of information –or within the paradigm shift, and secondly I will synthesize information provided by leading scholars in the fields of literacy, curriculum, and instruction regarding the complexities of youth literacy in the middle and high school context. By analyzing the difficulties of advocating for social construction of knowledge within the context of the paradigm shift it could be gleaned that promoting literacy in the secondary school milieu entails great challenges for all stakeholders including university educators, pre-service and in-service teachers, and school administrators as well.

Systemic change and paradigm shift

I would like then to comment on the work of professors Doll and Reigeluth during the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st. These education scholars have been writing

about and applying the principles of this epistemological approach to knowledge in pedagogy. Complexity Sciences and Chaos Theory as stated by W. E. Doll (2008) “deal with a complex sense of order, where order and disorder are structurally intertwined²⁹,” he says that “the chaos/order dichotomous split is but another example of modernism’s tendency to categorize;” and that ‘orderly disorder’ is no longer an oxymoron but rather describes nature and its laws.

During the early 90’s professor Charles Reigeluth (1994) advocated for systemic change in education stating that several massive changes in our society have been identified by people like Daniel Bell (1973), Alvin Toffler (1980), and Robert Reich (1991) among others.³⁰ He said that “Society is changing in sweeping ways that make our current educational system obsolete,”³¹ he also led the SYRIUS project which identified and documented school’s restructuring efforts and reported the results of a nationwide survey of schools that were exploring and experiencing systemic redesign³². By the same time –the early 90’s- W. E. Doll was writing as well about Complexity Sciences and the relation of *Complexity and the Culture of Curriculum*; he noted that Chaos Theory ushers the shift from a mechanistic metaphor to a dynamic one, and he reminded us that “this theory with its emphasis in non-linearity helps us realize that ‘small causes can lead [not just to small but also] to large effects.’”³³ (ibid)

²⁹ Doll, W. E. (2008), *Complexity and the Culture of Curriculum*. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 40: 190–212. doi: 10.1111/j.1469-5812.2007.00404.x (p. 14)

³⁰ Reigeluth, C.M. (1994). *The Imperative for Systemic Change*. In C.M. Reigeluth & R.J. Garfinkle (Eds.), *Systemic Change in Education*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Educational Technology Publications.

³¹ Ibid

³² Reigeluth, C. M. (1991) *Sirius-A Navigating by the Stars*. *School Improvement Resources Inquiry – USA*. A National Study of School Restructuring. Report II: Synthesis.

³³ Doll, W. E. (2008), *Ibid* (p. 15)

Scholars Doll and Reigeluth, among others, directed attention to context and connections in education; they advocated for educational systems being structured around person's appropriate curriculum more than around students' age as it is still happening in many places. Reigeluth (2004) calls the function of the teacher as a coach, facilitator, or manager, rather than that of the dispenser of knowledge, Barnes-Karol (2001) advocates for "systematic participation in speaking and writing tasks" which will eventually make [students] shift from "passive consumers of meanings" to "active processors of the text." Finally Reigeluth (1994) points to the difference between piecemeal change (tinkering) which entails modifying something (fixing a part of it), and systemic change, often called paradigm shift, which entails replacing the whole thing. Below I reproduce Reigeluth's views of school under the two paradigms.

Table 1: Differences between the industrial age and the information age that affect education

Industrial Age	Information Age
Adversarial relationships	Cooperative relationships
Bureaucratic organization	Team organization
Autocratic leadership	Shared leadership
Centralized control	Autonomy with accountability
Autocracy	Democracy
Representative democracy	Participative democracy
Compliance	Initiative
One-way communications	Networking
Compartmentalization	Holism
(Division of Labor)	(Integration of tasks)

Reigeluth noted that in the industrial age the need was for minimally educated people that would be willing and able to work on the assembly lines. He said, twenty years ago, that as the industrial age with its mechanical technology represented an extension of human physical

capabilities, so the information age with its intellectual technology represents an extension of human mental capabilities, and for that reason effective learning is so extremely important. Thus the problem lingering is that our current school system is designed for selection not for learning. Below, I reproduce his second table featuring possible changes affecting the school system.

Table 2: Emerging picture of features for an information-age educational system based on changes in the work place.

Industrial Age	Information Age
Grade levels	Continuous progress
Covering the content	Outcomes-based learning
Norm-referenced testing	Individualized testing
Non-authentic assessment	Performance-based assessment
Group-based content delivery	Personal learning plans
Adversarial learning	Cooperative learning
Classrooms	Learning centers
Teacher as dispenser of knowledge	Teacher as coach or facilitator of learning
Memorization of meaningless facts	Thinking, problem-solving skills, and meaning making
Isolated reading, writing skills	Communication skills
Books as tools	Advanced technologies as tools

In other latitudes practices known as Bio Regionalism³⁴ (emphasizing region-appropriated lifestyles and production activities) constitute a very valid approach within education. For instance projects like Escuela Nueva –New School– endorsed by the UNICEF are being implemented successfully in Latin American countries. Within this model educators and students follow national standards for all subjects but the way instruction, training, and knowledge are imparted don’t follow the traditional school system. Educators cater differently to

³⁴ Davis, B. (2004). Ibid (p. 157)

each student (students are farm labor children that need to support the family's enterprise and can't abandon the fields); these working children go to school as their duties allow them, they study at home, and when they complete a unit of academic work go back to school to demonstrate what they have acquired, take state tests when they are ready to do so successfully, and eventually finish their high school education. The school is open every day; there are also opportunities for tutoring and for study groups.

The challenges of advocating for social construction of knowledge

I argue that even though most pre-teen and teenagers may have similar needs there is as well great variety and uniqueness to them all. Specific needs stem mainly from their socioeconomic background especially when considering local at risk students and the ones that are immigrating constantly. However; the challenges of literacy instruction and acquisition in the middle and high school context for recently arrived and underserved ELL students are compounded when pondering their particular situations as exposed in the initial vignettes. They not only qualify to be included under the layer of a very complex age group, they also have to be instructed under a very complex curriculum, and their social situation as a highly vulnerable population compounds on a third layer the already demanding challenges both ESL educators and ELL students face on a daily basis.

According to scholars, literacy challenges for educators in the middle and high school settings could stem from worlds that overlap including the student's world and the school system. They state that the world of adolescent literacy is complex and mysterious and that the school system is also complex due not only to the complexity of the curriculum and of the pedagogy but also to the school culture in the secondary school (Moje, Overby, Tysvaer, Morris, 2008; O'Brien, Stewart, Moje, 1995). These authors develop the idea of how the education

model based on the predominant research base that has informed preservice teacher education responds to the needs of an industrial/technology age; they advocate for the need to restructure college training of future educators taking into consideration the needs of students in a globalized society that is more representative of the information age than of the industrial one.

Adolescent's literacy

Authors recognize literacy as the ability to interpret and use print symbols for communicative purposes within different sociocultural contexts while making sense of the conventionalized codes that make a community distinct from another. In their study of the literacy practices of youth from one urban community they found 1) that contrary to popular belief youth do read and write outside of school and that youth do read and write but their choices are not aligned with the kind of texts that adults value; 2) that even though the youth studied engage in literacy practices these are not significant to make a difference in their academic performance; and 3) that although the digital divide has not closed yet internet activity seems of no effect in the population studied, meaning that it is not responsible for students' distraction neither is supportive of academic performance (Moje, Overby, Tysvaer, Morris, 2008).

They conclude their report by stating that youth read and write for social, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual purposes and that through these literacy activities they engage in communications and relationships, they find ways for self-expression that also support their psychological health; and that ultimately via the literacy avenues they choose they construct subjectivities and enact identities that empower their daily lives.

Complexities of our school system

O’Brien, D. G., Stewart, A., and Moje, E. B. (1995) acknowledge that literacy is both cognitively and socioculturally linked to the contexts in which it occurs; they also note that most research had focused on elementary levels and on the act of learning more than in secondary levels and on the act of teaching as a socially constructed process. They made the case for complexity of curriculum, pedagogy, and school culture in regards to content literacy instruction and stated that literacy was so difficult to infuse into the secondary school mainly because the goals and methods of content literacy instruction were paradoxical. Below I present in Table 3 a summary of these authors’ points of view.

Table 3: *The paradox* (O’Brien, D. G., Stewart, A., and Moje, E. B., 1995)

Positivist and technical approach to teaching/learning	V e r s u s	Sociocultural construction of knowledge
Learning strategies are structuralist in orientation (should fit well within the pedagogy of control dominant in secondary schools –responding to the demands of a technical/industrial society)		They are socioconstructivist/ sociocultural in perspective (radical pedagogy that shifts control from teachers’ and gives it to students).
Nothing new		Overwhelming challenge
Traditional pedagogy (industrial mind-frame model). Teacher control		Radical pedagogy (socioconstructivist). Student control
Literacy as a learning tool applied to typical curriculum texts.		Literacy as a socially constructed vehicle to bypass politically dominant views of legitimate knowledge.
Literacy as a set of limited responses to boring texts.		Literacy as a way to interpret and produce texts (seeking understanding broader social and political issues).
Primacy and status hierarchy of subject areas. Technical rationality and disciplinary loyalties.		Challenge of this status quo.

O’Brien, D. G., Stewart, A., and Moje, E. B., (1995) found that content literacy instruction had mainly a cognitive processing foundation and although sociocultural and sociocognitive research had a place in the literature review a definite shift had not yet impacted

secondary content literacy research, teacher education, or instructional methods. The model they criticized consisted of the training of pre-and in-service educators by teaching them reading and writing strategies without emphasizing a thorough reflection on the philosophy, epistemology, and goals that should support content literacy research and teaching.

These authors state that the century old pedagogy of control widely discussed at the beginning of this chapter is still instilled nowadays. Twentieth century school system framed within a positivist perspective adopts a contemporary –constructivist- approach to literacy that contends with its philosophical foundation; to make it pass the new approach is given a structuralist format that it is supposed to work. However; the pedagogy of control and telling (students depend on teacher talk rather than on examining the text itself by themselves) is pushed on via time constraints. This control and telling is necessary for the factory model of school to function.

Regarding the school culture the authors recognize that it constantly changes and it is dynamic, “each school [...] has a distinct cultural stamp due to variations in social organization, expectations, administrative structure, values of the communities in which a school is situated, and the clientele it serves³⁵.” (p. 452). They argue that different disciplines have a specific subculture, generate different pedagogies and members within may not react positively in regard to innovations that do not resonate with the traditional view of their content’s pedagogy.

The authors finish by insisting on the importance of teaching teachers to recognize and move beyond institutional, cultural, and social constraints. Their alternative implies sensitizing university, in-service, and pre-service teachers to the complexities of school curriculum,

³⁵ O’Brien, D. G., Stewart, A., Moje, E. B. (1995). Why content literacy is difficult to infuse into the secondary school: Complexities of curriculum, pedagogy, and school culture. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 30 (3), 442-463.

pedagogy, and culture. They suggest that secondary content literacy research and teaching should move beyond the teaching of strategies alone toward teaching teachers to recognize, analyze, and work within the complexities that shape secondary teaching and learning.

Other scholars agree with Moje et al (2008) and with O'Brien, Stewart & Moje (1995) about how challenging the world of the middle/high school educator is. They give detailed input regarding the preparation of teachers, the needs of the students and the constraints of the system. Although the study discussed here referred to literacy challenges in the teaching of content areas a strong case was made for teacher preparation impact in the overall academic outcome of students. Researchers found that preservice teachers needed classes that will make them aware of the personal processes they engaged on while studying content; if they acquired such awareness it was most likely that they would model the studying/analyzing processes of their discipline to their future students. They also needed to become aware of interactions between reader and text and of the importance of this play for the development of students' literacy in their subject area (Olson & Truxaw, 2009).

In other words preservice teachers need to gain awareness of the every-day-changing literacy demands of this information age and in the process they need to learn how to identify and assess school student's literacy practices as well. On one hand, as noted by Leu, Mc Verry, et al (2011), even though adolescents pervasively use technological devices and surf the internet constantly they are not "skillful to locate and critically evaluate the information they encounter online" [...] and "no state assesses any element that is essential for online reading."³⁶ On the other hand other scholars stressed that "without explicitly naming online text and the internet as

³⁶ Leu, D. J., Mc Verry, J.G., O'Byrne, W. I., Kiili, C., Zawilinski, L., Everett-Cacopardo, H., . . . Forzani, E. (2011). The new literacies of online reading comprehension: Expanding the literacy and learning curriculum. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 55 (1), 5-14.

a central text for students, many Common Core State Standards (CCSS) consumers will neglect to consider it when planning classroom literacy and learning experiences.³⁷” If educators are not aware of these meanders in the system students at risk, including immigrants will be further alienated making the adolescent literacy crisis even more severe. Thus, preservice teachers need to enter the workplace with an “*if... then agenda*” and with the conviction that only furthering it their students will succeed.

Nevertheless; researchers also provide evidence that in some cases, even though teachers could be very well prepared the dynamics and culture of their work place could prove overpowering, as a result these young educators will not further the change needed but will be changed themselves and absorbed by the industrial machinery school model, the consequence of this adaptation will in turn limit the opportunities that students could have to become more autonomous in their literacy practices (Alger, 2009).

Another element that scholars make clear is the need for pre-and in-service teachers to actively engage in collaboration not only with discipline colleagues but with experts in their field, with reading specialists, and with stakeholders at every level as well, such as policy makers, new teachers, school leaders, parents, the community, etc. (Pytash, 2012; Hakuta, Santos, & Fang, 2013; Lenski, 2012). Then probably one of the biggest challenges comes from the old industrial school model still in use; last century’s schooling was mainly meant for selection not for learning and allows very limited time for the development of the 21st century student as a long-life learning individual. The pedagogical practices of that system are in stark opposition to more inclusive teaching/learning objectives demanded by our current reality. For

³⁷ Valentino Drew, S. (2012). Open up the ceiling on the Common Core State Standards. Preparing students for 21st-century literacy-now. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 56 (4), 321-330.

instance, as delineated in the CCSS the teaching of content involves unmatched amounts of time invested in allowing the interaction and conversations of students with peers about content studied but to approach such level of dedication with content material it will be necessary to purposefully slow down the process of reading by meticulously engaging with and analyzing text, and providing for varied representations of Close Reading such as multiple reading, methodical interpretation, extracting the correct meaning, transforming the meaning based on personal experience, and uncovering unique and contradictory meanings of a text (Hakuta, Santos, Fang, 2013; Lenski, 2012; Hinchman, Moore, 2013).

I would like to conclude the discussion by paraphrasing what C. Reigeluth (1994) said twenty years ago: that time is the most eroding factor in the school shift from industrial to information age. What would happen if teachers and students were given the time they need to teach and learn? In this same line of thought if ESL educators and the families and communities they serve were empowered and their voices listened to, and their knowledge and experience taken into consideration what kind of initiatives and alternatives would they propose that will improve education, making it more equitable, accessible, and appropriate to the reality of this unique population? We need to re-evaluate and re-formulate teaching/learning practices taking into account the context, the environment, the latest advances of science and technology, and the connections of the community.

To emphasize learning, as Reigeluth said, the new system must no longer hold time constant and allow achievement to vary. It must hold achievement constant at a competency level and allow time to vary. There is no other way to accommodate the facts that different children learn at different rates and have different learning needs. But to have an attainment-based rather than time-based system, we must in turn have person-based progress rather than

group-based progress. And that in turn requires changing the role of the teacher to that of a coach or facilitator/manager, rather than that of dispenser of knowledge to groups of students who pass by at the ring of a bell like so many little widgets on an assembly line.

Ultimately, this inquiry approach is founded in a new perception of reality that involves awareness of global problems that can't be addressed in isolation. I understand that we as the senior educators of the beginning of this 21st Century are about to close the paradigm shift from the industrial age to the information one; this means that the “constellation of achievements, concepts, values, techniques, etc.- shared and used by the scientific community³⁸” of industrialism are being replaced by a new “constellation of concepts, values, perceptions, and practices shared by a community, which forms a particular vision of reality that is the basis of the way the community organizes itself.”³⁹ This new paradigm better describes our problems and addresses solutions in a holistic way; it is not yet fully installed but society, and more importantly education, is moving towards that end. We people from “in-between-paradigms” still live in a hybrid reality: with one foot on the industrial models of thinking and acting and the other one stepping on the information age. However; new generations born “in the cutting edge of technology” live, think, and act differently because their reality is already another reality.

Thus the misunderstandings between these contrasting generations are somewhat understandable: first it is not only a matter of generational differences but also a matter of the whole humanity moving into a new paradigm. Second, even though our younger generations belong to the new paradigm, we are still treating them as belonging to the one that is in way of extinction; this is frustrating for all parts involved, it could even be oppressive, unwise, unfair,

³⁸ Kuhn, T.S. (1962). *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

³⁹ Capra, F. (1996). *The Web of Life*. New York: Anchor Books.

and inappropriate. Therefore; we as educated adults of this paradigm shift should know and do better because while we are almost getting ready to leave the planet our young ones are unpacking their luggage and settling down in their present which is what is left of our future. It may sound scary but it is beautiful indeed.

I would then argue that patterns of perfect balance vs. chaos as described in the sciences of complexity could be observed in the multicultural ESL classroom/experience and that as the participants in the teaching/learning adventure interact growing or co-evolving happens. Although the ideas of disequilibrium and chaos might be controversial when addressing the typical classroom setting the SYRIUS project and the Escuela Nueva proved to bring good results.

So what Reigeluth stated “systems can be in a state of disequilibrium, in which case they approach the edge of chaos [and] beneath the apparently chaotic behavior of a complex system lie certain patterns that can help to both understand and influence the behavior of the system”⁴⁰ could be perceived in any local classroom including the ESL as well; although *chaos* –depending on the understanding of the word– might not be the word of choice in any given classroom it might be harbinger of social co-evolution or co-existence in the extremely complex context of the ESL class.

Finally, I would like to close this chapter by stating the questions leading the present inquiry.

⁴⁰ Reigeluth, Charles M. (2004). Chaos Theory and the Sciences of Complexity. *Foundations for Transforming Education*. I. U. Retrieved from http://www.indiana.edu/~syschang/decaturn/documents/chaos_reigeluth

Research Questions

1. How are the approaches to literacy instruction similar or different among the multicultural ESL educators/instructors? Are there observable differences linked to their background?
2. How multicultural ESL educators/instructors perceive challenges in their classroom? Are there observable differences linked to their background?
3. What are the multicultural ESL educators'/instructors' attitudes towards concepts/constructs of awareness, deconstruction, otherness appreciation, context, and connections?

Notes

¹ United Nations Human Rights. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Rights of the child Article 28

1. States Parties recognize the right of the child to education, and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity, they shall, in particular:

(a) Make primary education compulsory and available free to all;

(b) Encourage the development of different forms of secondary education, including general and vocational education, make them available and accessible to every child, and take appropriate measures such as the introduction of free education and offering financial assistance in case of need;

(c) Make higher education accessible to all on the basis of capacity by every appropriate means;

(d) Make educational and vocational information and guidance available and accessible to all children;

(e) Take measures to encourage regular attendance at schools and the reduction of drop-out rates.

2. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that school discipline is administered in a manner consistent with the child's human dignity and in conformity with the present Convention.

3. States Parties shall promote and encourage international cooperation in matters relating to education, in particular with a view to contributing to the elimination of ignorance and illiteracy

throughout the world and facilitating access to scientific and technical knowledge and modern teaching methods. In this regard, particular account shall be taken of the needs of developing countries.

Article 29

1. States Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to:

(a) The development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential;

(b) The development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations;

(c) The development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilizations different from his or her own;

(d) The preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin;

(e) The development of respect for the natural environment.

2. No part of the present article or article 28 shall be construed so as to interfere with the liberty of individuals and bodies to establish and direct educational institutions, subject always to the observance of the principle set forth in paragraph 1 of the present article and to the requirements that the education given in such institutions shall conform to such minimum standards as may be laid down by the State.

Article 30

In those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities or persons of indigenous origin exist, a child belonging to such a minority or who is indigenous shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of his or her group, to enjoy his or her own culture, to profess and practice his or her own religion, or to use his or her own language.

Article 31

1. States Parties recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.

2. States Parties shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity.

³In this study I considered Freire's concepts regarding critical thinking theory and their links to the pedagogy of the oppressed. Even though acknowledging the importance of his statements in his context and time, I decided to build on them and re-word them while attempting to better understand and explain the social situation at the core of my research. The present study strongly connects with social injustice perhaps as Freire's *fragmented* and *critical knowledge* addressed the political, government, and individual relationships of power and need; however, here the discussion focuses more on self, the other, and context relationships. Then instead of his *conscientização* I use awareness, instead of fragmented knowledge I use superficial (or disjointed knowledge), and instead of critical knowledge I will use deep (or fundamental and vitally articulated knowledge).

CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Over the last few decades of past century and the beginning of our new millennium research of realities and practices in education and particularly in the field of literacy instruction has generated a wealth of material that informs our current educational policies and teaching approaches; not only the products of scientific findings in schooling and academic exertion influence the processes of teaching and learning in our classrooms but also many sociocultural, political, scientific, economic, anthropological, and philosophical shifts in the country and worldwide send us their ‘magnetic waves’ and tremors constantly. The purpose of the present literature study and summary is to further deeper understanding of the diverse dynamics at play in the middle and high school English second language teaching environment from the extant research and practice in the field.

Reading: Literacy Cornerstone, a Synopsis

The introductory part of the synopsis discusses four documents: three widely known reports on reading and literacy (1) *Becoming a Nation of Readers* (BNR) (1985), (2) the National Reading Panel (NRP) (1998), and (3) *Reading Next* (RN) (2006) and (4) the American Institutes for Research (AIR) (2010) *Reference guide for English language learners (ELLs) in the United States: Common Assumptions vs. the Evidence*. The first document (BNR, 1985) gives light on how multidisciplinary research informed education and particularly reading instruction in the late 80’s and early 90’s, the second one (NRP, 1998) –an ambitious meta-study of educational research– informed not only classroom teaching reading practice but policy and research as well from the late 90’s even until now, the third report (RN, 2006), intended to give direction regarding practice and research in middle and high school literacy over the last ten years, and the

last one (AIR-ELLs, 2010) discusses controversies in the teaching of language and content to ELLs and recent immigrants in the United States.

Becoming a Nation of Readers: The Report of the Commission on Reading (1985) was funded by the National Academy of Education's Commission on Education and Public Policy with the sponsorship of the National Institute of Education; the purpose of the Commission on Reading was to "summarize knowledge acquired from research and to draw implications for reading instruction" (p.3). In other words, the commissioned identified research and scholarship topics and surveyed, interpreted and synthesized research findings; as a result of the findings this report makes the case for reading as core factor in the process of education: "in the schools and across the country, reading is an essential tool for success" (p. viii).

The authors of Becoming a Nation of Readers present their report in the form of a narrative which consists of their interpretation and synthesis of an extensive body of findings on reading. They explored cross-disciplinary knowledge of research in the areas of human cognition in the psychology of language, in environmental influences, and in classroom practices in education that ultimately could inform educational policy. In the final product the reader finds a comprehensive definition of reading and emerging literacy, and also what the searched literature said about the teacher and the classroom, testing and reading, and teacher education and professional development.

Probably one of the most important issues discovered through the study of the literature in this report at the time, was the one of teacher preparation. The writers state that "an indisputable conclusion of research is that the quality of teaching makes a considerable difference in children's learning" (p.85). They state that without good teachers it won't be possible to improve reading instruction (p.111), and the nature of instruction teachers provide is

an essential factor –besides the quality of school textbooks and opportunities for meaningful practice– for young readers to be able to extend their literacy skills and meet the challenges of reading in the content areas (p. 61). They say that to recruit and hold good teachers better salaries and working conditions are necessary but to draw smart people to the profession admission standards for teacher education programs should be raised and teacher certification should be more rigorous; furthermore teacher education programs should be extended to five years with provisions for substantial scholarship aid (p. 109).

Another issue that the writers discovered as crucial was that one of the environment; they discussed the teacher’s milieu in terms of the leadership, philosophy, and atmosphere and stated “it is difficult for a teacher [...] with high aspirations and well-honed skills to achieve excellence if the school lacks leadership or the ethos of the school is indifferent to academic learning, order and discipline, and collegiality.” (p. 114). They also considered the students’ factor giving attention to parents, family, and home as the place and circumstances where the child receives his first reading lessons.

Finally they also discuss assessment and standardized testing. Based on their report it is not a matter of a voluminous file of classroom performance vs. a brief sample of performance allowed on a standardized reading test; rather it is the case for different and complementary sets of results that together offer a more balanced picture of a child’s accomplishments. Authors state that “the correlation is high between reading test scores and teacher’s rating [...] and that usually tests confirm what the teacher already knows” but as for teachers, ongoing observation and assessment of children provide more detailed and trustworthy information while standardized tests “provide objective information about the success of children in learning to read and of schools in teaching reading.” (p. 95)

The National Reading Panel (1998), this is a document that came approximately 12 years after the BNR, was mandated by Congress under President Bill Clinton in consultation with the Secretary of Education in 1997 and became the foundation of educational law during G. W. Bush. The purpose of this Panel was to “assess the status of research-based knowledge, including the effectiveness of various approaches to teaching children to read.” (p. 1-1) This report comes in the form of a meta-analysis in which the authors took into consideration “the foundational work of the National Research Council (NRC) committee on Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998) which summarizes reading research and reading instruction; besides that they identified and summarized research literature relevant to the task at hand; they found more than 100,000 research studies on reading on and before 1966, that is the last 50 years prior to their report; they screened that body of literature according to topics they considered a priority, they also conducted regional public hearings in order to “listen to the voices of those who will need to consider implementation of the Panel’s findings and determinations.” As a result of their meta-study they adopted the following topics for discussion: alphabets (phonemic awareness instruction and phonics instruction), fluency, comprehension (vocabulary instruction, text comprehension instruction, and teacher preparation and comprehension strategies instruction), teacher education and reading instruction, and computer technology and reading instruction.

Given the monumental work and balance presented in this report I made an effort to select recommendations that I found more relevant for each of the issues the panelists deemed strong enough to include; of course my summary is very subjective and it serves only the purpose of illustrating what I consider to be the most interesting elements under each big umbrella identified by the panelists.

1. Their findings regarding phonemic awareness instruction (PA)

- PA teaching is effective because it “improves their ability to manipulate phonemes in speech [...]” it also helps in learning to read and spell, and in reading comprehension. It will benefit students that are just learning to read, (1st graders and below) disabled readers, SES at risk, and ELLs (all of these regardless of their age).

- The most effective method/approach was “instruction that focuses on one or two skills [using small groups]” as opposed to a multi-skilled approach with an individual or with a large group or class.

- Teachers need to be taught to teach PA and also need knowledge about the development of beginning readers.

- There is a gap in knowledge regarding parents as PA trainers.

2. Their findings in phonics instruction

- Systematic phonics instruction contributes to children’s growth in reading more than alternative programs or no phonics instruction.

- It is effective in preventing reading difficulties among at-risk students, also remediating reading difficulties among disabled readers but more research was needed at the time to determine what constitutes adequate remedial instruction for low-achieving readers.

- It enhances word-reading comprehension skills among kindergarteners, 1st graders, older struggling readers, and disabled students.

- It improves spelling but only before 1st grade.

- It is effective regardless of SES.

- It is a priority to make sure teachers are well prepared and skillful in the use and knowledge of the different programs available for systematic phonics instruction.

3. Their findings in fluency. Characterized by speed and accuracy in oral reading, fluency is an “essential ingredient in successful reading development” and depends upon solid word recognition skills. The panelists discuss 2 major instructional approaches to fluency development: (a) “procedures that emphasize repeated [or guided] oral reading practice ...” (including neurological impress, radio reading, paired reading, and (b) “all formal efforts to increase the amounts of independent or recreational reading” (such as sustained silent reading programs, accelerated reader, drop everything and read, etc.) They concluded that guided oral reading procedures tended to improve word recognition, fluency, and comprehension and that these procedures are useful before and beyond 4th grade. As for the programs encouraging students to read more no adequate evidence was found (for the improvement of word recognition, fluency, and comprehension); as a result they recommend more research in that area. (p.3-28)

4. Their findings in reading comprehension (RC). Although this is the most extensive chapter of the report the writers acknowledge that only literature relevant to the normal reading process was analyzed; they didn’t consider in this section research related to students at risk, disabled ones, or ELLs. They elaborate on three predominant themes emerged from their analysis (a) the critical role of vocabulary learning and instruction, (b) text comprehension instruction, and (c) teachers’ preparation “which is crucial and intimately tied to the development of RC.” (p.4-1)

- Under vocabulary instruction: they produced a simplified taxonomy of methods for vocabulary instruction including: *explicit instruction* (students are given definition or other attributes of words to be learned), *indirect instruction* (acquisition of vocabulary through “a great deal of reading”), *multimedia methods* (semantic mapping, hypertext, ASL), *Capacity*

methods (concentrating on meaning of words rather than their orthographic or oral representations), and *association methods* (making connections –semantic or contextual, or imagery between known and new). Based on their analysis of a wealth of instructional methods they identified about eleven different trends, among those I would like to mention age and ability effects on vocabulary learning, computer use for vocabulary instruction, and vocabulary instruction effects on comprehension (mapping the causal relationships between vocabulary and comprehension).

- Under text comprehension instruction: text comprehension involves “intentional thinking during which meaning is constructed through interactions between text and reader.” (Durkin, 1993 cited by NRP p. 4-5). They state that “the explicit teaching of text comprehension before 1980 was done largely in content areas and not in the context of formal reading instruction,” that “teachers taught comprehension strategies by demonstrating, modeling, or guiding the reader.” Strategies can be summarized as self-awareness, teacher guiding, and reader practicing. They found 8 kinds of instruction that appeared to be effective:

- Comprehension monitoring (self-awareness of personal reading process)
- Cooperative learning (learning strategies with peers)
- Graphic and semantic organizers (to represent meanings and relationships of ideas)
- Story structure (answering “W” questions, plot, timeline, characters, events, etc.)
- Question answering (teacher asks, student answers, teacher gives feedback)
- Question generation (reader asks self W Questions)

- Summarization (by reader)
- Multiple-strategy teaching (flexible interaction teacher-student in naturalistic contexts using various strategies as needed)

- Under teacher preparation and comprehension strategies instruction they note:

“comprehension can be improved *by teaching students* to use specific cognitive strategies or to reason strategically when they encounter barriers to comprehension when reading.” (p. 4-7) Thus training of teachers as well as teacher expertise and flexibility while teaching with this kind of approach is crucial. They discuss 4 studies where teachers were trained to teach strategies and identified two methods of teacher preparation:

- Direct explanation (DE). Involved the ability of the teacher to “teach the students the skill of how to find the main idea by casting it as a problem-solving task and reasoning about it strategically.”
- Transactional Strategy Instruction (TSI) same as above but emphasizing interactive exchange among learners. The teacher must facilitate discussion among students so they “(1) collaborate to form joint interpretations of text, and (2) explicitly discuss the mental processes...”

Regarding future research they state that since comprehension research was limited to grades 3-8 it will be necessary to examine comprehension instruction beyond these grades; they conclude that “the most promising lines of research within the reading comprehension strategies are focused on teacher preparation to teach comprehension” and that intensive preparation in strategy instruction will help teachers deliver and students perform (p. 4-9).

5. Their findings on teacher education and reading instruction. They state that “appropriate teacher education does produce higher achievement in students.” They also found that there is

“little research on how teachers can be supported over the long term to ensure sustained implementation of new methods and student achievement,” that there is a growing body of experimental research on teacher education and professional development (p. 5-13), and that since “computer technology has made the use of video modeling and simulation even more available [...] it can provide supplemental experiences to classroom instruction in teaching.” (p. 5-16)

6. Their findings on computer technology and reading instruction. The Panel believes that technology must be addressed as how it could be applied to specific problems in reading instruction and that research must be “independent of specific computer platforms and software because the rapidity of innovations makes specific choices obsolete in short time periods.” (p. 6-9). They acknowledge that systematic research into problems involving computers or other technologies is not representative and that “a great deal of additional exploration” is needed in the use of computer technology for reading instruction; that the absence of research on Internet applications to support reading instruction is “particularly striking.”

I would like to end this section by quoting what the panelists consider the most important finding of their review. They refer to the “*multiple-strategy* instruction that is *flexible* (choice of strategy and when to use it) [...] and providing a natural basis for teachers and readers interaction over texts [...]” they say that “the research literature developed from the study of isolated strategies to their use in combination to the preparation of teachers to teach them in interactions over texts with readers in naturalistic settings [...]” they consider this development to be the most important finding “because it moves from the laboratory to the classroom and prepares teachers to teach strategies in ways that are effective and natural.” (p. 4-6)

Reading Next (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006) is a most recent document that aims to give directions for action and research in middle and high school literacy; according to the authors the report presents a “powerful array of tools” and a “framework for considering how to deploy them.” The authors argue that educators and administrators have powerful tools like programs and approaches but don’t know how to use them in combination. They also state that between 70% and 80% of students in 4th to 12th grade are struggling readers and require differentiated intervention, that 10% of students in this group have problems decoding, the rest can decode words but they don’t comprehend what they read. Thus the authors’ framework addresses the needs of the larger struggling population. They present a paradigm of 15 elements arranged in two blocks: the instructional improvements and the infrastructure improvements. From their 15 elements they recommend “practitioners and program designers to *flexibly try out various combinations* in search of the most effective overall program.” The combination chosen should *act as a foundation* for further instructional innovations, any program should include 3 basic elements: professional development and formative and summative assessment –among other tools- this will ensure “instructional effectiveness and measuring effects.” According to them all of this is relevant because not only the needs of students will be met but also it will help to understand “exactly what works, when, and for whom.” (p.5) Authors state that since all students are different, they have different kinds of needs and challenges thus needing “a wide range of interventions” (p.8), furthermore; that literacy needs are compounded by background factors such as learning disabilities, recent immigrants, and ELLs.

Their examples of instructional improvements (9 elements in total) include:

1. Direct, explicit, comprehension instruction. Such as *reciprocal teaching* (scaffolded approach), reading apprenticeship (promoting metacognitive conversations that make the

invisible aspects of 4 dimensions visible and open for discussion; 4D: *social* (safe, supportive environment collaboration), *personal* (improving identity and attitude, self-awareness, self-assessment, metacognition, ownership), *cognitive* (reading like experts in the discipline), and *knowledge-building* (content).

2. Effective instructional principles embedded in content. Such as *strategic instruction model* (SIM, which consists of: Word identification and break down into root, pre- and suffixes; Visual imagery –creating mental movies of narratives they read; Self questioning –why, what, etc., finding answers in text, and paraphrasing (p.16).

3. Motivation and self-directed learning. They argue this element is critical because “competence in reading is necessary but insufficient by itself to engender better academic performance.” (p. 16) they say that motivation is maintained by two kinds of provisions from the teacher: giving choices (in reading, research, and writing) and the instructional support and aids needed to succeed, and by “promoting relevancy in what students read and learn.”

4. Text-based collaborative learning. This is achieved by scaffolding, leading students to work in small groups and *question the author*. (Similarly to book clubs or literature circles where meaning is negotiated through a group process; students discuss ideas rather than a plot. In the scaffolding process the teacher has to provide instruction on how to deal with time effectively and assign roles.

5. Strategic tutoring: or intense, individualized instruction.

6. Diverse texts: or topical diversity including cultural, linguistic, demographic, etc., appropriate grade-level books and multi-level materials.

7. Intensive writing: “research supports the idea that writing instruction also improves reading comprehension.” (p. 19) and the other way around... it’s not bulk writing it is to be able to “engage with academic content at high levels of reasoning.”

8. A technology component: “technology is both a facilitator and a medium of literacy.” [...] needs to be addressed as an instructional tool and as a topic...

9. Ongoing formative assessment of students: day to day teacher’s duties as she adjusts instruction.

Their examples of infrastructural elements/improvements:

1. Extended time for literacy; need for 2-4hrs of literacy-connected learning daily, (in total across subject matters), need for content area teachers to teach both content and reading strategies proper of their subject; this will require a “rearticulation of standards and revision of preservice training.”

2. Professional development; should be ongoing and long-term, would produce a “team-oriented approach to improving the instruction and institutional structures that promote better adolescent literacy.” (p. 20)

3. Ongoing summative assessment of students and programs; progress-monitoring systems. “Tracking of students over an entire academic career k-12.”

4. Teacher teams; interdisciplinary, teachers teaching the same students “meet regularly to discuss and align instruction.”

5. Leadership; “someone with an informed vision of what good literacy instruction entails...” and a comprehensive and coordinated literacy program which includes the combination of the instructional and infrastructural improvements.

They end up by stating that our society is driven by knowledge and demands increasing literacy skills; they say that there is urgency for reform but the joint forces of funders, researchers, policymakers, administrators, teachers, parents, and students are needed to make change real.

AIR, Common assumptions vs. the evidence: English language learners in the United States. (2010). Gil & Bardack talk about “inconsistent and controversial” approaches to the teaching of language and content to English language learners (ELLs) and recent immigrants in the United States. They say that practices are informed more by reflections of personal or anecdotal experiences than by research which in turn contributes to a lack of clarity and confusion regarding appropriate policies, goals, strategies, and outcomes for ELLs. In their paper authors probe a series of popular beliefs and examine research addressing common assumptions underlining ELL instruction; a brief summary follows.

1. To the belief that all ELLs are immigrants they present data demonstrating that approximately half of that population is U. S. born citizens belonging to second or third generation of immigrants but despite the fact of being solely educated in the U. S. have not reached a proficiency level and adequate literacy skills to be considered as fluent English speakers. They also talk about the diversity among this population: “There is no one profile for an ELL student or one single approach or policy that will meet his or her educational goals and needs.” (p. 2) and add that due to the diverse policies and procedures regarding this population among states researchers find it difficult to describe ELLs learning progress and data available is not representative of the whole ELLs population.

2. To the concern that learning two or more languages would hinder student’s fluency in both they said research demonstrated that as cognitive and academic demands increase students

who did not receive adequate support to develop their first language perform more and more poorly; they said also that curriculums supporting “ELL students’ academic and linguistic needs in both languages over a sustained period of time” would better serve the needs of ELLs.

3. To the idea that all ELLs learn English the same way authors respond that ELLs arrive to the ESL classroom with diverse levels of schooling in their native language and also with substantial personality and linguistic differences, that they will respond better to culturally adapted instruction and that for an ESL program to be efficient the diverse sociocultural and linguistic needs of ELLs population have to be considered.

4. To the belief that once ELLs speak the language they are ready for academic tasks Gil & Bardack (2010) respond that relative fluency in conversation is not indicator of comprehensive literacy. They add that reading and writing problems may pass unnoticed for children that are fluent speakers and that the practice of mainstreaming children after one or two years of ESL intervention is not appropriate and could in fact deter future academic progress. (p. 9)

5. To the idea that without special programs previous generations of immigrants succeeded authors said that research endorses the opposite: “immigrants have consistently struggled to learn English to succeed in school and in the labor market, and have always required support to learn English and successfully assimilate.” Gil & Bardack (2010: 10) Authors mention the *newcomer* schools or programs as targeting recent immigrant population with adequate schooling practices (p. 11).

6. To the concern that native English speakers will be delayed in their schooling if enrolled in dual language programs Gil & Bardack (2010) respond discussing research that substantiates the opposite; they found that English speakers in dual language programs performed at the same level or higher than students in monolingual programs.

Finally, Gil & Bardack (2010) assess six other common beliefs and emphasize that ELLs need a comprehensive approach that would foster English language proficiency as well as adequate development of academic English; they add that students served through bilingual programs outperformed the ones sent to immersion programs, either way ELLs will need more explicit language instruction and their content area teachers will need specific training because usually they are not prepared to serve the ELLs population and don't understand their needs. About the idea of parents not desiring to be involved in their children's education authors comment on the attitude of regarding parents as a deficit not as an asset and give suggestions on what should be done to encourage parent participation but they don't offer information about studies on parent involvement.

Approaches to Literacy Instruction and to the Teaching of Second Languages

The second part of the synopsis discusses literature on didactic principles and approaches for the teaching of second/foreign languages including English as a second language (ESL) and English language learners (ELLs). This section begins with (1) an overview of research regarding metacognition and awareness in the teaching/learning of the second language (Rivers, 2001 and others), (2) the next document considered is Alice Omaggio Hadley's *Teaching Language in Context* 3rd ed. (2001), this is a reference book for the teaching of second/foreign languages methodology widely used in the education of pre-service and in-service language professionals, (3) in the third document *Application of Reading Strategies Within the Classroom* by Frank, C. B., Grossi, J. M., & Stanfield, D. J. (2006), the authors discuss literature spanning several decades of research (from the 1940's throughout the first few years of the twenty first century) to present a historical foundation illustrating the origin, importance, and rationale for the use of learning strategies across subjects –including the pedagogy of the second/modern

languages— and across school levels; they offer a selection of fifty strategies that when implemented will enhance literacy development in ‘academic language’ or content area subjects, (4) the following document Fay & Whaley’s *Becoming one community: reading and writing with English language learners* (2004) is a sensitive yet profound book that besides a wealth of techniques and strategies addressing the ESL/ELLs world and needs touches a nerve in what this researcher considers the backbone of any literacy approach for ELLs in school age: the sense of a safe environment where the adult genuinely cares; even though Fay & Whaley (2004) experience is framed within the elementary grades the humane and social principles underlying the creation of a classroom community and of a socio-emotional safe environment for new comers to this country is of utmost importance.

Metacognitive awareness in the second language class. Metacognition, as indicated by Rivers, W. P. (2001) consists of two types of behavior: self-assessment and self-management; he says that second language learners (among others, like chess learners) might be more aware of their reasoning processes than the rest of the students’ population. T. G. Gunning (2003) expands on this definition saying that the metacognitive process involves setting a goal of constructing meaning, assessing whether that goal is being met, and taking appropriate steps to remedy the situation if the goal is not being met (2003: 133); he goes onto saying that ELLs as they *have* to learn the new language “are more metacognitively aware than students who speak only English” (2003: 134). For P. Benson (2006) autonomy in language learning is tied to the “capacity to take charge of, or take responsibility for, or control over your own learning;” from his point of view people possess abilities and attitudes and can develop [metacognitive skills or monitoring for meaning as Gunning (2003) calls it] them to various degrees. Anderson, N. J. (2002) defines metacognition as “thinking about thinking;” he says that “learners who are metacognitively

aware [...] have strategies for finding out or figuring out what they need to do” when understanding is impaired. He adds that metacognitive strategies “can lead to more profound learning and improved performance, especially among learners who are struggling;” he stresses that understanding and controlling cognitive processes “may be one of the most essential skills that classroom teachers can help second language learners develop.” Since metacognition is not a linear process several metacognitive behaviors may be occurring at a time during the second language learning task that is why –he says, the orchestration of various strategies is a vital component of second language learning. To this respect, Graham (1997, pp. 42-43) states that the ability to choose and evaluate one's strategies is of central importance in the learning process, as a result metacognitive strategies that allow students to plan, control, and evaluate their learning are the most crucial to be aware of. Vandergrift, L., & Goh, C. (2011) in their research on second language (L2) learning state that “metacognition or the act of thinking about thinking [...] enhances thinking and comprehension.” They emphasize that the purpose of implementing metacognitive learning activities should be to deepen learner understanding of their own reasoning, raise greater awareness of the demands and processes of L2 learning, and teach learners how to manage their comprehension and learning. Finally, it’s important to increase students’ awareness about themselves (metacognitive knowledge) as cognitive processors, about different approaches that can be used for learning and problem solving, and about the demands of a particular learning task –TEAL (2012). Students also need to make adjustments (metacognitive regulation) to their processes to help control their learning, such as planning, information management strategies, comprehension monitoring, de-bugging strategies, and evaluation of progress and goals.

Teaching Language in Context. Hadley (2001) makes the case for the continued education of second language professionals emphasizing the importance of regularly engaging in self-assessment as a tool that would bring awareness about own teaching beliefs and practice and put in the picture important details for sustained improvement for as she said, in our field we have moved beyond the era of “absolutes.” She says unrelenting self-assessment and awareness practice should be at the core of what a true professional in this field is: “This continuing struggle to understand, clarify, and articulate one’s beliefs and practices is at the very heart of what it means to be a professional.” (p. vii preface) her statements stay true to the reality not only of literacy and second languages instructors but to that one of all teachers regardless of their discipline because educators constantly have to make informed choices regarding what is available in their practice while staying open to innovative avenues for change. Although she does not explicitly refer to the concepts of the French philosopher⁴¹ what she describes is the deconstruction dynamics second language practitioners engage in constantly (researcher’s personal interpretation of her statements).

Passing beyond philosophical constructs her work presents a set of “hypothesized principles” (p. viii), discussion of standards, the role of technology, the review of the extant literature for second language acquisition/foreign language teaching, and goal areas (known among professionals as “the 5Cs”: communication, cultures, connections, comparisons, and communities).

Regarding the language proficiency guidelines as stated by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), she said they constitute a broad frame of reference that instructors should look at and search for implications when making their instructional

⁴¹ Jacques Derrida Déconstruction théorie

choices; she added “by understanding what general kinds of abilities lie at each level of proficiency, teachers can plan to shift emphasis of instruction...” (p. 88) and determine priorities while teaching a second/foreign language. Educators should also be guided by core principles including giving opportunities to students to practice the language in true contexts, with different tasks, and to develop accuracy while taking into account their affective and cognitive needs and promoting cultural understanding in multiple ways. (p. 91)

Hadley (2001) also discussed the three historically “traditional methods” from where many other teaching approaches stem (1) grammar-translation, the oldest one and best known as the method of choice when teaching classical languages Greek and Latin; (2) the direct method, characterized by a ‘natural approach’ to teaching/learning: no use of native language was allowed in classroom settings and translation was forbidden; it was the method of choice at Berlitz institutions around the world; and (3) audio-lingual, characterized by emphasis on dialogue, use of pattern drills, and application activities. As is understandable, like in any profession, if a new method is giving good results to colleagues somewhere all practitioners want to give it a try; however, experience has shown that there is not one single valid way to advance in the teaching and learning of second/modern/foreign languages but a great variety of tools at the disposal of the skillful pedagogue. As Hadley (2001) puts it “many teachers are adopting an eclectic approach [...] believing that the age-old search for the “one true way” can be futile and frustrating.” (p.129). Then regardless of methods and instructional tools teachers choose, scholars, practitioners, and researchers agree on that for teaching/learning to be effective teachers’ choices must be guided by foundational principles aiming to provide instruction that is meaningful, interactive, and responsive to learner needs. Hadley (2001: 129), (BNR: 1985), (NRP: 1998), and (RN: 2006).

Finally, when addressing the culture topic the author stated that the cultural content of the curriculum has improved in spite of persistent challenges like an overcrowded curriculum and the feelings of inadequacy among teachers (they feel they don't know enough). Even though the author doesn't utilize the deconstruction theory terms she refers to the necessity of deconstruction through self-awareness that would increase understanding about personal ways individuals are culture-bound; such self-awareness process would include a revision of ways of behaving, reacting, thinking, and feeling or an inventory of attitudes, emotions, beliefs, and values (2001: 347). Hadley (2001) also gives an overview of how approaches to teach culture have evolved from the "Olympian" one where "the best" of the target culture was highlighted to the most anthropological one or BBV where beliefs, behavior, and values are addressed. She suggests practitioners to teach culture depending on the "level of cultural awareness and sophistication of the students, as well as by their level of linguistic proficiency," (p.384)

Application of reading strategies within the classroom. Frank, Grossi, & Stanfield, (2006). In this book the authors discuss literature spanning several decades of research; they start as early as the 1940's and go throughout the first few years of the present century. This theoretical framework supports the choice of fifty featured strategies and constitutes the foundation of the book. They begin by discussing the origin, importance, and rationale for the use of learning strategies across subjects and school levels. As the authors state a crucial factor for the student to acquire the skill –and for the teacher to have peace of mind, is consistency and persistence; the authors said strategies are to be modeled and reinforced in the classroom and used across all content areas (p. 2) then by consistently modeling and reinforcing at all levels and during all classes eventually all students will adopt strategies that work for them.

When addressing prior knowledge, Frank, Grossi, & Stanfield, (2006) discuss the importance of context in the process of comprehending information. They state that if the student lacks adequate prior information an important building block in the process of understanding material would be missing and it would be the responsibility of the teacher to help students establishing connections of the new material to their culture, context, and experiences (p. 11 -12) by activating prior knowledge or by building up student's knowledge before assigning the reading task.

Frank, Grossi, & Stanfield, (2006) devote a chapter to discuss how vocabulary knowledge affects students' reading ability; how vocabulary learning moves on a continuum of not knowing the meaning of a word, understanding it, and appropriating and incorporating the word in the personal discourse, and the role of vocabulary in reaching proficiency in the four communicative abilities of listening, speaking, reading, and writing (p.73).

The authors also argue about the social nature of learning and discuss the power and impact of talking as a learning strategy (p.112). They refer to the importance of preparing a planned classroom conversation that will scaffold students' talk and eventually shift teacher's role from lecturer to facilitator; this would engage all students in a dialogue or collaborative examination of content. (p. 115) Parallel to this discussion they talked about the importance of addressing the informative and creative aspects of literacy by incorporating writing as a learning strategy – reading to write and writing to read- (p.143-144).

In closing, Frank, Grossi, & Stanfield, (2006) argued about the student's necessity to understand the way information is presented and organized in different formats in order to comprehend and retain content (p.181-182). They discussed how perceiving both the external structure of a text as well as the internal structure of the discourse contained therein would

improve student's learning and retention of content. They ended their report by presenting a summary of strategies according to the content areas where they would be most appropriate to implement.

Becoming one community: reading and writing with English language learners Fay & Whaley, (2004). Authors in this book stress the importance of the many functions and roles the classroom plays in schools, they talk about the classroom as a safe haven or as the place where each one cares for each other fostering trust and establishing a respectful learning community. Their statements are also in agreement with Krashen (1997-2004) about the importance of increasing access to a variety of printed materials, of improving the classroom library, of every day giving all students the opportunity to read books at their instructional level (a strategy similar to that of sustained silent reading SSR), and of giving students the chance to choose their own readings.

Authors said ELLs need classrooms where teachers listen to them with sophisticated sensitivity, avoid making assumptions about students' potentials, design accessible lessons, and recognize ELLs need time. They stress the importance of creating safe and comfortable learning environments, providing spaces and times for discussion that would encourage conversations even on complex topics; they advocate for the creation of a "classroom community" stimulating students to get to know each other and adults to give evidence that they care by fostering feelings of respect, taking time to get to know students, connecting with families, becoming aware of students' interests and individual conditions, honoring each child by talking about native country and by changing the perception of ELLs as cognitively deficient or disabled.

Authors also emphasize importance of modeling specific comprehension instruction and of empowering learners by making them aware of strategies they already use. They point out

flexibility as a particular characteristic of this group of students: “ELLs often live with ambiguity through their day in school. [...] they have come to accept this fact [...] flexibility [...] helps them cope with uncertainty” since moving through hazy physical, affective, and social environments with remarkable flexibility is ELLs’ daily reality they also “need teachers who are especially flexible.” Fay & Whaley, (2004: 131)

Authors said ELLs “need many opportunities to talk throughout the day to develop language and also to negotiate the meaning of text (or any concept)” (p. 145) they said the practice of small-group discussions after read-aloud time helps confirm active listening and promotes meaningful participation in large group conversations (p. 144). They present read-aloud routines as a ritual that could be peaceful, relaxing, or stimulating and that fosters the development of sensitivity among students. However; they remark, it requires the disposition of the teacher for modeling, coaching, and scaffolding; authors say it’s worthwhile because students’ language and conceptual thinking improve by engaging in authentic meaningful conversations.

Finally, Fay & Whaley (2004) talk about the importance of making home—school connections; they present different alternatives to connect with parents and with the students’ community, they affirm these endeavors would provide “a critical link with the child and [the] family and [...] important new insights into the child” that ultimately would better inform the teaching approach (p.198). They conclude by stating that the most important thing in the ELLs environment is to establish the connection with the children “the connections we make with every child matters [...] they determine how each child will learn.” (p. 202)

Challenges in the Field

This section of the review deals with structural challenges such as education budget and policies and school culture realities such as teachers' attitudes, immigrants and minorities' social and self-image, and schools' physical and schedule spaces for sense of community and civility improvement among others. Difficulties at these varied levels affect not only ELLs population but also all students at risk of academic failure generated by inadequate literacy development and by lack of access to suitable services.

One of the greatest challenges in education in general, in academic success, and in literacy development specifically is related to poverty; poor families have limited access to books and printed materials, live in poor neighborhoods, their children attend poorest schools thus will have fewer chances to be taught by highly qualified/experienced educators, and usually have scarcer opportunities for rich educational experiences and leisure activities. Students living in school districts of 20% poverty levels or above experience even more compounded challenges because these kinds of schools receive about 29% less funding support per student than schools in more affluent areas (edbuild.org, 2015⁴²); as Selcuk & Sirin (2005) found "Of all the factors examined [...] family SES at the student level is one of the strongest correlates of academic performance. At the school level, the correlations were even stronger." Most recent immigrants and ethnic minorities are among the poorest in the country and rank at the lowest literacy/academic attainment; furthermore, being Hispanic and/or Black is a characteristic of students found at the bottom list of underperformers, "descriptive statistics found that multiracial students who self-identify as [B]lack or Hispanic achieve lower grades than do those who self-identify as [W]hite or Asian" Buggey (2007). According to edbuild.org statistics (2015) from

⁴² <http://viz.edbuild.org/maps/2015/student-poverty-timelapse/>

2006 to 2013 poor students' population across the United States increased by 60% and in school districts with poverty levels of 40% or above the number of students raised by 260%, researchers add "These concentrated-poverty areas pose heightened risks to child well-being and opportunity." They said that schools in concentrated poverty areas "need more resources to level the playing field."

Even though these recent statistics describe the current picture of schools in poor environments, the inadequate funding for schools especially those in extreme poverty is not a new trend; for instance, about two decades ago Stephen Krashen (1996) noted that books were not at home neither at school among families and neighborhoods living in poverty, at the time he found that literacy at prisons was better funded than at school: "prisons spent \$18.40 a year per inmate on books vs. schools spending \$8.2 a year per student, prisons average 1 librarian/815 inmates vs. schools 1 librarian/5000 students," besides the scarcity of funding to promote literacy Krashen (1996) indicated that policies and regulations at school libraries were not friendly or inviting making access nearly impossible and limited English proficiency students didn't know much what was available. He presented a series of recommendations to the California task force report on reading geared to significantly improve literacy; his words still resonate here and now: he recommended that school districts provide a print-rich environment in the primary and second language for language minority children, that school libraries to be improved, and schools implemented free voluntary reading. He said repeatedly school's investment in technology is strikingly disproportionate comparing to investment in the school library; often libraries had a "pathetically small, out-of-date collection, and policies making hard for children to get access to the few books." This fact points at how schools' leadership, vision, and priorities could change the direction of the tide if investment on literacy is adequate.

Krashen (1996) recommendations are in accord with the (IRA 1999) principles for supporting adolescents' literacy growth, those principles are summarized as what adolescents deserve: 1) access to a wide variety of materials that they can and want to read, 2) instruction that builds both the skill and desire to read increasingly complex materials, 3) assessment that shows their strengths and their needs and that guides teachers in the design of meaningful/appropriate instruction, 4) expert teachers who model and provide explicit instruction in reading comprehension and study strategies across the curriculum, 5) reading specialists assisting individual students having difficulty learning how to read, 6) teachers who understand the complexities of individual adolescent readers, respect their differences, and respond to their characteristics, and 7) homes, communities, and a nation that will support their efforts to achieve advanced levels of literacy and provide the support necessary for them to succeed.

As a strong ELLs literacy activist Krashen (2007) also advocates for late intervention as complementary to early intervention; his approach would benefit middle and high school ELLs students. He states that the way to achieve success in late intervention is implementing "massive free voluntary reading." He discusses research substantiating his approach saying that with programs that operate for sufficient period of time and when material is available students who participate "typically outperform students who don't." again, as in many of his papers he presents the case for "easy access to books" and highlights that access is a problem for children in poverty. He states that "late intervention based on free reading can work [because] there is no "critical period" for learning to read and literacy can occur at any age." He discusses how starting to read later in life is not a problem for a child if he/she has access to reading materials by presenting findings on research in economic developed countries, analyzing home-schooled

children, and examples of high-interest reading such as recovered dyslexics and Malcolm X. The conditions he proposes for a late intervention program to function are first to ensure that students have sufficient access to interesting reading material and that the program lasts a sufficient amount of time a minimum of a whole academic year; he ends by assuring that promoting late intervention is not advocating against early intervention.

Beside socioeconomic challenges ELLs populations face other kinds of situations that impact their academic performance; these could manifest inside the classroom stemming from teachers' worldview, personal philosophy of teaching, and their attitude in general; challenges could also originate from the school culture, from families' culture, from parents' attitude towards school and education, and from students' self-image. As Spache & Spache (1997) put it, sometimes bi-lingual or dialect users pass or are perceived as students with cognitive disabilities, their lack of fluency could be read as lower thinking ability which in turn may influence the expectations and attitudes of the teachers "the linguistically different child's primary problem is the attitude of the middle-class standard-English-speaking teacher" Spache & Spache (1997); the teacher may not be aware of that but ELLs perceive teachers' attitude as prejudiced and as a personal rejection "a rejection of the child, his family, and his cultural background that will only be met with negativism and hostility, or passivity and withdrawal." (1997: 19) The authors discuss as well the profile of low-achievers; among characteristics they note lack of self-confidence, negative self-concept, and expectations of failing-to achieve, they said poor children are exposed to family expectations and models of behavior not favorable to academic performance (p21).

Other authors acknowledge that teachers have a strong and lasting influence on their students and that their approaches to instruction delivery and perception of their role as educators

may stem from their personal philosophy, Cheek, Flippo, & Lindsey (1997). They said that often teachers' beliefs and philosophies are the basis for all behaviors related to their teaching tasks and roles from setting/organizing classroom, managing learning environments, determining learning goals, assessing students, making instructional decisions, interacting with students, parents, families and other professionals, etc. Authors concede though that it could happen that teachers express beliefs but don't enact them.

Cheek, Flippo, & Lindsey (1997) make the case for the *facilitative teacher*, a concept that has to do with educators' attitudes and ideas; they say this kind of professional "values students' individualities and facilitates their learning by being aware of and by providing for their differences, experiences, needs, strategies, motivations, cultures and interests, and she/he balances instruction to meet these diversities." (1997:26) The authors stress the importance of teachers understanding the uniqueness of each student, assessing what prior knowledge students bring, and their background experiences; they illustrate these points with poignant excerpts taken from case studies. Cheek, Flippo, & Lindsey (1997) present the facilitative teacher as the one that makes of his/her classroom a friendly environment that fosters both the social and academic development of the student by emphasizing group work, sharing and cooperation, and valuing student's work and ideas.

Schools' and families' culture, students' self-image, and parents' attitude towards school and education, could also present challenges to ELLs second language acquisition, overall literacy development, and ultimate academic success, especially for brand new comers. Regardless of challenges, disheartenments, and difficulties arising from the clash of diverse and dissimilar cultures, beliefs, values, and priorities distinct human groups still can overcome frustrations by displaying and enacting civility and other virtues in all endeavors they undertake. Wilkins, Caldarella, Crook-Lyon, & Young, (2010) Defined civility as a virtue, a code of mutually

accepted social behaviors important to maintain a functioning society in harmony. According to the authors, civility goes beyond tolerance and peacefulness because these imply leaving people alone whereas civility requires purposefully interacting to lift and help; it requires an active demonstration of courtesy, consideration, and respect for the property, rights, and humanity of others; it implies awareness of self and of the environment, self-control, and empathy. They distinguish two kinds of civility 1) Proximate Civility, which entails politeness or the absence of rude interactions with others, in words and/or in gestures, and 2) Diffuse Civility, characterized by showing regard for the effects of one's actions on others and for the spaces shared with them. Wilkins, Caldarella, Crook-Lyon, & Young, (2010) also include literature arguing that today's rapidly changing world, the influence of media, the pervasiveness of technology, the weakening of families, mobility, focus on the individual, glorification of violence, and an increased academic focus of public education threaten civility. They argue that despite the lack of data evidencing actual changes in specific civic behaviors there are data measuring antisocial behavior, crime, and violence; and that these point to the need of interventions to increase civility. (2010: 39). Authors discuss research stating that "much of youth violence can be attributed to attachment difficulties between child and parent, youth depression, and parental abandonment." (2010: 39) and go on suggesting that "although most antisocial behaviors stem from personal and familial dysfunction, many may be perpetuated and exacerbated by negative school environments leading to school violence and crime." (2010: 39). They add that "society has taken a sharp turn away from focusing on people and relationships towards focusing on the self and technology."

Wilkins, Caldarella, Crook-Lyon, & Young, (2010) quote research that refers of civility as having a leading role in reducing school violence and of incivility as fostering perceptions of school being unsafe, student's anxiety and fear and suggest that interventions are needed at school level. They add that literature substantiates the lack of a sense of community or of social consciousness, and that these facts contribute to apathy, intolerance, and incivility. They said that even though some programs addressing specific social behaviors and skills have been implemented no research has connected them directly to civility in schools; They conclude that "there is the need to design and test the efficacy of an intervention

to increase civil behavior in schools” because there are not data to support the use of these interventions. (p.44)

In the chapter for positive psychology (PP) and self-determination theory (SDT), K.M. Sheldon and R. M. Ryan (2011: p. 33-44) use SDT to explain how positive social and environmental change may be promoted. SDT defined as “an organismic-dialectic theory of human motivation that tries to explain how motivation can be undermined or coarsened as well as how motivation can be enhanced and elevated, makes positive starting assumptions about default human nature” meaning that “people are naturally inclined to learn, to grow, to assimilate important cultural values, and to connect and contribute to others.” They present data to support their claim that “there is a predominantly or originally positive human nature that can be demonstrated and enhanced through scientific means”

Their conceptual movement, known as Positive Psychology (PP), seeks to rectify negative biases of traditional psychology. They argue that despite the work of humanist thinkers, psychologists, and educators (Rousseau, Dewey, and Maslow, among others) on positive aspects of human nature, the tendency to view people and their experience through a negative and suspicious lens (which began with Freud) was characteristic of many schools of thought during the 20th century. According to Sheldon & Ryan (2011) that negative approach focused more on “finding the breakdown point in peoples’ social, emotional, and cognitive functioning” more than on “understanding how a system adapts and evolves,” which they attempt to demonstrate may be just as important. SDT analysis, as shown by Sheldon and Ryan, might have important implications for school interventions aimed to promote civility by motivating positive inclinations already present in human nature. As stated by Sheldon & Ryan (2011) “properly designed action-contexts meet or enhance people’s basic psychological needs and allow people to fully internalize the motivation to engage in that context, as a result, they

learn, thrive, and grow to the maximal extent in that context.” They affirm that regardless of the type or content of a program if people enrolled “feel that their perspectives are acknowledged and respected, that self-regulation and self-direction within the context are fostered, and that meaningful choices and options are provided” peoples’ natural problem-solving and happiness-finding abilities will be engaged and that if autonomy-support is employed the effectiveness of any interpersonal, dynamic, or cognitive-behavioral intervention will be improved. They add that SDT grounding concepts will help understanding why some interventions work better than others based on whether or not a person’s self-psychological needs are met.

Baquedano-Lopez, Alexander, and Hernandez, (2013) examine the literature on parental involvement in educational practice; they argue that certain approaches restrict parent involvement in that the foundational contexts for educational policy (the overlapping of family, school, and community) don’t engage the intersections of race, class, and immigration (which are relevant to parents from minorities backgrounds). They discuss the evolution of government efforts regulating children’s education away from home (Civilization fund Act of 1819), the Americanization of indigenous populations and of Mexican immigrants (Home Teacher Act of 1915), the helping of children from poor families into federally sponsored day care centers (Head Start and Title I, of 1965), and the engaging of parents from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (NCLB act of 2001) among others. They then discuss the school’s relationships to parents and attempt to assess whether goals of programs and initiatives, and their effects, are creating inclusive or dismissive roles for parents. They frame parental and community involvement in education research and practice by discussing tropes such as “Parents as Problems,” “Parents as First Teachers,” “Parents as Learners,” “Parents as Partners,” and “Parents as Choosers and Consumers.” Although their discussion revolves

around a historically explanation of the achievement gap from a perspective of an oppression discourse that needs to be replaced by a decolonial approach in the relationship school-teachers-parents; 1) they state that “to seriously begin to understand the achievement gap, we must tally the educational debt we owe to those left behind by economic disparities and racial oppression;” and 2) they advocate for change led by an attitude of decolonialism, meaning to “challenge the foundations of Eurocentric thinking that implies that nondominant communities cannot be autonomous or sovereign, 3) they also criticize the neoliberal approach of the “crisis of education” but endorse the decolonial one because the said “it seeks to redress imbalances and exclusionary actions toward students and parents from nondominant communities.” They conclude that socialization and advocacy –important forms of education- are often disregarded as well as met with hostility by school leaders that misinterpret them as threatening or too critical and as a result schools participate in racial, class, and migrant inequality embracing deficit perspectives.

Englund, T. (2011) argues that schools that engage in deliberative communication – including different moral perspectives- [...] are potential parts of the political dimension of cosmopolitanism [...] in terms of the obligations and responsibilities we develop through our institutions and in our actions as human beings towards one another. He says that schooling could be for many “the most important medium for developing as future citizens able to exercise their human and citizenship rights, through the learning of basic knowledge and skills, but also through the development of deliberative capabilities.” He also states that liberal citizenship requires cultivating the habit of civility, and the capacity for public reasonableness, in our interaction with others.” He draws from classical and modern pragmatism talking about education as communication and communication as a democratic form of life (Dewey); and the

work of schools towards a communicative rationality not tied to the subject-object relationship but to an intersubjective relationship between communicating individuals (Habermas). He concludes that deliberative communication could be created through the development of a sense of responsibility to the concrete other.

Intending to shed light upon the educational change discussion and focusing on what schools could do in order to meet the needs of marginalized students Watson & Reigeluth, (2013) state that isolating disadvantaged student bodies generates more disadvantages especially when these voices are not heard in the discourse for change, and that “listening to the voices of marginalized [...] populations is critical.” The question is how are they going to speak for themselves if they can’t make themselves understood? The writers advocate for the need of engaging in a “more inclusive social discourse to address the problems in the educational system in the U. S.”

Watson & Reigeluth, (2013) discuss research about classroom learning as reflexive and interactive and language in the classroom as drawing heavily from the students’ sociolinguistic experiences at home. They state that “the cultures of learning established by disadvantaged students and their teachers are very different from the mainstream learning communities within a school district” and that “policies and practices in schools tend to group and isolate [disadvantaged bodies of students] to gain convenience in administration and instruction” they suggest then that fundamental change (school change for higher standards) without addressing critical needs of diverse students increases the drop-out rates of students that can’t meet current standards.

These writers represent the systemic educational change movement, this movement advocates a kind of change that caters to individual student’s needs vs. catering to the majority

model we currently have; they state that students should move on with their studies as soon as they are ready regardless of the time they need to reach that state, this is opposed to our current practice of having all students academically placed mainly depending on age. “systemic educational change seeks to shift from a paradigm in which time is held constant, thereby forcing achievement to vary, which is a sorting-based paradigm, to a paradigm designed specifically to meet the needs of learners by allowing students as much time as each needs to reach proficiency...”

According to the findings of their research reported in the article, the most important elements of the school culture are learning choices (allowing for more possibilities) and control (giving more flexibility to students as to how to organize their time and their space).

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

Interpretive Frameworks

Qualitative inquiry has an ever-changing nature, Creswell (2007); it constantly moves from social construction, to interpretivism, to social justice, and as in this study, to social and context awareness. Then this research could be read through the lens of social justice in that 1) the situation explored –pedagogical approaches of multicultural ESL educators in the middle and high school classroom– aims to further the understanding of literacy instruction (and its social implications) to disadvantaged minorities such as migrant, displaced, and poor populations, 2) the rigorous procedures of research and standards of evaluation and ethics respect the participants, their individual differences, and the sites where the study takes place, 3) reciprocity was provided to participants by offering gift cards (to a shop of their choice identified while informally interviewing), and 4) participants and researcher are considered co-owners of the information collected (2007: 35); in fact, copy of the findings were provided to educators participating, to coordinators, and to district’s accountability authorities.

The current study also could be interpreted from a social constructivism perspective in that firstly, it acknowledges that the individual experiences of the participants and their interactions with others generate multiple realities; a beautiful example of this diversity of worlds generated is seen in the way English Second Language professionals (ESL) also referred to as Instructional Specialists (I. S.) interpret, understand, and react to the challenges their students face in real life and/or in their expectations for their future as adults.

For instance participant 7 (Pt7) perceives her students as accepting their fate as future illiterate or as poorly educated/trained citizens socially reserved to perform jobs such as maids or janitors; individuals with no right or hope to consider attaining high administrative and

professional positions in society due in part to the current language limitations and to the overwhelmingly daunting task of moving beyond basic-functional-survival-style literacy skills.

Trying to give them hope she identifies successful professionals in diverse fields of knowledge from ethnic backgrounds similar to that of her students and invites them to visit her schools and interact with her pupils. Then engineers, doctors, nurses, mathematicians, and university professors visit her classes and explain and teach immigrant students content area concepts in their own language; during the same kind of interaction they informally talk with students about “how they’ve made it” and about the importance of overcoming obstacles and of securing a good education. Pt7 says this experience makes a great impact in the attitude of students. She perceives they act differently, in a more positive way, she adds it could be due to a new sense of cultural pride or new found hope in their own future.

Secondly, participant values are honored, and thirdly, data are obtained through methods such as observations, interviewing, and analysis of texts, (2007: 36-37).

Finally, this research could be read as well from the systemic change perspective as explained in the introductory chapter in that the researcher is probing the context in the quest for indications about ESL educators’ attitudes towards concepts/constructs of awareness, deconstruction, otherness appreciation, context, and connections.

Although there is controversy regarding the definition of the case study approach the researcher agrees with Creswell’s (2007: 97) view of it as a type of design (qualitative methodology) that could be both “an object of study, as well as a product of the inquiry.” Furthermore; this study responds to what Spradley (1980:18) calls *strategic research* in that it begins with an interest in human problems within public institutions (the school) designed for multicultural constituency.

Qualitative methodology

The present ethnographic case study is framed within a qualitative approach to research that involves collecting data in the field, the natural setting where the participants are located, and the researcher being the fundamental instrument for data collection. The researcher collected multiple forms of data through direct observation, by interviewing participants, and using open-ended questions in questionnaires developed as new information emerged. Through the use of complex reasoning skills all along this process and focusing primarily on the participant's perspectives, their subjective view of their world, and the meanings they ascribe to their reality the researcher gleaned patterns, categories, and themes.

The participants in this research were purposefully selected multicultural ESL educators, natives from various countries (including the US, Philippines, Jordan, Romania, Latvia, and Japan –n = 7–) currently working in public middle and high school settings. Seeking to find and describe similarities and differences among these professionals' teaching practices and whether observable differences/similarities could be linked to their background they were observed in the context of daily interaction with their mixed population of English language learners (ELLs) and also informally interviewed during their class preparation time and/or after school hours; all observations and interviews were completed over the course of 7 weeks approximately. Ethnographic data collected were analyzed, contrasted, and compared; the analysis strategy involved identifying issues particular to the world of each participant and searching for common themes among them (Yin, 2009). After all; the design method adopted for this study strictly followed Developmental Research Sequence Method and Participant Observation, (Spradley 1980).

Thus, the case study was shaped within the ethnography research design and the researcher collected data through *participant observation*. The researcher observed and analyzed the cultural behavior, the language, and the interactions, as well as the cultural knowledge and cultural artifacts produced/used by ESL educators within their particular working environment with the intention to 1) discover and understand the meaning participants assigned to their behavior, to their feelings, and to the natural objects in their quotidian experience and 2) produce a complete cultural description/explanation of regularities and variations observed within their group-culture by identifying patterns, themes, and categories that best represented how this group functions.

Participant Observation and the Developmental Research Sequence

The Developmental Research Sequence Method (D. R. S.) is a systematic approach for conducting ethnographic inquiry initiated by ethnographer James Spradley (1980) in the late seventies. As he says, both ethnographic interview and participant observation involve a succession of tasks that are better carried out following certain sequence (p. vii); the foundation of his design lies on the critical need to study meaning carefully, thus along with the D. R. S. he affords a theory of meaning and the specific methodology for the investigation of it (p. 9).⁴³

The D. R. S. method then follows a six stages cyclical pattern that begins by *choosing a research project*, at this stage the researcher decides upon the scope of the investigation which in this case is the description of the multicultural ESL educator's world as perceived from the perspectives of 7 foreign and local professionals, identified with the letters Pt (that stand for short of "participant") followed by a randomly assigned number as follows: Pt1, Pt2, Pt3, Pt4,

⁴³ Spradley's theory of meaning is grounded on the systematic analysis of cultural domains identified in a given social situation. He defines cultural domains as categories of meanings (p. 88) where cultural categories (or domains) include three basic elements: cover term, included terms, and semantic relationship.

Pt5, Pt6, and Pt7. At the core of this endeavor is, as Spradley said, the desire to “discover the cultural knowledge people are using to organize their behavior and interpret their experience” (1980:31). The next stage in the cycle refers to *asking ethnographic questions*; Spradley (1980) emphasizes that question and answers must be discovered in the social situation being studied, otherwise the researcher risks obtaining distorted information by asking questions prompted through prior assumptions and outside of the cultural scene. The regard to parsimony following his method guided the researcher in the discovery of the new question to ask; however as he said, structural and contrast questions emerged later from general descriptive questions like: 1) “what people are here? 2) What are they doing? 3) What is the physical setting of this social situation?” (1980:32) The following stage in the cycle deals with *collecting ethnographic data*; this was achieved by means of *participant observation*. This required the researcher to “observe the activities of the people, the physical characteristics of the social situation, and what it feels to be part of the scene.” (1980:33). Next to this was *making an ethnographic record* which included using all resources and means available to record observations; the record in this study was kept using Atlas.ti sound recording in iPad, pictures of instruments and places, and written field notes taken by the researcher. As data were gathered their *analysis* was conducted immediately for analysis entailed the discovery of new questions; this was the twin stage of the recording one. The last stage then had to do with the *writing the final report* which in this case was open-ended (1980:34) leaving room for the researcher to pursue even more intensive analysis within this particular research agenda. Embedded in the six stages are Spradley (1980) twelve steps engaged in this specific ethnographic case study as follows:

One: Social Situation

As Spradley (p. 39) stated, “all participant observation takes place in *social situations*” and in every social situation three basic components are present: place, actors, and activities.

In this study 1) the *target place* was the multicultural ESL educator’s working environment in four (4) local public middle and three (3) high schools. The schools were located within a perimeter of 41 miles approximately⁴⁵ in a southern inner city of about 230,000 habitants where 54% of the population is black, 39% white, and 7% other⁴⁶. The public school district consists of roughly 80 schools; ethnicity in the enrolment of around 44,400 (2014) is represented primarily by black students with 80% and the 20% remaining split between white 11% and other 9% (Latino, Asian, and Native Hawaiian); gender is almost equally distributed (female 51% and male 49%). There are more than 50 languages represented among the foreign student population where Spanish speakers are the most numerous. This public school district states in its vision the desire to equip students with knowledge, skills, and values necessary to be successful; the district equally stresses the environment where students interact as caring, rigorous, and safe.

2) *Actors* are the persons that interact in the given location and take on (or play) a pre-determined role. Even though in this social situation there are various kinds of participants in constant interaction including the ESL instructors, the teachers of record, the students, the school administrative staff and other faculty, and the program coordinators at the district level, etc., for the purpose of this study the focus was be zoomed at the main actors which were the ESL instructors.

⁴⁵ All values in the demographic description are rounded to the closest digit.

⁴⁶ <https://suburbanstats.org/population>

In this school district the ESL educators could be considered as itinerant teachers in two ways: 1) they don't have a classroom or a designated specific area where to work with the students they serve; as a result they constantly move from place to place in school, they also could spend part of their instructional time in the teacher of record's classroom but often they have to look for places to better assist their students. Usually they opt to work with the ELLs in other spaces such as the library –when available⁴⁷ and 2) they are assigned to at least two (2) schools; these instructional specialists serve then either middle or high school students or both depending on the schools they are assigned to. They function under the coordination of the ESL district program and use different instructional materials according to the school's choices; they (when compared to regular content-area educators) are in contact with a larger, more diverse, and constantly changing student population regarding language proficiency, overall academic level, physical and psychological development, and emotional/affective needs. These ESL educators belong to various ethnic groups, have diverse nationality backgrounds, and have come to the profession through multiple academic, career, and job training experiences (all have at least a bachelor degree, teaching certification, and ESL training certification. Gender ratio is in favor of females 6/1 which is also representative of the profession⁴⁸, the median age is 40 years old, family composition varies from single individual, to single parent, to the traditional father-mother- and- children model.

⁴⁷ ESL instructors in this study appear not to have basic/acceptable working space conditions. Unlike other professionals in various fields of knowledge or expertise that are provided with adequate working spaces and tools to proficiently perform their duties.

⁴⁸ National Center for Education Information. (2011). Profile of Teachers in the U. S. 2011 by C. Emily Feistritz. Washington, D. C.

The selection of the participants was finalized by the researcher upon consideration of the program coordinator's suggestions and the willingness of the educators to participate. Due to the fact that in the past the researcher had volunteered and conducted studies within the public school system she had already established professional relationships with administrators and colleagues that informally offered general information about the ESL program; this helped greatly in the identification of participants from various cultural and ethnic backgrounds thus securing a population sample featuring cultural diversity.

Since the study intended to shed light upon how multicultural ESL educators/instructors perceive various challenges tied to their working environment and whether there were observable differences linked to their all-inclusive background it was important to establish multiethnic participant representation to help detecting possible comparison and contrast facts and the connection to participants' personal history; however, equal gender participation could not be granted due to the majority of females in the field as stated before. Furthermore, before proceeding with interviewing and participant observation permissions from supervisors at the district level as well as IRB documentation were obtained as appears in annexes xxx.

Finally, 3) the *activities* would be the "streams of behaviors" and the events participants engage in Spradley (1980); in this case the expected activities of ESL instructors would be preparing their lessons, teaching their students, keeping accurate files of their students' progress and of instructional and assessment materials, meeting with school and district staff, with parents, and with discipline or grade colleagues, and attending continued education workshops. Teachers' activities could be represented in concentric circles where the greater circle is any of the spaces where the I. S. delivers instruction, the middle circle would be the school(s), and the smallest one –or where the educator spends less time would be the district offices and other

places. However; all participants are very active besides their regular duties at school; they engage in diverse forms of community service or personal and professional development; this second kind of activities could be represented with Venn diagrams as demonstrated in annex xxx. By producing such graphics the researcher intended to shed light upon all kinds of extra-school activities as well as on the day-to-day official duties itinerant educators occupy regularly.

This study could be framed as what Spradley (1980: 43) called “clusters of social situations” because even though the participants observed share the public school district as their professional context, their job duties take them to particular working environments that could be described as distinct units within the covering of the big social situation. However; some participants are also actors in different situations and locations sharing in the activities, therefore this study could represent as well a “network of social situations” and/or “social situations with similar activities” (1980: 44).

The social situation’s selection criteria that guided this study involved 1) *Accessibility*: Access was granted. Whereas schools in the public system have limited access to visitors it was possible to obtain permission to conduct research within the boundaries of the school district; in fact admittance to seven schools was guaranteed and contact with ESL educators arranged. 2) *Unobtrusiveness*: was achieved due to the fact that the researcher is also a languages educator and doubled as a “teacher’s aide” when needed thus gently participating without intruding. 3) *Permissibleness*: public schools are considered limited-entry environments and it was necessary to contact different authorities at the school level, at the program’s coordinator level, and also to follow the required protocols with the representatives of academic accountability at the district level in order to secure permission to conduct the proposed research. Obtaining the approval at the district level proved to be a hard to accomplish task that took longer time than anticipated,

this was mainly due to changes in staff and other internal situations in the district main offices; however, with the help and diligence of experienced staff all difficulties were solved and authorization was finally secured to proceed with the proposed research schedule.

Two: Participant Observation

Doing participant observation as a researcher in this context implied slowly approaching the realm of the ESL educators with a wide-angle lens and learning the culture of their environment; it also required being especially aware of the differences between an “ordinary participant” or insider, who enters the social situation solely to involve in his/her conventional role versus the researcher’s role as the “participant observer” Spradley (1980:54). The researcher then accessed this unique world with the dual purpose of engaging in an appropriate activity and of observing place, people, and activities; she was thus invested with the dual nature of the insider-outsider. In order for this researcher to become a superior inquiry instrument she had to develop a sharp sense of introspectiveness meaning that not any experience was taken for granted; perceiving introspection as a tool used “to understand new situations and to gain skill at following cultural rules” (p.57).

Lastly, regarding record keeping, the participant observer kept detailed documentation of both objective observations and subjective feelings by registering the natural interactions occurring in every setting observed via sound recording and also by discussing these with the participating educators. The degree of involvement in this research was high and the type of participation ranged from moderate to active (p. 58).

Three: Ethnographic Record

All records in this study –field notes, sound tracks, pictures, and other artifacts– reflect ethnographic standards as emphasized by Spradley (1980 p. 64-72); moreover, three key

principles, as he suggested, were taken into consideration: (a) the language identification, (b) the verbatim, and (c) the concrete principles were dutifully implemented.

(a) Language identification. This principle required the researcher to be careful labeling each field note entry and making sure not to amalgamate her language with that one of the other participants. For instance in the following excerpts *A* reflects the researcher's personal notes and impressions, there she clearly identifies self by entering her initials (NLL) and by using the first person along the description whereas in excerpt *B* although she still uses her initials to identify personal interactions the participant's input is labeled with random coding (used to keep instructors' identity confidential) and to avoid fusion of language thus securing proper differentiation between researcher's and participants' language. Examples of language identification principle follow:

Excerpt A: "NLL: I entered the classroom at 7:30 am approximately; the teacher of record was the only adult there because classroom aides and other instructional support personnel were not able to attend that day. Eleven children were present: four boys and a girl were working at the computers, three girls were sitting at a table, each one was reading a small paperback book, the other three students (all boys) were paying attention to a reading strategy the teacher was modeling on the overhead projector, the boys had their work books opened, grasping the explanations they filled in the blanks and completed the activity independently; the teacher left a homework which consisted of writing a paragraph using the information from the activity modeled previously. Before the class was over the teacher let me introduce myself to the students so I told them in classroom language (both in Spanish and in English) how I was at the intersection of teaching, learning, and research because I was a language educator as their instructor, as a graduate student I also was sharing the experience of being a student –like them,

and how much I loved knowledge and was pursuing a higher degree in my career by engaging in research. The students reacted with interest and wanting to know my age surrounded me asking in Spanish: *Que edad tienes?* When the students left the teacher told me that this was a shorter period class and that was different from the other classes she had the rest of the day; the objective of this mini-class was to provide an extra-practice opportunity for students in reading levels below the grade level. Later I discovered that administrators at this school provide twenty-five minutes (as first activity in the morning before regular scheduled classes of ninety minutes) for diverse kind of managerial and academic tasks; during this time students with special needs are served, among them ELLs and other students performing below acceptable literacy levels are offered further practice, language development, and tutoring support.

Excerpt *B*: “NLL: I see, but was this your choice? (Asking about participant’s special job placement and duties)

“Pt6: no, well, yes! I don’t know if you can tell it but I am pretty stressed because I’m also doing my practicum at the same time and I have some paperwork, some readings, some papers, you know! You understand graduate work; I know you understand because you’ve experienced it before...”

(b) the verbatim principle or documenting word-by-word what the interviewed person said was secured by making sound recording and further transcription, by requesting informants to write down their answers to the interviews, and by double-checking with participants to make sure the notes taken by the researcher reflected the participant’s meaning; furthermore, their exact answers were used to generate new ethnographic questions; following, excerpt *C* is an example of the verbatim principle:

Excerpt C: Pt1 “I have a BA degree in elementary education... and then you know as teachers when I thought of going back to school I started having my children... but you know we always go back for continuing ed [education] and took different workshops... now I think about ah... my current work environment last year changed greatly we’ve got children from uh... Honduras, and uh... Columbia, Nepal, ...so here it comes a new chapter to my teaching... I had six to twelve [ELL students] last year and now I have sixty ELLs a day all classes combined, all the same level...”

(c) The concrete principle which requires the researcher to use concrete language when describing observations instead of summarizing, abbreviating, or generalizing information. Since writing an ethnographic account also entails making generalizations the researcher was careful to exercise flexibility as the situation demanded; excerpt D is an example of the concrete principle; there instead of making a general statement like “the class was in normal session” the researcher noted the following information:

Excerpt D: “the teacher of record was at the smart-board modeling a strategy, five boys and three girls were at their individual desks arranged in semi-circle facing this teacher, they were following the instructions and orally giving answers to questions the teacher was asking, they all were very loud, especially the teacher for her voice invaded the room despite the presence of other professionals working with students in the crowded atmosphere. Three additional studying areas could be identified in the classroom: two sets of student’s desks facing each other (about six each) and two instructional specialists (I. S.) tended to the students working there (one of these was the ESL teacher participating in this research); the other learning area was the classroom language laboratory consisting of a set of seven computer stations equipped

with headphones placed facing a wall; at this time all computers were occupied by students practicing listening/talking and reading/writing drills.”

Four: Descriptive Observations

The researcher started recording descriptive observations, as Spradley (1980) suggested, by approaching the social situations with only the most general questions such as “who is here? What is happening here? What are people doing here?” As stated previously the *social situation* chosen to conduct this research is characterized by a *cluster* distribution; here seven clusters are identified –each one corresponding to the school where the ESL instructor and the researcher interact; in each of the clusters a most general (or “grand tour”) observation would produce a description similar to the following one:

“Upon finding an available space in the car-crowded parking lot I continued to the main office, some students were outside apparently waiting for a ride; on the way I crossed two adults one was a male police officer and the other seemed to be a hall monitor or other administration staff –he was communicating through a radio receiver (walkie-talkie). In the main office several adults were performing duties such as typing on key boards, going through files, tending to a student at the front desk, talking on the phone, asking me for the purpose of my visit, etc.; one of these staff generously took me to the place where the ESL instructor could be located. After the conventional salutations and greetings we discussed research expectations, teacher’s schedule and routine, and held an informal conversation. [...]

This school housed an average of twelve hundred persons where approximately the 93% represented the student population and the 7% adults were either teaching or administrative staff. A 7:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. schedule is established; routinely, teachers teach and oversee students, students attend classes, go to the library, to the cafeteria, or to other campus facilities, and

administrative staff tend to expected and unexpected situations such as in my case assisting educational research professionals.”

After identifying the general interactions among basic elements –place, actor, and activities– of all seven clusters in the social situation, the researcher directed her attention to the production of descriptive, focused, and selective observations and to keeping the record of them involving in the basic unit of ethnographic inquiry (question-observation) the nine major dimensions as developed by Spradley (1980: 73, 78). Below the nine different features with some examples and notes from the world of the multicultural ESL instructor:

- *Space* or physical place in this study refers to three different kinds of settings 1) the schools where the educators work, characterized by aged facilities, located in middle-low income and poor-and-dangerous neighborhoods⁴⁹. 2) The places where ESL educators deliver instruction ranging from a corner in a classroom, a small cubicle, and an available table at the library among other. 3) The inexistent classroom these educators wish to have.

- *Actor* or people involved were primarily the multicultural ESL educators, the ELL students (mostly Latino), and in some occasions the teacher of record. Besides interacting with these individuals the researcher had the opportunity to informally chat with school staff and also with district representatives sporadically.

- *Activity* or set of related acts people do; here the focus was zoomed at the ESL instructors’ doings. Their tasks ranged from locating students and pulling them out of class or staying in the content area classroom and work with ELL students parallel to the teaching activity the teacher of record was conducting, to prepare instructional materials to speedily leave one school to timely reach the next school they had to go. However; this sequence of duties

⁴⁹ Two of the schools were rather modern compared to the rest and located in a nice looking middle-high income neighborhood.

cannot be generalized because some I. S. are not itinerants; they stay in a single location during the day, other are assigned to two different schools in the same day, if that is the situation, these specialists would have morning schedule in one place and afternoon schedule at another one. While some ESL instructors go to different schools in different days, and other split the day between two schools, yet two of the participants were placed in a single school each. However; they all are itinerant within the school for they are not granted a teaching/learning space of their own. As a result the activities ESL instructors engage in greatly depend on the time allowed after the mandatory commutes in and outside of school,

- *Object* or physical things, could be divided in working environment furniture and ancillaries such as desks, tables, computer working stations, electronic tables, etc., teachers' instructional resources such as manuals, reference texts, and teaching resources they produce, students' learning items such as books, booklets, smart phones, and various stationary items in the learning setting, and teachers' personal objects,

- *Act* or single actions people do, like walking, standing, signaling, talking or listening, or choosing to be a spectator,

- *Event* or set of related activities people carry out; for instance in one of the visits the researcher paid to a certain school, Pt2 had few minutes between classes (the ring of a bell where students exit one classroom and move to the next one) to determine with whom she should work for the next class period. She had to quickly check her email for updated information regarding active students, review last report or grades she had about the student(s), make sure she had the materials she needed for instruction; after this she double-checked another schedule to locate the class the students would be attending, finally she entered her greeting sentence on her iPad, listened to the suggested pronunciation and rehearsed it couple of times before heading out in

search of the students. When a classroom was located she would gently knock at the door or opened it, signaled to the teacher asking for the student she needed, when the student came out she would repeat the rehearsed sentence in the student's native language inviting the student for ESL practice; the student would smile with delight when hearing some words in Spanish, say "yes!" and followed the teacher; this was repeated as many times as needed until she gathered all the students she was looking for. Once all together she would take them to a small storage room (her "office") and conducted a short lesson on sight words; during the lesson she would quickly explain what the objective was, demonstrated the activity, rehearsed with them, and then let the students practice, to finish the short instruction time she would distribute pieces of paper with departure time written on (back-to-class pass).

- *Time* or sequencing taking place; in the event –or set of related activities –described above, the whole sequence lasted about thirty minutes, five minutes went in the I. S. preparation, ten to twelve minutes went in the walk class to class looking for the students, other ten to twelve went in the lesson, and the remaining one or two minutes in the homework assignment and dismissing instructions.

- *Goal* or what people try to accomplish; as in the same sequence previously described but also in almost all other activities ESL instructors occupy themselves their main objective is to seriously involve ELLs in the study of the English language and to ultimately help them overcome the language barrier so they can feel more comfortable in an academic setting. ESL instructors want their students to proficiently communicate in English and get motivated enough to continue their education at the college or trade training level upon graduating from high school.

- The last dimension Spradley (1980) wanted the researcher to explore while composing descriptive, focused, and selective observations was *feeling* or emotions felt and communicated. An example of this is (1) what the instructors in this study –by their acts and also verbally – expressed. It could be said that they all feel profound commitment to all students (including the immigrant children who do not have knowledge of English whatsoever and the local students – native English speakers and national second generation children whose literacy skills hinder them to perform at the level they are placed age-wise) assigned under their supervision. (2) Kinds of feelings and attitudes the instructors identified in their students such as hopelessness, anger, frustration, or determination to “go-get-it.” (3) Regarding feelings on the part of the researcher, she expressed empathy towards the professionals participating for she perceived a sense of great flexibility to adapt to circumstances and an attitude of survival regarding the work conditions. The researcher experienced also an urgency to call for help and support to instruction specialists (like the ESL educators) serving children at risk like the ELLs.

To conclude this section is important to note that as Spradley (1980) recommended, the three basic elements of every social situation (place, actor, and activities) evolved into the nine major dimensions guiding the question-observation dynamics all along the inquiry cycle. To study data implementing analysis techniques highlighted in this step all the obtained data were assessed using the descriptive question matrix Spradley (1980: 82-83) prepared.

Five: Domain Analysis

Ethnographic analysis demands of the researcher a thorough examination of all kinds of records in order to discover cultural patterns; in other words, the systematic examination of all field notes should guide the identification of multiple different relationships among the parts and the whole as Spradley (1980: 85) stated. For this task to be efficiently performed the methodical

examination of data should run parallel to the inquiry endeavor, in doing so the researcher identified in a timely manner the cultural patterns underlying the social situation. Spradley (1980: 88) defined cultural domains as categories of meanings where cultural categories (or domains) include three basic elements: cover term, included terms, and semantic relationship (p. 89); he distinguished three kinds of domains; *folk domains* (when all terms come from the people in the social situation), *mixed domains* (when the researcher has to 'ad' personal terms to the folk ones in order to appropriately describe variations observed), and *analytic domains* (when a consistent pattern of cultural behavior emerges and there are not folk terms available to label it – folk meaning remain tacit– p.90). In this study most domains found were both folk and mixed ones; however, the researcher introduced the term “*itinerant educators*” to refer to the ESL instructors, they agreed the term gave an appropriate description of the inherent condition of their appointment. Examples of domain analyses from the field are included in Appendix E (pages 259-261).

Six: Focused Observations

Spradley (1980) recognizes that even the most elemental social situation is filled with numerous cultural meanings, he called this *cultural complexity*; due to this feature –which implies that thoroughly and comprehensively describing a cultural situation would take many years of exhaustive research– ethnographers must find ways to limit their investigation while maintaining a holistic perspective (p. 100). In the present study the primary surface investigation yielded the identification of numerous domains that deserved independent and concentrated study, these are discussed in the chapters for findings and implications for further research.

The researcher thus adopted focused observations as the strategy of choice to achieve the goal of limiting the investigation within a reasonable scope while approaching the vast world of

second language instruction from a well-rounded point of view; as Spradley (1980: 102) said “we must adopt strategies for both in-depth analysis and a more holistic, surface analysis.” His overall approach begins with a broad surface investigation (steps 1 to 5), narrowing to an in-depth inquiry (steps 6 to 9), to finally move again to a broader standpoint (steps 10 to 12).

The ethnographic foci this researcher selected are closely tied to the original inquiry questions as follows,

1) Under the semantic relationship of *strict inclusion* are: kinds of educational goals, kinds of teaching approaches, kinds of instructors, kinds of instructional spaces, and kinds of instructional materials and resources. The analysis of these types of domains shed light upon inquiry issues such as similarities and differences among multicultural educators regarding their approaches to literacy instruction and whether such comparisons, contrasts, and attitudes were related to their background (research questions #1 and #3), they also illustrated job condition’s challenges such as the school areas ESL educators routinely use for instruction delivery; as found very early in the study there is not an “ESL classroom” per se –as assumed on question #2 of the research and on question #6 of the interview– where specialists were asked to discuss and describe “various kinds of challenges and sociocultural interactions in *their classroom*” thus an important domain for discussion turned out to be “*instructional spaces*;” finally the different analysis strategies helped as well refining the assessment of main teaching materials used for instruction (research question #4).

2) Under the semantic relationships of *means to an end*, of *function*, and of *sequence* the researcher focused on ways to deliver instruction, description of instructional areas, and on stages/steps in achieving educational goals.

The selected foci are by no means exhaustive; the choice could be rather understood as strategic in that this ethnography aims to serve immediate and basic human needs of the ESL educators and also of the vulnerable population they serve. The complete list of identified cultural domains not chosen for in-depth analysis is further discussed in the final ethnographic account and in the section limitations and implications for additional research.

Among other, some of the structural questions that guided this step are: What are all the kinds of ESL educators? What are all the kinds of students they serve? What are all the reasons and the ways ESL educators search, find, and implement creative methods to motivate students? What are all the reasons ELLs and other students are angry and drop out of school? What are all ESL educators' goals while working with their students? What are all the characteristics and other uses of places ESL educators occupy while delivering instruction?

Seven: Taxonomic Analysis

Similar to a cultural domain a "taxonomy is a set of categories organized on the basis of a single semantic relationship" but the difference between the two is that the taxonomy reveals smaller groups and how they are related to the whole showing "the relationships among all the included terms in a domain" (Spradley 1980: 112-113); the taxonomic analysis in this study took into consideration the search for the relationships among the smaller units that best represented each of the identified ESL educators' culture domains.

Below there are examples of the processes involved in the analysis of domains found in the research. The different steps, as suggested by Spradley (1980), included 1) choosing a domain to work with (or to *taxonomize* –my own term), 2) seeking for similarities centered on the same semantic relationship, 3) further seeking for supplementary included terms, 4) identifying broader more wide-ranging domains, 5) assembling all pieces together or proposing a

provisional taxonomy, 6) going back to the field to conduct even more focused observations probing each subset identified in the drafted taxonomy and repeating this step as often as needed until the researcher felt she had gathered enough information to finally 7) build a thorough or final taxonomy.

For instance, one of the domains the researcher identified is *ESL educators*, the semantic relationship is strict inclusion; the first step produced the following distribution:

1. ESL educators

1.1 Foreign

1.2 Local

The second and third steps examining similarities produced:

1.1 Foreign

1.1.1 Asian

1.1.2 European

1.1.3 Middle Eastern

And:

1.1.1 Asian

1.1.1.1 Japanese

1.1.1.2 Chinese

1.1.1.3 Philippine

1.1.1.4 Russian

The probing of subcategories went on, then new information was added to each subset.

When searching for more wide-ranging domains that would include as a subset the one being analyzed the researcher developed the following distribution:

Middle & High School Faculty

1. Content area teachers (also known as teachers of record or classroom teachers)
 - a. Social sciences teacher
 - b. Mathematics teacher
 - c. Modern languages teacher
 - d. Physical education teacher
 - e. Biology & chemistry teacher
 - f. Other teachers
2. Interventionists (Co-teachers or Instruction specialists)
 - 2.1 Special education interventionists
 - 2.2 ESL educators
 - 2.2.1 American ESL educators
 - 2.2.2 Foreign born ESL educators
 - 2.2.2.1 Asian
 - 2.2.2.2 European
 - 2.2.2.3 Middle Eastern
3. Para-professionals or teacher's aids
4. Substitute teachers

Another domain the researcher identified is *Steps in delivering instruction*, the semantic relationship in this domain is sequence; the following tentative taxonomy was proposed:

1. Finding students
2. Deciding on a place where to work with students
3. Getting students together

4. Teaching a lesson
5. Dismissing students

The second and third steps examining similarities produced:

1. Finding students
 - a. Searching through the most updated roster
 - b. Locating the classrooms where new students were placed
 - c. Going class to class to get students out
2. Deciding on a place where to work with students
3. Getting students together
 - a. Knocking on content area teachers' doors
 - b. Greeting teacher and signaling to get student out ("pulling them out")
 - c. (Once student is out) greeting student in Spanish (or any other native language)
 - d. Repeating a, b, c, as many times as students needed
 - e. Reaching the selected place for instruction (small office, library, etc.)
4. Teaching a lesson
 - a. Once all of the above were performed the teacher continued the process by
 - b. Giving the objective for the lesson
 - c. Modeling the main activity
 - d. Making sure students understood the activity
 - e. Making students practiced the activity individually or in pairs/small groups
 - f. Reviewing lesson and praising good demonstrations
 - g. Assigning homework
5. Dismissing students

- a. Writing back-to-class passes
- b. Reminding students of future events

Eight: Selected Observations

The inquiry process up this step was one of comparisons; in other words, the researcher went on the quest for cultural meanings through the analysis and the study of similarities among categories and domains identified. In order to proceed with selected observations she had to turn over the other side of the possible relationships and search for contrasting features through the discovery and study of differences. This she accomplished by further surveying the social situation with formal but mainly with informal ethnographic interview and also by the means of continued interaction as a participant observer with the natural members of the social situation.

As Spradley (1980: 122) anticipated, after few periods of field observation people in the social situation started recognizing the researcher; approximately within the first four visits at each of the different sites the researcher was granted quick access without questioning, no more guidance was offered to locate the ESL instructor either, the school staff assumed the researcher was acquainted enough with the campus to find her way around. This circumstance of progressive familiarity opened the way for the researcher to conduct ethnographic interviews – she engaged in casual conversations with people naturally belonging to the social situation and informally interviewed available informants– an example of this practice could be seen in the interactions the researcher had with diverse people in one of the schools visited as appears in the following excerpt of a descriptive observation:

“The researcher entered the library looking for Pt4, the place was packed; students crowded the entry hall, half of the space was occupied by approximately fifty persons that sitting on chairs and holding a binder with documents waited for a presenter to begin his speech. One of

the librarians was helping incoming adults to find a place to sit, to get a coffee, and was answering questions to all that needed information. I approached her and asked what was happening –the library is usually very active but this invasion was something unexpected for me– so she said pointing to different sections in the library, “here is institutional training to prospective substitute teachers, there is IT class (more than twenty students were working at computers while a teacher gave instructions), on that side is the Career Compass Program (non-for-profit counseling targeting senior students with college aspirations), behind them is the literacy workshop.” This last one was led by a slim lady dressed in a very casual way; she gave loose papers to a group of about ten teachers and explained something for ten to fifteen minutes, she would then let them talk and ask questions; the group changed every forty minutes). I asked then how long the activities would take and the librarian replied they would be ongoing for the entire day; I asked what would happen with Pt4’s ESL class (since such a noisy, open, crowded, and busy place was not really the inviting atmosphere for a language class although couple of tables were available... the librarian replied “oh! She’ll go ahead with her class there –pointing at one of the tables–.” I didn’t want to believe that but didn’t say a word, instead I went to the teacher’s booth to ask her colleague (a “brand new hire from China” who was lively talking with a group of four adults in front of the tiny cubicle they shared as their office space); she confirmed the librarian’s statement: “Pt4 will be there shortly with her class.”

Besides the routine practice of informal ethnographic interview, the researcher from the beginning included the formal ethnographic interview format due to the nature of the endeavor; in fact discussing and submitting instruments of research prior to any field interaction was necessary to secure both IRB and school district approval. The proposed interview format

appears in appendix iii. The researcher also closely followed the research model presented in *The Ethnographic Interview* (Spradley 1979).

In preparation to conduct selective observations the researcher had to ask contrast questions, dyadic contrast questions, and triadic contrast questions; following this she had to examine all dimensions of contrast found through this kind of inquiry. As stated before approaching the field this time with contrast questions aimed to determine cultural meanings based on differences among categories in a given domain. Some examples of these processes follow next.

General contrast questions and answers proposed.

Domain: Itinerant Educator (ESL),

- Q: how are Itinerant Educators (ESL) different?
- A: some are foreign few are local
- Q: how are foreign different?
- A: not two of them come from the same country, different gender, different work placement, etc.
- Q: how are the local ESL educators different?
- A: different career paths, different work placement

Domain: Student needing literacy accommodation (ELLs)

- Q: how are ELLs different?
- A: there are “ground zero,” beginners, low-level-readers, newcomers, immigrant kids ...

Dyadic contrast questions and answers proposed.

Domain: Student needing literacy accommodation (ELLs)

- Q: in what ways are “ground zero” ELLs and “immigrant kids” different?

- A: ground zero is usually an immigrant child without English (and/or first language) literacy skills whatsoever. Not all immigrant children are illiterate; in fact many have adequate (or even sophisticated) literacy levels (in their mother tongue) for their age and academic placement.
- Q: what is the difference between “beginners” and “low-level-readers”?
- A: the term beginners refers usually to foreign-born students starting to learn English, low-level-readers refers to American-born children (ethnicities represented were African American and Latino American) whose reading level and overall literacy skills do not match the academic level they are in.

Triadic contrast questions and answers proposed.

Domain: Teacher

Q: of the following triad which two are more alike and which one is different: *instructor*, *interventionist*, *ESL*?

A: the terms interventionist and ESL refer to itinerant educators, both could be highly specialized, the ESL professional could work with a more multicultural student population than other kind of interventionists; these both differ from the instructor because the instructor (better known as the teacher of record) has his/her own classroom, also because they don't “grade” the students; they give instructional support and assess learning and performance but don't assign pass/fail or letter grades.

By repeatedly applying the same strategy in the analysis of each domain (formulating general, dyadic, and triadic contrast questions) the researcher discovered dimensions of contrast that ultimately became the basis for conducting selective observations. The researcher, as a result, strictly adhered to the design Spradley developed by making thorough use of descriptive

observations to apprehend the singularities of each cluster (represented by the ESL participant and his/her working place) within the social situation studied. The researcher moved progressively to conduct focused observations in each place to achieve in-depth understanding of patterns, and finally by the parsimonious analysis of the data gathered moved onto conducting selective observations.

Nine: Componential Analysis

This step in the inquiry endeavor is closely linked to the previous ones and involves organizing and representing all contrasts discovered so far; Spradley (1980) says componential analysis requires “the systematic search for the attributes [components of meaning] associated with cultural categories” (p. 131). He defines component as *unit*; then when doing componential analysis this researcher was looking for units of meaning the participants assigned to the cultural categories in their social reality. These in turn were separated in several clusters identifiable by their particular attributes.

Examples of some domains selected for componential analysis are:

Domain: Roles ESL educators perform (selected included terms below)

- Classroom teacher
- Co-teacher
- ESL specialist/interventionist
- Translator
- Parent liaison
- Community liaison

Some dimensions of contrast in this domain are:

1. ESL specialists as classroom teachers. These specialists could sometimes be assigned to a classroom of their own where they will teach a language class; in other instances they act as co-teachers (functioning more as a teacher aid).
2. As interventionists ESL specialists pull out ELLs from a classroom and find places in the school (usually in the library) where to work with these students.
3. As translators they could be called to any of the school's offices –when needed– to help interpreting a document (i.e. a medical record, a letter from a parent, etc.) or to give specific instructions to a student. As parent liaison they will interpret a conversation with a foreign parent. As a community liaison they will connect with professionals representing the ethnic background of their students and invite them to class to interact with ELLs thus encouraging students to persist in their study of the language and to pursue a college or trade path. Examples of domain paradigm worksheet appear in Appendix E (page 262).

Then making componential analysis involved using all the data gathered and analyzed so far, entering them into paradigm worksheets, and identifying, combining, and further probing and refining the diverse dimensions of contrast found. This process was repeated systematically with the domains selected for in-depth study.

Summarizing the Developmental Research Sequence model implemented so far the researcher started by selecting a social situation: “the world of multicultural ESL specialists,” then she went onto collecting samples of behavior, activities, items, judgments, beliefs, feelings, and ideas, after this she applied different series of specific strategies contributing to the discovery of meaning in this particular cultural setting; these strategies included conducting domain analysis, focused observations, taxonomic analysis and further focused observations; finally, she directed her attention to run selective observations searching for dimensions of

contrast. After completing the previous steps the researcher started the process of organizing and representing all contrasts found by using componential analysis and produced a series of matrixes or paradigm worksheets. For the purpose of this study the researcher chose to examine in detail (space, attitudes, itinerants, and interventions I'm still thinking on which ones to include and I'm not finished with the detailed analysis... :- (and the aspects of other most salient domains (related to students, policies, budget,) she leaved for further research. Always keeping in mind though that the main objective in ethnography as Spradley (1980) stated "is to discover the cultural patterns people are using to organize their behavior, to make and use objects, to arrange space, and to make sense out of their experience" (p. 130).

Ten: Cultural Themes

In order to present a holistic view of a cultural scene in the context studied, the researcher 1) moved beyond the general inventory obtained when identifying the different domains and categories in the social situation and 2) delved into the cultural themes the members of the ESL professionals participating in the study have learned and used in their daily experience. Cultural themes were gathered from the recurrent postulates participants utilized or implied thus forming complex nets of patterns. The author defined cultural themes as "any principle recurrent in a number of domains, tacit or explicit, and serving as a relationship among subsystems of cultural meaning." He also emphasized the importance of identifying the "cognitive principles" underlying "what people believe and accept as true and valid" Spradley (1980:140 - 141).

The researcher here detected cultural themes by

- 1) Immersing herself and participating in the diverse scenes ESL educators function on a daily basis,

- 2) Withdrawing after intense immersion periods –for instance a full day of shadowing a teacher, and by examination of the shadowing/immersion experience,
- 3) Searching for larger domains that would include the cultural scene,
- 4) Developing componential analysis of cover terms for domains. To do this the researcher listed a number of the social situation major domains, found nesting terms, analyzed using contrast questions, and produced a taxonomy part of which is reproduced in Appendix E (pages 263-264).
- 5) Comparing cultural scenes,
- 6) Searching for similarities among dimensions of contrast,
- 7) Identifying organizing domains and making schematic diagrams of the cultural scene

(selected diagrams representing the cultural scene appear in the following pages).

Schematic diagrams would convey a perspective of the cultural scene from a different angle:

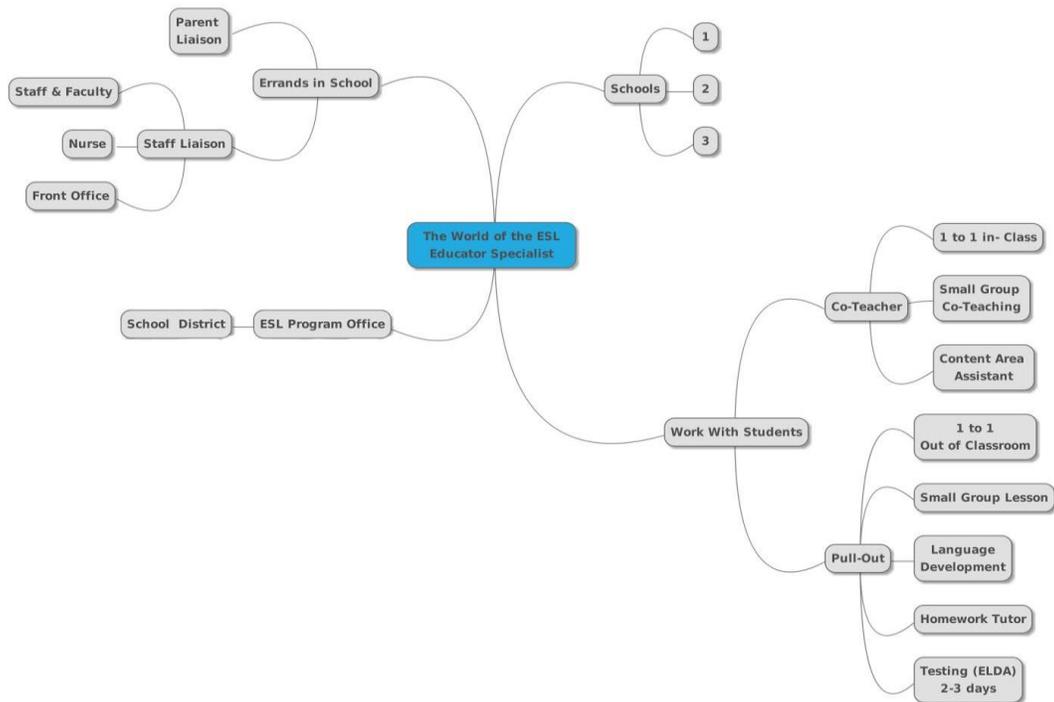


Figure 1: The World of the ESL Specialist

The schematic diagram above represents four main areas of the ESL specialist work: on the left below are responsibilities with the ESL office and with the school district, on the left above are assignment that ranges from one to three schools, at each of these the ESL specialist would routinely perform some or all of the typical roles and duties branching out of “errands,” and on the right is represented ESL daily work duties including “push-in” model above and below are listed pulling-out instruction kinds.

In the schematic diagram following are noted unscripted duties of the ESL specialist.

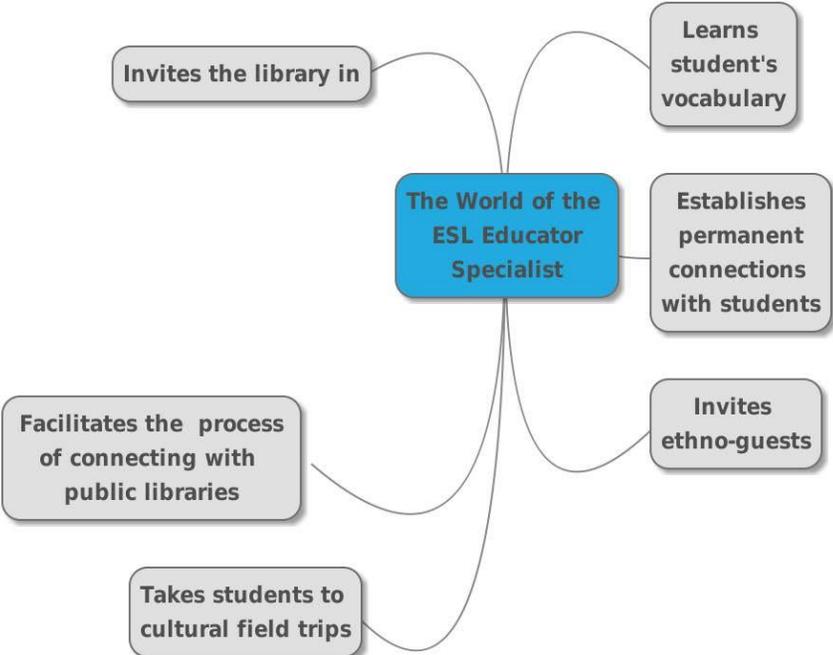


Figure 2: Extracurricular and Outreach Activities

ESL specialists voluntarily engage in extracurricular activities, some of those represented in Figure 2, they are proactive learning the language of their students, and they diligently search for opportunities in the local area to establish connections between the school (ELLs) and the community.

Finally, to illustrate the work involved in the discovery of cultural themes (step ten of Spradley, 1980 D. R. S. method) the researcher produced a summary overview of the cultural scene and briefly discussed the most salient domains as follows.

As in many other professions the ESL specialists may come from a great variety of contexts and ways of life; the common thread being their special interest in and appreciation for modern languages and contemporary cultures. At some point in life these professionals have experienced how it feels being a stranger in a foreign land, what it is like learning someone else's vocabulary, accent, and way of forming sentences, along with the struggle to convey ideas, feelings, and thoughts with borrowed words. The ESL specialists made a career choice that put them in a position to assist foreign children (or local and second-generation students experiencing difficulties with the language) in the process of developing literacy skills in the lingua franca.

The ESL educator if born in the United States typically has completed undergraduate studies in language arts or in other humanities area, they also could have a declared minor or a number of academic credits in a foreign language, some of them have earned an M. A. as well; they all are proactive lifelong learners. If they didn't originally pursue a degree in education, by taking certification classes and complying with other requirements merged into the field. Subsequently, and due to their talent with languages, their skills connecting with minorities, and their willingness to continue their education they joined the local ESL team (by obtaining a certification –if they didn't have it previously) and were appointed as ESL specialists. If the ESL educator is foreign born they usually have formal studies in English language and literature and foreign and local ESL certification, most among them have a graduate degree, they are bilingual

(most speak three languages), and they have local and international teaching experience in different environments.

The group of specialists participating in this study shared a cultural scene unique to their context (it might be similar in other latitudes but any comparison has to be nuanced with local flavor). They all agree on that the attention given to the ESL profession in the State is still incipient (this compared to previous teaching experiences in the country or abroad); they concede that traditionally this is not a State of immigrants thus the school system is not well prepared yet to respond to the demands presented by the massive influx of children from all over the world being enrolled in public schools on a daily basis. As a result of this socio-cultural- and school system policy-wise unpreparedness many challenges arise.

Challenges could stem from inadequate distribution or lack of funds dedicated to 1) sustain or build up a solid and consistent ESL program, 2) improve the working conditions of professionals as related to providing adequate teaching spaces, 3) hire more ESL/literacy specialists and place at least one permanently at each school, 4) train content area teachers in the middle and high school and require them to obtain ESL certification, 5) improve learning conditions of ELL students by providing learning spaces, programs, and services fit to their needs.

Trials associated with the ESL program in place now were identified as lack of consistency in the agenda approach. It seems that the district cut services it provided not long ago or is not allocating the funds to support critical services anymore. An example of this is what was called “centered schools” where intense language development was provided for all children with unsatisfactory literacy skills; when the centered schools were closed all these “below-level

or low-readers” were sent to mainstream classes causing havoc everywhere a specialist was not in place to support and assist them.

Difficulties caused by professionals not being provided with appropriate teaching spaces are diverse as well as those coupled with insufficient personnel, lack of training required of or provided to content area teachers, and poor learning spaces and services to students; the researcher will discuss these in detail in a further chapter.

Hardships originate also from the kind of population ESL educators serve. The students they assist hail from many different countries but specialists also work with American-born students. For the purpose of this study foreign students were referred to as Asian, Middle Eastern, African, and Latino; American students were mainly of African descent and Latinos of second generation. Another criteria ESL educators used to distinguish kinds of difficult situations with their students was tightly linked to the family model or parenting style at home, previous schooling experience of the members of the household, and to socio-emotional attitude of all involved.

Nevertheless, though challenges often become overwhelming these educators have not lost la joie de vivre, neither faith in their call or in humanity. They invest off duty time to improve their own foreign language skills by learning words and expressions of the languages their students speak, they also take the time to go the extra-mile and search for opportunities to connect children with the community, and to find creative ways to motivate these students into persistence to complete their high school education despite many frustrations.

Eleven: Cultural Inventory

The inventory is the system the researcher has adopted to organize data along with the techniques to easily retrieve and access all kinds of information gathered and produced all along

the ethnographic endeavor. Spradley (1980) suggests some strategies including producing a list of cultural domains and the information whether these were completely, partially, or lacking analysis and interpretation; he also suggested the creation of a collection of sketch maps including physical spaces and situations beyond the physical boundaries such as communications and relationships, all these plus a list of themes, an inventory of examples with quotations, a summary of domains that could double as organizers, and finally, an index or table of contents.

Twelve: Ethnography

As Spradley (1980) stated “[d]oing ethnography always leads to a profound awareness that a particular cultural meaning system is almost inexhaustibly rich [...] and that ethnographic description is partial, incomplete, and will always stand in need of revision.” However; the standard as he said, is to achieve writing that discovers and translates the meanings of a culture and communicates them so well that someone unfamiliar with that cultural tradition grasps those meanings and understand them (p. 161). In order to reach such a high standard the researcher deeply delved into the social situation with the desire to develop an intimate knowledge of the ESL specialists’ world and culture; also thinking of the possible audiences reading the description the researcher used different tools to convey and display information such as paradigm charts, schematic diagrams, and different levels of writing with flexibility. This researcher made use of six specific levels of ethnographic writing as delineated by Spradley (1980): universal statements, cross-cultural descriptive statements, general statements about the multicultural ESL instructors, general statements about a specific cultural scene, specific statements about a cultural domain, and also specific incident statements.

Bias and Validity

It is not easy for any kind of research to be totally free of bias; as Creswell (2007) noted “we always bring certain beliefs and philosophical assumptions to our research.” He also pointed out that to avoid bias the greatest difficulties lied 1) in becoming aware of personal assumptions and 2) in deciding whether they will be integrated into the qualitative study or not.

On the one hand the researcher in this study wanted to secure results as free of biases as possible so she 1) kept self keenly aware of her own beliefs and philosophical assumptions, 2) recognized inclination towards epistemological statements presented in chapter one such as knowledge as being socially constructed, the 21st century’s industrial to information paradigm shift, massive populations’ migration as a social problem with deep moral and political implications, literacy as the gateway to civility, understanding, and respect for *the other*, and the ESL educators (or any second language instructor if the context is not the United States) as important players in the field thus, granting merit for a close examination of their world perspectives’ and of their working context in order to understand social and emotional dynamics in this unique environment.

On the other hand, understanding that the researcher in this kind of study is the main research tool she strictly adhered to the D.R.S method as delineated by Spradley (1980); wishing to become a refined inquiry instrument she aimed to develop a fine sense of introspectiveness by not taking any experience in the field for granted and seeking to understand new situations from the ESL educator’s perspective while gaining skill at following cultural rules.

Finally, great parsimony was employed regarding record keeping; the participant observer kept detailed record of both objective observations and subjective feelings and even though the degree of personal involvement in this research was high it has not been the intention

of the researcher to gather data supporting any particular view point or philosophical perspective throughout the study.

CHAPTER 4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Interview with PP1 (American-born ESL educator)

Educational Background and Experience

PP1 is an American ELA and ESL educator with teaching experience in private and public schools. PP1 has taught at various levels including secondary school and adult students; at this time PP1 holds a fulltime appointment with the public school system. PP1 holds a B. A. in English, an M. A. in Education, and the local ESL certification. PP1 loves languages, beside English she speaks a second language and has been studying Spanish lately. She is also very interested in research and in presenting at conferences then she considers obtaining a higher degree in the future. Whereas in past years PP1 was appointed at different school levels during the same school year (elementary, middle, and high school) the current position only involves secondary students' instruction which the educator prefers much more as that is her certification level and main area of knowledge and professional development.

When asked about comparing previous ESL teaching experiences and environments to the present one PP1 said this school had been rated for the last three years as a "D school," and the turnover of administrators and teachers had been constant. It appeared that providing opportunities for ESL/ELL awareness as professional development to content area teachers was difficult but PP1 managed to somehow connect with these educators and conveyed the most important facts; as the specialist said:

Communication between administration and teachers is abnormal but getting somewhat better, though opportunities for growing professional development are very limited (begging when) so I must use "ESL topics" newsletters to faculty to pan along critical information.

On the other side of the coin when talking about how often the district and particularly the ESL program offered possibilities for ESL specialists to continue their education PP1 stated:

We have opportunities for taking PD during ESL staff and team meetings –these address our local and/or critical needs. We cannot always attend TESOL or LATESOL conferences due to lack of funds (and these are the most beneficial to me). This past summer a colleague and I “won” an invitation to present on an ESL topic for a 2hr workshop at the ILA conference in St. Louis, due to that we could attend other workshops while there, but this is only due to our own initiative.

Overall PP1 said she tries to stay current with the latest developments in the field by personal affiliation with professional associations, researching topics of interest to staff at school, and by taking all training pertaining to the profession offered by the district. Finally, comparing the working environment to that one of previous years PP1 considered that there is a “greater diversity” of ELLs; students now not only arrive from more distinct latitudes thus speaking many different languages but also their exposure to English is varied which places them at different ESL levels, furthermore; a fact that compounds this challenge is that some students are illiterate in their first language as well. According to this specialist the current situation finds local teachers and administrators unawares and underprepared to handle such diverse population and properly tend to their needs.

Grand Tour

The ESL specialist described her working place as “an older inner-city school in a neighborhood considered very dangerous due to crime and shootings.” This specialist also works at another two schools in the same area but spends always most of time at the present location. On Wednesdays and Thursdays afternoon PP1 goes to the other two schools where there are fewer students the way she feels about is: “that is very cool because of the opportunity to work for a full hour with each of these students that are still active ELLs.” PP1 adds that even though providing instruction only for one hour per week doesn’t sound a lot and it is not sufficient it is

much more comparing to the school where the majority of ELLs are located because due to the bulk of administrative duties and diverse situations that constantly arise on the spot it may happen that several weeks pass before he/she can devote such time delivering instruction to a student or to a group of students..

This school features tall brick walls, it is an old building very depressing; there is a feeling of imprisonment, as if once being admitted you will be trapped in. When you supposed you had entered, right on the side of what seems a wide access glass/wood second door –locked from the inside- is this restricted entrance conducting to a narrow corridor-looking-small office; there, at a very basic desk with a pen chained to an old bulky ring binder there is a young woman looking at something on a dusty computer screen. Visitors write their name on the log and before the question even crosses the mind the woman utters: “10:05” so the visitor reacts by quickly writing that under the column “in-time,” by then she had already peeled of a white sticker from a paper pad, written something on it, and handed it to the visitor; -evidently this efficient staff is eager to help visitors expediting the disheartening passage through the miserable corridor-office.

At the main office, located on the left, waiting for the ESL specialist the researcher is disoriented, doesn't know how to proceed; a clerk reads her face and without words makes her pass a small hanging piece of wood –a semi-door that could evoke old west saloon doors– but this one is rather small, flat, and hanging down low. The two persons pass another contracted corridor where tight doors labeled with signs indicate staff and administrators' working spaces; across a wider hall there is the teachers' lounge; it is bare and depressing as well. On a subsequent visit, the office was packed and the only person behind the counter was tending to a phone call. There were eight tall male student-athletes waiting for uniforms and two female students, they all seemed relaxed but three mothers or guardians grew impatient by the minute. A

lady came out from an office and quickly took care of four visitors. She recognized the researcher from previous visits so she just opened the access half-door and the researcher passed in. Since the staffs were still busy tending to customers the researcher felt embarrassed to ask for help trying to recall the way to the ESL specialist; as a result, she started walking the labyrinth-maze-style section connecting the reception area to the back side of the building. She managed to move along corridors and negotiated not few doors before finally reaching the library where the ESL teacher's office was located. It was not a long walk but a tricky one avoiding getting through the wrong doors or ending on a dead-end alley. Once the maze conquered wider clean-shining halls gave the impression of space but the bareness of these long passageways' walls were reminders of somber movies featuring psychiatric asylums or penitentiaries thus betraying the true spirit of what an academic institution should be.

Across the wide alley the library was located on a large area. The floor was covered with a dark carpet, there were few cubicles on one end, these were used for testing, scattered in the penumbrae were few small round tables with their 3 or 4 old chairs nearby, on the other end behind a separation there was a rectangular wooden table and three men discussing something, one of them was a student. The whole ambiance was one of a movie depicting a time maybe in the early 70's. Occupying approximately one fourth of the space was the librarian area, even though her counter appeared accessible her chair was perhaps too low giving the impression that she was not there. Nearby was located a tall counter with two PC terminals linked to a printer where occasionally students logged in and printed their papers, a book tower displayed old paperback copies of the same novel ... there were about 4 book shelves holding books on both sides plus tall shelves on two walls with books from the floor almost to the ceiling, lighting was not favorable in this space and despite books being on display and most likely available they

seemed shy to be taken out of their dusty niches where they apparently rested in undisturbed slumber. Behind two accordion-like separations there was a space with better lighting, in the middle of it on a long table was a set of PC terminals arranged back-to-back probably twenty in total; a female student was taken a test there. The ESL teacher was working on a computer in the corner on a small teacher's desk.

Overall this area added to the bizarre feeling of being somewhere else in time and space rather than in the year 2016 in a southern busy city's school in the middle of a regular school day. Not a plant, not a flower, not an inviting couch where to sit and read a book, not a lamp to help with such intention, not a poster, poor lighting, ugly dark carpeting, scattered not-matching furniture, graceless objects piled here and there. Interestingly enough, energetic passersby passed quickly, like in a rush, they passed, they didn't stay longer, they passed and went away, suddenly appearing through a door but being swallowed up within the blink of an eye through another opening door. Despite seeming so animated they appeared not to be willing to use their energy in this library. This place was not inspiring neither inviting at all it transmitted the idea of a defeated barren kingdom.

The experience leaving premises perfectly matched the first impressions for after the last bell sounded many teachers lined up in front of a PC terminal located on a low table. This check-in check-out station was very close to a narrow corridor in the staff area of the front office so the exit space grew packed and congested with teachers anxious to leave the old building of tall brick walls; this crowd looked like overexerted factory workers of industrial times. Once outside this place faces sparkled with smiles: "this day is over!"

The ESL specialist considered herself being very lucky for having an office; she said:

This year my "office" is an old storage room where obsolete DVDs and diverse kinds of materials and equipment are stored; the video camera system server is also here, so

workmen come in very often. It may not be a well-outfitted, freshly painted classroom, but I'm happy because it's the first time I've had a place of my own to instruct small groups without having to beg, whisper and hide during instruction. Teachers come in to the library often, so I enjoy brief visits with them –good location for sociability! So I like my space compared to the corner I previously had.

Challenges

PP1 stated that due to the greater diversity of ESL students there was an increasing need for more training and professional development not only for specialists but also that “training is sorely needed for regular classroom teachers: “these content area teachers must understand and address the needs of all ELLs.” As this specialist stated, content area teachers’ unawareness and lack of preparation directly affects the chances for academic success this vulnerable population may have. In PP1 words:

Since ELL numbers are growing most teachers I observe do not even consider having a content and a language mode goal for lessons, and many still do not write a full agenda on the board for all students to follow.

This means some classroom teachers are not providing basic differentiation ELLs need and should receive.

Another challenge comes from attitudes this social situation generates at different levels. These include mindset and approach of local students, classroom teachers, and the ESL program administrators towards new comers and the ESL specialists alike. PP1 considers that it is necessary to ameliorate “student’s tendencies to exclude others who are different,” local students express jealousy of ELLs receiving “special treatment;” not only that but the lack of understanding of cultural differences and customs added to the language barriers generates even more complicated classroom environments. On the other side not all teachers are welcoming newcomers or “another student with special needs” because that means “more work.” Finally specialists are overwhelmed with what seems double job load: administrative and instructional

duties; PP1 considers the ESL program administration staff needs to understand “how much time is required” for specialists to complete all diverse duties required of them on a daily basis.

Finally another difficulty PP1 perceived is that apparently more new students are refugees without parents; they are probably living with relatives or with friends; this in turn impacts their emotional and affective stability. Regarding students’ performance PP1 said “many students are more fluent than their ELDA proficiency levels indicate; testing conditions are not always strictly enforced and students may not try their best.”

Mini Tour

Teaching approach

PP1 considers that what’s effective for ELLs, is effective for all students so she uses sheltered instruction strategies, and computer-delivered programmatic ELA interventions such as *System 44*, *Imagine Learning*, and *Rosetta Stone*, PP1 says these programs not only can benefit the greatest number of ELLs in the shortest amount of time with the greatest differentiation but also look good and identify small groups with specific like needs including phonics, sight words, s-v agreement, pronunciation, etc.; she said this kind of programs are useful for pull-outs and/or for in-class assistance. PP1 also models strategies for teaching using hands on activities and emphasizing conversation: these include foldable, games, chanting, graphic organizers, and team competitions; PP1 said “my students are most engaged when I have fostered a safe environment where all learn from the other, joke and laugh with each other (they love my attempts at speaking Spanish) and maintain respect for each other.” She also enjoys modeling activities/strategies for teachers in their classrooms to all students and considered this to be “one of the best ways to influence classroom teachers’ approach to deliver instruction.”

Due to the fact that the district is receiving students with increasingly diverse backgrounds this educator has become more interested in “addressing the needs of the whole child rather than just delivering English language instruction and academic knowledge.” Thus PP1’s teaching approach turned out to be “less about a certain body of academic knowledge and more about ability and demonstrating progress.”

As PP1 stated all ESL specialists are supposed to have a schedule “but things change so often that is not accurate all the time” and “if I refer to that schedule I don’t see what I am supposed to see so anyways.” Since the working situation at school is not predictable at all PP1 keeps a log which is more useful and accurate because beside a name and a date it gives information about what the instructor has accomplished and about the kind of involvement or service provided to a specific student. Below part of such log is reproduced.

The ESL specialist started the day hoping to be back to the classroom and assist the language teacher of record with the *System 44* intervention, then she wanted to meet and work with the newcomers but it didn’t happen. Instead of that, upon checking in the administrator met PP1 and advised to be watchful because a big fight was expected on campus; as the administrator knows PP1 roams and walks around pulling out students constantly so that warning didn’t set a good tone for the day.

Right after this PP1 spoke with a counselor about graduation matters and needs of a senior student. The student is not familiar with the school’s expectations about seniors and doesn’t know what he is supposed to do before graduation but also in his status as an ELL he has to meet with certain teachers like the E20-20 teacher (which is a staff member that manages academic credit transfers and recovery) and with the counselor among other staff. PP1 feels it is critical to stay on top of that and then transmit and explain all this information back to the

student to make sure everything is on place: “I feel that I have to, because they are my seniors ... otherwise they’re going to slip through the cracks.” After that PP1 had to find where a student was and have a talk about class’ expectations and acceptable behavior. The teacher of record of this student had confiscated a love note the student was busy writing during class time while she was supposed to be working on a project. After the talk PP1 gave the note back to the student – she was embarrassed-... PP1 thinks this situation was “kind of cool” because in that process the student realized “ah! These teachers talk, they get each other’s information” and PP1 perceived the student was concerned about “because you know [...] most of these kids like me, they don’t want to disappoint me [...]”

Then, PP1 received a Swahili dictionary requested two weeks before; at that school they have a Swahili speaking student, providing the dictionary is part of the accommodations the student needs. After this PP1 to continued trying to get signatures on the accommodation and modification forms that teachers of record have to sign relating ELLs but sometimes people were absent so PP1 couldn’t finish. Then PP1 had to meet ten new new-comer students that have arrived in the last weeks, gather information from them pertaining accommodations and modifications and hand it out to the teachers of record.

Afterwards PP1 talked to the principal and assistant principal concerning a class where the students had been complaining about the atmosphere of the class; it had to do with a situation where ELLs had not been accommodated. This conversation started on an awkward tone on the side of the administrators but ended up fine. It transpired on one side that even though ELLs need accommodations and modifications and it is not easy all the time for the teacher of record, on the other side content area teachers were not always willing to comply or even cooperate with

the specialists' recommendations regarding the rights and needs of ELLs. Instead teachers of record might not take professional input professionally but personally.

Then a student was asking for help filling the forms to enroll in college and no paperwork about immigration status other than a birth certificate was available. PP1 needed to inform the student of possible choices but first had to consult with the ESL office administrator and ask for help perusing the student's files and obtaining their number for immigration support to better provide counseling to this student. Then PP1 had to talk with a teacher about the situation of a senior student, talk to the student also, pull him out and inform him about the credit recovery situation (his need to get in touch with the E2020 teacher) and helping him understand all he had to do before graduation. PP1 said perhaps the student may end by not doing anything because part of the problem with him like with so many other ELLs is that they need to work. Apparently other school staffs were aware of this situation because PP1 ended up by saying:

That just breaks my heart! And everybody else's that works with this kids at the high school level, so we can't resolve that for him you know... it brings tears to my eyes you know... it is a family circumstance... there are so many like that [...]

Later PP1 had to troubleshoot the access to Imagine Learning of a student whose logging was not working; then he/she had to update records of three new ELLs in the folder binder documenting test accommodations because at any time people from the district come and inspect it so this binder has to be updated daily. By then PP1 had already spent almost two hours with administrative duties and was not yet finished. Then PP1 was called to the attendance office for a parent whose child had run away over the weekend with a friend. The mother was crying, the father spoke fairly good English; the child was in fact his stepson. The runaway boy was only 14 years old, he texted the parents and told them he was with a friend in Charlotte NC, he did not intend to come back home or going back to school. PP1 passed this report to the attendance and

child welfare school person and said he/she would contact again the stepdad before the week was over to ask about the whereabouts of the boy.

Subsequently PP1 had to continue completing administrative duties with students at school and paperwork required from the ESL office. PP1 started by calling the grandma of a female student suspended for creating a disturbance with some of her friends in one of their classes. Since at school there's no mechanism for letting PP1 know when ELLs are involved in a disciplinary action, the specialist stumbles upon these matters when students informally talk of what's happening with classmates that have been suspended. PP1 tries however to stay on top of it all by sending emails to several people with requests pleading to "please keep me informed, please keep me in the loop" but there's no feedback. As a result when students get into trouble the process to solve the issue is not efficient, is time consuming; in PP1 words:

I need to speak with the disciplinarian and that just takes so much time... finding the students... speaking to the disciplinarian... finding out who it was because for instance in this situation two were listed but I needed to speak with them and find out the truth... and I finally got the information: it was a class disruption with five students three of them were ELLs that created a disruption in math uh for continued laughing cutting up and the disciplinarian said they even did it in her office... so probably the teacher was right. Now, I would say this... this is kind one of my contentious points with the administrators... not everyone has the same teaching style as I do, I know this a math class but this class is antiseptic! It's just teacher-talk, there's some group work but for the main time you will just sit there like a soldier and I understand that we are the "worst in the district" that's what we are labeled but again there's no real modifications or accommodation for these kids; they can't sit closer or with a peer, they are non-English speakers, so they get in trouble... so after I investigated I called grandma back and spoke with her because the mother doesn't speak English, so I talked with her and (but I had to make several trials to reconnect with her... that's another consuming time thing... and it ended up being another number than the one she told me... so we resolved that for the time being but I've told the mom -this is the third time I talk to her... I finally told her that umm it's late in the school year, this is a done deal, I advocated for her but I couldn't get her out of suspension, she's suspended... and um I want to talk with her when she returns to school, we are going to follow teacher's directions, complete the work she assigned, we are going to pass all our classes so we can move on to the next year... you know...

As PP1 states it is difficult for the specialists when these kinds of conflicts arise because they have to be allies to both sides: advocating for the ELLs rights to accommodations and modifications but also pressing them to actively participate in classes that are less than friendly or inspiring.

Then while perusing the ELLs files PP1 discovered a discrepancy in the language listed on the institutional forms for a certain student; it was a student from an African country and was assigned different first language in his records. PP1 had to search for the accurate information, correct it in all records for when it is test time and the specialist requests accommodations the exact language must be listed, so this had to be correct. In the middle of this search the disciplinarian brought two students without any warning; two girls that were found skipping lunch in the bathroom. The disciplinarian said upon bringing the students to PP1: “do not give their ID back to them until they understand that they will be suspended for doing so... we are going to give them grace but they need to be aware of consequences,” in other words the school administrators rely on ESLs for ELLs discipline matters also. PP1 professionally handled the situation but this instance it is an example that no matter what the specialist does or try to concentrate in it could be interrupted at any time without warning.

After dismissing the two students PP1 had no more interruptions and went back to paperwork; shortly afterwards PP1 had to leave and go to the next school she serves in the afternoon.

Teacher Instruction

At the time of this visit the specialist was in her “office.” In this small cubicle by the library was the teacher’s desk behind the video surveillance tower; this monument to technology had intricate nets of colorful wires plugged here and there and small fans that you couldn’t see

but whose buzzing beside keeping the system cool would lull you to a nap if you needed. On the side of the monument was a huge roll of paper the size of an eighteen wheeler tire; it was faded on the sides but the usable surface was still white, the specialist found it and claimed it; she cuts stripes of it and gives it to her students to practice their writing. On the other side of the cubicle there were shelves from floor to ceiling; these were occupied by old recording devices and tapes that probably were viewed during the era when the “Betamax” was a symbol of technological advancement. Against the shelves there is a small table and three chairs. When the researcher arrived the specialist was getting ready to go “pull-out.” She had already checked the information on the email, made a list of students she wanted to work with, found where these students would be at that time, practiced a greeting in Spanish on her tablet, cut some pieces of paper from the huge roll, and borrowed a couple of chairs from the library. PP1 and the researcher went together to pull the ELLs from classes; on the way the specialist explained how the school was distributed on the right and on the left, some corridors were closed with a diamond shape panel division and a staff with walkie-talkie was around; PP1 and the researcher went room by room looking for the students. The classes were already in session, after a gentle knock at the door someone would open, a brief greeting and a student walked out, it was but a short disruption; once the student out and the classroom door closed PP1 explained the purpose of the pull out and introduced the researcher, the student seemed delighted listening to his teacher speak in Spanish. This was repeated four more times until all students were together; then they all went to the small office and had a fifteen minutes class on sight words. First the specialist explained again what they were doing; the goal was to identify and be able to pronounce words from the Dolch list. She started by reading the words, having the students following and repeating, several times again and again, then she would quiz them by saying

words randomly and they would find them on the list; she ended by having a short dictation, she would call the words randomly again and instead of looking for the word in the list the students would write them on the stripes of paper. When she was modeling the pronunciation the students were much focused and tried their turns reproducing the words, it was more of a one-to-one with the teacher, when it was the time for the quiz PP1 let the students work together and help each other. Before dismissing the students they had the chance to chat for a couple of minutes. The teacher couldn't stay for a longer class because she had to go to the other school.

This next observation took place at a location where the specialist can devote more time to the students in language development because she doesn't have that many ELLs. The ESL describes the students in this instructional session as follows: Kobe, a true beginner that started from zero, very motivated and improving a lot with *Rosetta Stone*, he has been attending school the whole year; Nina, who is in level 3 and has been in the program for three years; she could give the impression of not being an ELLs because of her proficiency speaking in English. However; she is working with the *Rosetta Stone* program in order to develop her writing and grammar skills; and Jairo who is a newly arrived student he is perceived as illiterate in his home language, he could have some learning disabilities. PP1 requested the researcher to conduct literacy diagnostics and assessments in Spanish for Jairo so all staff involved with him could gain more insight and better address the needs of this student. At the time for language instruction as they arrived to the library, Kobe and Nina being rather independent learners and already knowing the routines, greeted their teacher, discussed what they would work in during that time and went straight away to the computers. They logged in and started a language lesson and practice over the PC station.

Concerning her approach with Jairo PP1 says she started with the Dolch frequency words but the student could not read a word; then PP1 presented him with children's books in Spanish and asked him to read but the student could not read either; then the specialist turned on the translator on iPad and when the student listened to the reading out loud he said he understood. The specialist felt that working with this student was extremely difficult: "so much that I'm wondering if he has a speech impediment that he must be evaluated of, or maybe he needs to be evaluated for special education... you know." Beside Jairo's language barrier the instructor had to say that

He's a great kid, he's very shy, but he has a great attitude! He's willing to do all I ask him to... but it's so difficult for him to speak, to repeat after me, you know I have to try very hard and repeat too many times to have him repeat "and" (see and say) this is unlike anyone I ever had in my four years of working here. I want to help him but you know...how can I do? Should I start from the very basics? From the alphabet with him? Do we have the time for that?

The specialist has also contacted the ESL main office for guidance on how to better assist Jairo and the administrator told PP1 to register him in the *Rosetta Stone* program but the ESL is not sure the student can handle that program yet. PP1 gave Jairo also something to try his writing; he was very hesitant, he tried, he finally managed although it was very labored. The guesses about Jairo could be summarized as not having substantial schooling experience in his home country and probably having some learning disabilities as well. Beside this the teacher had not met the parents yet and didn't have further information about his family composition.

Regarding the challenges students like Jairo present PP1 considered we all could do more about. She said ESL specialists only have access to a notice stating newcomer's name, identification number, English grade level, and the country where they come from but other than that they are not given more specific background. This could be the result of budget difficulties

in the ESL program office; the specialist recognized that they have lost some staff to retirement and that these have not been replaced yet.

PP1 expressed empathy with the administrators of the ESL office and conceded it is a tough job to make sure the children get served with English language instruction however, administrators should also take into consideration and never forget that some of these students have not been in the classroom or in any structured schooling system for long time and that ESL instructors are trying their best to deliver language instruction but are interrupted constantly with things that are also very important: “there’s a lot to do... before these kids run away.”

A challenge then for ESL specialists while serving the ELL population is that conflict between the normal things of life, such as adapting to a new culture and system and the urgent need to learn the language coupled with improving mother tongue literacy skills. In this specialist’s words:

None of us will let things like that, we all have a heart for our kids, we need to do something about... but again there’s no place to record this; how can we document the more personal stuff, the things that impact these kids and how they live, you know [...] no one is asking me how the day went? Did you get to teach today? For instance today I had to treat a situation where a girl was severely disrupted because a male teacher called her a bad name [...] what a “puta loca” means anyway? Crazy bitch, pretty much... uh? Well that’s what I’ve thought [...] so he was doing this again and again and all the girls there got upset... you know... so I had to intervene what I’m happy to do because you know... This is what causes extra stress! What a lovely day it would be if I just had to go to my two *System 44* classes, break for lunch, go get some signatures, come back, welcome my newcomers, but that doesn’t happen since the second month of school... well that’s my schedule ... but it doesn’t happen like that. I’m not complaining, but I don’t think anyone will understand how much this happens... and how I am supposed to do with my instructional schedule? To lie about telling how much time I actually spend on instruction? [...] conflict arises due to that but we don’t talk much about the real situation [...]

Attitudes

During the conversations and interactions with this specialist several lines of behavior were identified: the respect ESLs have for each other and their commitment to this population,

the anguish when pondering the fate of ELLs if they fall “through the cracks of the system,” proactive advocacy when perceiving negligent or hostile staff at schools, and willingness to walk the extra-mile on behalf of the children. (need to complete this section)

Coda

If PP1 had the power to re-structure the ESL program she would have more than one ESL -9permanently at each school. By reducing the number of students per specialist the professionals would be in a better position to tend to both administrative and instructional matters. PP1also believes just teaching the language is not enough, these students need to develop a trust relationship with their teacher and the way to do so is by interacting beyond the class time as they do now; the only problem is that these specialists have too many students thus the need for more professionals to share the load.

PP1 believes there is the need among ESLs to get more understanding not only of the different difficulties their students go through but also of local programs and alternatives that would help these children solve situations in civilized ways. To this respect the specialist said

[...] sometimes I get upset that I don't have more information on immigration, on steps that are needed to take in certain situations... for instance sometimes I have students that come asking me about how to deal with a ticket they get because they were caught driving without insurance... well I don't know how to deal with that in their situation (undocumented immigrants) I don't know what to tell them to do but I wish I knew... they get a ticket and they don't even have a license... they are scared to death when they have to go back to Texas or to Arizona... I don't know all the details of what they have to do there to face all these immigration officials, go to court... other person that would be knowledgeable about this stuff and could prepare them would be wonderful because they really are scared to death...

Interview with PP2 (Foreign-born ESL educator)

Educational Background and Experience

PP2 is a foreign ESL educator with teaching experience and training at various levels. PP2 holds a B. A. in education, an M. A. in ESL, a second M. A. in special education, and is

working now in a third M. A. degree in curriculum and instruction with a concentration in gifted and talented education. PP2 has experience working in both international and local settings, K-12 and adult education, and in private and public education systems; currently this instructor works as a full time ESL specialist with the public school system.

When talking about the present appointment and comparing this work experience with previous ones PP2 expresses his sentiment of unhappiness when working as a classroom teacher and says he felt in need of a change because being confined within the four walls of a classroom and tending to the numerous demands of the task like grading papers, making lesson plans, making visual materials, plus the preparation load, interview with parents, etc. made life very stressful. Not only that but also the level of social interaction with colleagues was limited mostly restricted to few exchanges with school administrators. PP2 says: “teaching elementary [...] takes a lot of patience and a lot of preparation.”

PP2 feels happier in the current assignment and says he likes it more because it gives the opportunity to network with people at higher levels of administration and to meet more people. In this position PP2 also interacts with students at different secondary school grades and academic levels which is a source of satisfaction because PP2 feels more comfortable teaching older students. However; in this profession the perfect job doesn't exist because ESL instructors –at least in this district- would face difficulties tightly related to their working situation. PP2 considers the teaching assignment with this district as challenging mainly from four different structures: the students, the parents, the colleagues, and the program's administration.

Challenges

This specialist perceives problems with the ELLs middle and high school population as stemming from 1) previous schooling and 2) behavior. In this school district very few Latino

newcomers have had proper schooling experiences back home, most among them have a rather incipient Spanish language literacy level that doesn't constitute a solid foundation to build upon a second language, and some are totally illiterate in their first language; this situation is extremely problematic because the specialist has to teach a second language where there are not literacy basis whatsoever, with a very tight schedule that doesn't allow the space to tarry and teach abc's. Secondly, PP2 sees a stark difference between our local students' behavior and attitude towards school compared to that one of his/her home country. PP2 says "back home we don't have discipline problems [...] discipline is not a problem; but here you get tired of dealing with discipline issues, and it's not only the students but also the parents..." according to the ESL specialist many times the students' behavior runs parallel to that one of the parents in that when teachers have to deal with unruly pupils and call the parents for support instead of finding them as team players in the education of the child teachers encounter defiant parents that are very complacent with the student's behavior, don't believe their children have discipline issues and blame the school for the shortcomings of the students. Another difficulty from the parent's perspective is when they are not educated or strongly interested in education, these type of parents can't effectively assist their children studying or doing homework; if education is not of great value in the parents' perspective they won't encourage the child to persist and aim to higher academic levels; PP2 says "uneducated parents don't know the lessons so you have to do double job but if parents are educated they help the children at home. You teach and there's a follow up."

PP2 considers that as itinerant educators ESLs have to adjust to diverse environments; each and every school being unique where the socio-educational climate is different as well as the working atmosphere; PP2 says there are schools where the colleagues are very welcoming

and nice but it is not the same in all places. Regarding various situations with colleagues PP2 –as the other ESL instructors- interacts not only with the ELLs population but with their content area teachers too as language specialist. This part of the instructor’s job description involves first informing the classroom teacher about the ELLs needs, requesting instruction and testing accommodations and modifications. Second, assisting in instruction delivery as interventionist inside the same classroom, technique known as “push-in” or else “pulling-out” the students from the class for individual or small group instruction; and third, it also has to do with educating the teacher on literacy strategies to better approach the teaching of academic language to the second language learners and to local students not literacy proficient. Although such collaboration and professional development could be very beneficial for both the teacher of record and all students taking that content area class and it could impact overall academic achievement at school as well, it is not always welcome or appreciated; in the PP2 experience this part of the job is sometimes not pleasant and even intimidating.

Furthermore, when he/she has conducted professional development workshops senior teachers have an attitude that could be interpreted as prejudice towards foreign-born, younger specialists that want to inform them about “new trends” in the field. PP2 recognizes that teachers with many years of experience could be very good in their area but less receptive vis-à-vis ELLs and other at risk students’ literacy needs, rights, and teaching approaches. PP2 says:

Living in the south there’s always the attitude, racism, people would not say it but you can feel it, there are times when the old ones, like the veteran teachers [rolling eyes] they don’t like it when a younger teacher from a different culture, from a different race, comes introducing something new, [...] you know when I have teachers with the attitude and you feel the resistance I just tell them, ‘well you don’t have to stay for the workshop’ because what else can one do with a teacher’s attitude that is like; ‘well I have thirty plus years of teaching experience under my belt and what I do works for me now here it comes this stranger with something new telling me how to teach?’ and you know veteran teachers they are so good in their craft their attitude could be very intimidating [...] They are very intimidating! In other professional development situations some teachers give

the attitude “well I have so many things to do that I just can’t sit here to listen to this kind of information.”

What this specialist does when there is this kind of tension after extending open invitation to all staff is to tell them the door is open to stay or to leave and although it is a professional development opportunity no one is forced to attend the workshop. However PP2 makes it clear that content area teachers are responsible for instruction delivery that incorporates literacy strategies accommodating all students at risk –including ELLs.

Apropos challenges generated within the ESL program office PP2 states that administrators try to accommodate both ESL staff and ELLs but there are too many students and not enough specialists and it is not fair with all when some specialists have to serve more than one hundred students while others don’t have the same load. This seems then a budget problem that may go beyond the office administrators because since there is a job that must be done and there are not enough teachers the load doubles not only in student numbers per educator but in assigning both administrative, instructional and professional development duties. PP2 says “we are doing two in one we are ESL teacher and specialist at once so that’s a lot... and it goes back with the district because they don’t have the budget and the people...” he adds that the district has been inviting teachers to become ESL certified but an invitation for certification is not strong enough to alleviate the load and better distribute the professional responsibility with newcomers. In fact in our state ESL certification is not compulsory for content area teachers as it is in other states, Texas for example, where teachers of record are ready any time to receive and serve ELLs. PP2 says the situation in Louisiana is not going to change until ESL certification becomes a pre-requisite for teaching certification.

Grand Tour

PP2 works at two different schools; they are fairly new buildings unlike the places where the other participants work. The first impression approaching the edifices is that things could be better off there because the premises seem modern and inviting; the whole façade, the foyer and the library sharply contrast with the decrepit facilities housing the other schools.

Both, the high school building and the middle school one are similar, their grounds look well-kept and clean, the landscape looks neat, although the parking area seems crowded there is neatly demarcated space for visitors' vehicles nearby the entry door. The facilities boast big polarized windows and glass doors giving at the same time the impression of amplitude and of privacy, the main office has modern access and service processes with computerized-ID enabled check-in system, semi-private cubicles that separate staff spaces to the public but allow interaction among staff behind the desks give the sense of openness and of connection simultaneously, student's art work is on display on the walls outside the office. The library occupies a prominent place close to the reception area, half its wall is brick and the other half glass, it is highly decorated with a season's theme, there are at least three staffs either assisting students or working on the collection, the furniture is of fine wood, comfortable and arranged for small groups work, there are also individual cubicles, PC terminals, low tables with lamps nearby lounge chairs, books seem in good condition and accessible, there are students checking books out, sitting on the carpet perusing their book choices, working at a computer or reading; the whole ambiance is colorful and vibrant with luminosity, the space arrangement is inviting and although busy it projects the image of intense but enjoyable academic activity.

PP2 roams the school bringing ELLs accommodation materials for content area teachers to use in class –for instance a multiplication table to be used in math class-, he requests teachers'

signature acknowledging receipt of such materials. PP2 says this is important in order to have documentation available any time the federal government inquires about. But ultimately it is going to be up to the teacher of record to truly provide the differentiation local students as well as ELLs need. PP2 says the presence of ELLs in any class is a burden for teachers because students with zero English skills won't be able to work at the same rhythm and level of regular students which constitutes a daily challenge to the delivery ability of the teacher. Although some teachers don't appreciate "specialists" in their territory and consider literacy strategies as "extra work" there are others that welcome and invite the ESL specialist and incorporate new instructional strategies in their teaching thus providing the assistance needed by all at risk students.

Most of the classes this specialist serves have an average of four to five ELL students but there are also classes with only one ELL requiring accommodation and modifications; if that is the situation PP2 gives priority to the classes with numerous students because he has "to maximize time," and to the teacher of record with only one ELL the specialist provides materials devoting more time where the need seems greater.

When asked whether teaching in the middle and high school would involve different dynamics PP2 didn't address the question of ELLs instruction at specific literacy levels but raised the issue of the current system's ability to provide continuity while serving this vulnerable population and of tracking students' progress. PP2 said that part of the rationale for his appointment was to follow students from middle to high school and to observe the progress students make when transitioning from grade to grade. As PP2 suggested few years ago the district served ELLs in only three or four schools thus monitoring ELLs literacy skills improvement was easier. In fact now the socio-educational panorama changes so often that it

could be challenging to serve the growing ELL population in efficient ways with the limited ESL staff the district has and with the current operating model. PP2 gives an example of a situation he handled recently: two new Latino students were send to one of these schools; by law the school has to accept the students but there is not in place a mechanism to effectively engage them in education. Instead these ELLs are just “dumped” there to pass their time within a school facility but without clear academic involvement because they won’t obtain grades or be held responsible for their language advancement. This in turn generates despair and hopelessness among this young generation.

PP2 considers a great challenge with his students is not the language barrier for ELLs would be able to reach adequate proficiency levels provided they stayed in school long enough but –as the specialist suggests- language is not their priority. Since students know that upon reaching certain age attending school is not mandatory they drop school and go to work. School attendance is then the greatest challenge.

Mini Tour

Teaching approach

The first thing PP2 does prior to start working with students is to peruse the assessment document the ESL office produces. This document is a language placement sheet ranging from zero to thirty three points, PP2 said this information gives him a good idea on where to start with a particular student; however some students are even “below zero” when they arrive without literacy skills from their home country and/or without a proper schooling experience. To this respect the specialist said “I have to start with the non-English speakers from scratch because some of them are not literate in their own language... I also help [local students] with their

assignments.” Finally, after identifying the students PP2 meets with them and let them know that he is there to support them.

PP2 also talks with each teacher receiving new ELLs and informs about the situation of the students and the strategy to follow with them. Basically PP2 offers assistance to the teacher of record providing information on the ESL literacy strategies that would be better for these students; even if the content area teacher doesn't consider literacy strategies as part of their personal approaches to instruction and educational choices this information/training must be delivered. PP2 accomplishes this task during meeting or planning times and says that “even if they are not receptive they have to accept this information because [sooner or later] they will need it.” If it happens that the teacher of record seems to never be available PP2 will email them all pertinent information regarding ELLs and instructional approaches.

The specialist then checks the students' schedules and decides whether to “push-in” or to pull students out to the library or to any other available space and would proceed with instruction one-to-one. The decision will depend on the needs of the student; if they need more one-on-one attention or if they can't concentrate in ESL matters while there is a content class going on they may be pulled out otherwise the specialist assists them in in class. To this regard PP2 says ultimately would be the student's choice on how to handle the double task: attending the content area class or getting the ESL instruction needed to make progress in all subjects. This kind of situation is not only a matter of space: where to deliver the literacy instruction this vulnerable population needs, but also a matter of timing: these students are not being allowed to spend the time sufficient to acquire literacy skills that would make them independent learners. As a result a minor has to split his/her attention between being present in a content matter class and in the same place at the same time receiving help with other class homework. When asked about this

dilemma, PP2 said: “it is a matter of priorities... if that’s what the kid wants to do... so if they want to catch up later with the content of the class is up to them.” PP2 added that when a teacher gives an assignment the student can’t fail it so it is the specialist responsibility to help the student with that task.

Regarding scripted materials used at schools PP2 serves he said it is either *System 44* or *Read 180* in the middle school and in the high school is *Language!* The specialist said that there are other ESL support programs used in the district like *Math 180* but ESL specialists have little or nothing to do with it besides assisting the teacher of record when they request the intervention of the ESL specialist. At last -PP2 said- these students are under the roster of the teacher, they are their responsibility “[...] the primary responsibility is on the teacher.”

PP2 says about personal approach that it is unstructured and unique for it has to adapt to each child’s specific needs. As whether assisting in class or pulling out PP2 states that it is a matter of priority mainly depending if the student needs to present an assignment or not; because if that is the case the main concern would be to help the student with the homework or project and avoid a zero.

My approach is unstructured... because each student is different, each one is unique it depends with the kind of student, there are students that are a behavior problem so you have to be very strict... others are very shy so you have to sound very like motivational... with restless ones keep them busy.

Teacher instruction

During this visit PP2 quickly arrived to the foyer and took the researcher to the classroom. With few words introduced the researcher to the teacher of record who was occupied teaching a lesson on prefixes and suffixes. All of the students in this class were language learners; there were eight Latino girls, one Asian girl, and eight Latino boys. The teacher of record acts as the second language school staff and was using the “Language!” program; PP2

acts as the second language specialist and in this class worked with a “push-in” intervention model. While the class was in session PP2 sat by a newcomer student and together they completed the biology homework; however the student’s attention was divided between the interventionist and the lesson the teacher of record was delivering to the rest of the class. The way PP2 assisted the student was making a quick internet search of the homework questions on a laptop and having the student copying answers in a notebook; as the student was too slow copying in English PP2 copied the answers on the student’s copybook. Once PP2 was finished with the student’s homework he began walking the classroom checking the progress the rest of the students were making with the scripted lesson; suddenly PP2 exited the classroom with a student without saying a word to anyone. The researcher stayed in the classroom and assisted students that asked for help. It was evident some students didn’t understand the terms “prefixes & suffixes” so they ended up by copying answers from the students that knew how to complete the activity. The teacher of record quickly started the next activity consisting on making students hand-cut a sheet of paper in sixteen smaller pieces; (later on the students discovered they will have to write on the small paper pieces prefixes and suffixes and form new words). Again, some students grasped the instructions and others were lost. In the middle of this practice messages from the front desk interrupted the class through an intercom device; students also were allowed a short restroom break and some students left their unfinished cutting paper task on the desk. In the meanwhile other students blew away pieces of paper here and there or stole them from neighboring desks. As a result when the break was over there was no little commotion over the lost pieces of paper and a fight between two boys broke. The teacher of record yelled at students, separated them, and gave her spared paper pieces to students needing them, this settled the discomfort.

PP2 and the student were still at large. The teacher of record reviewed short and long vowel sounds using compound words and assigned a paired activity on fluency: certain students were allowed to choose partners and other pairs were set by the teacher. The students took turns practicing reading a list of words and then they timed each other at reading and entered the words-per-minute score on a grid. The teacher explained how to interpret the graph and assess their progress. Finally, the teacher moved to a short revision of meaning of words and began to explain what she wanted to be done for homework but the bell rang and all students jumped to the door, the teacher turned her back and erased the board, in an instant the room is vacated, the researcher asked the teacher about PP2 and she said the specialist was gone for the day. The researcher exited the room also and found PP2 in the hallway. PP2 explained the sudden departure from class as part of the ESL interventionist job offering counseling as needed; he added “this student needed support outside of the classroom.”

The overall feeling observing these professionals and the students they interacted with was that one of “rush-n-exit” for they all quickly went through apparently scripted motions, they rushed to be done with them as soon as possible and went for a tangible or intangible way out, for instance the ESL specialist had a student with a biology task needed to be submitted later on the same day; why this short notice? Was it poor planning on the part of the student or of the teacher of record or of the ESL specialist? Something had to be written on that student’s copy book and no matter what it was –since the student couldn’t copy English words and concepts fast enough from the laptop to his copybook the specialist did it, but the student also had to pay attention to the suffixes-prefixes lesson and so didn’t tarry to pay attention to his helper and started cutting paper squares not knowing what was the purpose of such task his attention being so scattered. The ESL had to tend to a student needing counseling and decided to leave behind

the push-in intervention where several students seemed lost; however, by this time he already 1) had a short interview with the researcher, 2) completed biology homework, 3) made sure who was attending ESL class, and 4) escaped a class fight. On her side the teacher of record was concerned on covering content and finishing that lesson; obviously students needed more than five minutes break so they fussed about the strips of paper and in doing so stole two or three minutes of allotted instruction time. Students rushed out of the classroom on time with the bell without waiting to be dismissed but once outside they adopted a more relaxed attitude.

The researcher does not suggest that teaching or learning did not happen in this context, what she wanted to know was why that exaggerated focus on squeezing tasks within a time frame and keeping a record to demonstrate that the motion had taken place rather than on fostering cooperative group interaction among these students?

Attitudes

PP2 was very aware of his ethnicity, cultural background, and overall education; probably PP2 was one of the most stressed participants. This could be due in part to his choice of taking online classes while having a full time job appointment. In fact the participant pointed out that beside the specialist duties he worked with another segment of the school population as part of the requirements for a degree he was pursuing at this time. PP2 acknowledged being “pretty stressed” with the demands of the studies.

Regardless of such stress PP2 had found the time to go beyond the scripted job duties and involve his students with the community by procuring invitations to perform outside of school for his most talented students as will be discussed later on next page.

While asked about the attitude of the colleagues at school PP2 said that even though their main job was to provide professional development one-to-one with teachers and assist with the

ELLs language development he “only worked with teachers that asked for help” because some teachers didn’t feel comfortable having other adults in their classrooms and preferred doing things in their own way. However; PP2 had also worked with teachers that did above and beyond of what was expected from them; PP2 said these educators “truly do differentiation, they provide translation with tests... although it is too much for them they still do it: they provide accommodations,” while some content area teachers went the extra mile in order to assist all language learners in their classes PP2 has encountered teachers saying they are not being paid for that extra work or they are underpaid, as a result they treat ELLs as regular students and these students have to “sink or swim” in those classes and most likely they end up drowned because they don’t grasp the basic concepts or are unable to perform due to overall poor literacy skills.

This conversation brought researcher and participant to an informal interview where PP2 informed the researcher about non-scripted activities that usually ESL educators engage in with the hope to encourage ELLs in the pursuit of education and community involvement. For instance PP2 has taken talented students to a university fieldtrip where ELLs perform in a cultural venue; although the trip is short because the group will only be absent of school for half of the school day the process involves a lot of work and personal time on the part of the interventionist. On one hand it has to do with all the institutional paperwork to secure permission from school and from parents, transportation, and provision to make up for the classes students will be missing, and instruction for ELLs not participating; and on the other hand it also requires establishing the professional connections with university programs, all of this beside the training and preparation students will need to perform which usually would have to happen as extracurricular activity because there is no time in their regular schedule for such kind of involvement.

PP2 also invites the public library staff to school in order to help newcomer students to get familiar with, to enjoy the different services the library offers, and to participate in its programs as well; finally, PP2 uses professional connections and brings individuals in diverse fields of knowledge to the schools. These successful members of the community are carefully selected from the same ethnic groups the students belong to; in that way they would serve as role models and as motivational speakers. Inviting these guests to schools is not as cumbersome as taking students out to the field and although the interventionist has to put extra time as well it demands different kind of energy for most likely this would be more a friendly/professional collaboration than an institutional endeavor.

Coda

When asked about what would be necessary to do to re-structure the ESL program and to improve the situation of both English language learners (both local and foreigners) PP2 expressed the need to solve the situation about the lost connection with parents or guardians and the urgent need to seek and hire more ESL specialists and other professional staff able to provide the services needed by the present population.

PP2 considered that the way to improve the situation of all ELL students should begin by reaching out to parents and involving them more in the education of their children; this could be accomplished by scheduling teacher, school staff, and parent conferences where the overall situation of the student should be discussed and an appropriate plan would be agreed upon by all concerned. PP2 stressed that most challenges were a matter of communication, thus after a plan was established it was necessary a follow up; the specialist stated as a result that no matter how parents needed to be reached later on and instructors needed to sit with them to discuss every child's performance and needs.

PP2 said as well that ESL staffing had to improve because the task was too great for the few professionals serving the growing population of language learners. In PP2 perspective certain students needed constantly a person able to spend the time they needed to acquire the basic literacy skills that would help them reach proficiency. PP2 seemed overwhelmed for all the needs ESLs have to respond to at any time; ESLs often play several roles such as teacher, proctor, test administrator, counselor, translator, teacher's aide, interventionist, language specialist, homework tutor, and so on. The specialist does as much as he can but as he said: "hey! I'm not a superhero! There's only so much we can do."

Interview with PP3 (American-born ESL educator)

Educational Background and Experience

PP3 is an American ESL educator with teaching experience in English and in Spanish; she holds a B. A. in political sciences and is ESL certified. PP3 entered the public school system as a Spanish teacher and also assisted with the ELLs instruction when the other duties permitted. As the ELLs population increased PP3 was appointed full time to work with ELLs in a newcomers program that the district had a few years ago. In that process PP3 became ESL certified and retained as ESL specialist. When working in the newcomers' program her main duties were similar to those of other content area teachers, namely preparing and delivering instruction; in PP3 particular situation the content was English second language addressed to immigrant children or to local students performing under the appropriate literacy level. When the newcomers program ended PP3 was required to work as language interventionist; in this context she was not given a classroom anymore and became an itinerant ESL instructor.

PP3 said ESL specialists have a monthly professional development session in the ESL program office; they attend also the TESOL training opportunities so this teacher takes

advantage of these opportunities as they are available. Beside the schools' duties ESLs also have work to do at the service office so after schools are closed for summer break they work one or two more weeks at the ESL program office depending on assigned tasks, the same happens one or two weeks before schools open.

Grand Tour

From the exterior view the visitor perceives an old faded building, part of the parking lot grounds don't look well maintained, sections of the pavement are broken open, and an access bump is not painted so the unaware driver would get a surprise with it; the exceptional student's access reaches up to this parking area. Nevertheless; in stark contrast to the first impression the interior of the edifice is clean, organized and shining. Students and staff quickly move around. The distribution of this edifice is similar to the one where PP1 works but it looks in better condition. People here seem very proud of their past athletic accomplishments because on the walls of the spotless foyer there is an athletic hall of fame –an exhibition of framed pictures of men and women that even though young appear from another era or age– there are also wood and glass niches with many cups and other sort of trophies in display; these trophies' safe places are both in the main office and in the foyer. There are also in exhibition some more updated pictures of athletes. The main office is decorated as well with several pieces of white and black artwork silver framed and with inspirational quotations. Three staffs promptly take care of visitors, a couple of wood benches are conveniently located and visitors rest there while waiting for their party. The office is not crowded but busy, the clerk remembers that the researcher is waiting for the ESL specialist and again places a call asking someone on the other side of the line to locate the instructor; as an explanation she said: “since this teacher doesn't have a classroom anymore it is not easy to tell where she is!”

Once together the specialist takes the researcher on a short tour of the premises. Leaving the main office there's a large hallway connecting to the library and to the east and west sections of the school; there are many metallic locker cabinets on the sides of the halls leaving scarce space for students' artwork but some of them manage to exhibit their crafts in the narrow gap between the lockers and the ceiling. There is also an open common area with some vending machines. The library has very good lighting; there is action in this place: students, staff and teachers enter, stop, roam a little bit around and continue to their destination. In the periphery of the library there are small cubicles where half the wall is a window giving the impression of openness but conveniently isolating occupants for study group, conference or testing. At the moment several of these are busy with students taking tests, more students outside cubicles are also working at computer terminals; these seem rather available and also the books which are exhibited on open bookshelves and very close to the door. In fact from the very entry the visitor realizes she is in the library. While talking about this space PP3 and the researcher find a Spanish teacher, she is a native language speaker; she entered the country several years ago as a refugee. When asked her opinion about the building the Latino teacher said it has been recently remodeled that is why it looks so well. The researcher is left alone for few minutes in the hallway and passersby greet her in Spanish and try their language skills with the researcher; people seem rather friendly.

After a while both specialist and researcher found a place to sit in the teachers' lounge; there were two computer terminals with printers attached, one wall was covered with open mail boxes, a couple of tables held materials, framed inspirational quotations and random stuff. There were several other tables with chairs where teachers ate lunch, on one end of the room in opposite corners there were doors indicating restroom spaces. The table where PP3 was working

was covered with her stuff, several ring binders with master copies of documents, other loose papers and few personal items; PP3 and the researcher tried to have a conversation but it was very difficult due to surrounding noise and movement; there was also constant interruption coming from a loud speaker, teachers and staff were filling some documents online and as they saw PP3 around they would ask him for help.

This school had more than one hundred ELLs so the specialist was appointed full time there. However; there was not a room where the ESL could store or organize materials or have even a small a class if needed. When asked about the space inconvenience PP3 said:

I have not heard about getting a room for next year; this school year some very generous teachers, when aware of what had happened offered to share part of their storage space with me. They volunteered some of their cabinets or of their desks drawers. So that is what I do: I put of my stuff here and there, I put my papers in a teacher's drawer, go check them out and then go and find my students.

This specialist's instruction dynamics could be both pulling-out small groups of students and going to random places available at the time for instruction, or push-in going to the teacher of record classroom to assist ELLs. The decision whether to push-in or to pull-out depends on at least three factors: 1) the ESL familiarity with the subject matter and the lesson topic addressed, 2) the context of the classroom where the lesson is conducted, i.e. if it lends itself for intervention without disrupting much, and 3) on the student's needs; if PP3 feels very confident about the content being taught, if the content area teacher doesn't feel comfortable having the intervention in class, and if the ELL student is easily distracted then PP3 opts for a pull-out form of instruction. Nevertheless the factor that weighs more is how confident PP3 feels about teaching the content to the students. PP3 has almost no problem assisting ELLs in any content area but mathematics topics could be challenging at times; as a result PP3 would choose to take the math lesson along with the students, ask in class as if she were a student also and then later

discuss it with the ELLs. PP3 said some teachers – but sadly not all- added PP3 as a student in the electronic class roster and emailing group, in doing so they allowed the specialist access to class materials in a timely way so she could better decide how to address assistance to ELLs. PP3 prefers to pull-out students though, because that format eliminates further distractions for students; PP3 said:

For English, sciences, and social studies classes I tell the teachers ‘just send me the materials, what you want the students to do and I go through that with them’ but for math it is harder because I’m not a math person [...] I know basic math and some formulas as well but many things I’ve forgotten, I can’t remember from the top of my head things like those quadratic formulas[...] so it depends on how confident I feel [...] for me it’s necessary even if I end up by pulling them out it is necessary to sit in and see how that class goes [...]

Even though working in only one school seems very convenient compared to the situation of other colleagues –that have to commute to different places, this specialist plainly said the workload is daunting due great needs of ELLs.

Challenges

PP3 considered the greatest challenge to be the lack of specialized staff and the literacy limitations of ELLs. PP3 said content area teachers must accommodate ELLs and also sometimes someone must be there to translate & assist depending on the situation of the students.

Mini Tour

Teaching approach

PP3 begins each work day by inspecting emails and different sorts of communications from both the ESL program office and from the school; usually they demand most current information on students like last testing scores, they also request the specialist to make copies of information about students and distribute it among teachers, school staff, the students themselves or send it home; they also often request updated specialist’s schedule. After making sure email requests are

taken care of, the specialist proceeds to the guidance office if she is asked to help with students' registration or with other related matters. If PP3 has to work with registration this would involve assisting new ELLs filling out paperwork, school official forms, and translating; she makes sure newcomers understand the paperwork they are filling, they are accurately providing information needed to complete registration forms, provide proofs of residency, identification, and so on. If the new ELLs don't have the documentation needed the specialist has to inform them about and send a request back home. During this process PP3 also conducts interviews with the student and with the family as requested by the principal; the purpose being to gather as much background information from the student and family as possible; PP3 starts from the information provided by the ESL office and based on that decides how to best complete the profile of the student. In many occasions students don't bring school records so the interview would focus on establishing schooling experience back home, years attending school, and overall literacy level expected in the native language of the student. However; the ESL office doesn't have an instrument to diagnose Spanish literacy among Latino ELLs. (probably for any language) part of this interview involves also explaining the student the school's rules, regulations, and expectations; PP3 provides then the orientation around the school's grounds the 'West-side and East-side' main interest areas like restrooms, cafeteria, and library, the explanation of school's A-Day and B-Day schedule, and finally PP3 takes the newcomers to the classroom of the ESS specialist. Even though the exceptional students' instructor provides services to the ESS population she also has a beginners' level English class and PP3 has found this to be of benefit for ELLs specially newcomers with limited literacy skills.

This teacher doesn't speak Spanish but she has a great personality and a passion for ELLs, students love her because she helps them with loads of vocabulary, she doesn't need me for translation, she already has a little system that works for her, she googles and passes the ideas across; she also makes students introduce themselves to newcomers,

there's a lot of ELLs in her class so the new ones feel less of a strangers. Even though this teacher's schedule is different from the rest of the teachers' if a student is enrolled in that class they can go every day and that is very helpful.

PP3 also has a sort of a 'buddy-program' or a 'lunch-connection' aimed to help the new ELLs spend lunch time with someone that speaks Spanish, that way the new student could have a friendly first day experience. This connection usually evolves into companionship beyond lunch time which helps newcomers with the motions of the day in the unfamiliar school context over the first weeks. PP3 students enjoy very much this kind of interaction because they do understand the situation of the new ELLs.

After the last step of the registration which is making sure the new student has a lunch buddy, the specialist proceeds to the classes where she has students. Usually PP3 has four to five classes to attend a day, she said:

At the beginning of every semester (in August and again in January) I send an email to all teachers introducing myself and explaining the services I provide. I also attach electronic copies of forms to be used when requesting intervention services, i.e. forms for accommodations, behavior or other kind of issues, I also put a hard copy of the same forms in each teacher's mailbox at the beginning of each semester. So when a teacher needs assistance they just drop the completed form back in my mailbox here in the teacher's lounge room and as soon as I get the request I accommodate that teacher in my schedule. Teachers with low literacy level students are the ones needing/requesting most assistance. The others don't because their ELLs are already more independent learners.

PP3 said that sometimes only one teacher requests services during a class period, if that is the case the specialist spends as much time as needed in that class; however, if it happens that two or three teachers request the ESLs at the same time what she does is to split the ninety minutes class time in two or three segments to tend to the teachers needing assistance at the requested time; PP3 does this when the instructional model is a push-in. If it is a pull-out then the specialist takes all students from these classes at once and assists them in a space other than a classroom. PP3 does not provide assistance to more than three teachers in a single class segment

regardless of the strategy push-in/pull-out. Sometimes teachers leave their school appointment unexpectedly and it becomes necessary to educate the new content area teacher with the protocol of obtaining ESLs assistance. PP3 says her intervention schedule is very consistent with at least three to four classes a day but what changes is the classes she visits during certain periods. Other than that it could happen that a teacher that was requesting intervention services says that she doesn't need the specialist on a given day, when this happens PP3 uses that time to update administrative paperwork pending to be processed. During these 'free' times PP3 also provides behavior assistance; mainly what students do that would put them into trouble is skipping class, so in such instances the ESLs becomes the disciplinarian.

I often work with registration, we've registered students all year long [...] we've registered students even in April! That is astonishing, what can we do with a student arriving in April! A month before school is over [...]

Teacher instruction

During this visit PP3 arrived to the main office where the researcher was waiting and invited her to assist students during a push-in intervention in a mathematics class on polynomials. The lesson has already started when the researcher and the specialist entered, the classroom was very noisy, most students seemed engaged in something else, probably they were finish with the task and were just waiting for the bell to ring. PP3 and the researcher went across the room –no one seemed to care, not even the teacher, the two instructors found some empty desks at the corner opposite to the door and there they sat behind a group of three Latino boys that were looking at the board, chatting in Spanish, or checking their phones, one of them appeared to be very worried and copied what he could from the board.

Students' desks gave the impression of being arranged in semi-circle previously; during the lesson desks were a bit scattered but still leaving free space for someone to enter the room

without disturbing too much the students. The math teacher was writing something on a smart board, he quickly passed pages back and for referring to explanations he has given previously. The researcher's feeling was that they've entered the class late and missed important information but after a while she totally discarded that feeling. The researcher waited for the ESL instructor to assist the ELLs but PP3 seemed as lost as the students. The researcher then asked the students about what they were doing, if they understood what the class was about, or if they wanted help; they didn't understand, two of them were waiting for the worried student to copy the stuff on the board so they could copy from him later. Since the teacher of record quickly passed pages on the smart board back and for the ELLs had little chance to get the information from beginning to the end. The researcher told PP3 these boys were lost and couldn't make sense of what was on the board, she suggested PP3 to directly ask the teacher for explanations so they could assist the boys. Then PP3 went to the teacher and asked him what the lesson was about and what he expected students to accomplish; after a mini lesson from the teacher of record to the ESL specialist, this last one returned back to the ELLs and tried to convey the idea of the lesson; however, it was very hard to translate this lesson into Spanish because PP3 lacked the academic vocabulary in the students first language. As a result the Latino boys searched for the topic on their phones and tried to get an explanation of the same topic from the web.

In the meanwhile, some students in this class acted as if this was leisure time: they found music videos on their phones and played them loudly; the ones that were not playing loud music, playing games, or talking on the phone were talking loudly or laughing. There was a girl working on her copy book and the teacher approached her and explained something, he did the same with a boy that was also working alone; on the back of the room there was a boy wearing his pants below his buttocks thus exposing his underwear, he approached a pretty girl that was playing on

a phone and apparently he disrupted her because she started talking very loud so the teacher reacted by also loudly telling something to the boy; after this threat the boy displayed an upset attitude and left the room. Almost all the boys in this class were wearing their pants in the middle of below their derriere showing underwear.

The researcher suggested that a push-in intervention perhaps was not be the best instructional approach for these ELLs given the content and the context of the class; an alternative would be to ask the teacher for the whole class syllabus, to pull out these Latino students and have them study the lesson via online instruction for instance the Khan Academy. There was no feedback whatsoever.

Overall not only the Latino boys but most students in this class were not paying attention to what the teacher said or wrote on the board and were engaged doing something with their phones. Before the bell rang the teacher walked around checking something on the students' copybooks but little by little students started vacating the room without being dismissed or acknowledging the presence of the adults in the room. The atmosphere during this class experience was that of disconnected individuals, scattered young school-goers that didn't see any value on what happened inside the classroom but there was reciprocity in this feeling because the teacher of record seemed defeated; the impression his demeanor and attitude left was that his expectations of local students were very low, perhaps one girl and one boy were worth spending some time with explaining few concepts, the ELLs were hopeless because they didn't understand the language so there was no point wasting his time with them plus, they had an ESL instructor that will help if needed. This class could pass as a babysitting time rather than a math lesson; as if the unscripted message known by all was "wait here until the time you can drop, no need to pay attention or to care about the content because you are not going to college."

Attitudes

This instructor was very reserved and not willing the researcher to take pictures or to record her voice or her answers to questions. The researcher had to handwrite all she could and that was the basis for the data gathered.

The specialist shared her point of view regarding the situation of ELLs though; she said “society was changing but not all would stop and think about” she said at schools was pretty much the same situation because people in learning atmospheres expressed their desire to embrace diversity and multiculturalism but no one really understood what that meant; she stated, “we could be more sympathetic as human beings and show that we care but we don’t know much about the culture of the ELLs students.”

Coda

PP3 believes to better serve the ELLs population the *centered schools* must be installed again and improved, a permanent language class at schools that would cater to students still working on leveling literacy skills must be provided, and the budget for schools and for the ESL program must be increased.

Interview with PP4 (Foreign-born ESL Educator)

Educational Background and Experience

PP4 is a foreign ESL specialist with teaching experience locally and abroad. She holds a B. A. in modern languages and an M. A. in translation; PP4 also has foreign and local ESL certifications, her work experience involves teaching ESL and other modern languages to children and adults locally and abroad. PP4 is currently working fulltime as ESL specialist with the public school district. PP4 believes this district would support specialists’ professional development endeavors by reimbursing part of the costs associated with classes taken and by

allowing professionals to attend ESL conferences; however, it could be better if leading authorities had more awareness regarding the reality of the ELLs population and of the ESL staff. The specialist perceives that the ESL field is relatively new to the State and the ESL department is but a small group of professionals.

When comparing this appointment to the ones back home PP4 finds that differences between the two working contexts branch off from three edges: 1) the student population abroad and the current one are very dissimilar regarding their level of education. PP4 said that all ELL students she previously taught were on grade level and some of them slightly above in terms of literacy and overall academic development whereas the great majority of local ELLs are far below the expected first language literacy and academic level that corresponds to their age group. 2) Moreover, the student population abroad benefitted from constant and increasing support from their parents, whether it was school events, homework, exams, etc., this intense family involvement with the child's education in some foreign countries dramatically contrasts with the attitude of a high percentage of parents of our local at risk students; lastly 3) PP4 emphasizes that in highly literate countries the environment and the culture strongly foster, value, and promote knowledge and study thus children grow up in a favorable learning milieu and are aware of society's expectations regarding their education while in our context most school districts seem more concerned about testing, teachers on "covering content," and many parents are nowhere to be found.

At the school where PP4 works the majority of ELLs come from poor families and the specialist perceives that the chief concern of both families and students is obtaining employment and working many hours, as a result these students drop out before finishing the high school education. PP4 wonders if the dropping factor among the Latino population could be the result of

the children's desire to honor their parents –for the sacrifices they have made bringing them to the United States so they could live and grow up in a civilized country- by providing bread to the family's table. However; it could be also prompted by the dire financial needs of the family translated in the urgency to become a provider rather than a consumer; then students' priority would be getting a job and earning some money more than staying at school and trying to follow and adapt to academic schedules that don't fit their skills, their interests, or their needs. These students know that in most instances the passing grades they obtain –administrators affording such leniency- don't reflect their true literacy and academic status because they are not reaching a proficiency level in anything.

Students perceive they are attending a phony school; this deceptive space is the result of a vicious cycle that can begin anywhere from 1) the fear of school administrators losing money and privileges if declaring the true grades of students by age placed within their boundaries whose literacy, academic, and social skills are but outliers of what the true mean of the population should be; administrators know though, that they will be violating basic human rights of children –chiefly articles 28, 29, and 31 of the United Nations Human Rights and Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights– by not enrolling such students, 2) the inexistence of school-based, district, federal, and state's remedial programs to level the playing field for children lacking academic, literacy, and/or social/behavior skills, 3) the inadequate training of content area teachers in the middle and high school whose lack of classroom management skills, ESL preparation, low or inexistent levels of multicultural awareness, disregard or ignorance of basic human rights and children rights make them unfit for the job, 4) the ignorance, lack of interest, negligence, or total absence of parents or responsible adults that would closely monitor the appropriate development of the child, 5) the explicit or in-between-the-lines agenda of social

oppression in a country whose leadership's priority is not giving fair education opportunities to all but on keeping minorities ignorant and isolated, 6) the "easy-fix-the problem" attitude of law makers and education-law-makers that create, pass, and enforce laws that go against the unalienable rights of children as stipulated by the United Nations' charter referred to above (i.e. the "dropping age" law) thus making provisions for a government to go unquestioned regarding a blatant attitude of keeping the minors ignorant and marginalized by not making the effort to provide the kind of education and training they need so ultimately they can become independent learners and productive responsible citizens free of hatred and frustration, 7) the laziness or downright lack of interest, and the irresponsibility of education and government leaders to inquire, find, and give adequate and timely alternatives to the roots of the problems –namely illiteracy of the poor, the neglected, and all the at-risk-of academic-and-social failure children, 8) the stony heart, lack of compassion, selfishness, unethical behavior, and/or prejudice of adults in charge that have the power to make a change in the life of a child and refuse to do it, 9) the poor self-image, lack of hope, the brain-washed belief that there's nothing else for them to learn, the appalling poverty, the ignorance, the shame of being unschooled, the lack of support, the fear of being found and deported, and many other complexes children in this segment of the population have deeply rooted in their soul, and 10) the low expectations regarding young generations of an unjust society where the neighbor, the stranger, the poor, and the most at risk have no human value for birds and whales can make the news and compassion groups form and gather to defend the rights of species that otherwise wouldn't have a voice yet there is among us a vulnerable one that even though able to articulate human words is still neglected. Society attitudes seem now being shaped within constructs of megalomaniac, narcissist, indifferent adorers of self,

individuals who erect concrete or abstract monuments to “me-myself-& I” while despising other fellow humans.

Then the dropping child, the new “adult” as empowered by the dropping age law is not an asinine individual. He is smart enough to understand that all doors of academic opportunity are being systematically closed to him, that he will never be good enough to obtain a high school diploma and even if he stays longer in the system to get it, this piece of fancy paper is worth nothing because it doesn’t represent achievement it rather is the testimony of the mediocrity of a failed school system, an academic bankruptcy, a paper that has no value, it can’t be scholarly cashed! Then it is understandable that the intelligent step to take for many of these children would be to drop, get a job, get some money in the pocket and move on with life voided of further education.

Despite the remarks of the researcher the specialist suggests that among some Latino families “the focus does not seem to be on education probably because these children have grown up in an environment where education comes second or doesn’t make the list at all.” Whatever the cause may be many of these children are not on grade level which makes evident they didn’t benefit from education, proper schooling, and basic family/community support in their home country. Moreover; the complexity of immigrant ELLs ordeal is compounded when considering their complete lack of English; as PP4 accurately expresses: “they are faced with a very daunting task, even if they are in the land of opportunity.”

This researcher dares to suggest that to poor young Latino migrants (and to some of our local children) the challenge is too great, the time allowed to acquire the basic literacy skills in English too short, the support to build a strong literacy foundation in first language inexistent,

the social expectations too low, the family situation too desperate, the self-image too distorted, the memories too painful, and so on.

Finally, the specialist doesn't know the situation of the families thoroughly enough to risk a better explanation for she acknowledges that it is hard to say whether dropping out of school "stems from crass indifference on the parents' side regarding the education of their children or from parents' physical absence."

Grand Tour

This was an old school but it looked well maintained. The initial impression was that of an open floor plan, the main offices appeared to be rather accessible. There were cement benches and green spaces where students sat and roamed around in between class periods. The researcher went to the front office where staffs took their time to acknowledge her; one of them offered help in locating the ESL specialist.

In subsequent visits people in the front offices already recognized the researcher so they left her alone; since she already knew her way around she went to the library but the ESLs was not there. The library was crowded. Half of the free area was occupied with about 50 substitute teachers waiting for training; this event was scheduled for the entire day. A fourth of the library space was occupied with a technology class of about 30 students, these were seated at computer terminals logging in and following instructions from a teacher that walked around making sure students started the training. The rest of the workable area displayed an arrangement of several sturdy wooden tables and chairs. The researcher found a table in the center of this space and there waited for the specialist. The two ends of this section were busy; on one end there was a group of ladies with t-shirts and packets of documents, ring binders, stationary, and other supplies, they work for the "Compass" program a non-for-profit entity that offers free counseling

to high school students. As students arrived the ladies interviewed them, signed them in for scholarships and offered them institutional stationary and a t-shirt, some students didn't want the free stuff. On the other end there was a table where a group of about 10 adults sat; they listened to a speech given by a middle aged woman, following the presentation the adults worked on hand-outs and after discussing something they left. This group's sequence repeated in intervals of 30-40 minutes, every time a different group of teachers arrived and did the same thing.

When the habitual users of the library entered (the students that need a computer, a book or a space to do their homework) they quickly jumped back and exit causing a traffic jam at the entry door and whoever wanted in or out had literally to push their way through.

While observing this scene PP4 arrived at the table the researcher had reserved; PP4 started writing a report straight away stating she was dealing with a problem and all of that had to be documented immediately. Then the researcher stayed to save the working space and the ESLs went out searching for the students that would take a test; she brought some of them but the group had to wait for approximately 10 more minutes for a student that needed also to take the civics test. During this time waiting a female ELLs requested the ESLs assistance to be transferred from the geometry class; she was upset because the Arab boys in her class molested her (touching her breasts) and made her get in trouble with the teacher for not paying attention to the class by often speaking to her in Spanish. There was a short conversation about it and it was said this kind of physical contact was not allowed at school finally PP4 offered to arrange an appointment with an administrator to solve the situation.

The missing student arrived and the civic test started. This test has been modified to accommodate the ELLs learners: it was a multiple choice questionnaire and of the 4 original choices given two had been eliminated so instead of pondering four possible answers ELLs had

to assess only two and pick one answer. The assistance the instructor provided consisted on reading the questions and choices and re-wording them if the students failed to grasp what was being asked. PP4 repeated this strategy of re-wording or giving examples over and over until the students felt they understood and chose their answer; this test took about 30 minutes to be completed.

Following the test and when the students had left, PP4 shared her impressions about some of them. PP4 was not favorably moved by the attitude of many Latino students. The specialist gave the example of a Latino 14 years old girl -1st generation born in the United States-; PP4 said this student was lazy and despite being born here at her age only had acquired a 1st to 2nd reading level and a 3rd to 4th writing level. Since the majority of ELLs PP4 serves is of Latino origin the specialist perceives something she interprets as laziness and low interest in education as constant characteristics of this ethnic group; PP4 concedes there are exceptions but few.

After the lesson and subsequent conversation PP4 took the researcher to “the office.” This space, that two ESL instructors share, was a strikingly narrow and crowded plot that looked as if stolen from the neighboring cubicles. Within the rectangular shaped area were two small desks tightly fit side by side against one wall and from one end of the booth to the other end, against the other wall were a couple of chairs; in between the chairs and the desks there was a slim space to get in and out. Boxes of materials were under the desks and also on top of them, a computer was there as well; the walls were littered with posters, pictures, and cut outs from newspapers thus adding to the overwhelming feeling of what appeared to be more of a jam-packed storage room than the office of two instructors.

Challenges

The way PP4 perceives challenges in this profession could be explained from two big blocks 1) the sociocultural condition of the ELLs Latino population and 2) the current ESL program structure in the state.

The condition of most Latino ELLs attending public schools in the state is very complex but the specialist summarized her concerns regarding this group of students as branching out from previous schooling and attitude/motivation. Newcomer Latino children in the local middle and high school start their schooling experience by realizing 1) they are dramatically far behind reasonable expectations regarding their literacy abilities and overall academic development, 2) they don't have enough first language development and/or literacy skills where to build upon a second language, 3) the local education system doesn't have a sound or efficient structure and doesn't provide the resources that will effectively support their efforts to compensate for the deficiencies they bring from home, and 4) they don't have enough and reasonable time and social support allowed to acquire the preparation normal local children their age are supposed to have. PP4 states this in turn translates in frustration and a hopelessness attitude.

PP4 says the first problem is the absence of vocabulary, which in turn comes from inadequate previous schooling. All ELLs students enrolled in high school without school paperwork from home are placed on ninth grade regardless of their age; they are not placed depending on their overall literacy/academic skills; most of these children's overall literacy skills and academic growth in first language correspond to fourth grade maximum, according to the specialist. The specialist has found for instance that these students don't understand basic sentence structures, word order or the sentence structure in English; beside this they also lack exposure to concepts proper to content area topics; as PP4 says even though they do their best to

understand new notions because of their lack or insufficient formal education they fail to grasp the basics in any content area as if they had never been exposed to or learned any social studies, sciences or math back home. As a result, trying to teach ESL to this segment of the population is extremely challenging for any specialist in the State taking into consideration not only the local ESL program limitations but also the workload these professionals currently have as well as the challenge it represents for content area teachers that have not been trained properly to work with ELLs. PP4 states that for approximately 90% of the Latino ELLs the great academic crisis they are in is “due to this huge gap in their education but for the other 10% is due to their lack of interest, because they are lazy.” However; if the students stayed long enough in school –six months to a year the specialist said, they could grasp at least the social English but the academic language needed to succeed in the content areas and ultimately aspire to a college education will still remain the biggest problem. PP4 is convinced then that these ELL students will consistently fail state tests for lack of vocabulary.

The specialist said based on conversations with students that not only these students never had in-depth lessons of the Spanish language but also that the common denominator of the schooling experience in their country of origin is lack of consistency; in fact, most of these children even though teenagers already did not attend school beyond 4th grade, yet due to their age they are placed in high school here. As PP4 quotes “most of them find that everything is more structured here, that teachers go more in depth with the lessons here and they are not used to that.” PP4’s Latino students are able to read and do some writing in Spanish but their writing is broken for “they don’t know the mechanics of their own language, they all write run-on sentences without any punctuation, no capital letters whatsoever not even when writing their own name!”

Beside the literacy impediments and poor schooling Latino ELLs bring PP4 considers the other leg of the monster is the attitude. Not the attitude of the students alone but also that one of the parents. The specialist manifested that it is easier to work with the non-Latino ELLs (Asian and Arabic) because they are focused, determined to learn, and know what is expected of them; thus they quickly learn English and transition into higher levels of education successfully. Not so the Latino students that for reasons still obscure to the specialist (conceding that part of the cause could be the lack of consistency in their previous education and probably the social experiences they had) always have behavior and discipline problems. A constant PP4 perceives is these students' disregard for school's rules, regulations, and routines. Even though they are thoroughly informed and reminded about uniforms for instance PP4 said they give excuses not to comply with the school's expectations. This makes the specialist ponder whether that kind of behavior is the result of a widespread disregard for authority in their culture; although PP4 is amazed at some Latino ELLs "blatant and outright disregard of rules and regulations" she concedes that also part of the problem is the inconsistency of schools' administrators enforcing policies; since students perceive there is no penalties for not obeying school's rules then they do as they wish.

Another eroding attitude on the side of the students could be interpreted as hopelessness or the *defeated one* before even starting the race. Students start school with great expectations but little by little lose hope, become defeated and end up dropping out of school before graduation. PP4 explains this phenomenon as the result of continuous failure experiences Latino ELLs endure day by day. The specialist considers that failing to acquire language fast enough has very negative repercussions in young Latinos:

“as they fail over and over, more and more they begin to realize their lack of education [...] this frustration begins to build up and it doesn't go away because they want to learn, they want to communicate with their peers and teachers but they can't [...] they want to show the teacher that they are making progress even a little progress but they can't [...]

this frustration increases and it doesn't go away not even after their first year. I have many students in that situation that even after 4 years of ESL intervention they stay in ESL level 1.”

Lastly, PP4 considers Latino students are not highly motivated and their academic failure could also be the result of their lack of interest in their own education “if they are not interested it's not going to happen.” The specialist gives the example of the remedial program provided for students that have failed a class, -system 20-20-. This accommodation class to recover academic credits is offered at school three times a year; yet she said, there are students that even after three years attending school have not recovered failed classes.

When comparing the three main ethnicities in this ESL program PP4 considers the Latino children the most at risk far at the left end of the bell curve, the Middle Eastern children in the center around the mean, being literate in their own language, lazy sometimes; and slowly learning, very gradually getting where they need to be academically; and the Asian students, the Vietnamese specially, in the right side of the curve “shooting from an ESL level one to a four ESL level even in one year, the ‘go-getters,’ but the Latinos being the true concerning issue.”

Talking about parents' attitudes –the second leg of the monster – PP4 said only about 10% of Latino parents attend teacher-parent meetings; the specialist believes the great absenteeism could be due to parents/guardians' “sheer indifference” but conceded there could be also other circumstances mediating. The specialist also stated that the children of this 10% of parents don't represent a concern at all because they are making good progress in the ESL literacy acquisition; they are placed in the appropriate grade level and if they are not yet there the parents will efficiently support them to reach that level on time, they don't have the typical behavior and attitude problems pervasive among the remainder 90% of Latino ELLs such as skipping classes, disregarding school's regulations, fighting, and dropping out of school,

furthermore; both parents and students in this 10% group know how to navigate the school system successfully.

However; based on the discussion with PP4 it could be said that the problems debilitating these parents' involvement branch out of four interconnected phenomena: 1) language barrier, 2) overall literacy and professional skills, 3) school connection, and 4) sociocultural awareness. The specialist said that despite a bilingual ESL office parent-liaison staff and that PP4 also speaks Spanish –and that they both would help with communication- still when parents don't speak English they are “frightened[...] and have developed this fear to come to school and participate in extracurricular activities, because they don't speak the language;” she said that when parents don't know how to ask for information or when they fail to convey a message to non-bilingual staff, when communication is thus impossible they will feel embarrassed and avoid such situations in the future.

The difficulty these parents are having when making the effort to communicate with teachers and staff at school may in turn stem from their own limited literacy skills in Spanish and education opportunities they had in their country before migrating; the small percentage of Latino parents following up with their children at school seem to be more educated and more professional-like individuals compared to the other parents whose Spanish is rather broken and their self-representation/awareness in an academic public space is less than ‘business-like,’ PP4 commented: “I had a parent wearing pajamas to school; [...] I know we should not judge by appearances but that tells me a lot about the parent and in turn it tells me what to expect from the children, and what role models they have at home.” The specialist concluded that if the parent doesn't display interest, regard, or respect for the public institution serving their child in turn the child won't deem it important or valuable.

Whether the problem lies on language barriers, overall education, or culture understanding impediments one fact is true: there is a chasm without bridge between these parents and the school. Thus the connection between the two parts appears not to be a lasting contract but an ephemeral interaction; it may be limited to the initial registration motions and then vanishes. To make matters harder for newcomer Latino ELLs even in some instances there's no registration for some of them don't self-identify as ELLs in the entry survey at the ESL program office, as a result they don't get services; PP4 stated:

I am sure that we have more students attending school that need the service but don't get it because they didn't indicate their true language in the survey [...] in fact the population is not the population it's more than the ones we are working with at this point.

Another element obstructing communications is perceived in the trend of parents not updating their information in the school system. Parents or guardians upon registration provide telephone numbers that might not be theirs, -perhaps because at the time they don't have a phone themselves- so they recur to a friend or relative to 'lend them' a telephone number to enroll their student at school; when they finally get a working phone number this information is not communicated to school. PP4 said:

"the connection [with the parents] is lost [...] when I call the numbers we have for them the person that responds is not the parent or the guardian listed in our records so by law I can't talk to anyone answering the phone if they are not registered in the students' paperwork."

The specialist admits there is some contact with the parents of this population but "it's minimal [...] there is no [true] connection." PP4 have perceived that "in some cases parents genuinely are not interested in finding out about their kids but in most cases they don't know how to ask for information."

The last factor ruining the parent-school connection with this group surfaces as a trend through the 'in-between-lines' conversation; it has to do with the immigration status of the

families. Most of them, if not admitted in the country as refugees, are undocumented folks; then the fear of being caught and deported or alienated from their children and other family members is the most unnerving foe for them. As a result, instinctively they hide as much as possible and they fear providing information that later could be used against them. Arguably, parents' fears and attitudes will be perceived, internalized and replicated by the children in the household and later on they will surface at school as different kinds of behaviors.

Then behind the problematic and 'lazy' attitude of a Latino teenager could be the parent's absenteeism –this prompts the question 'why are the parents nowhere to be found?'; nevertheless, as PP4 previously acknowledged few of these parents/guardians might not be genuinely interested in the student's academic development but the great majority could be paralyzed by fear, handicapped by the language barrier, not socially aware/comfortable, and living in the dark edges of society knowing they are the unwanted outsiders in the country because they have not yet obtained and are not able to obtain any documentation that would enable them to exit the shadows and start living a normal life. These families are keenly aware of their not-so-good-status in the land of opportunity. Furthermore; their human ordeal is compounded when added to the social mobility challenges are unhealed emotional scars. These persons are still carrying heavy burdens produced by extremely traumatic experiences endured through their migration adventures; they fled a country where their chances of survival were scarce, still in their mind and heart there is the moral affliction and grief for leaving behind other children and family members, there is also the overwhelming battle to adapt in a foreign ground with tremendous uncertainties and the struggle to feed the children is a daily matter.

The second set of challenges PP4 identifies in her work with students in this district stems out of the current ESL program structure in the state. These could be identified as 1) the

program's lack of resources, 2) the State laws regarding teenagers' school attendance and academic expectations and provisions for these ELLs, and 3) the State's measure of readiness for appropriate ESL intervention and awareness about ELLs diverse socio-academic background.

First, the resources are very limited; as the specialist said "we do as much as we can with the resources we have [...] but if we don't get more funding improvement is not going to happen." PP4 said not only the ESL office needs better resources but also the schools receiving the greater number of ELLs need support for when there are only three to five ELLs teachers would manage somehow to handle the situation but when they need thirty dictionaries in Spanish and ten in Vietnamese and they don't have them handy then they have a problem. However; the situation is even more complex than that because when newcomers arrive to the ESL program office they are tested for English literacy skills but not for mother tongue literacy skills; which might not be a problem with some ELLs (mainly children of Asian or Arab background) because not only they have been properly schooled back home being thus literate in their own language and on academic grade level but their parents also provide accurate school records' when enrolling them in the school system. However; the majority of ELLs in the district are of Latino origin and as previously discussed they have not been properly schooled back home, they are not on academic grade level, and their literacy skills are not well developed; plus they bear the emotional marks of traumatic separations, loss, grief, abuse, the fear of their parents being deported and subsequent stress of living in hiding. When the guardians or parents bring them to the ESL office for assessment and placement prior to admission in the public school system many of them don't have and/or don't bring the necessary school records'. Furthermore; the district doesn't have first language diagnostic instruments or resources that would give more accurate information about their literacy skills in mother tongue and if the children are of age to

be attending high school they are automatically sent to nine grade regardless if they are 17 or 16 years old. PP4 stated:

“Realistically some of these teenagers could fit in the academic level of a fourth grade kid but because of the age gap they can’t be sent to elementary settings and the district currently doesn’t have a program that would better address their literacy and academic needs.”

Second, the State’s provision about dropping-of-school-age summed to the unrealistic academic expectations and provisions for these ELLs, make ESL specialists’ efforts to educate them many times unfruitful. To this regard PP4 suggests that it is discouraging working with sixteen years old children recently enrolled because most of them will not stay in school to take the challenge against all odds and give themselves a chance with education; she said that soon after being enrolled these students realize that upon turning seventeen they can resign schooling. PP4 said “with them it’s more of a few months babysitting [...] a waste of time because they don’t want to put any effort,” in that case the specialist would prefer to work with students that are willing to study, to learn, and ultimately to graduate.

Moreover; PP4’s perception is that the system’s expectations toward Latino ELLs are naïve because “we are trying to get A& B’s from students who have had a D &F education.” The way to alleviate this academic disaster and truly give a chance to all these children would be offering “an intensive English and content area program designed specifically for ELLs before sending them to mainstream classes as they do in other States.” Finally; when pondering all these facts together and adding the institutional testing resource that could boost motivation among the Latino children the system could be perceived as a failure in part because the results of the English Language Development Assessment test (ELDA) don’t translate in any academic gain for them. The specialist recognized that “the test doesn’t count for a thing” and added that the

lack of institutional feedback erodes children's academic hopes because in the land of testing their test results don't add any value towards their academic results.

Another factor PP4 points out regarding the ELDA test is the lack of rigor of the test content. PP4 said this test includes exactly the same set of questions all the time which makes it useful only for one sitting but since students in the system have to take it year after year they end up knowing the questions by heart. Furthermore; the kind of questions presented only target low level thinking skills as a result this test is perceived by both ELLs and ESLs as rather basic and sometimes as a waste of time and resources. In contrast, ESL tests given/taken abroad are very rigorous, more sophisticated, change the kinds of questions while keeping the testing level, in few words, those are ESL tests that are far superior. However; the specialist reiterates that using an improved testing instrument won't make a difference if the program doesn't incorporate its results towards the ELLs academic accountability.

In fact incorporating top-quality testing, assessment, and diagnostic instruments could make a difference if these students had the opportunity to realize what progress they are making; enhanced and timely feedback could boost ELLs confidence and sense of accomplishment levels thus their attitude could be touched in a way they would be willing to further venture in education by staying as long as necessary in an ESL literacy program that addressed their true needs. PP4 stated

When they realize they can write a paragraph in English that's amazing to them [...] I've seen kids when they see what they can do they feel so happy that they can actually do it! [...] but most of them don't realize what they can and they can't do [...] because they are thrown to mainstream classrooms without them knowing anything.

Third, the State seems to be not well prepared to efficiently serve this growing population. On one side there is no consistency in the ESL program: approaches change when supervisor staff change, the specialist said almost every year they have to tend to different

demands without allowing the specialized staff to prove an approach right or wrong; within the last few years ESLs had to move from training content area teachers, to co-teach in a language intervention class, to give language development classes, to provide push-in/pull-out interventions in content area classes, among other scripted job duties. On the other side PP4 perceives that in the State there is not enough emphasis placed on ESL awareness both State-wide and teacher preparation-wide; for instance the lack of classroom teachers' awareness regarding the ELLs or immigrant population makes itself evident when some teachers are not actively trying to involve their students in the learning process and PP4 believes they don't know how to do it because they have not been trained, or the training has been superficial. As a result the State should make provisions for proper training of all classroom teachers on how to work with this migrant population.

Mini Tour

A working day in the life of PP4 begins at 6:00 am and ends at 2:45 when she leaves school. PP4 has her schedule and tries to stick to it as much as possible but that almost never happens because unexpected events can occur at any time; for instance teachers of record send ELLs often, or PP4 is needed somewhere on campus for a translation either on the phone or in person with a parent/guardian, perhaps a student is sick and PP4 has to go to the clinic to interpret, sometimes she is working with students and a parent comes in so the instructor might leave the students working alone while helping the parent. As a result the schedule of the specialist doesn't accurately reflect all duties performed during the day.

Nevertheless; PP4 starts out by checking progress reports and students' overall performance, based on that she decides which ELLs to pull out for support i.e. "who is getting Fs." After this PP4 checks absences and contacts parents, because as she said "the dean of

students doesn't process attendance for the Latinos and if their parents don't provide a doctors' note or any other explanation for the student's absence ELLs will fail a class." Finally PP4 goes roaming the school room by room handing out ELL's information to teachers and letters to ELLs. When these non-instructional duties are taken care of PP4 proceeds pulling out students from classes; once she gets them together they all go to the library for individualized-small group instruction. There they go through lessons' homework, tests, or projects where students need help; if this is finished before the class period is over the rest of the time is devoted to language development.

At the time of this observation PP4 brought in two female students that needed to take a test; in the library they found a table where to work, there was a lot of noise in the background and also the students of a class going on in the computer stations nearby were rather loud. ESL and ELLs disregarded the noise and went on with their task. The instructor read the test out loud, explained words students didn't understand, helped the students recall names of six European countries by giving the initial letter of them, guided the students through the test reading, translating and explaining each question; the students followed attentively, silently reading along on a copy they had and entered their answers in a scantron form. But when students seemed to be more guessing than remembering something they have studied before the specialist stopped further explanations and the students finished the test by randomly filling out blanks in the answering form. The history test was about WWII, taking the test took about forty minutes.

When the students left PP4 commented that to some of them it is rather easy to grasp concepts and they can give evidence of understanding; although students can be occasionally moody but often they are unprepared for tests:

Sometimes you can do great work with them other times it's like pulling teeth [...] how one can try to guide their thinking or help them remember if there is nothing to be

remembered! [...] because they don't pay attention in class, they don't take notes, don't work the study guide, so how can they do well if they are not prepared...

Once the session with the girls was over PP4 went out looking for the next group of students and worked on reading for fifteen minutes; this was just a reading practice where three students read a short story and practiced out loud reading. Then PP4 worked for about thirty minutes with a male student from Guatemala; the student had arrived five months ago, his school experience was similar in both countries the main difference being the language; he was placed in eleventh grade and wanted to get a scholarship to study computer systems engineering but he was concerned because he felt not sure about his language acquisition so far. This instruction period was on a social studies' reading comprehension practice. The ESL specialist made the student read a section on the presidents of the US and explained that they were doing two things at a time: practicing pronunciation and trying to understand the information presented in the book.

The student read with a good rhythm, with acceptable and understandable accent. As the student read PP4 went through the section re-reading and explaining new vocabulary; PP4 repeated words that were hard for the student to pronounce and made him repeat over correcting the pronunciation. When the student had finished a section the instructor asked questions about the fragments read; if the student was hesitant PP4 would pick a word and explained the meaning or prompted further thinking making him focus the attention on the text again and infer the answer; this happened again and again until all the sections were finished. The student was dismissed with a go-back-to-class pass.

Even though only one student was present the study period was briefly interrupted few times by school staff and by ELLs; one of these was a student hailing from Mexico; he needed

help with tests and paperwork, the instructor took note of it, quickly assisted and dismissed the student. PP4 later said this student had been there for almost a year, worked very independently and was highly motivated; sometimes when the student needed help he knew where to find the ESL specialist. To this PP4 said it was a good thing that ELLs were allowed to move around asking for help. The bell rang for lunch and PP4 was happy about having had about half an hour language practice with the Guatemalan student without major disruptions because as she said:

Anything can happen at any moment! parents come here with their situations, many times I have to leave the children in the middle of the instruction session and go tend to the need of the parents [...] it could take even half of an hour.

At lunch time the instructor didn't take a break; there was a student needing support with a history class and that is what PP4 did. She provided the student with explanations about the constitution and had student practicing close reading. PP4 explained the constitution as "the highest law" containing the rights of people and the rules of the country and gave examples of vocabulary i.e. freedom of religion using a wealth of cognates.

After lunch break PP4 has a daily class; it begins at 12:30. PP4 started this instructional time by requesting some papers from students—a homework they completed while PP4 was absent; she then sent to the office two students that didn't have proper school identification, they would be admitted back in class upon bringing temporary class passes. In this classroom the majority of the students is of Latino origin; there were two girls and twelve boys, one of the boys was of Chinese origin and the other one was from Yemen; one of the Latinos explained in Spanish: "he only speaks Arabic language and takes very long time writing in Greek alphabet; he doesn't separate the words within the sentence." This lesson was a continuation of a topic already explored "the present and the past tenses" the teacher started off with a brief review of concepts and then allowed the students work in pairs; the students had to complete past tense

forms on a hand-out the teacher distributed. During that student-to-student interaction there was a moment when the Latino boys started talking in Spanish but suddenly they realized their non-Latino peers were not understanding the discussion; the Latinos seemed rather embarrassed and one of them apologized and quickly all of them turned to English. Then the teacher had the students comparing their answers and reading them aloud; PP4 wrote the answers on the board and went through them explaining subject-verb agreement. Following the explanation all students worked with a new set of sentences this time in present, they had to re-word them in past tense and work their answers within their group or paired teams. They all repeated the complete routine of a) completing the work in groups, b) sharing and reading out loud and c) teacher writing on board and making remarks. To finish the class PP4 made a quick recap of the lesson, asked for questions, and assigned a short reading paper as homework.

To finish the day PP4 returned to “the office” to complete paperwork, as she stated “a lot of detail goes into that paperwork even though no one can keep record of everything.” The specialist said that ideally only the first and last period of school activity should be used for this kind of administrative and class preparation duties and the rest should be exclusively instructional time devoted to students but unfortunately it doesn’t happen that way.

Attitudes

PP4 describes sociocultural interactions in the working space from two perspectives: 1) colleagues and 2) students’ exchanges. Co-workers were depicted either as understanding and receptive or as the opposite. For instance not all of the teachers of record with ELLs in their classes recognize that the ESL has to be extremely flexible with her schedule in order to accommodate their ELLs services’ requests. Some among them send children to PP4 at any time without placing a proper request thus risking the children to be sent back if the ESLs can’t

accommodate them at that precise moment . But in general PP4 considered that rappers with most faculty are not stressful for most of them were already aware of PP4 duties' meanders; PP4 stated: "they are very understanding when I tell them I have just been called for a meeting I can't work with their kids that day, they know I have to be pretty much all over the place."

As for the attitude of content area teachers towards ELLs PP4 said some among them are receptive and care about this population they are "just wonderful;" they modify all assignments and copy them to PP4, they pair ELLs with higher level students, they cooperate a lot, and constantly check on the progress these children are doing; while others seem to have given up on them don't provide accommodations or modifications, and don't pay attention to ELLs in their classes. PP4 even tried to co-teach with some content area teachers but when they realized it implied extra time for preparation they wouldn't put up with the project.

Regarding the ELLs attitudes PP4 separated them depending on ethnicity: in one extreme were the Asian children being the most successful and no problematic at all, on the other end he/she placed the Latinos as the most at risk of academic (and probably social) failure and in between the Middle Eastern ELLs as a population not as vulnerable as the Latinos but not as quickly adapting to the new lifestyle, learning, and thriving as the Asian. Of the Latinos the specialist said their constant academic failure and the absence of supporting adults produced terrible frustration and hopelessness among the majority of these children, hence the high dropping statistics in this group; as for the Asian children and their families PP4 perceived them as very organized and with strong community support. PP4 said that when Asians arrive to school they already know how the registration process goes and bring all the documentation needed: they have all their paperwork (school and medical records) translated and certified, they also provide proper identification and proof of address thus enrolling their children goes

smoothly. PP4 also perceives the Asian ELLs as having previous education experiences more rigorous and extensive compared to the other two ethnic groups. Most of Asian students in this school go to honor classes because they have already learned the contents taught at the level they are placed; as for the language PP4 said, it is not a problem at all even if they are placed in 1st or 2nd ESL level because of their determination and the support they have at home they go beyond expectations. Furthermore; PP4 has never had the smallest problem with these students, not even one of them have ever presented a behavior issue, or bad grades, none of them skip classes, none of them get into fights, they are very focused, they are here to study, there are no lazy ones to be found among them. However; the specialist admits that their attitude sometimes is extreme because they don't want to be very socially involved, preferring not to participate in activities that don't seem academic such as homecoming, dances, or other kind of social gatherings, the specialist said

Whereas the Latinos are ready to participate [in these kind of endeavors] and always find ways to communicate with their American peers the Vietnamese say 'we are here to study not to have fun' and that's a true quote from one of my students!

PP4 assumes this attitude is the result of families' demands and expectations in that culture; she reports of students saying "my parents came here for better life so I have to study," implying that the students fully assume academic success almost as a moral responsibility and that they honor parents' desires as mandates even to the point of postponing or negating personal interests. PP4 gave the example of a conversation held with a student; he was complaining about the biology class and saying that even though he didn't like that subject he had to excel at it because he had to become a doctor. When the specialist tried to assure him he had a choice the student said

no, I'm the only one in my family that can do it [...] I'm the only hope left for my family to have a doctor [...] my family wants that and that's what I'll do; all members of my

family work in restaurants, they can't go to school, I'm the only one left; so I'll do it. I like more computers but I'll be a doctor...

In fact, the student had already made a choice and it was to fulfill parents' expectations. In regards to the Asian parents' involvement with school and following up with their children's academic progress PP4 said these parents didn't constitute a problem at all because they always found ways to know what was happening with their students. The kind of challenges and sociocultural interactions in these cultures –the Latino and the Asian, was then a sharp contrast, like looking at the two sides of a coin: on one side consistently succeeding children and very involved parents vs. on the other side consistently failing students and no available parents, the sad picture of the Asian vs. the Latino ELLs in the district.

Finally about the Middle Eastern population the specialist said they were not as extreme as the Asians or the Latinos and they were literate in their own language. However; the ESL literacy skills acquisition could prove often challenging, sometimes among these children any progress would not be easily noticeable, they could be also perceived as lazy and their overall learning very gradual; not to be compared in any measure with the other two ethnic groups, just different. PP4 said the hardest thing with children of Arabic descent was getting them to understand certain concepts not just single words; when they understood a concept it constituted a great breakthrough in their global learning experience.

Teaching approach

PP4 said her instructional delivery approach has changed greatly compared to the times when she was starting a career as educator. PP4 was very rigid strictly following the scripted lesson plan and would stick to it even if in the middle of a lesson PP4 realized it was not appropriate for the population or was not addressing their learning styles; over the years though, the specialist started paying more attention to the different learning styles of students and ended

up by always adapting lesson plans to the target population. PP4 said: “If I see I’m losing them I would say: screw the lesson plan!” and she would do something to engage the class and steer them in the right direction. While teaching PP4 includes activities that keep the students moving around and talking; as PP4 has become more flexible and aware of ELLs learning styles she uses different kinds of visuals, authentic artifacts and documents, and “anything that would help them grasp some abstract concepts” along with diverse audiovisual resources. This specialist tries to stay away from language arts’ content terminology and grammar terms such as “subject, predicate, syntax” and in general from terms to which students here have not been exposed to because “that complicate matters.” As a result PP4 finds ways to convey the information without naming words that could be very sophisticated for our Latino children below literacy level.

Although; PP4 accepts this elemental approach could be problematic for students with appropriate schooling experiences because their academic skills and thinking processes are very different when measured up to the children that have endured traumatic experiences, poverty, and a marginalized life. PP4 also perceives that the majority of Latino students would like to be able to express themselves better in Spanish –their first language, but they are not able to do so. When PP4 realizes that the communication skills of Latino children are also deficient in Spanish she tries to get them to speak as much as possible.

PP4 finds that the chief difference when teaching ESL abroad and teaching here is that local students need more time to complete every activity; that ELLs take long time to process information as well as the specialist getting the instructions through. What PP4 does then is to reduce/drop activities that she would use abroad and instead focus on repetition as necessary:

We have to repeat and model much more before they understand what they are asked to do. [Latino ELLs] look for confirmation, they are not sure they have understood, so they ask their peers to make sure they have understood. They try to give perfect answers and that not necessarily happens so they feel they fail...

This specialist also considers her instructional approach to deliver literacy instruction to be twofold: 1) ensuring that the student is making progress in second language development, understanding of the language, the grammar, and the syntax, as much as possible, and 2) giving them support with content areas classwork, homework, projects, thus encouraging them to actively participate in those classes. Nevertheless; PP4 stated testing seasons are overwhelming because there are too many students that need assistance –she has about one hundred and thirty students registered in the ESL service- and not all of them may get it.

In conclusion PP4 said her overall goal as ESL educator is to make ELLs comprehend that learning English is a pass to a better life: “better education will turn around in a better job which represents a better income.” The specialist acknowledges that not everybody has to go to college but even for a trade job they will need to improve their communication and language skills. PP4 concludes that Latino children are rather smart but that they lack self-confidence which is an internal trigger that produces their poor academic results.

Coda

If PP4 had to restructure the program she would increase the ESLs and provide ESL training to content area teachers. She would not assign more than twenty ELLs per ESLs. She would propose night programs for all such a “literacy night” that would include all ELLs and their produced artifacts like poems written by them, demonstrations of their improved literacy abilities by having them reading out loud or discussing a novel that they’ve read. She would also like to have multicultural day similar to what some teachers have in elementary levels but appropriate for the age and interests of teenagers; in these kinds of social/academic interactions the presence of parents/guardians would be expected and encouraged.

She would re-instate “centered schools” or a centered program in each school that would be mandatory for at least two years; after these students with great overall skills improvement would be considered for mainstreaming. Nevertheless ESLs support would continue at schools. PP4 believes keeping the children in a consistent ESL program like that would make them feel more confident because then they would be reasonably aware of what they can & they can’t do.

PP4 would also implement a program for immigrant students that are not going to university or college. She said that since “they came here to work they need programs like welding, construction, engineering, something that is very hands-on.” PP4 believes there is a great difference on how governments handle migrant populations because she has seen children in similar circumstances in other countries that “in one year are ready to go on with their lives; they also arrive very motivated but the context is favorable to that kind of transition.” PP4 also considers the kind of assistance some immigrants and some local families receive is not helping them at all –i.e. food stamps-. Instead of helping them to improve and become productive members of the society the authorities are making them a burden for the tax-paying residents. She believes these communities need also a challenge because some among them are “super comfortable and don’t have incentives to improve at any rate. She identifies among Latinos the relaxed ones and the go-getters the first play the system and are very laid-back whereas the others are hard-working people that want an education for themselves and for their children.

Since there’s also a population without any schooling at all PP4 believes there must be a program that addresses that circumstance as well. Even students not interested in college education must be accountable for making language progress

there must be a specific system in place for each case/category a very strict evaluation of their transcripts, education, ability to interact socially, there must be accountability [...] what erodes all good intents is the fact that they can drop at 17, they arrive few weeks before realize they can do anything they want because shortly they are dropping so they

come here to waste time [...] so why should I waste my time with them that are not going to put the effort when there are others that are here to stay...

Summarizing, PP4 states that a sound ESL program should include at least:

- A centered school program where all new comers have to spend at least two years acquiring the adequate literacy skills that will put them in any track they desire trade/academic
- Consistent and intensive language classes in these centered schools and in mainstream ones as well
- Intervention specialists available to roam schools or classes within a school when needed
- A translator or translating system

Interview with PP5 (Foreign-born ESL Educator)

Educational Background and Experience

PP5 is a foreign ESL specialist with teaching and administrative experience at various levels. PP5 holds a B. A. in microbiology, an M. A. in secondary education with a concentration in biology and sciences, completed further studies to become ESL certified, PP5 is a speaker of other languages and self-considers also an ELL. This specialist's professional practice spans several levels and capacities. She has taught science and mathematics from elementary through middle school grades, has extensive experience as school administrator, and currently holds a full time appointment as ESL specialist with the public system. Due to her valuable skills working with multicultural populations PP5 was encouraged to join the ESL program and that is how she was finally recruited. PP5 works now at two different schools.

When comparing this one to previous appointments PP5 believes the perfect job doesn't exist and the difference depends on whether the person likes or not what they do. PP5 likes this job very much even in spite of the frustrations it entails. He/she acknowledges there are diverse

circumstances that could buckle specialists' hands the chief difficulty being the characteristics of the local program; in his/her opinion ESLs could do better if they were provided the time and the resources to achieve more but with the current status of the program in the district they are rather limited. However; PP5 is very sympathetic with young immigrants and is keenly aware of these children's ordeals; he/she sees each day as a great opportunity to impact a child's life:

The children are very dear and near to my heart. Every day I come here I hope I can help a child become strong and understand and learn something new. I feel their struggle [...] I love the kids... they like the class, they come every day to learn something new and I am here to help them.

PP5 deeply understands on one side how foreigners feel when local people don't understand them even if they are speaking proper English but communication becomes impaired due to a strong accent; on the other hand she has experienced the feeling of not being able to grasp meaning when locals use idioms or regionalisms; these kind of first hand experiences makes PP5 be very sympathetic and aware of ELLs frustrations with the language. To this PP5 said "it's a different way of life, a different mindset, the culture also is different, so definitely it is a daily struggle."

PP5 is fairly new in the public system and is thankful for the professional opportunities the district has made available to ESLs so far, but considers not having had enough experiences yet to make a more thorough judgment of the support the district provides to this program. Nevertheless; it seems that the district's leaders have good initiatives but not the budget to continue worthy endeavors. An example of this is the Spanish language training for faculty with the purchase of Rosetta Stone licenses, specialists were engaged but the program lasted only one year. PP5 was able to complete two language levels and though the program was suddenly cut she is happy for not being "completely clueless in Spanish now."

Grand tour

This school is old but appears neat and clean; though people at the front desk are very busy they help the researcher locating the ESL educator. The researcher is sent to sit on a chair in a corridor outside; this is understandable because the space for public interaction in the front office is so narrow that more than two persons standing there and waiting obstruct the passage of others and the place becomes uncomfortable.

PP5 arrives and starts looking for a place where to sit for the interview. There is a computer laboratory not occupied at the moment so the specialist and the researcher go there. PP5 likes working at that school because the faculty is very cooperative; they seem genuine in their interest about ELLs, and both teachers and staff are perceived as assisting students by giving them the accommodations they need. PP5 have had some situations with personnel in this place and based on those interactions she can tell that they care about ELLs. The specialist spends most of the instructional time at this school assisting the teacher of record in the *System 44* class; that is where the interaction ESL-ELL takes place; PP5 feels that ELLs in this school are getting what they need from all their classes. But the same can't be said about all teachers in other schools; PP5 finds teachers in some schools that don't give the students the instruction they need and at the end both teachers as well as pupils are frustrated and overwhelmed. PP5 empathizes with them and tries to help as much as she can by showing and modeling literacy and instructional strategies but to no avail because the teachers don't always incorporate them in their content delivery. PP5 believes that situation is a problem because any improvement must come from the teacher's desire to change and some of them don't want to do it.

PP5 doesn't have a classroom or an office neither a cabinet where she could store teaching materials. Yet PP5 considers she is lucky because all students in her roster go to *System 44* class. This is program adopted in certain schools to address the needs of ELLs and also those

of local at risk of failure students; the program features a rotation system where students take turns to work independently, receive instruction in small groups, and also practice individually in a computer lab installed in the classroom. Although in these schools there are other content area teachers with ELLs in their classroom they don't request PP5 assistance; they seem to manage the instruction of ELLs very well on their own even during testing times. The way PP5 handles the situation with the teacher of record in the System 44 class is very cooperative, they agree with enough anticipation on what section of the rotation PP5 will support; this mainly refers to the independent work or to the small group practice because for the laboratory segment most students work alone. PP5 focuses on language development instruction regardless of the portion or model he/she assists during a given lesson.

When talking about the ELLs population, how it has changed over time, and how the district is handling it PP5 said the number of students in the program is increasing; for instance last couple of years PP5 had in average thirty students in each school whereas this year there are fifty to sixty each. The demographics changed also including a more varied population, the majority (90%) being of Latino origin and the other 10% is shared by Arabic, Chinese, and Vietnamese. Since the ELLs population is growing steadily PP5 considers the ESLs are too few to properly cater to all children in need; thus the ESL office must plan on enhancing the program and securing consistent funding. PP5 acknowledges that the program has provided few student licenses for *Rosetta Stone* and these have been allocated where the needs are greater; that small support helps but these efforts are not enough yet: "we do the best we can with what we have."

Challenges

PP5 identifies challenges as stemming from three different fronts: 1) teaching/learning space, 2) the reality of Latinos, and 3) lack of funding for this program. First, the specialist

dreams of having a teaching/learning atmosphere designed with the ESLs and the ELLs in mind; a place that would be favorable to their instructional and learning needs and that would belong to them. PP5 wishes the idea of having an adequate ESL/ELL classroom would become something tangible in the future; not having a suitable working space greatly limits both ESLs and ELLs creativity, instructional, learning, and studying time: “it would be different if you had your own space, you could design your own classroom in a way that it supported instruction but being on the run you know... is hard.” The specialist said she is fortunate to co-teach with the *System 44* teacher in the present school because in the other one she doesn't have an acceptable working space:

I have a corner in a room that was used to make posters, the space where I have to work is tiny, only fits a chair where I sit and a rolling cart where I have a computer and that's it, that's it, only that fits there, it is like this [pointing at a desk and showing with stretched arms the available space] if I need a table where to work with students I have to go somewhere else, usually the library [...] it is the same when I want to do something like a special project with them or an activity where we need a big table we go to the library but oftentimes it's not available because there are other things going on, other classes too, and when we have this kind of activities like projects or games kids would make noise and the other teacher will be upset because of our noise... so we have to work very quietly because you don't want people complaining about you ... but that is sad indeed because that's how they learn: talking and interacting...

To PP5 the big challenge is then not having a reasonable teaching space, a classroom. By not having a fair working area PP5 cannot have materials organized or displayed in a neat way, or plan certain things ahead of time, cannot have a set of computers where she could get ready instructional software, online activities or games. In the classes or spaces PP5 goes, if computers are installed they are not necessarily available because the teacher of record naturally would be using them with other purpose. Having to teach, study, and interact borrowing a spot in someone else's instructional territory greatly constrains both PP5 and ELLs; they always have to limit if

not totally suppress instructional, interactive, and presentational activities in order to not upset the host. They may even pass many times as unwanted guests:

I'd like to have a place where my children could work freely, make some noise –not bad noise but the one of learning-. I don't have a place to work with my children, I sit in a corner, and this roller cart is my desk; I wish I had a room where I could create the learning atmosphere proper for my class, but I don't have it, so in the classrooms or in the library we can't interact much or talk too loud because we risk to upset the others ...

Second, regarding the condition of all ELLs PP5 finds that sometimes it could be challenging conveying ideas and concepts to children of so diverse sociocultural backgrounds; nevertheless, she manages very well and becomes creative using games, visual aids, body language, etc. if the message doesn't pass across PP5 keeps on trying until all “manage to bridge gaps.” But the factor that concerns this ESL educator the most is the reality of the Latino children.

PP5 realizes the great majority of Latino students have not received proper schooling in their countries of origin, but the most dramatic cases are with children from Honduras who appear to be rather boisterous and without structure in their life. Regardless of their age they have not been to school. They are not used to routines or to a learning environment; they appear not to understand the school or the classroom dynamics. PP5 said for example these children want to do things in the way they like, they don't grasp classroom practices or procedures; for instance they don't want to sit and do their work, they are not prepared for class, they want to talk whenever they feel like and they don't realize a classroom is a learning environment that functions with certain structure. Some teachers might interpret that unruly behavior as lack of respect and it could be so but this also reflects the disaster of a generation being neglected and abandoned.

When these students arrive as newcomers and are massively sent to mainstream classes – disregarding their true sociocultural, socioemotional, and behavioral conditions, assuming “they are just normal teenagers—” could be a formula for distress in school environments not prepared to appropriately provide the instruction these children truly need or to effectively manage such population; the education leadership response to this reality based on assumptions of “normality” among migrant populations adds further confusion in the life of children that have been victims of social injustice because these nomadic, destitute, and unwanted very young human beings don’t fit the local standard for a “normal” teenager; all their characteristics compounded make of them among the most needed and most vulnerable of our species. This applies not only to young Latino solo-immigrants and many other refugees but also to our local most neglected and abandoned children. As PP5 argues a large number of these students in a single class could become unmanageable especially if the instructor doesn’t speak the students’ language, also because the newcomers don’t understand English; furthermore, they lack understanding of the local academic and learning contexts and of the classroom routines for they have never been exposed to such structured contexts; in fact the overall school exposure and the American school experience is brand new for them.

PP5 gives the example of a situation in a school where the program *System 44* has been adopted as the literacy intervention aimed to address the needs of ELLs and of local below-level students. The outsider observer could assume as PP5 said: “well, all shall go well now, right? You send all these problematic students to the *System 44* class and difficulty solved, right?” But it is more complicated because the configuration of the intervention program requires both a classroom environment that is highly organized and teachers who are really disciplined, interactive, and have strong class-management skills. As PP5 points out “sometimes the

environment of the class is very challenging and one teacher by herself cannot control it;” PP5 describes the intervention class as dynamic and featuring different learning centers where students have to move and rotate at certain times. It has an independent study component, then students that have no basic English knowledge, no classroom routines whatsoever, and don’t understand instructions can’t function alone in this rotation segment; they need support. Because “when the teacher gives them work to do and sends them alone telling: ‘work on your own’ it’s not going to happen! They can’t work on their own!” As the specialist noted, even if the teacher is an excellent classroom manager and understands the assumptions of the intervention program, if several of the neediest children are sent at the same time to this class that teacher of record will need extra assistance. In other words the most at risk students need more individualized attention, not necessarily more materials or sophisticated educational tools. PP5 said

When I go to Ms. Smith’s class she is very happy because I assist with the independent part of the program and she can work with a small group; that minimizes a lot of discipline issues. Please realize that most of the kids in this class are the ones that are lowest performance, it’s like the bottom of the bottom you know? How are they going to mask that “I don’t know this” [...] by misbehaving! ... so we need a different kind of class!

As a result the specialist constantly changes instructional strategies when serving at schools with large numbers of these Latino students; PP5 states: “I notice that when the group is too large things could get out of control because they may say something that is not appropriate and the teacher wouldn’t have a clue of what they are saying.” To manage this kind of situation PP5 tends always to work with smaller groups and carefully chooses students that would bring balance and help with translation; he/she then would work with very disruptive students individually. PP5 interprets the experience of working with these students as a sociocultural challenge because they don’t display appreciation for school or for the learning environment. The educator wonders about the kind of upbringing they have had, if they have ever been taught

any kind of routines, even if learning is an important thing for them, if there is someone at home to help them with their schoolwork, if they have whatever they need at home [...] because the sum of these factors adds up in the situation of the Latino students and presents challenges for all involved.

There are times when the specialist further inquires about the situation of students that don't make any progress even after several years in the system; she finds out that they are always in trouble, they are suspended, they get into fights [...] PP5 recognizes –to her dismay– that an educator alone can't do much beside meeting with the parents and talking with them. Then there is the question whether the time spent with this unruly-always-failing student could probably be employed working with another child that would be more interested in his education.

The daily dealing with this kind of circumstances makes the specialist ponder what is the leadership doing to solve the problem? That question takes the conversation to the third challenge PP5 sees in the working environment: the budget for properly funding education of children with special emphasis on those that have been victims of social oppression, negligence, or abuse. The response of the ESL program so far –as the specialist can say- reflects what this small program can do with the limited resources they are able to acquire; for instance last year the program was able to secure an instructional package: the “Newcomer program,” this bundle included all the materials for the students and the salary for the teachers; also instructional specialists sometimes get partial support for professional development endeavors, the district or the program had provided supplies such as stationary, laptops, and/or iPads as well. In occasions there are trials for programs made available (i.e. software based programs) and these are tested only in some schools, thus not all instructors get the opportunity to judge such new materials.

Yet these efforts are still insufficient to adequately address the complex task at hand. An example of this is the fact that ESLs are not provided with master materials they could reproduce for instruction; they have to prepare all the materials (handouts, games, etc.) they use for ELLs. Children attending schools where a special program is not in place for them don't have ESL instruction materials (textbook or working book) they only would have access to materials the specialist brings and hands out when they see each other. To solve this scarcity of resources and bridge the production of original materials –which could take a lot of personal time- this specialist pays a subscription to a web-based educational store and purchases the instructional materials she needs or wants.

The inadequacy of funds reflects also in the lack of staff. Most ESLs are assigned to more than one school where there are less than one hundred ELLs, if in the school there are one hundred ELLs or more one specialist is located there. Yet the permanent presence of the staff in a certain school doesn't imply that appropriate working space or resources will be provided for the ESLs or for the ELLs. Nevertheless the ESL program is reported as making efforts to appropriate funds (for instance Title3) to alleviate the struggle of both specialists and ELLs because the situation is rather complex and a small program like this can't solve it alone.

Lastly, having to serve at different schools during the day could be also challenging for the ESL educator but the specialists are very flexible and quickly adapt to the working conditions

we work with what we have [...] in our situation the most important thing is that we get to give the kids what they need with the best we have, with the resources we have [...] sometimes you just have to be spontaneous, come up with things right on the spot [...] I think that's a characteristic of a good teacher to come up with goods things on the spot.

Mini Tour

Teaching approach: before PP5 delivers any instruction and even before start planning she needs to know what students' ESL levels are. All newcomers, before being registered at

schools are assessed in the ESL program office; they take the ‘last length’ test which gives their level (lower intermediate, upper intermediate, advanced, or proficient); if they are not ‘proficient’ they are eligible for ESL services. PP5 also has access to the results of the ELDA (English Language Development Assessment) test that provides results in numbers, for instance 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5. The highest performance scored falls in number 5 so this kind of student doesn’t need ESL services. Depending on the results of this test in the four domains of the language listening, talking, reading, and writing the specialist decides how to approach instruction with a student. For example, if in both tests the student is placed in the lower segment PP5 will start by teaching the alphabet and sight words independently of the age of the child. If the student is in level 2 the instructor would start him with very basic grammar, and so on. Then teaching these students requires a case-by-case instruction; it will always depend on the particular language skills of each child. As PP5 stated, with some ELLs instruction will depend on the pre-schooling as well: “were these kids schooled before they came here, can they read in their own language?” in fact the specialist has to weigh many factors before planning instruction. When planning she decides on what kind of instruction would be better: “do I need to give them online support, or start by teaching them the alphabet, do I need to focus in phonics, can I get them short sentences?”

At the time of this observation the class’ topic was contractions; the specialist had made a quick online search and came up with a card game to practice contractions; PP5 said “kids like games, you know...” the activity consisted of sorting and playing matching cards to find the original words and the contraction. PP5 also created another game for vocabulary cutting pictures of objects, sticking them on cards and writing the word naming the object in other card, this was a concentration game; PP5 displayed the cards face down and instructed students to flip

one card at a time to find the picture that matched the word that was at the top of the card stack, if the card they had flipped didn't correspond to the word, students had to turn the picture card to its original place and the word card to the bottom of the stack; at the end the student with most matches won the game and would get a treat. PP5 said "beginners like that activity very much [...] but I can't do it in the other school because the teacher gets upset with the noise. For the game I usually get 5 or 6 students at a time." In this school PP5 assists the S44 teacher of record by taking care of the independent study segment of the rotation; the specialist works in the classroom during the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th academic blocks, the first and the last class periods of the school day are for preparation and administrative paperwork.

When comparing this one to previous teaching experiences the specialist expressed she prefers to work with students placed in the middle school. First of all the specialist's training and experience are with middle and high school students; second, although PP5 is fully qualified to teach ESL she is aware of her foreign accent and believes elementary ELL students will have greater gain if they learn the language with a native speaker "because at that level and age students start learning their phonics and I don't want to give them the sounds with my foreign accent; [...] they need to learn the American accent." Third, the specialist prefers middle graders over high school students because at that age she believes there is still great chance to academically and socially rescue the children; PP5 fears at high school is too late. As the specialist further explains in sixth grade students still have time to learn whereas the children that access the system at the high school level are usually just waiting to get the age to drop; such urgency among teenagers to resign schooling is understandable because what is expected from them is more than demoralizing, in PP5 words:

They don't see the light at the end of the tunnel, it's too much for them they feel overwhelmed; they enter the country being 15 or 16 years old and you expect them to

read *Romeo and Juliet*, or understand chemistry, or algebra [...] they cannot! That's too much! They see no hope! That's why I think they just hope to get the age to drop and drop. But in middle school there's still some hope, there's still chance for them to learn to read and write and when they get to high school hopefully they can manage at least with the accommodations given to them of course.

Teacher Instruction

At this time PP5 goes to the *System 44* class to assist the teacher of record. The class is part of the intervention program provided by the school district to ELLs; this group of students includes both non-English speaking immigrant students and local English speakers that are below their grade level. There are seventeen students in total attending the class. The majority is of African American male students (eight in total) there are also two African American girls; the other seven students are foreign ELLs: four Chinese, two boys and two girls, two Latinos a boy and a girl, and another boy is a Middle Eastern student. In the classroom there's a water fountain and also a sink; the room seems like a small sciences lab that has been adapted for a language class.

This was a lesson on syllables; the teacher of record was busy going through administrative stuff. The group of Chinese students seemed much knit together, all were supporting each other and cooperating with a task the teacher has posted on the board, there was a newcomer in that group and all other reached out to him, they translated and helped him. Few minutes later the teacher sent a Chinese girl to gather the homework. PP5 told the class they will have a game with her to practice the syllables. The teacher of record sent students to the three different learning/studying groups or stations: small group work, independent work/study practice, and computer-based laboratory.

They all started moving and gathering what they needed to go to their assigned places; someone started a big timer displayed on the electronic board, this would inform the class the

time left in each practice section. Unexpectedly a fight started between two male students; by yelling at them and getting in between the teacher solved the situation. There also was what seemed a “push in intervention” going at the same time; it was a staff member that entered the class and started talking to a student, the student was still sitting, the adult squatting behind the student’s desk was telling something, the mother or the guardian of the student was nearby. This lasted few minutes and in the meanwhile students were circulating and getting to the places where their appointed activity was taking place. Six students went to a PC station and started working their drills, the teacher of record sat at an old table with 5 students, this was the place for independent reading but the teacher was scaffolding for most of them, PP5 put together a set of student’s desks improvising a larger table, there PP5 went on with the board game created the day before for this activity. The students in these three learning centers rotated after approximately 16 minutes so all of them had the chance to work drills on the computers, to sit for independent scaffold reading with the teacher of record, and to play the board game with PP5. The nurse also entered the room handing out T-shirts to newcomer students that completed their vaccinations.

In one of these rotations while the Chinese students were doing independent reading with the teacher of record she didn’t scaffold for them; they appeared to be very confident working on their own. Instead the teacher used the whole session working with the student starting the fight who was sitting at the table; he seemed to be the only one really needing help in this group.

PP5 managed the different groups calmly; students played and enjoyed placing the buttons used for marking personal space on the board on top of the other buttons when they reached their game mates’ places. Something interesting is that in this game there were names of animals and there was a big girl in one group that only got the names of the big animals; she was

not happy with these coincidences one after the other and looked at the children on the table but the children didn't have an external reaction [nothing like a bullying attitude at all] they simply looked at each other and kept very quiet; not a grimace, not rolling eyes, not a word: they all were very serious. This game also had some traps, it was like ladders and sliders and to a boy and a girl that were kind of fussy about being ahead of the rest it happened that they fell in the traps. At the end of the game the winners got candy.

Although students were fully engaged doing their activities they were very aware of the time and they stormed to the door with bags ready even before the teacher dismissed them, it was a frantic stampede; in an instant only the three adults and a special needs student remained in the class.

PP5 considered this class to be very good and well managed; she gave an example of a class situation in other school where the *System 44* is also provided and although PP5 is there to assist with the rotations the class is not as successful as this one. PP5 considers unnecessary and ineffective to discipline students by yelling; rather a teacher could earn some respect from students by demonstrating respect to them as well and by providing instructional choices. Below is an excerpt of a conversation with PP5 to this regard,

I was about to work with a small independent group; the teacher was telling a student he had to go sit down there and work with me, the student didn't want to do that and the teacher started screaming and fussing at the student, so I told the student: 'no problem, I respect your wishes, if you don't want to work with me it's fine, if you feel you don't need my help that's fine as well [...] just do the work on you own, sit down and do your work quietly; I would love to have you on my table because you could help me with other kids that don't speak English, but I respect your position, I respect your choice, and if you don't want to sit here with me that's fine, that's up to you, just sit down over there and be quiet.' So he went and sat at the other end of the table, and I was working on the table with other students; a little later he started raising his hand from over there because he wanted to participate.

PP5 referred also to other class where the only thing students have to do is desk job; she believes just copying something on a copybook is not the best classwork to do. But PP5 doesn't interfere because that kind of instruction was what the teacher of record has planned. It happened in that class that a student didn't want to do the copy work; so the specialist asked him why he didn't want to do what the teacher was asking them to do. By reasoning with the student—who found the copying extremely boring, and asking him whether it was worth to score a zero by refusing to complete such an easy task—the specialist managed to get the student to do the job.

PP5 concludes that though the teaching/learning experience at times could be a “big struggle” it is also a matter of willingness where all involved must want to change ways to teach and to learn. If there is no interest in instruction it is not going to happen. PP5 considers also that discipline is a very important thing but it can't go alone; it must be paired with respect and compassion:

The kids need to know that you really care about them, they need to feel that you care and that you respect them [...] that's the only way to make a difference [...] because we need to remember that most of these kids don't have anyone... they are in the world by themselves [...]

As a result of the ever changing teaching atmosphere PP5 approach to instruction changes, evolves, and improves every day. PP5 learns from the mistakes and looks for new ideas; she now does things that she didn't do when starting this teaching appointment.

Attitudes

PP5 is very sympathetic of immigrant ELLs because being a foreign born professional in the country PP5 feels many times the struggle of those perceived by the society as not ‘belonging to the flock.’ As the specialist said, in public people don't know about the education, the skills, the true life and background of a person passing by, people may judge based on the appearances and could entertain thoughts and preconceptions projected by stereotypes enforced through mass media. In the school setting sociocultural unaware teachers and staff could offend others out of

crass cultural ignorance; but all lack of knowledge could be remediated by offering opportunities for instruction and for social respectful interaction.

Since public schools become increasingly multicultural due to the constant waves of displaced children PP5 believes it is crucial that teachers and school staff educate themselves about the diverse cultures of the students in the system and promote respect and tolerance in the classrooms. PP5 has taken classes on cultural issues as part of her professional development endeavors; she said that kind of classes opens a lot of new perspectives that foster sociocultural awareness because students in such classes get prompted to think about culture and people in ways they normally don't stop to think about. However; attitudes and interactions in a learning environment don't need to get extremely complicated if the participants practice proverbial cornerstones of social behavior and civility: "do to others as you wish they do to you and love your neighbor as yourself."

When talking about cultural-based bullying in the school setting PP5 said victimized children react in various ways depending on their culture but on their personality as well:

Usually children cry, withdraw, fight [...] it varies from one personality to another [...] but what made this country great was the respect and tolerance immigrants had always have towards other newcomers [...] because at the end we all bring our culture here and share it, that is what makes us all what we are; we all are immigrants and we must respect each other.

PP5 is then a big proponent for sociocultural awareness in our milieu because 1) she is a member of an ethnic minority, 2) she has benefitted from classes and professional development opportunities fostering appreciation for other peoples and cultures, and 3) has witnessed the damage and pain cultural illiterates can cause to others.

Coda

If PP5 had to re-structure the program she would address the situation of the content area teachers that lack ESL instructional skills, would also provide more intense language instruction

not only to foreign ELLs but also to the local ones, and would create an intervention/program to address the situation of language and civic behavior dual illiterates.

PP5 believes for any program and intervention to function it is necessary to have content area teachers that are efficient classroom managers; many teachers could be experts in their subject matter but are not skillful in classroom management. If added to that is the fact that they are not ESL certified and they have in their classroom several ELLs with behavior problems then as PP5 said: “you’d enter the jungle when accessing their room, it could be a zoo.” PP5 considers teachers in the district need access to professional development opportunities addressing classroom management, ESL literacy delivery, and sociocultural awareness. Teachers recognize their needs but sometimes they don’t have access to the professional development opportunities or are not proactive looking for the training they need to address the problem; as teachers admit to PP5: “I’m not trained; I don’t know how to deal with this.”

However; PP5 also admits that in occasions even if teachers are trained and willing to address the behavior situations in the classroom it is not always possible due to large classes where several students with extreme needs are present. Some interventions require individual attention and a classroom teacher alone might not be able to deal with it, PP5 adds: “we know we cannot solve the whole thing at once but if at least we can reach one or two students in the same class that’s something.”

PP5 perceives most challenges with students as coming from children entering the system as true beginners; she said “that’s where most challenges are created for classroom teachers and for us as ESL specialists.” The situation of the specialist is different than that of the classroom teacher because the ESLs don’t see the same children every day whereas the teachers of content have them continually in the classroom. This is a three edge situation: on one side ESLs don’t

have to confront unruly students every day –this could be seen favorably because it represents less stress for the ESLs , on the other side, the content area teacher who is the one dealing with these students daily might not have the necessary ESLs content skills and sociocultural awareness to deliver appropriate instruction, third since these children are mainstreamed based on their age they don't have continuous access to the specialized services ESLs are able to provide, thus the instruction these children receive might be rather scattered. If that is the status of the matter it could be that in spite of budget appropriation and interventions most efforts could be futile because the root of the problem is not treated. As a result all temporary efforts will only yield temporary results. That is why PP5 would propose intensive language classes addressed to all ELLs (foreign and local) because as she said “is a disaster to put a child without any literacy skills, without understanding of school structure, and without English language in a pre-algebra class.”

In PP5's opinion these zero to very low English literacy skills students could make greater progress if placed in intensive languages classes half a day, every day all week long, the rest of the day students could participate in mainstream classes such as arts, sports, culture, etc. Since it's proven that putting together language learners that speak the same home language they tend to keep on speaking in first language instead of learning the second language as they should it wouldn't be wise to totally isolate the ELLs. However; since their second language level is so low they need intense, more structured, and continuous training.

Due to the fact that we have in the classrooms children without civic skills and even lacking basic/every day routines and structure in their life it is necessary to create a class that would address that kind of needs. This class should be directed to all ELLs –local and foreign- and even to some students that though literate in the language are socially illiterate. Many

children are in that situation because they have been consistently neglected or abused; then it is unwise to place several of them in a class environment where the teacher can't give them the attention they need. As PP5 said, "these children need a lot more attention and more one-to-one assistance, but that is also a challenge."

With the kids that don't have any civic structure and no English whatsoever you have to begin by teaching and establishing consistent procedures and routines, to do so you have to fully concentrate and focus only on them. In our school system that is the condition of all underperforming children: not only that they don't know routines and don't have structure but that they don't have the training opportunities they need to acquire such structure and skills. They need that kind of training from day one; from the beginning of the year until they are able to function independently [...] and if they don't get it you don't move forward until they have acquired the routine and understand the structure; it is not hard to detect highly structured classes because behavior and academic problems are minimal but in scattered learning environments the feeling would be of overwhelming chaos.

Interview with PP6 (Foreign-born ESL Educator)

Educational background and Experience

PP6 is a foreign ELA educator with an M. A. in philology & English literature and culture. She has a full time appointment with the public school system as ESL specialist. PP6 comes from a country where the government pays strong attention to education; PP6 said students there have great benefits because almost everything for them is free of charge and opportunities for sociocultural involvement is pervasive and supported by a solid network of after school activities from camping to concerts to sports and much more. The specialist said that their 'culture of education' sharply contrasts with our school culture and routines; when

comparing PP6's study and work experiences abroad to the experiences here she feels that provisions for sociocultural interactions for our students here are almost non-existing; PP6 also said there's no trust to go out and interact with people on the neighborhood's streets.

PP6 said educators and students have a very different attitude here and there; she perceives something is missing here and elaborates a little bit this idea. In that country

[...] people just don't show up with weapons at schools or universities and kill teachers and students, teachers have better salaries and a social reputation, teachers are highly respected, and are keenly aware of their status in society, [...] teachers don't get physically-affectively involved with pupils at any rate.

What sometimes makes the tabloid's news here as teachers or coaches get prosecuted for rape or molestation is unthinkable in other latitudes and is something that puzzles this specialist. PP6 gives a hint about a special attitude professionals in the field of education constantly display back in his/her country of origin and the researcher interprets it as perhaps a refined sense of awareness among educators; PP6 said "teachers there are always 'on the spot' nothing escapes their attention and they react accordingly."

When talking about professional development opportunities PP6 was not very enthusiastic regarding overall system support; she said there were some few workshops professionals could attend and some software-based training materials that have been very useful. Other than that the specialist perceived a hostile attitude from the district shutting programs that benefitted both teachers and students. PP6 said "it is like a blatant resistance to invest in education [...] or like the desire and interest is not there at all."

Grand Tour

This ESL specialist works in two different locations, the present one is situated in a middle income neighborhood; a panel cookie chain link fence surrounds the old-looking one story brick building it looks very much like most of the other school buildings the researcher

visited. PP6 was in class and stepped out to meet the researcher she invited the researcher to observe the class right away; they went through devious spaces and narrow corridors that reminded the researcher of the other buildings leaving an impression of déjà vu. PP6 skillfully and quickly moved through the passages known by heart but the researcher got dizzy; PP6 was so eager to get back to class that the researcher was wondering what could be so exciting there that made the specialist not willing to lose a single minute of the action. Nonetheless; during the race back to the classroom PP6 succinctly explained the format of the class and of the lesson. Basically this school had also adopted the *System 44* and had appointed a fulltime ELA instructor to teach it; as a result PP6 would be working as instructional support co-teaching a section of the three system rotations during selected class periods; since the specialist also serves ELLs in other school she doesn't get to meet all students regularly.

Once in the classroom the specialist gave a visual tour to the researcher standing close to the door; she explained what was going on in different areas of the room. The place was rather noisy and packed –too many students for a language class and perhaps too much furniture cluttering the area--. PP6 described the population as ‘mixed ESLs and ELLs explaining the presence of native English speakers still working on basic literacy skills. The class distribution as in other *System 44* classes consisted of three separated activity rotations (small group learning, individual studying, and laboratory practice) for these rotations there is supposed to be isolated specific spaces and there were but the class surface was so jammed with desks that the overall appearance was overwhelming and the distinct interacting stations were not evident on first sight. Against a wall was installed the set of computer terminals where the interactive laboratory practice would take place, on the opposite corner facing the door was a smart board and other technologic devices nearby; a group of students in semicircle was sitting watching at the board

and to the teacher of record that was talking very loudly. As PP6 explained, the teacher of record liked very much taking care of the small group rotation segment of the program so she usually gave a lecture on the lesson's topic to each group of students that would take turns seating on the semicircle; this observed activity was more of a teacher-talk or a quick review 'covering content' than anything else. Students working on the PC stations worked very independently but the teacher of record was also paying attention to the action there and would sometimes interrupt them. Against the next wall was a series of desks and a couch, next to this on the left side of the door was a teacher's desk with materials piled upon it. Here and there student's desks were arranged facing each other as forming small tables, on one of these clusters a young interventionist was working with students on a one-to-one basis. The rest of the students that were appointed to independent work were a bit scattered on the different available clusters of desks; some were working on their own while others waited on the young interventionist or on PP6 to take care of them. Once PP6 finished the quick class tour the researcher was allowed to sit at a desk close to the door while the specialist took care of a child; PP6 and the child sat at the couch against the wall and read together on a paperback booklet.

Challenges

On a subsequent visit to this school the researcher and the ESLs informally discussed certain of the questions in the survey. PP6 was carrying two tote bags with materials and a small purse. They went to the library and started the conversation but soon had to find another place because a class was starting there soon. The researcher asked about having the conversation in PP6's office and she laughed and said pointing at the tote bags "this is my office" and added: "and my cafeteria or restaurant is my car." The specialist recognized that not having an adequate personal and working space limited ESLs-ELLs interactions; however, he/she couldn't foresee a

change of this situation in the near future. Maybe a reason for the assumption that professionals like PP6 don't need a designated working area could stem from the fact that they are more itinerant instructors than stationary ones. In fact, working in different schools she is pretty much 'on the run' all the time. Another factor in this particular case is that PP6 schools have adopted the *System 44* intervention program which means most ELLs attending these schools are assigned to that intervention class; these students will be 'centered' in the *System 44* classroom and receive language instruction, assistance, and/or other kind of intervention if needed. As a result the specialist will mostly co-teach but if she needs to privately assist a student, or teach something specific to a small group of ELLs, to prepare materials for instruction, or to take care of administrative duties and paperwork there is no place readily available to do this work. PP6 will have to find a temporary working area anywhere on the schools grounds and if it's not possible to secure such a spot she will have to postpone or cancel the task.

While roaming around trying to find a place where to drop the tote bags and discuss ESLs/ELLs matters PP6 and the researcher almost decided to just stand somewhere on the alley and chat but a lady from the front office –realizing what was happening, unlocked a small room on the office's side and allowed the two instructors in; she warned them though that they had but short time because someone had a meeting scheduled there. The side room was a tiny space with only a round table and a couple of chairs; the professionals agreed and continued their conversation about the situation of ESL professionals and ELLs in the State but couldn't finish it. They ended up talking outside in front of the school and since PP6 had to run to the next school the conversation was left unfinished.

Part of this conversation was about what PP6 considered to be the greatest challenge not only for ESLs and pupils but for all educators and students alike, not only in the State but in the

entire country: the failure in the education system due to the lack of appropriate leadership in the field. The specialist expressed disappointment about the leaders of the country for failing the people in areas tightly interconnected such as poverty, illiteracy, and public health; PP6 felt our appointed leaders have not been efficient doing their job and had not offered so far reasonable solutions to these and other related social problems. As a result we teachers had to deal on a daily basis with the by-products of such lack of efficient leadership. PP6 said:

If the people we elect to be the leaders of the country keep on failing us this society will be breeding terrorists. Why the nasty attitude from the leaders of the country and of the state regarding education for the most vulnerable? Why the lack of concern about the teaching profession? Why there are no provisions to improve the quality of the teaching practice and the training of teachers? Don't they [government leaders] realize that teaching is not about running tests over and over [...] that teaching is about determining what students need, providing that, and helping students to academically and professionally succeed?

Finally PP6 shared her concern about how we were losing this generation of students that “are growing up being neglected by the system and feeling less than second class citizens.” In PP6’s point of view the education system is a total failure when considering the poorest of the poorest; students (at least ELLs) are thrown into classrooms and teachers don’t know this student population well; furthermore, professionals are not allowed the time or the means to get to know these students better because a lot of information about them is not shared neither properly addressed. For instance PP6 expressed distress about students coming from violent countries – like our Latinos, or from challenging home situations –like our local ones, she said:

Students in these two groups are the most at risk of academic and social failure due to poverty and parental/social negligence, they need more differentiated attention involving psychological assessments, social support translated in appropriate housing, medical screenings, dental health and nutrition services, and appropriate academic interventions; these are not being provided in a timely manner and we are losing them.

Mini Tour

PP6 said about her teaching approach it could be compared to the act of living, meaning it was a continuum experience that changed every day. PP6 expressed that probably the most important skill ELLs needed to acquire was to learn how to live [survive and thrive] in this environment and learning how to negotiate diverse circumstances. In PP6's point of view the ESLs should be "on the top of the tide" by being extremely aware of what was going on with the students under their supervision, by fostering a trust-based relationship with the students and by being very flexible and eager to learn new things as well. The specialist described her world in a very succinct way:

Number one, I have to know everything about my students, I get a list of them and I have to know who they are, with what teacher, etc. and number two, I have to make them feel comfortable in this world, reassure them that I will be there for them. In other words we have to build a relationship based on trust.

PP6 also spoke about being able to achieve more now because few years ago she was serving five schools whereas now she only works at two; the specialist considers to be a goal-oriented person, she likes to see when students' progress is more tangible because "there's a moment when students start speaking and writing in English and even argue with you in English [...] that's a wonderful feeling." Beside assisting in this *System 44* class PP6 regularly inspects students' data and follows them to class when she notices low grades; if a student is spotted failing a class "I show up there and get a feeling of what's happening." At the school there is also an advanced language level, the *Read 180* but the specialist prefers to work with the beginners because

They need assistance immediately [...] before they fell through the cracks of the system [...] sometimes I sacrifice my science class where I know I can catch up later; because if I lose these from the beginning they will be lost [...] later could be too late.

The ESLs also took the time to go through a student's portfolio and explained how they gave incentives to ELLs by 'paying' them with school money or certificates when they were doing well with tasks and tests; later on the students would be able to spend their savings at different school's events: "we let them buy things they want here at school [...] they are happy when they can spend their money."

About teaching experiences at various schools the specialist considered there was no significant difference with the ELLs population but it could be noticed that in schools that changed teachers often if the instructor didn't understand the program or was not strong in classroom management the *System 44* program would not be successful and she said:

For a class to function [using that program] you need a highly structured environment [...] in schools that had the program for several years with the same teacher it goes very smoothly, there is not a minute wasted.

During a class observation at the same school PP6 introduced the researcher as a 'support teacher,' that was like giving ELLs a hint and very naturally some Latino students approached the researcher and requested guidance with the reading they were doing. The atmosphere of the classroom was heavy with noise, not only the natural sounds of a learning setting but it was also a lot of disruption caused by the teacher of record. Nevertheless; the three professionals in the classroom (PP6, an interventionist, and the researcher) tried their best to keep their students focused on task but it was not easy. It was not a single peaceful minute in that class; the teacher of record did not stop her sudden interruptions and found silly reasons to constantly interfere with what the others were trying to accomplish: she shouted, she hollered, she took the right to interrupt the whole class just because; the impression projected was that she wanted to demonstrate who dominated the atmosphere and she truly achieved that –but what a sad picture: when she was not talking loud or shouting she would grab a shaker and agitated it furiously until

all inside gave her their attention and then she would complain about how some of the students were not following instructions, then she would threaten them with some disciplinary code known by them all. The researcher was sorry for the other professionals sharing the same room and understood part of what they mean when they say “it is not always easy to work with other teachers in the same classroom.”

When one of the class periods was over and while waiting for the next class to enter the classroom the teacher of record came to greet the researcher; she didn't say her name though, she wanted a student to demonstrate how they used the tablets for translation: the student was shy for being caught off guard and the teacher impatiently called for another student to show the researcher that “students are allowed to use the tablets to translate and get understanding of texts in their native language.” The student scanned a page with the tablet and entered it in *Google Translate*; the translation provided on the tablet was fairly accurate. When the researcher asked PP6 about the experience teaching in that atmosphere she said: “*System 44* helps establishing the mood for the class; other than that we have to manage.”

The rest of the day in this classroom went the same way as the first class period: the teacher of record putting her persona on the center of attention (by hollering, talking very loud or shaking the rattle) and the other instructors working with students mainly scaffolding. In one of the classes a Latino boy seemed rather frustrated, he started the class period by being benched; he said it was his turn to start at the computer practice but the teacher of record didn't allow him. So during two rotations the student kept a terrible attitude, picked on other boy, called him names, and didn't do his job; the rest of the class ignored him, the researcher tried to help him with the reading but he was not interested about. The student angrily waited until finally he was assigned to a PC station, he missed his reading and studying practice.

Through the reading rotations the researcher helped some Latino students with their independent reading practice; the documents they studied were varied, such as posters comparing information, (Uncle Sam calling soldiers to join the army for the WWI vs. Smoky the Bear handing a shovel and calling people to the attention about saving the forests), short stories about young people and how they succeeded reaching goals they had, and a text about a Middle East female athlete that earned a soccer scholarship to the U.S. Upon returning to her country the young woman helped forming the women soccer team there. During all rotations PP6 and the other interventionist worked with small reading groups or focusing their attention on a single student. The impression was left that these two instructors and their students shied away by using low voices; the groups at the PC also used moderate voices but the clamor was sometimes unbearable when the loud teacher and the normal action of the class compounded.

Attitudes

Through the conversation with this specialist and the participant observation of the class interactions the researcher could identify three attitude patterns, 1) the ESLs obliviousness of the surrounding atmosphere as a survival mode, 2) the ELLs natural attraction and curiosity towards one of their kind, and 3) the teacher of record's maneuvers to demarcate a territory. It is possible to interpret the adults' behaviors as the reaction of one towards the other and vice versa. The teacher of record could be identified as the 'landlord' because that area was 'her' classroom –it has been assigned to her and she had the power to organize (or disorganize) it at will; furthermore, as one of the ESLs said in other school “they are the ones accountable for grading students,” because ESLs and other interventionists don't grade students. So in at least two ways this teacher may have perceived this as her territory: one, it was her classroom and two, she had the grade power whereas the other professionals could be understood as transient passers-by.

When itinerant educators enter and temporarily borrow space and time to serve students they are somehow intruders; they don't belong there and when they leave it is the teacher of record the one that is still in charge. The itinerants' attitude was one of sheer survival because there is a population that need their help, there is a program that puts together these children in the teacher of record's class, and there is no other place or time available for the interventionists to serve the children so, in order to get some of their job done they have to adapt to the situation and "do the best with what they have." They acted as if that cluttered classroom was a pleasant place, they smiled to their children and worked with them throughout the rotations; they ignored the other adult's disturbance as if they had totally shut her out of as if she was part of the background décor of an imaginary tableau. The scene reminded the researcher of a 1988 movie by Roberto Benigni, *Life is Beautiful*, where in the concentration camp the Jewish-Italian dad helped the young boy survive by making him believe they all were actors in a big movie that would soon have a happy ending. It was the same kind of attitude; "just happily play your part in the act and don't let the background actors distract you."

Coda

This ESLs believes the daily classroom ordeals of many teachers and students in the neediest neighborhoods in the country are but the by-product of a failed education system; such social disaster is in turn the result of unethical and irresponsible leadership. PP6 described the fate and trials of poorest children as stages in a vicious cycle influencing and harming the most vulnerable; the way PP6 interprets the reality of our education system from her standpoint of view is the stark result of blatant social injustice:

Poor families can't afford to feed well their kids, to offer opportunities for leisure activities, to provide optimal health solutions or academic support [...] these children grow up being neglected by the system and feeling less than second class citizens [...] there are civilized countries in the world where no matter how poor you are or your

citizenship status (refugee, immigrant, local, with or without documents, etc.) you always have access to concerts, art exhibitions, sport games, [...] here that kind of venues are kind of limited for this population, even their libraries [...] just look at the libraries in poor neighborhoods and compare them to the ones in affluent zones; look at the schools too [...]

What this educator does from the area of influence she has carved out in this failed system is to touch as many as possible of the ELLs in her classes with a message of inspiration and of hope. PP6 does that by reaching out to multiethnic professionals in different fields of knowledge and inviting them as motivational speakers or as one-time-class assistants in content area classes where students are failing. PP6 considers successful adults from same ethnic background of the ELLs are powerful role models to these children:

Because these kids will see that they can actually achieve something, so I invite these people to interact with the children because they speak the same language and can give a word of encouragement to the kids.

Interview with PP7 (Foreign-born ESL educator)

Educational Background and Experience

This specialist is a foreign educator with a B. A degree in English literature, an M. A. in education, and she also has the local ESL specialist certification. Before being appointed as a fulltime specialist in the district PP7 had several professional working experiences in various capacities locally and abroad. This ESLs currently serves three different schools where the majority of the population is of African American descent. PP7's duties consist of 1) giving support, training, and assisting teachers of record who have ELLs by modeling ESL instructional strategies that promote cognitive, affective, and language growth for ELLs, by researching and adapting instructional resource materials for teachers, and by designing and conducting in-service/professional development for faculty and staff to target specific needs at schools (topics include ESL instruction, ESL assessment, grading ELLs, language acquisition processes,

academic vocabulary, etc.). 2) Providing direct instructional support to ELLs by delivering ESL lessons to newcomers and interpreting for students as needed. 3) Beside ELLs and teachers of record's related duties the specialist also supports faculty, staff, and families with interpretation, conducts parent-teacher conferences, ensures appropriate accommodations are provided in classrooms and during standardized tests, actively corresponds with teachers and parents by emails and phone calls, assist with selection, production, and use of ESL instructional materials, including appropriate technology, collaborates with teachers and instructional specialists in developing instructional plans, assists teachers with selecting and using effective ESL teaching strategies to achieve school goals, participates in grade-level/department meetings, consults with teachers individually as requested, serves as the advocate for ELLs at their schools, works with community and LSU volunteers to provide additional support to the students and teachers, assists the test coordinator in administering standardized tests (ELDA, EOC, PARCC, etc.), monitors, updates, and analyzes student data including grades, tests, behavior, and attendance and follows up with parents, teachers, and administration on any issues –all of these duties and other ones as well if the need arise.

The population PP7 serves now consists of about one hundred and twenty students in two schools where the specialist co-teaches in the teacher of record's classroom and about sixty students in the third school; the specialist addresses the needs of this last group through a language class that he/she teaches. Approximately 80% of the foreign population this specialist serves includes Spanish speakers of Latino origin , the rest is shared by speakers of Arabic, French, Farsi, Chinese, Nepali, Vietnamese, Lingala, Tamil, Bengali, Swahili, Portuguese, Yoruba, Burmese, and Russian, all included representing very mixed ethnicities; 80% of these students are placed as beginners (first level of English language). The specialist has worked

within the context of intervention programs adapted by schools and delivered through a centered ESL/ELL class thus catering to both local (mainly African American) and foreign language learners; these programs include phonics-based packages such as *Language! Read180*, and *System 44*, or ESL scripted curriculums and language development programs like *Visions Basic* (2003).

PP7 delivers literacy instruction by using sheltered and differentiated teaching strategies, he/she also gives lower level students more scaffolding than upper level students, especially by supporting their reading with a lot of visuals (graphic organizers, videos, etc.), by employing explicit vocabulary instruction, by modifying materials and simplifying language to make them more appropriate for students English proficiency levels.

The ESLs teacher of record's colleague is a senior American educator with a B. A. degree in ELA and education, this professional is certified to teach all levels. These two educators consider the teaching environment has changed greatly in that children from many different cultures are entering the system and there are some among them that don't possess literacy skills in their home language. Since some children have not been schooled previously they are not familiar with classroom routines being in a way also social illiterate.

Grand Tour

This is an inner city school, in structure similar to the other schools visited but also different. It functions in an old building featuring brick walls, metal paneled fences, tattered parking lots, small not appropriately furnished/equipped library that is most a multi-facility room (classroom, meeting room, book-display/storage room, conference, and training room, etc.) than the reading and literacy center of the school with comfortable and inviting spaces and appropriate lighting where students come to spend time reading a book. The building is different

however, because some of the exterior spaces for mobility seemed much more comfortable, accessible, and inviting, (i.e. when classes are in session visitors, school staff, and other adults don't get crowded within common passageways) there is artwork, large posters, and murals displayed in several walls giving the impression of a lively community. Although there are several edifices interconnected the visitor can clearly see where she is going and staffs equipped with walkie-talkies would help navigating the area if perhaps feeling lost there. Additionally, the recently added new modern-looking facilities –adorned with colorful artwork- when observed along with the outdated sections of the structure (i.e. old trailers still being used as classrooms, tattered corridors, handrails, and classrooms, etc.) give a global static, motionless view of the age's paradigm dynamic transition: it is in a way a bizarre mix of old and new, it conveys somehow the urgency to move ahead but simultaneously evidences a lack of nimbleness to do so because the buildings, the system, and the social structure they contain and represent are all still carrying old weights.

The majority of students housed in these premises are of African American descent; they have access to a variety of programs which go from gifted and talented, to language immersion, to the special programs for exceptional students, and English language services for ELLs. This last one –the ESL/ELL addresses the needs of local low level readers and of the foreign language learners; students belonging to these two groups are merged into the language intervention classes. One fourth of the ELLs are local students and the other three fourths is made of foreign true language beginners (ESL) (20/80 in this school in average, -numbers often change); academically speaking most students in language intervention class enrolled in this middle school could be placed on 2nd or 3rd grade, they are also reported as a group with behavior difficulties and whose parents are mostly absent. The specialist and the teacher of record agreed

on that the lowest literacy levels among them are strongly linked to the behavior problems and though the need for parents/guardians involvement is dire when the time arrives that parents and teachers should meet and come up with a plan to address the situation the parents are nowhere to be found,

[...] which is the nature of the beast because they are low level they become frustrated, you know and then they act out in behavior! [...] so and even if this is not what you want to know but when we have open house, say if we have 80 students we will have only 5 parents that show up! [...] it's very disheartening, they are not just involved with their kids' education... when you call, they might have 4 numbers to call and none works uh the response is the number is disconnected and that type of thing. So it's very hard to get in touch with most of the students' parents [...] for this to work you must have the three sides of the triangle connected and properly functioning: the school system that cares, the teachers that know how-to-do, and the parents that are involved, and when you don't have the three it doesn't happen ... and when there's a missing link [...] that's where the big problem comes [...] it's a problem.

The two professionals also conceded that on their side they have tried different strategies to connect with parents but “parents are not just available” and they consider that something else must be done at higher administrative levels. Then difficulties stem in the school environment – as discussed above- from a lost or never established connection between educators (or school system) and families.

Challenges

However; complications also arise from the system failing to properly place the foreign ELLs and some of the local most needing students in the context that will foster their normal development. The system (school administrators where there is no provision to adequately place severe-at-risk-of-failure students) assumes the teacher of record should be able to solve the problem alone and sometimes with some support from the ESL services office. Nevertheless; the specialist and the language intervention teacher reported that the low literacy levels summed to poor school/learning environment skills, added to a great variety of sociocultural/language

backgrounds in a single classroom are too great of a challenge for a language or content area educator that has no ESL training whatsoever even if the teacher of record is a veteran outstanding ELA educator. Below is an excerpt of a conversation with one of these professionals,

What can I do?! There are a lot of them and I don't speak Spanish, Tamil, Farsi, Nepali, or Swahili! [...] so I go back to the basics: colors, sight words, and putting words together to make sentences, but with some refugees it is not that easy because they are totally illiterate! [...] in fact it is very difficult!

In most circumstances when students without basic literacy skills are sent to regular classrooms the teacher's approach would be more of a trial and error matter because these teachers are not ESL trained and don't have access to resources that would help differentiate for this population yet they are the ones that have to deal day after day with these students; these teachers don't have constant support and many children need individualized attention. This veteran educator said: "now I know, next year I'm going to hold them more accountable and test them more and make them do more at home because we cannot do it all at school."

But when talking about an extreme situation many teachers at this school had few years ago [this was also witnessed by the researcher who at that time was volunteering there] the professionals agreed there is no much they can do and it is the system's responsibility to handle cases like Mutairu's in the opening vignette. This boy came from an African refugee camp with about ten more members of the family; Mutairu and his five siblings were fatherless, all of them spoke a dialect and understood French language but couldn't speak it fluently, they were language, academic, and social illiterate –they had been confined to a basic refugee camp for many years and that was the chief experience they all had in life. Yet Mutairu and two more siblings in school age were sent to regular classes in our local schools; when he arrived to PP7's school several teachers and administrators tried to help him as much as possible but his presence

there made it evident the school (and most likely the school system) was not prepared to properly handle such acute situations. PP7's colleague conceded:

They are just middle school kids and they still would do what middle school kids do! They don't care! They show their true colors (laughter). With Mutairu we've created a monster; no one permanently connected with him [...] so they let him do what he wanted to do, he was so cute when he first came! But now he gets away what he wants. It turns it like it's never his fault! Another similar situation that ended up quite differently is this little girl; it's just amazing how she improved! I think it's because her daddy [who brought her here] works at a plant nearby and learned some English, he supported her a lot [...] she's learned so much in so short time, no behavior problems whatsoever! Seeing her and listening to her now is just amazing! After only a school year ...but I think they really work hard with her at home [...]

Mini Tour

The classroom is located in the old part of the school and the corridor is a little bit somber but the room is full of light and organized in a way that all rotation's transitions and people's interactions appear to be effortless and friendly. The teachers work very patiently with all students, calmly they instruct, model, scaffold, assess, laugh, and interact with their pupils; the teachers also cooperate with each other, ask questions, briefly consult, or ask for the other professional's advice, at times they may sit at the same table while working with students and all participants use gentle voices and don't interfere with what the others are doing; there is no screaming, grounding, or threatening in this room –the whole atmosphere is very pleasant and relaxed though active and busy: all participants in the classroom are focused on their task. Occasionally someone from the main office arrives and takes a student out for administrative matters while in other times there are volunteers from the community helping students (i.e. university ESL students); it also could happen that other school interventionists come to assist with the class, as a result the rate adult/student is often 1/5 and sometimes lower than that.

When this observation took place the teacher of record was working with a group of students at the desk, some students were working in the computer terminals with the laboratory

practice, and the ESLs was guiding a reading practice and scaffolding for few students. In this classroom usually PP7 assists the teacher of record with a maximum of twelve to fifteen students present at a time; they work with the *System 44* intervention and take turns with the independent and group study rotations.

The instruction rotation was about building vocabulary; students were presented a reading section where the word “training” and other related terms in the same semantic field were used in context. The reading had also the accompanying narration recorded allowing students to have a multisensory practice; PP7 had previously explained what the reading/listening would be about, passed then the recording, and let the students listen to it while following on their own copies of the document. After the reading/listening was over PP7 asked general comprehension questions and gave a scaffold by modeling close reading. The specialist started with all visuals on the reading piece, picture by picture and almost word by word, tarrying at some italicized words, at cognates, re-reading, asking, giving examples, prompting inferences, etc. i.e. “look at this picture. It is of a team, it is made of the best players; the *elite* [...] can anyone be a player in that team? What they have to do stay fit?” the students followed closely and answered –sometimes they gave good answers sometimes they didn’t but they participated nevertheless. The same process went over with graphics and text in the reading portion until they finished. Afterwards PP7 asked the students to read aloud and to complete a cloze activity; she gave turns to students to try their best pronunciation, modeled the correct pronunciation again and again, and finally let them finish the reading comprehension activity

All activities were finished few minutes before the bell rang and students gathered their belongings; the two teachers started chatting with the researcher and some students joined them. The professionals explained how the administration at that school constantly provided support

for the ELLs and mentioned the programs the students had to go through before being totally mainstreamed.

This year we have a pilot program for *Imagine Learning* we have *System 44* and *Read180*. We have intervention class 1st thing in the morning [...] This helps low level students. I like this school very much because the administrators listen to suggestions we give them and are always eager to implement good ideas.

During another observation period PP7 was working on writing skills with the students; she had them writing a paragraph about self, the specialist gave questions that if answered would give ideas to help with the writing. She reminded them about the mechanics: “use periods, capital letters and you need a title, write on the lines, keep the margins [...] yes, what would be a good title “all about me” -she told a student. Very often both teacher of record and specialist would say something about a student or to them like “They are so smart! You are very smart!” When it was almost the time to leave the teacher of record said: “Ok guys you need to pack up” and students got ready and waited on their desks to be dismissed; then the teacher said: “This side goes out first” –pointing to the section that was to leave first, then she stood at the door, dismissed the other students, and waited there to greet the next class. The overall feeling in this class was of intense activity in a friendly learning atmosphere; also of cooperation and of networking.

In other class visit PP7 and the teacher of record were working with the children and the class was interrupted by the school nurse; she needed to talk with a student about his vaccinations, the researcher went out to the corridor with them and translated. The researcher visited this classroom several times and the perception of friendliness and of academic exertion was constant regardless of the group of students. Sometimes the teachers had a large group (twelve – fourteen) other times they only had five children; in occasions a former student would randomly enter to greet his teacher or to see the class but even in these instances the learning

activity would not be affected. Something interesting in this class was the created perception that they all had enough time to finish the task; even if students wanted to rush through the teachers would make them tarry to think and take the time to perfection whatever it was they were doing: “I want you to know it’s not how fast you can do it but how efficient you do it; it’s not a rush, ok, [...] slow down [...] look at what you are doing, take your time.”

Attitudes

At this school PP7 and the teacher of record considered the lack of parental involvement as the great difficulty both on the part of the Latino parents as of the African American as well. They said regardless of how hard they worked (meaning the educators) and how intense was the attitude of administrators to serve this population, if the parents were missing some children would still fail.

Another behavior the professionals noticed came from the local African students; they complain often arguing that Latinos are pampered or are the ‘teacher’s pets’ but PP7 said what happens is that the African American children often misbehave and are disciplined (are called to the attention) while the Latino in this classroom do not misbehave and are not told to do their job because they do it. In one instance the teacher replied to the child complaining “if you are not doing anything wrong I don’t have to correct you” but the child said the teacher was prejudiced.

Coda

PP7 agrees with the principal of the school on that it is not good to totally isolate ELLs to provide focused language instruction; she believes children need to be in the context with English speakers to practice their communicative skills. However; both specialist and teacher of record judge necessary to provide a beginners or introductory class to all newcomers. The professionals said an extended ‘orientation’ or transition experience would help ELLs better

settle and get used to the American style schooling routines. The teacher of record proposed what could be understood as the figure of a specialized counselor/class for these students:

ELLs need the time, the place, and the person [...] Someone that would be able to guide them if they have questions, that would give, explain, and guide them through the schedules, show them the routes to school, help them getting library card, a person available where ELLs can go back to if they needed, if they had a problem, [...] here they don't have that kind of help yet [...]

Collaborative connections among academic and administrative staff are present in this school but sometimes access to important data is not available and professional interaction not always possible. PP7 and the teacher of record said they are included in grade-team meetings but they can't attend most of these faculty gatherings because their students and classes are very mixed; they teach students all across the spectrum from sixth to eighth grade so they only go to meetings set at times not overlapping with their teaching schedule. The teacher of record who was present at the moment stated:

I don't only have 6th grade students! I have 6th, 7th, and 8th graders in one class so I'm not always with the people that teach the same students that I do [...] I only have contact with the other grades' teachers just occasionally in passing in the lounge, because we are not off at the same time and it's hard even impossible to plan with them! But we would share things like translation tools online, or other kind of information that would be useful for them when teaching content to our ELLs [...] here at this school it is only two of us, [teachers of record teaching the intervention class for ELLs].

The concern of these professionals was that other staff is knowledgeable in different areas and willing to network with colleagues but schedules are overloaded and tight so such academic cooperation is very limited.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS, SUMMARY, LIMITATIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Findings

After systematic examination of all data gathered from interviews and observations, several findings emerged and implications for further research became evident as well. Before summarizing findings obtained from this investigation it is necessary to look back at the questions that guided the research: (a) How are the approaches to literacy instruction similar or different among the multicultural ESL educators/instructors? (b) How multicultural ESL educators/instructors perceive challenges in their classroom? (c) What are the multicultural educators'/instructors' attitudes towards concepts/constructs of deconstruction/otherness appreciation, awareness, context, and connections?

While keeping in mind the questions that steered the inquiry process three themes surfaced. It is important to notice that in the obtaining of the themes, all participants included in the study came from distinct sociocultural and ethnic backgrounds, have had diverse educational and professional experiences, interpreted in various ways their moral responsibility as educators, held different attitudes towards awareness, the other, and the context, and strongly voiced a number of challenges in their professional practice field. Yet, the themes that emerged from this exploration were extant regardless of approaches to literacy instruction, interpretation of challenges, and/or personal and career background; these themes complexly interconnected with the multicultural ESLs attitudes related to sociocultural dynamics in their teaching environment.

Furthermore, cultural themes were gathered –as Spradley (1980) suggested- from the recurrent assumptions participants have learned, used or implied in their daily experience thus forming complex nets of patterns. In other words, what participants believed and accepted as true and valid and the underlying interpretation principles of their rationale for action constituted the

grounds where themes were identified. It is opportune then to remember that the initiator of this systematic approach to research (Participant Observation & DRS) defined cultural themes as “any principle recurrent in a number of domains, tacit or explicit, and serving as a relationship among subsystems of cultural meaning” (1980:140 - 141).

The three overarching themes that emerged from this investigation were (a) the reality and fate of Latino teenagers, (b) the State’s lack of awareness regarding ELLs, and (c) the status of education and of the teaching profession in the country.

The Reality and Fate of Latino Teenagers

Even though ELLs population in the State come from various regions in the world and represent diverse ethnic backgrounds the Latino segment is the most at-risk-of-academic/social-failure. All participants agreed on that the presence of Asian and Middle Eastern students at the middle and high schools visited did not translate in difficulties for teachers, for schools enrolling them, or for the ESL program because (1) these students entered the system with adequate schooling experiences –like understanding and accepting of rules, regulations, and routines proper of academic environments-, (2) relating to their age and grade placement they had normal or above standards first language literacy and academic development, (3) they were reasonably or highly motivated to continue in school and to graduate, (4) their parents were very involved in their education and were aware of their academic progress and overall behavior, and (5) as a result of these factors combined students of Asian and of Middle Eastern origin tended to learn the language quickly or at acceptable rate, adapted to school environment, and ultimately achieved academic success. Whereas the presence of the Latino children in the middle and high school environment was almost always –because there were few exceptions- harbinger of distress at different levels.

The reality of the majority of Latino students in this program is very complex. To begin with, most of these children entered the territory on hiding; they fled conflict zones in the neighboring countries, they left behind very close family members, despite being so young they have risked their life crossing natural and human-made obstacles; they embarked in such an adventure –similar to that of *Orlando* in one of the introductory vignettes- with the hope to contact a relative or a friend in the United States and thus secure survival. Crossing the border and being placed with friends or relatives do not represent the end of troubles for this population of middle and high school-age children. When the joy of waking up under friendly roof fades away the discovery of a sour reality begins; suffering is not over it is just of a different kind. It does not explode on their faces with a blast, rather it enters their being little by little, one unconquered obstacle after the next one, one stumbling block after the other; it is like a canker worm that devours hope and faith in society. Like the boxer struggling to stand still for one more round many of these teenagers will take blow after blow in their fight for self-esteem –even more when education seems unattainable because the quest for dignity in their context is uncertain and it could take a life time.

The first shameful circumstance they would face is getting enrolled in school upon taking a series of ESL assessments –even if students are explained what a placement test is they might interpret the results as a failure. Thus entering the school system as a middle or high school displaced Latino teen is very problematic for at least three reasons; 1) most among these children can't provide proper identification, medical records, or previous schooling documentation; if they happen to have some paperwork it is not translated into English, 2) not having handy what is required to enroll them in school is not only complicated for the ESL program office and for the school staff but it is disgraceful, onerous, and frustrating for the teen and his family, 3)

finally, this enrolling process turns out to be a shocking and unfortunate circumstance because the crucial connection ‘parent-school system- child’ was not established; this could be in part due to not having a close relative fluent speaker of English that would represent both sides well, or someone else they trust to bridge the language chasm. Enduring these embarrassments makes the gap deeper, disgrace more appalling, and the prospectus of establishing an honorable and enduring connection more unlikely. Furthermore, most of these middle and high school students have not been accepted in the country “legally;” in other words, they were admitted in the territory without being granted the least of all humanitarian conditions which is asylum.

The next stage of shame begins when the pre-teen and teenagers start attending school; these students realize the other children in their classes know a lot of stuff beside the language⁵⁰. Classmates know routines and schedules by heart, they know where to go, what to do, how to talk and to whom, when and how to perform all school-related tasks; school has been a pivotal part of their life, classmates can read, understand, talk, and write about for instance Romeo and Juliet, they also understand the content of other classes they are taking and get passing or very good scores in assignments; overall they appear to have certain academic focus and a goal in life. Most Latino children can’t compete with these skills and lifestyle. Their focus and goal in life remains staying alive, school has not been a priority in their development neither an integral part of their life experiences so far because when life is threatened everything else becomes

⁵⁰ Which could have different implications in elementary school environments, because at those academic levels and ages the stark differences and inequalities caused by previous schooling experiences –superiority and intensity of education received, kind of exposure to various learning opportunities, etc.– may not be so dramatically noticed and –arguably would not constitute ‘shame/incompetence awareness-triggers’–; whereas in the middle and high school settings children with deficient or inadequate literacy skills, lack of knowledge in content areas, and poor school-wise behaviors/routines will be readily spotted as “the painted birds,” they will feel like the bizarre outsiders, and when their efforts to become more ‘average’ don’t produce any fruition shame and despondency would grow deeper roots.

secondary; in other words survival supersedes schooling, then they have not tasted and appreciated how sweet it can be to acquire knowledge and understanding. Furthermore; to compound this stage even more, when these ELLs are placed in a language intervention class or under the protection of an ESL specialist they become extremely aware of their hopelessness because even the most basic of basic tasks become very hard for them to perform when they are not given the time, the consistency, and the structure they need to really build a solid foundation for further knowledge; rather they are exposed to scattered and disengaged learning experiences very hard to connect when they lack that solid foundation. These pre-teens and teenagers become keenly aware of what their fate has been so far, for they have not had: (1) normal childhood experiences and adequate schooling that would have given them enough social and civility skills –like understanding and performing acceptable behaviors in school settings, (2) access to elementary education where they should have acquired first language literacy skills and introduction to content area fields of knowledge, and in the circumstance of students admitted to secondary schools, access to middle school education, (3) basic knowledge of social and exact sciences, and basic technology literacy skills that would help them transfer previous knowledge to middle and high school content classes, (4) parents with at least average literacy skills in first language and basic knowledge of English that would be able to follow up at home with school’s assignments, (5) community-smart and community-connected parents that would be proactive finding ways to navigate the system and to be present at school, thus sparing the children further shame, (6) parents or guardians that were not afraid of being deported at any time thus feeling free to interact with school staff on behalf of the children hence demonstrating interest in their education.

Typically among at risk ELLs all or most of the above are missing; these students would then have a better chance for academic and social success if upon entering the schooling system they would be granted (1) a reasonable amount of time to make up for what they have missed so far: structured and appropriate life and learning experiences and sound literacy instruction, (2) knowledgeable teachers (highly qualified content area experts and ESL trained) that would understand the situation and provide the most adequate instruction, (3) school-based programs and materials to foster their academic and social development, (4) institutional support from their schools requesting their overall progress to be assessed in realistic ways and with adequate instruments until they reach language and content area development that could be fairly measured along with local standards, and (6) an accountability system with incentives based on language acquisition, academic, and behavior performance, and community service/involvement that would be significant in their quest for dignity.

Arguably, since most of the above are inexistent the Latino ELLs levels of hope, self-esteem, and of motivation are directly affected and with them any prospectus of continuing education; as one of the ESLs participating in the study put it: “what they are asked to do in the content areas classes is just too much for them, it is overwhelming; they despair, get frustrated, and don’t see the light at the end of the tunnel.” Therefore it is rather humiliating, self-castigating, and futile for many to still go one more day to such a place of incompetence because there is no way they would score a goal in so short time and with so many stumbling blocks on the playfield. Since making any kind of progress and even achieving a little success seems so unattainable, so unrealistic given the circumstances of their academic prospectus and social fate dropping out is not only “legal” but could be viewed as an honorable alternative.

The State's Lack of Awareness Regarding ELLs

As previously discussed, ELLs of Asian and Middle Eastern origin don't pose significant challenges in school districts. However; Latinos do and also our local ELL teens not performing at grade level yet. In the process of this inquiry all seven ESL participants –both locally and foreign born- identified the State of Louisiana as (1) very unaware of the reality of Latino ELLs in the middle and high school settings, (2) quite unprepared to properly respond to their true needs, and (3) not adequately addressing the true needs and the situation of local ELLs (a majority of African American children) that find themselves in a hope and dignity situation similar to that one of the Latinos regarding expectations for academic success and social fate; they have advantage over the Latinos though in that they already understand spoken English and are not intimidated by deportation of their parents.

The ESL specialists participating in the study indicated that both ESLs and ELLs difficulties in the district are similar across the State and that their perceptions are confirmed often when they network with colleagues. The State's unawareness is reflected in (a) the lack of resources available to better fund the program (i.e. to hire enough specialists and staff that can adequately respond to the growing ELL population's needs, -comparing to previous years more specialists and staff are needed even now when massive tides of children fleeing conflict zones enter the country). (b) The absence of provisions for proper training in ESL instructional strategies and ELLs sociocultural awareness among the middle and high school teachers; as specialists report, content area teachers acknowledge they are not skillful differentiating for this population yet the State doesn't make it compulsory for these teachers to become ESL trained/certified. (c) Children are still placed age-wise instead of socio-academic/literacy-wise; specialists stated that despite the lack of training and understanding of school environment

routines, very low or no literacy in first language whatsoever, and no exposure either to content area matter schools expectations regarding these children are unrealistic and even cruel. These children are not being placed in the appropriate environment that would help them overcome various kinds of deficiencies as previously discussed; neither are provided with the resources necessary to have a fair chance at education. This in fact violates the rights of the children and must be addressed accordingly. As promulgated through the United Nations Human Rights.

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. (Rights of the child Article 28 part 1 b, and 3)⁵¹ States Parties shall

(1.b) Encourage the development of different forms of secondary education, including general and vocational education, make them available and accessible to every child, and take appropriate measures such as the introduction of free education and offering financial assistance in case of need; [...] and

(3) Promote and encourage international cooperation in matters relating to education, in particular with a view to contributing to the elimination of ignorance and illiteracy throughout the world and facilitating access to scientific and technical knowledge and modern teaching methods. In this regard, particular account shall be taken of the needs of developing countries. [...]

Lack of awareness could in turn lead to unpreparedness or inadequate response to difficult situations or to emergencies –being nature, man-made or socially caused (Katrina, BP, school violence, etc.). However; improvised and hopeless reactions or no response at all to social challenges could also be the result of negligent, corrupt, or asinine leadership and/or of social injustice manifested in oppression of the poor. Thoughtfully considering their working environments and cultural milieu specialists offered alternatives to address the true needs of ELLs in the district (suggestions could be extended and applied to the State and even to the country). ESLs agreed on that the State needs to fund a strong structured program specifically designed for ELLs attending middle and high school. That program should have four major

⁵¹ United Nations Human Rights. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Retrieved from <http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx> 09/07/2015

components: 1) a training module oriented to create a solid foundation of good habits and routines; newcomer students (foreign and local) would acquire proper study habits, understand and follow school routines, learn acceptable social behaviors, and be instructed on hygiene habits and civic manners; 2) the second module would concentrate on intensive training in different literacies ESL, ELL, first language, and cyber. Students entering with no literacy skills whatsoever would have to spend more time learning to read and write in their first language while also taking ESL, 3) the third module would focus on sociocultural involvement; children would be allowed robust exposure to artistic, scientific, sports, museums, leisure, and community service venues; and 4) the last component of such a program would offer content area classes guided by highly qualified content area teachers with ESL training, it would also include information, training, and apprenticeship opportunities for vocational and trade alternatives considering more hands-on driven students and those that were definitely not college-bound. As specialists expressed most ELLs in the middle and high school drop because the law allows them to do that and because the environment they are in fosters frustration, shame, and anger instead of hope to overcome.

The assumption is that these ELLs if retained for at least two consecutive years in such a highly structured, intense, focused, disciplined, and generous program would be better prepared to go to mainstream classes, would have more incentive and motivation to go to college or to complete formal education in a trade of their choice, ultimately they could become responsible independent adults and life-long learners. Of course given the circumstances of immigrant Latino children to situate them at the same level of local ELLs would require State's governing action

granting either asylum or other special status⁵² perhaps initially with the promise of obtaining permanent resident status based on academic achievement and civic behavior⁵³. Specialists agreed that for most children to acquire the basic social, literacy, and academic skills to be successfully mainstreamed the ideal would be to keep them for four years and the minimum at least for two years in such a program.

If any government allows laws to set stumbling blocks on the path of these children⁵⁴ or is not proactive avoiding things like those to happen, it could be said that such institution would be blatantly disregarding international law's provisions for children and youth as quoted before. If ELL students attending middle and high school are denied a fair opportunity at education their faith in society, their hope of academic redemption, and their self-esteem as human beings will be eroded and vanished. Metaphorically speaking they would remain the bizarre *other*, the painted bird.

The Status of Education and of the Teaching Profession in the Country

⁵² Government actions addressing the situation of the children could be similar to LSU policies regarding promising international students/scholars; these are awarded assistantships and in-state tuition benefits. Continuity of such privileges is contingent upon excellent performance and honorable conduct.

⁵³ Some specialists indicated that just granting asylum and giving social assistance at the expense of the taxpayers without demanding literacy, academic, and behavior progress at school was undermining the very interest of these displaced youths. The specialists insisted that some of these families needed to realize the value of education and fully engage in the quest for knowledge and financial independence through education.

⁵⁴ By discriminating, delaying their entry to school, sending them to mainstream classes before they are able to manage such environment and academic demand, by admitting them in less than adequate environments and systematically putting them in suspension for not reaching behavior and academic expectations, keeping them in school and giving passing grades that do not reflect their true academic status, neglecting to create sound environments for proper social and academic development of most at risk ELLs (Latinos and African Americans), not providing reasonable law-based accommodations for these children thus penalizing schools for not making adequate AYP when these children in their rosters distort results as outliers, not granting minors a refugee status.

Of seven school buildings visited only one had a library that appeared to function as a true center for literacy engagement through reading, for study, and for academic rendezvous; in fact only at that place were students spotted reading or studying. Most space in school libraries visited seemed to be used more for administrative purposes than for the nurturing of reading; library areas were either busy with training of adults, computer classes, committee meetings, test taking, and random counseling sessions or were void of students and closed. For the leaders of the country to demonstrate they hold education and literacy as a high priority they should urge massively investment on improving all school libraries beginning with the ones in poorest neighborhoods and strictly require the use of the library as it should be, making of the school library havens for study-reading and leisure-reading⁵⁵.

All school libraries should have designated and appropriate reading-for-leisure areas, small group study cubicles, and a wealth of reading materials of all sorts readily available for the students to peruse; pre-teen/teenager ELLs must be encouraged to make use of the library (not discouraged), must be instructed on school library protocols, etiquette, and services, and they must be allowed 'library-time' in their schedules. When libraries are being used as everything-but a library it could mean 1) the school lacks adequate physical space and/or 2) administrators are not giving the prominence the library should have as a literacy center. Whatever the reasons for obscuring the place of the library in a learning community it should be properly addressed.

None of the participant educators had an appropriate teaching/personal space at their work place. Participants and their students had to roam here and there in search for an available spot where to hold a short lesson. If at six schools out of seven there are not appropriate spaces

⁵⁵ This especially important considering the circumstances of the most at risk students, these being the poorest children might not have at home a comfortable well-illuminated place where to sit with a book –they don't have the books either.

for students' literacy development and study engagement and if all of educators participating don't have suitable designated spaces for instruction delivery, organization and display of class materials it could be a sign of unsatisfactory leadership at school, program, and district levels and/or of government's negligence to sufficiently fund school and education.

If parents' absenteeism is so pervasive across the spectrum among the at risk student population the government must fund research and programs that would explore, find, and describe the true reasons at the core of this attitude and provide alternatives and incentives cultivating parents' involvement in students' education and supporting social acceptable behaviors at school. As evidenced in the study there are crucial connections that are inadequately established, the parent-school and the parent-child's bonds seem rather fragile or inexistent in this segment of the population; thus schools must be empowered and given the resources to properly intervene. Often times the may not be the lack of programs available at school or in the community but the lack of access poor families have to them, possible reasons could be transportation, failed connection, language barrier, or survival exigencies.

The government must demonstrate interest in the education of the middle and high school child by (a) making funding available to middle and high schools, public libraries, and other outreach multicultural initiatives to 1) engage parent-pre-teen/teenager child active involvement in cultural, sports, leisure, diverse kinds of literacies, academic activities, and community service, 2) to consistently facilitate access to diverse venues by reasonably providing shuttle transportation and by disseminating key information in public places, 3) to hire enough ESL specialists and staff as needed at each school, 4) to secure a decorous teaching/learning space in each school for ESLs/ELLs, 5) to encourage research and implementation of the kind of strategies, initiatives, and activities that would establish, mend, and sustain the connection

parent-school-pre teen/teenager. And (b) by facilitating and promoting change in educational systems that would better structure instruction around the true needs of the pre-teen and of the teenager; this would involve a thorough assessment of student's needs and interests and providing the appropriate curriculum and instruction not based on the age of the student but on their true socio-academic and literacy needs. This is crucial especially among at risk of failure ELLs.

Summary

Overall this investigation concluded that the reality (academic prospectus and social fate) of middle and high school ELLs is very complex –specially the situation of students of Latino origin, and intricately revealing the level of awareness the State has regarding ELLs as well as the nature of the response it gives to this population's needs through current ESL provisions. The inquiry also shed light upon the status of education as a social institution and of the teaching profession in the country. By reviewing the data obtained from interviews and classroom observations these findings suggest areas that require further investigation. It is from the perspectives of the multicultural ESL specialists that this investigation shed light on possible connecting and/or modifying relationships among literacy, awareness, context, and otherness. It is also through their lens that a novel construct or series of constructs could be suggested: 1) triggers of shame among ELL pre-teens and teenagers and their incidence in dropping out of school, 2) the relationship linking literacy, pride, and behavior at the middle and high school level among ELLs, 3) the relationship linking literacy, pride, and behavior at the middle and high school level among parents of students at risk and whether it could be indicator of connection with school and involvement with child's education, 4) the relationship between immigration status and self-esteem, and 5) the relationship between parent's literacy level and parent's

presence at child's school. By uncovering these themes and bringing them to the forefront of the investigation, social awareness and attitudes towards *the other* could be better assessed in the light of social justice.

Limitations

Choosing the participants from a single school district could be seen as a limitation caused by a narrow focus. Having selected multicultural ESL specialists from various districts in the State could have given a broader perspective to the study by exploring teaching approaches and sociocultural dynamics in disparate working environments. Considering only the standpoint of the ESL specialist and not that one of other individuals involved in the teaching of ELLs such as the content area teacher of record and other ESL staff; this could have led to further uncovering of information regarding instructional processes and resources aimed to serve the ELLs. Gender could also be perceived as a limitation because of the seven participants only one was a male; this could be addressed in further inquiries by locating more male ESLs. Since the results of the study strongly leaned towards the Latino students, that event –if anticipated would have prompted the researcher to include a Latino ESL, this perhaps could have given more insight about the Latino ELLs. However upon discovery of the facts the researcher interviewed two random ESL specialists of Latino origin; their responses to the same interview and their understanding of the reality in their working context confirmed even more the findings of this study.

Implications for Further Research

Continued research investigating States awareness and preparedness concerning appropriate services to ELLs is necessary; this is especially important vis-à-vis pre-teen and teenager Latinos due to their vulnerability as displaced children living in hiding and not being

granted asylum or other kind of status that would better their chances for normal development. It is suggested that United Nations delegates from the office of children's rights further inquire about services to ELLs across the country, enforce humanitarian treatment to these children, along with protection from homophobes and predators. The research could be duplicated in other states to better understand the world of ESLs and of ELLs in the country and to determine if the situation of the Latinos is pervasive and predominantly a Latino matter or if it affects other ethnicities, where and how. The investigation could be conducted again including a majority of male ESLs and/or coordinators of the program in various districts; this would provide a more thorough picture of this social situation.

Finally the question is what kind of research is still needed to describe on one side the lack of concern of the leaders of the States, the wealthy, and the powerful, and on the other the lethargy and numbness of crowds with the 'laissez-faire laissez passer' attitude apropos the status of education in the country? Should not suffice entering a dilapidated school in a random neighborhood and taking a look at the "library"? Maybe informally talking with an ESL instructor with tote bags filled with beautiful materials she's prepared for her students but that she can't fully incorporate in a lesson because there's not a spot in school where she can have a normal instruction/learning interaction with ELLs? Perhaps a conversation with a defeated teen whose soul is crushed by the shame of finding himself in high school when he barely knows his abc's and not seeing any prospectus of redressing the situation? These are signs of serious and profound social justice and moral issues strongly bound to or affecting people's levels of awareness, civility, community responsibility, and appreciation and respect of *the other* as a fellow human being. However; not only it is the responsibility of the government, the powerful, and the wealthy to play a significant role in the reshaping of a more unprejudiced, avant-garde,

research-informed, connection-age paradigm's appropriate, and generous education system for the current and next generations to come but also it is the choice of ethnic communities to overcome shame and marginalization by proactively seeking to establish strong and permanent community and school connections, by extravagantly displaying high standards of civility and solidarity among members of diverse sociocultural backgrounds, by not being content with receiving a morsel (or a full serve) of fish instead of learning the art and the trade, and ultimately by becoming highly proficient in multiple literacies and reaching a status of educated life-long learners that will be thoroughly informed, knowledgeable, and empowered to intelligently choose their government leaders thus avoiding falling in the hands of corrupt and asinine individuals.

The greatest implication is not for research only –because research has been informing continually for over the last fifty years, if not longer, about the need for systemic change in education– but for action, for social awakening and awareness interpreting signs of a decadent society that having ‘bread and circus’ is content even if outside of the arena the country is crumbling. As one of the specialists put it: “by not making of education a top priority the country leaders are failing the people,” while other said “educating is not testing; teaching is more than training on test taking, educating is providing what the child needs at his time and place that would better his chances to succeed academically, also granting him the reasonable time to reach academic and life goals according to his interests and dexterities,” and yet another “the government must change the attitude towards education and educators, must begin by respecting the profession and by making education a priority.” Yes dear colleagues but educators, families, schools, and diverse communities must also look for robust interactions and networking on behalf of the less fortunate.

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APPENDIX A: CONSENT FORM

1. Study Title:

Exploring Teaching Approaches and Sociocultural Dynamics in the Contemporary English Second Language Classroom from the Perspective of the Multicultural Educator.

2. Performance Site: Middle and High School.

3. Investigators available for information regarding this study:

Dr. Earl H Cheek Jr.
& Nancy Laguna-Luque 111-111-1111
M-F, 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p. m.

4. Purpose of the Study:

The purpose of this research Project is to compare/contrast multicultural English second language educators' teaching approaches and sociocultural interactions in the context of their instruction delivery.

5. Subject Inclusion:

Individuals who are multicultural middle and high school English second language educators/instructors.

6. Number of Subjects: 7

7. Study Procedures: The study will be conducted using interview protocol and field observations of teaching approach, teacher interactions, and textbook along with its supporting materials.

8. Benefits:

The community, as well as researchers will benefit from the study by contributing information about needs, challenges, and diverse dynamics in the English second classroom environment.

9. Risks:

The risks involve a possibility of the school(s), district, and teachers/instructors being identified. However, all precautions will be taken to ensure that sensitive material, including interviews, observation notes, and all/any names will be carefully secured by the use of pseudonyms and locking of all information.

10. Right to Refuse:

Subjects may choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or loss of any benefit which they might otherwise be entitled.

11. Privacy:

Results of the study may be published, but no names or identifying information will be included in the publication. Subject identity will remain confidential unless disclosure is required by law.

12. Signatures:

The study has been discussed with me and all my questions have been answered. I may direct additional questions regarding study specifics to the investigators. If I have questions about subjects' rights or other concerns, I can contact Dennis Landin, Institutional Review Board (225) 578-8692, irb@lsu.edu, www.lsu.edu/irb. I agree to participate in the study described above and acknowledge the investigator's obligation to provide me with a signed copy of this consent form.

Subject signature: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview Questions for Multicultural ESL Educators/Instructors

1. Please describe your career education, training, and work experience prior to joining your present appointment.
2. How would you compare previous ESL teaching experiences/environments to the present one? How long have you been teaching ESL at this place?
3. How would you describe your approach to delivering literacy instruction?
4. How do you think your teaching approach has changed over time?
5. How often do you have opportunities to continue your education? How do you think the ESL teaching terrain has changed over time?
6. How would you describe various kinds of challenges and sociocultural interactions in your classroom?
7. How could you be better prepared to serve the ELL population in the process of literacy acquisition?
8. What are your beliefs and attitudes towards concepts of sociocultural awareness, diversity appreciation, context, connections, and school systemic change?
9. Describe the ELL student population in your workplace. How do you think this population has changed over time?
10. Describe your current work environment (physically, affectively, socially, academically, etc.). Describe a typical work day in your life please.
11. Describe the program, resources, methods, and budget, etc. that you use in your coaching, mentoring, and/or teaching practice.
12. If you had to re-structure the ESL program what elements would you discard/include?
What it would look like?

ESL: English Second Language

ELL: English Language Learners

APPENDIX C: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FORM

ACTION ON EXEMPTION APPROVAL REQUEST



TO: Nancy Laguna-Luque
Curriculum & Instruction

FROM: Dennis Landin
Chair, Institutional Review Board

DATE: October 26, 2015

RE: IRB# E9607

TITLE: Exploring Teaching Approaches and Sociocultural Dynamics in the Contemporary English Second Language Classroom from the Perspective of the Multicultural Educator

Institutional Review Board
Dr. Dennis Landin, Chair
130 David Boyd Hall
Baton Rouge, LA 70803
P: 225.578.8892
F: 225.578.5983
irb@lsu.edu | lsu.edu/irb

New Protocol/Modification/Continuation: New Protocol

Review Date: 10/26/2015

Approved X Disapproved _____

Approval Date: 10/26/2015 Approval Expiration Date: 10/25/2018

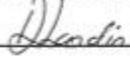
Exemption Category/Paragraph: 1: 2b

Signed Consent Waived?: No

Re-review frequency: (three years unless otherwise stated)

LSU Proposal Number (if applicable):

Protocol Matches Scope of Work in Grant proposal: (if applicable)

By: Dennis Landin, Chairman 

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING –

Continuing approval is **CONDITIONAL** on:

1. Adherence to the approved protocol, familiarity with, and adherence to the ethical standards of the Belmont Report, and LSU's Assurance of Compliance with DHHS regulations for the protection of human subjects*
2. Prior approval of a change in protocol, including revision of the consent documents or an increase in the number of subjects over that approved.
3. Obtaining renewed approval (or submittal of a termination report), prior to the approval expiration date, upon request by the IRB office (irrespective of when the project actually begins); notification of project termination.
4. Retention of documentation of informed consent and study records for at least 3 years after the study ends.
5. Continuing attention to the physical and psychological well-being and informed consent of the individual participants, including notification of new information that might affect consent.
6. A prompt report to the IRB of any adverse event affecting a participant potentially arising from the study.
7. Notification of the IRB of a serious compliance failure.
8. **SPECIAL NOTE:**

*All investigators and support staff have access to copies of the Belmont Report, LSU's Assurance with DHHS, DHHS (45 CFR 46) and FDA regulations governing use of human subjects, and other relevant documents in print in this office or on our World Wide Web site at <http://www.lsu.edu/irb>

APPENDIX D: SCHOOL DISTRICT APPROVAL OF RESEARCH NOTICE



Accountability, Assessment, and Evaluation
Christa McAuliffe Center
12000 Goodwood Boulevard
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70815
(225) 226-7625 FAX- (225) 226-7605

November 10, 2015

Nancy Laguna-Luque
375 W. Roosevelt Street, Apt. 1222
Baton Rouge, LA 70802

Dear Ms. Laguna-Luque:

Your request to conduct the following research in East Baton Rouge Parish School System is approved.

"Exploring Teaching Approaches and Sociocultural Dynamics in the Contemporary ESL Classroom from the Perspective of the Multicultural Educator"

Glasgow, Southeast, Westdale and Woodlawn Middle Schools, Belaire, Broadmoor, Tara and Woodlawn High Schools

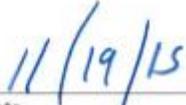
We require that all data you collect protect the anonymity of participants, unless they specifically provide you with permission to identify them. It is my understanding that you will provide the East Baton Rouge Parish School System a summary of your research findings, once your project is completed.

We appreciate the opportunity of working with you. If we can be of further assistance, please contact Cynthia Sampey at (225) 226-7625 or csampey@ebrschools.org.

Approved:



Warren Drake
Superintendent



Date

APPENDIX E: SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL FOR CHAPTER 3

The following tables contain examples of how data were analyzed and reduced following Spradley's (1980) DRS methodology.

Table 1: (next three pages) Examples from the field –Step 5 Domain Analyses:

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Semantic relationship: <u>Rationale</u> 2. Form: <u>X (is a reason for) Y</u> 3. Example: <u>Being illiterate (is a reason for) dropping out of school</u> 		
<p>Included terms</p> <p>Being illiterate ... Perceiving self as being a low level performer... Absent parents... Having to work to support family... Turning 17 years old...</p>	<p>Semantic Relationship</p> <p><u>is a reason for</u></p>	<p>Cover Term</p> <p><i>Dropping out of school</i></p>
<p>Included terms</p> <p>Not understanding the language... Not understanding school routines... Not understanding the culture ... Not feeling understood/respected by adults & other students alike... Perceiving self as a burden... Not feeling that someone genuinely cares...</p>	<p>Semantic Relationship</p> <p><u>is a reason for</u></p>	<p>Cover Term</p> <p><i>Being frustrated/angry</i></p>
<p>Included terms</p> <p>Students' dropout rate Students' lack of inner motivation Students' anger My professional responsibility Compassion Believe they can make it Social responsibility</p>	<p>Semantic Relationship</p> <p><u>is a reason for</u></p>	<p>Cover Term</p> <p><i>Searching for new ways to engage students</i></p>

1. **Semantic relationship:** Sequence
2. **Form:** X (is a step in) Y
3. **Example:** Searching the most updated roster (is a is a step in) delivering instruction

Included terms	Semantic Relationship	Cover Term
Daily searching through the most updated roster ... Finding the classes where new students could be located... Deciding about the place where to work with students... Knocking at content area teachers' doors... "Pulling" students out of classrooms Greeting students in Spanish... Getting all students together... Taking all students to the selected working area	<u>is a step in</u>	<i>Delivering instruction</i>

... table break ...

1. **Semantic relationship:** Strict inclusion
2. **Form:** X (is a kind of) Y
3. **Example:** A specialist (is a kind of) a teacher

Included terms	Semantic Relationship	Cover Term
Teacher of record... Classroom teacher... Teacher aid... ESL instructor... Teachers... Co-teacher... Instruction specialist... Interventionist... Lead teacher... Instructor...	<u>is a kind of</u>	<i>Teacher</i>

1. **Semantic relationship:** Strict inclusion
2. **Form:** X (is a kind of) Y
3. **Example:** A newcomer (is a kind of) a student needing literacy accommodation

Included terms	Semantic Relationship	Cover Term
ESLs... ELLs... Beginners... Kids... Low-level readers... Students... Immigrant boys & girls... Newcomers ...	<u>is a kind of</u>	<i>Student needing literacy accommodation</i>

Included terms	Semantic Relationship	Cover Term
Teacher aid ESL instructor Co-teacher Instruction specialist Interventionist Instructor	<u>is a kind of</u>	<i>Itinerant Educator</i>

Table 2: Example of Domain Paradigm Worksheet –Step 9 Componential Analysis-

Domain		Dimensions of Contrast								
Roles ESL educators take on		I	CR	T	A.stu/sta	A.par/sta	Ccst	Tr	...	
	Specialist instructor/interventionist	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes		
	Classroom Teacher	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	no		
	Co-teacher	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	no	yes		
	Liaison	Language	yes	no	no	yes	yes	no	yes	
		Translator	yes	no	no	yes	yes	no	yes	
		Cultural	no	no	no	no	no	yes	no	

Key:

I = itinerant

CR= is assigned a classroom

T= teaches

Tr= translates

A.stu/sta= assists/mediates/translates between students and school staff

A.par/sta= assists/mediates/translates between students and school staff

Ccst= connects community members to school & to students

Table 3: Example of nesting and distribution of Domains Paradigm –Step 10 Cultural Themes

Semantic relationship: X is a kind of Y strict inclusion Cover term: Domains in the cultural scene Ex: kinds of colleagues is a domain in the cultural scene			
Possible nesting terms	Included terms	New discovered terms	
	Kinds of		
Kinds of People	Colleagues Administrators Teachers Itinerant educators ESL Instructors		
Kinds of Challenges	Instructional specialists Parents School students ----->	ESLs ELLs ----->	--Go-getter --Laid-back
Kinds of Responses to Challenges	ELLs Student needing accommodation People's attitudes Cultural contexts Interventions	Beginners Low-level-readers Immigrant boys & girls -----> Local children	--Asian --Middle Eastern --Latino
Kinds of Social Interactions	Backgrounds Teaching spaces Teacher's roles Schools Teaching situations Social interactions Activities out of school Activities in class Challenges Solutions to problems Choices people make		
Kinds of feelings	Reasons for		
Kinds of Students' Choices	Dropping out of school Being frustrated/angry Not communicating with others Lack of information <div style="text-align: center;">Ways to</div> Motivate students Delivering instruction <div style="text-align: center;">Steps in</div> Identifying own students Getting acquainted with students Delivering Instruction		

Table 4 below shows how producing a taxonomic analysis of domains in the cultural scene gave lieu to a broader perspective of the social situation by identifying overarching domains. Some included terms are intentionally placed in boxes where they overlap with other terms.

Table 4: Taxonomic Analysis –Step 10 Cultural Themes

-----Overarching Nesting Domains-----										
Domains in the Cultural Scene										
	The country, the State, the City, the Parish	Kinds of Social Institutions	Local School System, Public middle & high schools selected for study	Multicultural English Second Language Educators	Kinds of People	Included Terms	Colleagues		People	
							Administrators			
					Teachers					
					Itinerant educators					
					ESL Instructors					
					Instructional specialists					
					Parents					
School students										
ELLs										
Kinds of Challenges	Included Terms		Students needing accommodation		Spaces					
		People's attitudes								
Cultural contexts										
Backgrounds										
Teaching spaces										
Teacher's roles										
Schools										
Lack of information										
Kinds of Responses to Challenges		Interventions		Activities						
Kinds of Social Interactions		Activities out of school								
Reasons for		Activities in class								
Kinds of Students' Choices										
Kinds of feelings		Dropping out of school								
		Being frustrated								
		Being angry								
Steps in		Identifying own students								
		Getting acquainted with students								
		Delivering Instruction								

VITA

Nancy Laguna Luque was born in Bogotá, Colombia. She received her Bachelor of Arts degree in Spanish and French Pedagogy at the Universidad Pedagógica Nacional de Colombia, in 1987. She also received her Master of Arts in French language, culture, and literature from the Colegio Mayor de Nuestra Señora del Rosario in 1993, and her second Master of Arts in Spanish Language and Literature from Louisiana State University in 2005. As an international educator her practice includes the teaching of foreign modern languages Spanish, French, and English, the coaching and mentoring of pre-service educators, and the design of literacy curriculum in these three languages; her international experience includes Colombia, the People's Republic of China and the United States. Nancy has been elected to different honor societies and received scholarship awards to pursue graduate studies and internships in the United States and in Canada, she was honored also with the SCOLT/ Virgin Islands Teacher of the Year award in 2010 as an outstanding educator.

Currently Nancy is conducting studies towards the doctoral degree in Curriculum and Instruction at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge. As a doctoral candidate she has actively engaged in research and in community service with schools and multicultural groups in the parish.
