A MIXED-METHOD STUDY OF TEACHER EFFICACY
WITH ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS IN RURAL SCHOOLS

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JODI ELAINE ELDER, MA, MS
Dr. Robert Watson, Dissertation Supervisor
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The undersigned, appointed by the Dean of the Graduate School, have examined the
dissertation entitled

A MIXED-METHOD STUDY OF TEACHER EFFICACY

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Presented by Jodi E. Elder

A candidate for the degree of Doctor of Education

And hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance

___________________________________
Dr. Robert Watson

___________________________________
Dr. Cynthia MacGregor

___________________________________
Dr. Gerald Moseman

___________________________________
Dr. Denise Baumann
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A MIXED-METHOD STUDY OF TEACHER EFFICACY
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Jodi E. Elder

Robert Watson, Dissertation Supervisor

ABSTRACT

The United States of America is experiencing a demographic change as dramatic as in the early 20th century when thousands of immigrants entered Ellis Island (Karathanos, 2009). Ballantyne, Sanderman, and Levy (2008) reported over the past decade that the number of English Language Learner (ELL) students in this country has increased more than 60%. Experiencing this student demographic shift are American teachers.

The purpose of this study was to explore this phenomenon from the perspective of the teachers and their perception of their efficacy in educating ELL students. The population of this study included 212 educators from three different school districts in rural Missouri. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected to answer two questions. The first question was what are the perceived levels of self-efficacy beliefs among mainstream teachers of ELL students in rural schools in the following areas: (a) Instruction, (b) Classroom management, (c) Academic expectations, (d) Motivation, (e) Social cohesion, and (f) Inter-classroom dynamics? The second question was how do teachers in rural schools describe their experiences with ELL students?
The researcher obtained the data by administering the modified Teacher Efficacy of Teaching English Language Learners (TETELL), which was downloaded in Zoomerang, a survey designing tool found on the Internet (Yough, 2008; see Appendix A). These surveys were sent electronically to all educators at the three participating school districts. Data analysis was completed on these surveys, and the means for each sub-scale were placed in ascending order. This data indicated in which areas teachers felt low self-efficacy.

The first research question in the study was answered by the teachers’ ratings on a Likert scale to the TETELL questions. The questions pertained to how teachers perceived their ability to impact instruction, social cohesion, interclassroom dynamics, classroom management, and motivation of ELL students. The second research question in the study was answered by the open-ended questions added to the TETELL. The two questions asked teachers to explain their specific experiences with ELL students.

The final conclusions pertaining to the first research questions were that teachers expressed the lowest efficacy in the area of instruction, with a mean of 3.249, which means “Some.” However, on an average, teachers also rated themselves in the mid-3.0’s, or “Some” in the areas of academic expectations, interclassroom dynamics, and social cohesion. The final conclusions pertaining to the second question were that in all three school districts a common theme emerged. This theme was that teachers expressed frustration with the lack of time, resources, and preparation to instruct these ELL students. Another common theme was that many of the teachers shared positive experiences with ELL students. Despite the difficulty, the teachers seemed to enjoy
having these students in their classroom. Overall, the findings of this study could
implicate that schools, especially rural schools, need to be more cognizant of the
teachers’ desire to be more prepared to teach ELL students. School districts should also
use this research to understand the need for more resources and staffing to assist the
teachers in mainstream classrooms.
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Background

The United States of America is experiencing a demographic change as dramatic as in the early 20th century when thousands of immigrants entered Ellis Island (Karathanos, 2009). Ballantyne, Sanderman, and Levy (2008) reported over the past decade that the number of English Language Learner (ELL) students in this country has increased more than 60%. Responding to the influx of non-English speakers along with other organizations are America’s schools (Karathanos, 2009). Flynn and Hill (2005) wrote that school districts in some states have felt the impact more than others. They explained although the non-English speaking population is growing all over the United States, the majority of English Language Learning students reside in five states: (a) California, (b) Texas, (c) New York, (d) Florida, and (e) Illinois (Flynn & Hill, 2005). However, the migrant transition is increasing in other states now as well (Karathanos, 2009).

Not only are the urban areas experiencing the increased English Language Learner (ELL) growth, rural districts also have witnessed dramatic increases in ELL student populations (Flynn & Hill, 2005). Karathanos (2009) described the complex pattern of migration as a patchwork quilt with migrant groups settling in many Midwest towns. Missouri has experienced a 43% increase in number of pre-K to 5th grade ELL
students in between 1990 to 2000 and is one of the ten states increasing the most in ELL populations (Flynn & Hill, 2005).

As small towns in Missouri welcome new ELL students, the schools face the complication of meeting the academic needs of these students who may speak one of hundreds of languages from Arabic to Xhosa. The combination of this continually increasing number of ELL students enrolling in American schools and an increasing demand of accountability measures is a complicated mixture for today’s teachers (Harper & Jong, 2009). Harper and Jong (2009) elaborated stating, “In spite of the fact that ELLs vary tremendously in age, country of birth as well as in linguistic, cultural, economic, and educational background, many inclusion efforts have resulted in a one-size-fits-all approach to instruction” (p. 138). Teachers face the challenge of educating learners on a variety of levels and languages, as well incorporating lessons that have differentiated instruction. This news might be alarming for many small towns since those districts often have a scarce number of ELL staff members, materials, or resources (Flynn & Hill, 2005).

In Cobb’s (2004) report *Improving Adequate Yearly Progress for English Language Learners*, the accountability standards required by No Child Left Behind make this issue even more critical since all students must demonstrate their learning improvement annually, including those students who have Limited English Proficiency (LEP). In Missouri, to comply with the federal mandate of No Child Left Behind, students are required to complete the Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) or End-of-Course exams (EOC; Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2011). The ELL population is one subgroup of students in the state’s desegregated data
and one in which school districts should exhibit growth to meet No Child Left behind requirements (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2011).

Even though ELL students ideally would perform on level with the English Proficient (EP) students, students with a deficit in English consistently score lower on standardized tests (Cobb, 2004). Ballantyne, Sanderman, and Levy (2008) agreed that ELL students have reportedly scored significantly lower than the English Proficient (EP) students in reading and mathematics. They wrote in 2008, after fourth grade and eighth grade students were assessed, 30% of ELL students scored at or above basic in reading, while 76% of the English Proficient students scored at or above basic. These statistical discrepancies between ELL and English Proficient student outcomes also include lower graduation rates and high school assessment results like End-of-Course exams for ELL students (Ballantyne et al., 2008).

In addition to the concerns about academic growth of ELL students, Deering (1997) added another layer of concern, which addressed the cultural differences of teachers and the ELL students. He explained that many teachers are white, from middle-class backgrounds, and primarily speak English. Durgunoğlu and Hughes (2010) found many teachers admitted experiencing low teacher self-efficacy in educating ELL students because of cultural barriers and possible lack of experience with ELL students.

To understand the teachers’ perceptions of their ability to educate ELL students in their classrooms, one conceptual lens to apply is that of teacher self-efficacy. Teacher efficacy involves teachers’ beliefs about their effectiveness and ability to make an impact on their learners (Cobb, 2004). This study sought to examine the conceptual measure of teacher self-efficacy by measuring teachers’ perceptions of their strengths and needs in
relation to students who are ELL, as well as their experiences with ELL students in their classrooms.

Conceptual Underpinnings for the Study

Teachers play a pivotal role in the education of their students, especially ELL students who seek to learn a new language and new concepts in other academic areas simultaneously (Yough, 2008). Yough (2008) explained how many researchers have found one factor that plays a significant role in student outcomes is teacher self-efficacy. Therefore, one way to thoroughly explore the impact teachers have on students is through the conceptual lens of teacher self-efficacy. The conceptual framework for this study, which will drive the research questions and purpose of the research, is the framework of teachers’ sense of self-efficacy. Bandura (1997) defined self-efficacy as “the belief in one’s personal capabilities” (p. 4). Bandura developed this framework to elaborate on his Social Learning Theory, which postulated that people learn by modeling, observing, and imitating.

A person’s self-efficacy in any given area can have a significant impact on the person’s attitude in the area and level of productivity (Bandura). A person’s sense of self-efficacy can even impact others around the person. Teacher self-efficacy is significant because research finds positive relationships between high self-efficacy and both the students’ academic achievement and their learning experiences (Bandura). Tshannen-Moran, Hoy, and Hoy (1998) defined teachers’ sense of self-efficacy as the teachers’ belief in “their abilities to organize and execute courses of action necessary to bring about desired results” (p. 204). Teachers who feel more confident may witness more positive learning outcomes for their students. This relationship between teacher self-efficacy and
student learning is extremely relevant with today’s accountability standards (Yilmaz, 2011).

Efficacy can also impact people’s job satisfaction, commitment to their job, and levels of demonstrated efforts in the classroom (Bandura, 1997). Ergo, teachers who feel more effective in an area tend to be happier at work and tend to make extra efforts to educate their students. Bandura (1997) maintained that teachers’ sense of efficacy influences both the kind of environment that they create, as well as their judgment regarding the different tasks introduced in the classroom in order to bring about student learning. Thus, teacher self-efficacy appears to have a direct influence on more effective teaching practices and student outcomes.

Teachers’ feelings of effectiveness, therefore, impacts their performance in other areas as well. Yilmaz (2011) agreed, explaining how teachers’ self-efficacy serves as a precursor in a domino effect. During his studies of teachers’ sense of efficacy, Yilmaz found the teachers’ beliefs to be important in how teachers perceived and determined instructional and assessment methods. He added that these pedagogical choices shaped students’ learning experiences, which in turn impacted their assessment results.

Funneling down from self-efficacy, this research focused on the self-efficacy of teachers as it related to their education of ELL students. Yilmaz (2011) wrote that with the changing student demographics, educators have been left questioning their background and experience teaching this population, or their self-efficacy with ELL students. Teachers, as well as other professionals, have a quantifiable amount of efficacy in their occupations. Some may be confident in their abilities, while others may feel ill prepared for their jobs. Many teachers in rural schools admit that they have questionable
self-efficacy in their experience teaching ELL students and how their inexperience may contribute to low effectiveness teaching these students (Yilmaz, 2011).

In addition to teachers feeling ineffective, they may not have the necessary training to improve their instructional practice. Durgunoğlu and Hughes (2010) asserted that adding to this lack of efficacy are the teachers’ feelings of being untrained and that professional development opportunities are limited. They asked teachers if they felt prepared to effectively instruct ELL students and found that more than half of the teachers not only admitted to not having received training in this area but also expressed a lack of interest in pursuing this training (Durgunoğlu & Hughes, 2010).

To more thoroughly understand teachers’ self-efficacy of overall teaching, this study focused on specific areas that fall under the umbrella of teacher efficacy. Yough (2008), who created the instrument used in this study, reported teacher self-efficacy can vary depending on different areas: (a) instruction, (b) behavior management, (c) academic expectations, (d) motivation, (e) social cohesion, and (f) inter-classroom dynamics. Some teachers with ELL students may feel more efficaciousness in instruction and motivation, but lack efficacy in inter-classroom dynamics or behavior management. In order to evaluate teacher efficacy, the researcher surveyed teachers’ efficacy in those areas. Tangen (2007) studied regular classroom teachers with ELL students to explore teacher perceptions and discovered that teacher efficacy was considerably low in the area of teaching ELL and improvement was needed to provide better service to the ELL student population in the area. Cobb (2004) defended the importance of serving ELL students and the challenges of maximizing ELL learning in the mainstream classrooms. She prioritized teacher self-efficacy as a key influence in helping ELL students improve
their academic performance explaining, “Teachers who possess high levels of efficacy, who use research-based instructional methods and provide explicit strategy instruction, can make a difference with ELL students and close the achievement gaps” (Cobb, 2004, p. 4). Thus, teachers’ perceptions in this area can be valuable in helping not only ELL students, but the English Proficient students as well.

Statement of the Problem

As ELL populations continue to increase, efforts to improve education for these students and their teachers are not moving as quickly. Not only is it evident that ELL students need a better education in American schools, but it is also apparent that pre-service teachers need to receive adequate training in this area. Professional development in this area would also benefit the teachers so that they would feel more comfortable when confronted with this challenge. However, Ballantyne et al. (2008) reported only 26% of teachers reported to have training related to ELL students. They also reported that 57% of teachers admitted that they needed training to improve their knowledge of teaching ELL students. Seo and Hoover (2009) agreed, adding that most teachers receive nothing more than a one-day workshop.

In the past decade, many researchers have studied the relationship between ELL students and their ELL teachers, but there is very little research in the field of ELL students in the mainstream classrooms. Tucker et al. (2005) stressed the teacher’s influence on a student performance and called for educators to promote teacher efficacy “with children from diverse backgrounds” (p. 29). Harper and Jong (2009) asserted that the teacher-student relationship in the regular classroom is just as important as the relationship in the ELL classroom.
Not only are educators confronted with the challenge of teaching these non-English speaking students, but there is also the pressure of high-stakes testing and this group’s performance on standardized assessments (Perez & Holmes, 2010). ELL students’ performance rates historically have been notably lower than their English-speaking counterparts (Perez & Holmes, 2010). Although this comes as little surprise to teachers, Mongiello (2011) said teachers are held accountable for these students’ academic growth just as they are every student in their classroom. No Child Left Behind, passed by Congress in 2002, mandates all students to reach proficiency in communication arts and math by 2014, even ELL students (Mongiello, 2011).

Another area in this study is the analysis of teacher efficacy in the area of educating ELL students. Mitchem, Kossar, and Ludlow (2006) wrote many schools today are ill prepared for the ELL students who enter the American classrooms where English is the predominant language. These issues are even more problematic for rural school districts. Mitchem et al. (2006) explained why rural schools especially are unprepared for the demands of students who do not speak English. They wrote that many rural schools often have fewer supplemental resources and funding. The problem is the body of literature on this topic is slim to nonexistent on teachers’ perceptions of efficacy with ELL students.

Purpose of the Study

This research aimed to collect the teachers’ perceptions and to focus on the teachers’ self-efficacy with the ELL student population in rural districts. Another purpose of this phenomenological study is to research the teachers’ perceptions and expressions of self-efficacy with educating ELL student in rural schools in Missouri. Another purpose is
to collect multiple perspectives from teachers on their self-efficacy of teaching ELL students and their stories about the experience working with this student group. By recording teachers’ perceptions on their teaching experiences, one can learn more about this issue and possibly collect ideas on how to improve ELL education. The researcher also may discover common themes emerging from these teachers’ perspectives.

**Research Questions**

1. What are the perceived levels of self-efficacy beliefs among mainstream teachers of ELL students in rural schools in the following areas:
   a. Instruction
   b. Classroom management
   c. Academic expectations
   d. Motivation
   e. Social cohesion
   f. Inter-classroom dynamics

2. How do teachers in rural schools describe their experiences with ELL students?

**Limitations**

There are limitations involved in this study. One limitation in this study is that the researcher surveyed three rural school districts. A study that included more schools would provide insight into the big picture of ELL education and teacher efficacy.

Another limitation is that because rural school districts were selected, the teacher perceptions of educators in larger school districts were not represented in this study.
Teachers within larger districts may have expressed contrasting beliefs on this subject, but the researcher chose to focus on schools in rural districts.

Also, this study has the limitation that not all faculty members within the participating schools responded to the survey. Ideally, the researcher would obtain responses from every teacher in a building, but this survey was optional for faculty members. Therefore, not everyone chose to complete the survey to express views and opinions on this topic. Finally, this study specifically collected the perspectives of teachers in regard to self-efficacy and educating ELL students, which limited the opportunity to analyze whether or not these beliefs impacted the ELL students’ academic performance within the schools. Despite these limitations, this study added to a body of research that will guide educators of ELL students in the future.

Definition of Key Terms

Throughout this study several terms occur frequently. To ensure consistency within the study, the following key terms are defined.

*Academic expectations.* Academic expectations referred a teacher’s ability to communicate the expectations for learning objectives (Yough, 2008).

*Classroom management.* Yough (2008) defined sense of efficacy in the area of behavior management in the classroom as “one’s ability to convey expectations of behavior, to control disruptive behavior, and to get students to follow rules” (p. 5).

*English Language Learners (ELL).* The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (2011) used the term Limited English Proficiency (LEP) synonymously with ELL. The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (2011) defined an ELL student who is “between the ages of 3 and 21, are
enrolled or plans to enroll in elementary or secondary school, not born in the United States or whose native language is something other than English.” The definition provided by Missouri’s Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (2011) included students who come from an environment where a language other than English has had a significant impact on the student’s English language proficiency or a student who is from a migratory home where the family moves around the country often and has difficulty speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language to the point at which the student is not able to meet the state’s proficient level of achievement on standardized assessments.

**Instruction.** Yough (2008) defined instruction as the teacher’s belief in his or her ability work with ELL students and to help them catch up with their peers in reading, writing, and oral communication skills. He added that this term includes the teacher’s sense of efficacy in helping ELL students receive high scores on achievement tests (Yough, 2008).

**Inter-classroom dynamics.** In the framework of teacher self-efficacy, this term refers to the teacher’s belief in his or her ability to impact factors outside of the classroom that affect the activities inside the classroom (Yough, 2008).

**Mainstream classroom.** The term mainstream classroom refers to the classroom that the majority of the students within the school attend (Durgunoglu & Hughes, 2010). Mainstream classrooms do not refer to special education classrooms. In this research, mainstream classrooms include the ELL students receiving instruction with the rest of the EP student body. Durgunoğlu and Hughes (2010) added that using the term mainstream classroom may be concerning because it may be understood as implying that the ELL
students are secondary students. However, the researcher chose to research the mainstream classroom teachers because ELL students spend the majority of their school day with these teachers (Durgunoğlu & Hughes, 2010).

**Motivation.** Yough (2008) defined the teacher’s sense of efficacy in the area of motivation as his or her ability “to tap into one’s perceived ability to get students to value learning and to engage their interest” (p. 6).

**Rural schools.** The United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service (2011) now provides eight different locale codes for American schools so that the size of the school can be more specifically quantified. For the purpose of this study, the participating group will be the collection of schools located in rural school districts. Rural districts are defined as “an incorporated place or Census designated place, or non-place territory with a population of less than 25,000 and more than 2,500” (United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service, 2011).

**Self-efficacy.** The researcher will use Bandura’s (1997) definition of self-efficacy, which is, “the belief in one’s personal capabilities” (p. 4). Self-efficacy can be manifested in many different areas. A teacher’s sense of self-efficacy can vary depending on these different areas: (a) instruction, (b) behavior management, (c) academic expectations, (d) motivation, (e) social cohesion, and (f) inter-classroom dynamics (Bandura, 1997).

**Social cohesion.** Social cohesion refers to a teacher’s ability to encourage his or her “ELL students to interact with their peers and the extent to which he or she can get native English-speaking students to accept the other ELL students” (Yough, 2008, p. 6).
Significance of the Study for Leadership Practice

This study is significant for a number of reasons. First, the increasing population of ELL students in American public schools, especially in Missouri, makes this research significant. As more and more students require additional services because of their limited English proficiency, teachers need to feel effective and comfortable in the services they provide (Flynn & Hill, 2005). Yilmaz (2011) stressed the importance of teachers’ beliefs in and perceptions of their quality of work. Bandura (1997) also explained that teachers’ self-efficacy can help them to improve their effectiveness no matter the area of work in which they engage. This study is significant because it will provide insight into the teachers’ perceptions and self-efficacy of educating ELL students in rural schools.

With increasing national accountability standards this study is significant in that improving teacher efficacy could impact schools’ performance in these areas. No Child Left Behind requires all sub-groups, including ELL students, to exhibit growth during their education (Perez & Holmes, 2010). This study will provide input from practitioners that is significant for leaders’ decision-making. It will also help leaders understand the value of teacher self-efficacy in education and more specifically in the area of teaching ELL students.

Summary

As rural school districts face the challenges of instructing higher ELL populations and increasing accountability standards, teachers’ roles in mainstream classrooms will be critical in making their schools more successful. The teachers’ perceived self-efficacy impacts how they will confront these challenges, and their perceptions of the experience
is invaluable in understanding this phenomenon. This research painted a portrait of teachers in rural districts in Missouri and how they perceive their effectiveness with ELL students. Chapter Two includes a review of literature relevant to ELL students and the significance of teacher efficacy in the classroom.
CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

For the past 200 years, people all over the world have traveled to the United States of America in search of a new place to call home (Diner, 2008). The early settlers were just the beginning of immigrants who relocated to America for many different reasons. During every era of American history since colonial times, families have chosen to live in this country to experience the American dream (Diner, 2008).

This is even true today as immigrants continue to move to America or to spend time studying in America (Diner, 2008). Although many can speak English, the majority of immigrants who come to America are classified as English Language Learners (ELL) and bring their children with them. Chapter Two will share related literature regarding English Language Learners and sociocultural factors involved in educating ELL students. Next, this chapter will include background on the foundations of self-efficacy and teacher self-efficacy. The chapter will conclude by bridging the two topics into how teachers’ sense of self-efficacy can impact ELL students.

English Language Learners

The National Council of English Teachers discussed the many different terms and names that have been used to refer to this student population. The term selected for this
research, as well as preferred by other researchers, is English Language Learner (ELL) because the name suggests the students are learning and does not refer to them as deficient in any area. The No Child Left Behind legislation outlined requirements for school districts in the area of educating ELL students (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2011).

The backgrounds of ELL students are diverse from students’ languages to their cultural backgrounds. Payan and Nettles (2010) published the Educational Testing Services research, where it was found that the Spanish was the most common native language for ELL students and nearly 80% of the ELL population. The other common native languages were Vietnamese, which accounted for nearly 2%, Hmong which accounted for 1.55%, Chinese or Cantonese which accounted for 1.02%, and Korean which accounted for 0.966% (Payan & Nettles, 2010). The upcoming section will address the past and present state of ELL education.

*Educating ELL Students*

What is just as interesting as the varying ELL backgrounds is how American schools have reacted to these new students. This topic of conversation is by no means a new one. Brandon, Baszile, and Berry (2009) wrote, “Since the advent of compulsory education in the U.S. society, the question of cultural and linguistic pluralism has been a source of controversy” (p. 47). They cited the school movement of the 19th century in which European immigrant children were pressured to replace their native tongues with English (Brandon et al., 2009). This push to Americanize ELL students continues today
and is still the most common barrier in the education of ELL students in the language barrier.

This historical context establishes the foundation of the current approach to educating ELL students in America. Recently, districts still struggle to find the most effective methods of educating their ELL students as they experience the rapid growth in ethnic populations. Harper and Jong (2009) explained one common instructional approach schools use, which is to place ELL students in the mainstream classroom for most of the day, regardless of their knowledge of the English language. These ELL students receive limited personal attention to improve their language (Durgunoğlu & Hughes, 2010; Harper & Jong, 2009). In fact, Harper and Jong (2009) wrote that approximately 50% of ELL students do not receive special services.

Although most mainstream teachers have limited training or experience working with ELL students, these students spend most of the day in the regular classroom (Durgunoğlu & Hughes, 2010). Teachers’ uncertainty of how to most effectively educate ELL students and their attitudes toward working with ELL students in the mainstream classroom is a proverbial elephant in present day American classrooms (Durgunoğlu & Hughes, 2010; Harper & Jong, 2009). More recently, Perez and Holmes (2010) indicated that there are some common components that educators should address in their instruction. Perez and Holmes (2010) formulated a quality program for educating ELL students that should encompass a four-dimension framework. These four dimensions are (a) sociocultural, (b) linguistic, (c) academic, and (d) cognitive dimensions.
Sociocultural Dimension

First, Perez and Holmes (2010) wrote that teachers should consider the sociocultural aspect of the ELL students’ experience. Cartledge, Singh, and Gibson (2008) articulated the significance of socioculture in the classroom, explaining how most of America’s teaching force is homogeneous and lacks the cultural experience to relate to ELL students. Because of the two contrasting cultures, many times the teacher might misunderstand culturally specific behaviors of his or her students. Also, the students may not understand the expectations and requirements of the school because the school culture is different from their culture (Cartledge et al., 2008).

For example, in the Hispanic culture the nurturing environment of a community and working as a team guides many ELL students from this culture to behave more socially than the classroom may allow (Cartledge et al., 2008). Deering (1997) agreed, writing that the majority of American teachers are from white, middle-class backgrounds and that many admit they are not prepared to work with students from diverse cultures. The demographic differences create concerns for American schools, as an increasing percentage of students are from minority populations.

Chang (2008) concurred, citing the theory of sociolinguistics that states ELL students have difficulty because they are “simultaneously learning a new language and a new set of cultural norms” (p. 84). For students to be more successful and eager for language acquisition, Chang wrote teachers can decrease this cultural conflict by creating a class atmosphere that allows ELL students to reduce their anxiety level and to encourage them to participate with their English-speaking classmates. He wrote, “Recent
language minorities, most of whom are ELL students, need intensive and specialized
teacher support to perform at the same level as their English-speaking counterparts”
(Chang, 2008, p. 84).

Chang’s (2008) longitudinal model also demonstrated how cultural barriers
determined more practical instructional methods for teachers. He suggested that teachers
should consider the ELL students’ heritage when developing lessons. For example, the
study indicated that the Hispanic ELL students did not perform as well during teacher-
directed whole-class activities, while Asian ELL students did not perform as well during
teacher-directed small group activities. Hispanic dual-language students did, though,
prefer the one-on-one lessons with the teacher. Although some may fear that this concept
generalizes or stereotypes ELL students, teachers can utilize this information in the
classroom. Implications of this study were that by understanding the cultural backgrounds
of ELL students, teachers might be able to select an appropriate instructional strategy that
would be more effective for the minority groups (Chang).

Teachers also need to be aware of their students’ cultures and be willing to
celebrate the different cultures (Miller & Endo, 2004). They suggested that teachers
remember the varying life experiences students have, evaluate their classroom
management styles to determine if they are conducive to the different cultures of their
students and respect the cultural differences of their students. Miller and Endo (2004)
added that teachers should not assume ELL students have the same prior knowledge as
their English-speaking classmates. Perez and Holmes (2010) also explained how knowing
ELL students’ culture or background can benefit the educator and the student. By
showing interest, educators can improve their students’ motivation, increase class attendance, and improve the student’s self-esteem (Perez & Holmes, 2010). There are different ways to celebrate the students’ cultures such as reading literature from their culture or allowing them to share their heritage with their classmates (Perez & Holmes).

Another conflict for teachers is making connections with the EP students without isolating the ELL population. For example, teachers may also find it difficult to integrate pop culture references in the general education classroom, as this may make ELL students feel excluded (Duff, 2002). Because these ELL students may not have the same prior knowledge, they may feel isolated and like outsiders. Duff provided a study completed in Canadian classrooms where 50 percent of the students in the school were ELL students. In one particular scene, a social studies teacher made several references to pop culture, such as The Simpsons and Ally McBeal. While other students conversed, the ELL students remained quiet. “Unfortunately, the practices excluded most of the ESL students from the local English-speaking discourse community and positioned them as outsiders or outcasts” (Duff, 2002, p. 484). Because ELL students are trying to comprehend the new language as well as references to pop culture, understanding can be difficult.

Implications from the study were that teachers should give media surveys prior to class beginning. Also, when pop culture pervades a conversation, teachers should record their names on the board, so that ELL students can take notes. Finally, ELL students should always be encouraged to share their knowledge of other cultures.
In regard to the sociocultural aspect of educating ELL students, another important area is moral education. Teachers in schools are increasing their focuses on moral education in the classroom. For example, in Missouri many districts have adopted the Positive Behavior Support program (Shaaban, 2005). Shaaban (2005) proposed a framework for teachers to use when incorporating these concepts in the ELL classroom. Many believe that moral education, the “impartment of knowledge, values, beliefs and attitudes that help learners become informed, concerned, responsible, caring citizens who understand and believe in the concepts of ‘justice, fairness, and human welfare,’” (Shaaban, 2005, p. 201) is a teacher and school’s obligation. Shaaban (2005) added that teachers need to be sensitive to cultural differences when they discuss morality.

Another sociocultural factor that researchers said influences ELL education is the classroom environment. LeClair, Doll, Osborn, and Jones (2009) explained how classroom learning environments can help students learn better or be a hindrance to students. In their research, they found that ELL and non-ELL students expressed contrasting perceptions of the same classrooms. It is possible that the ELL students’ experiences in their original schools were more or less structured. In some American classrooms, students may have more liberty to move around the room. This may be a new learning environment for ELL students who come from schools that prohibit freedom to move (LeClair et al., 2009). Although this obviously is not something teachers can change, it is something of which teachers can be aware.

Finally, when educating ELL students, their perceptions of the classroom’s culture are important (LeClair, Doll, Osborn & Jones, 2009). LeClair et al. explored the
perceptions of the classroom environment from the points of view of ELL students and non-ELL students. As research has indicated, they found that perceptions impact student engagement and quality of learning. They discovered that ELL students felt more frustrated with their lower performance in American schools than in their native countries and that they perceived their classroom as more orderly than the non-ELL students (LeClair et al., 2009). The researchers added that the students’ perceptions may have been a result of a less structured experience before entering American schools. Overall, the findings of LeClair et al. (2009) were significant as they remind educators of the importance of remembering the students’ perceptions, since they may differ from other student populations, and that the teacher’s perception often will not parallel that of the ELL student(s) in his or her classroom.

**Linguistics**

Next, linguistics is another area of education that should be considered in ELL education (Perez & Holmes, 2010). Miller and Endo (2004) agreed that the language barrier between teachers who speak primarily speak English and an ELL student can have a dramatic effect on the student’s learning. Because districts have limited ELL classes, most ELL students spend the majority of their school day in a mainstream classroom with teachers whose language they do not understand very well, and, at the same time, the teachers do not understand the students’ languages. Brandon, Baszile, and Berry (2009) argued that this language barrier has the most profound effect on ELL students since the lack of communication can stifle the students’ learning and social experiences. Not only
do the ELL students struggle to communicate with their teachers, but they also lack the peer relationships that the other students have (Brandon et al., 2009).

One of the major challenges with this rapid influx of ELL students, which is probably one of the most obvious, is the issue of language (Flynn & Hill, 2005). The number of bilingual teachers is just not available (Flynn & Hill, 2005). Flynn and Hill (2005) wrote another language concern is that teachers with ELL students have to alter their teaching methods and use of language to communicate more effectively with the ELL students. Their report stated that many teachers are not prepared to meet the needs of these students, and they will admit it. In a recent survey, 82% of teachers in the rural locales reported that they have never participated in professional development for teaching ELL students (Flynn & Hill, 2005). Like Flynn and Hill (2005) noted, “Mainstream teachers with English language learners in their classrooms are not receiving sufficient training in how to foster English language acquisition while also teaching the content knowledge and skills those students need to learn” (p. 3).

When entering American classrooms, ELL students could even experience a language shock. Miller and Endo (2004), too, postulated the role of language acquisition in educating ELL students and found language shock to be a common experience amongst the ELL students they interviewed. Language shock is the feeling of anxiety these students experience when they enter the new community without speaking English, which can be even more exasperating when the student enters a school with a predominate language other than his or her native language (Miller & Endo, 2004). Many ELL students admitted to the researchers that they refuse to speak their native language
for fear of their classmates mocking them or that they refuse to speak English very often until they are more proficient (Miller & Endo, 2004). The researchers shared one story they collected that demonstrated how many ELL students experience confusion:

A Cantonese-speaking family who moved to the United States had two children. One of them, Chu-mei, quickly learned some English and maintained a working knowledge of Cantonese. However, Kai-fong did not have the same experience. He remained an outsider at school, and his only friends were other Asian children. Once he began to learn English, he stopped speaking Cantonese altogether. When his family attempted to converse with him in Cantonese, he would either respond in English or ignore them. Soon, he began alienating himself from home and spending more time with his friends from school. (p. 788)

Just as the Cantonese family experienced language shock, many ELL students experience this confusion of learning a new language and, at the same time, keeping their native identities. Flynn and Hill (2005) wrote that this can definitely impact ELL students’ learning. According to McClure’s (2009) research, even though ELL students may be proficient in using their new language in conversation, this does not necessarily mean they are fluent readers of the language. This learning process usually takes four to seven years, depending on the individual student (McClure, 2009).

Language and linguistics can impact another facet of education, the pedagogical practices of teachers (Miller & Endo, 2004). American curriculum is mostly Eurocentric, neglecting other cultures, which of course causes ELL students to feel unrepresented (Miller & Endo, 2004). For example, one assignment from an American textbook
required students to describe a trip to the dentist, while many of the students had never been to a dentist’s office (Miller & Endo, 2004). Perez and Holmes (2010) wrote, “Ensuring that English language learning students have equal access to content-area curriculum continues to be a challenge for many secondary educators” (p. 32). They added that although many teachers attempt to help ELL students, their lessons frequently fall short (Perez & Holmes, 2010). Fu, Houser, and Huang (2007) also acknowledged the dual nature of the ELL dilemma. Citing the heavy influx of new immigrants in New York City within the past ten years, Fu et al. (2007) explained how this influx of ELL students created concerns for the city’s educational system. They found that mainstream teachers struggled to understand the ELL students’ frustration and expressed their wishes that these students would move faster, while the ELL teachers wished the mainstream teachers addressed the needs of the ELL students on a more individual basis.

In their research, Fu et al. (2007) shared the study of two teachers who collaborated to enhance ELL students’ language and writing development. During their collaboration, the two teachers observed each other’s classes and planned and improved curriculum. At the end of the year, the two teachers reflected that the outcomes were rewarding; they witnessed significant growth in their ELL students’ learning. However, the two teachers recognized that the year had been challenging with the additional time it took to individualize each ELL student’s assignments and to collaborate. This case study presented the challenge of how to balance the general curriculum with the academic needs of these students. Though the collaboration of the two teachers was fruitful, in the end, it created even more questions of how the program could be implemented across the school district with limited budgets and ample curriculum to cover (Fu et al., 2007).
The issue of assessment is another instructional concern in the area of linguistics (Cheng, 2004). She explained that although the teachers devoted a significant amount of time planning, administering, and grading assessments in their daily teaching, the same is not necessarily true for instructors of ELL students. In several studies of the assessment and evaluation practices, teachers expressed the importance of using assessments as instructional tools. Interestingly, while the teachers felt they were in charge and created their own assessments, often their assessments were modeled after mandated external standards (Cheng, 2004).

Because of the increased diversity in American classrooms, teacher education programs need some alterations, according to Simonds, Lippert, Hunt, Angell, and Moore (2008). They reported the critical variable of teacher quality in the area of linguistics is lacking. The clash of cultures is partly to blame, Simonds et al. (2008) explained. This large minority population challenges teachers to use diverse communication skills, for which many have not received training (Simonds et al., 2008). To improve their knowledge and use of linguistics, teachers could attend a professional development session or workshop. Simonds et al. cited one particular workshop that is sponsored by the United States Department of Education, A Teaching Diverse Learners Communication Workshop.

This enhancement program is made possible from the Teacher Quality Enhancement Grant from the United States Department of Education (Simonds et al., 2008). Simonds et al. found in their research that participating in this program helped to change participants’ attitudes about diversity in the classroom. Participants responded to
a modified version of an affective learning scale before the workshop and after the workshop. The results were a significant difference between pre- and post-test means in the area of being more sensitive to students’ diversity. Thus, the researchers concluded that training workshops were effective in preparing teachers for the classroom’s diverse student body.

_Academic Component_

Another essential component Perez and Holmes (2010) postulated should be considered in ELL education is the academic component. Students from different cultures may be used to different instructional practices (Cobb, 2004). Cobb (2004) wrote in order to select the appropriate instructional methods, ELL students should be divided into three groups: (a) newly arrived with adequate schooling, (b) newly arrived with limited formal schooling, and (c) long-term English learners. The newly arrived ELL student with adequate schooling would include students who have been in U.S. schools for less than five years but have attended continuous schooling in their native country (Cobb, 2004). Students who fit in this category moved from a native country with a school system similar to American schools. These students generally make steady academic progress, but they may still have difficulty understanding the American texts because of their language levels.

The second group, the newly arrived with limited formal schooling, are students who have been in U.S. schools for less than five years but had only limited formal schooling experience. Because of this lack of experience, these ELL students may struggle due to the lack of understanding of the school culture and structure (Cobb,
According to Cobb (2004), these students generally have limited literacy and math development, which may lead to poor performance on standardized assessments.

Finally, the third group is the long-term English learner group. This category of students is the group of students who have been in American schools for seven or more years and may have attended several different schools. These students may have experienced varying curriculum and instructional practices because of their different school experiences. This group, according to Cobb, may have more English proficiency for conversational language acquisition but may struggle with the fluency necessary for academic success (Cobb, 2004).

Cognitive Ability

One of the most obvious manifestations of teachers recognizing ELL students’ cognitive abilities comes in the 2001 legislation, No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Wright and Choi (2006) explained NCLB requirements. They noted NCLB requires that schools place ELL students in “high quality language instruction educational programs that are based on scientifically based research demonstrating the effectiveness of the programs in increasing (a) English proficiency; and (b) student academic achievement in the core academic subjects” (Wright & Choi, 2006, p. 3).

The federal legislation of No Child Left Behind made a direct impact on the quality of ELL education as well (Payan & Nettles, 2008). Payan and Nettles (2008) elaborated on the influence of NCLB policies on ELL students’ education. NCLB requires that students be identified if they are English learners and their English
proficiency is measured (Payan & Nettles, 2008). The policy also requires states to assess ELL students along with the other students during annual academic assessments (Payan & Nettles, 2008). Their performance on these tests should be included in the states’ Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP; Payan & Nettles, 2008). Schools have more at stake with the NCLB requirements, which includes higher standards for ELL students. Brown and Souto-Manning (2008) also elaborated on how this rapidly growing minority group is a subject of concern for the nation’s educational success because standardized tests demonstrate lower scores for Latino students.

Teachers are experiencing frustration in this assessment hurdle. Harper and Jong (2009) shared the findings of a qualitative study they conducted in 2006. This study involved 52 teachers, who were experienced in teaching ELL students, to learn more about their perspectives on the national standards. One veteran teacher expressed her frustration with the district’s lack of consideration of her opinion on how to educate the ELL students. She said:

The problem as I see it is that everyone is being treated alike and the materials that are chosen for us…first of all, without any input from me whatsoever. Why aren’t they asking me what I do right instead of inflicting horrid books on me that don’t meet my learner’s needs, that are inappropriate for ELLs? I mean people with over 20 years of experience, and at a level of master teacher and professionalism in our field…There’s something radically wrong…I mean basically you’re driving me out of my classroom. And it’s a shame in a way…to

School districts across the country are responding to the need to prepare all students, including ELL students, for these high-stakes tests (Bernhard, Diaz, & Allgood, 2005). State-mandated standards have been one major concern. Bernhard et al. (2005) wrote that the federal education department has influenced education by emphasizing the importance of research-based practices. Because of the legal and ethical expectations that all student groups be treated equally, teachers must balance their attention between the ELL students and the other students in the classroom (Bernhard et al., 2005). In addition to preparing these students for assessments, teachers are expected and should respect the bilingual potential of these students and the diversity they provide in the classroom (Bernhard et al., 2005).

Despite the increasing ELL population across the country, there is a lack of research in the area of ELL students, their educational process, and their learning outcomes (Chang, 2008). Chang (2008) added to the implications of his study, since NCLB mandates that schools are accountable for all students’ learning, including ELL students. Chang cited a wealth of statistical sources regarding language minority subgroups and their performance gap in comparison to English-speaking students. Just 11 years ago, 32 million people over the age of five years spoke languages other than English. According to the U.S. Census (as cited in Chang, 2008), now there are more than 47 million people in America who speak a different language, which results in 18% of the
U.S. population. Recent assessment scores indicate the low performance of non-English speakers (Chang, 2008).

No Child Left Behind legislation mandates teachers to meet standardized criteria for all students, including subgroups by ethnicity, socioeconomic status, special education, and English proficiency (Cobb, 2004). Although ELL students are exempt from testing the first year of entering American schools, in their second year they are required to complete the same assessment as their EP counterparts. Cobb (2004) stressed that because of this level of accountability, districts are challenged to meet standards with their ELL populations.

Another complication when educating ELL students, despite the obvious language barrier, is the variance in formal schooling experience (Cobb, 2004). Cobb (2004) explained that some students may have experience with structured school days, while others may have not ever attended a school similar to an American school. As districts face these various struggles, those on the front lines are the ones who will lead the way to improving ELL education. These people are the regular education teachers.

Teacher Self-Efficacy

Teachers play a pivotal role in their students’ performance, including ELL students. This feeling of effectiveness is self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). As a teacher interacts with students, instructs, plans lessons, and build relationships, his or her sense of efficacy influences his or her behavior. The teacher’s sense of efficacy also influences his or her attitudes toward students and his or her job (Bandura, 1997). This section will
Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy is a concept that plays a role in nearly any field, from business to sports to education (Bandura, 1997). Bandura stressed the importance of self-efficacy in all occupations because he said personal efficacy beliefs impact the way a person functions in his or her career. Teacher efficacy has been defined as “the extent to which the teacher believes he or she has the capacity to affect student performance” (Tshannen-Moran et al., 1998, p. 2). The social cognitive theory explains the role the individual, beliefs, behaviors, and environment combine to play in a teacher’s self-efficacy. Fives and Buehl (2010) discussed the influences of self-efficacy, which included experience and teaching level. Teachers with more experience tend to exhibit higher rates of efficacy (Fives & Buehl, 2010). Fives and Buehl added that efficacy beliefs have been collected in varying grade levels as well and have indicated that early education teachers tend to exhibit higher rates of self-efficacy than middle school and high school teachers. To assess teacher self-efficacy, Tshannen-Moran et al. (1998) presented a measure that determined teachers’ efficacy in the areas of student engagement, classroom management, and instructional practices.

The Rand Corporation (as cited in Tshannen-Moran et al., 1998), which conducted the first studies of efficacy, grounded their research in Rotter’s Social Learning Theory. The Rand researchers gave credit to Rotter’s 1966 article entitled *Generalized Expectancies for Internal Versus External Control of Reinforcement*, in
which Rotter wrote that the influence of the learning environment has the potential to
overwhelm a teacher’s ability to have an impact on student learning. The Rand
Corporation began the research in this field by adding questions to a survey, which
resulted in the instrument collecting powerful data. In the Rand research, Tshannen-
Moran et al. explained, the researchers found a strong connection between teachers’ sense
of efficacy and their students’ performance. Tshannen-Moran et al. (1998) listed
numerous effects of teacher efficacy. They wrote that teacher efficacy helps to encourage
a teacher to be persistent when things do not go so well, to be more enthusiastic about
teaching, to be more open to others’ ideas, to experiment with new methods, and to
exhibit greater levels of effort in teaching and planning (Tshannen-Moran et al., 1998).
Viel-Ruma, Houchins, Jolivette, and Benson (2010) agreed that self-efficacy may impact
teachers’ academic expectations for their students and even the students’ academic
achievement.

Obviously the positive implications of high teacher efficacy make this an
important subject to research. Another major finding of Tshannen-Moran et al. (1998)
was that teachers with higher efficacy were more likely to stay in the teaching profession.
Viel-Ruma et al. (2010) concurred, saying that they found teachers’ self-efficacy to be
strong predictors of both job satisfaction and job commitment. They added that teachers’
self-efficacy have been shown to overcome effects of negative factors in the classroom.
Klassen, Usher, and Bong (2010) added to the literature regarding the role of self-
efficacy. They wrote that teachers with higher self-efficacy demonstrate higher abilities
in their classroom duties and more confidence in their students (Klassen et al., 2010).
Not only can a teacher experience personal self-efficacy, but he or she can experience collective teaching efficacy. Yeo, Ang, Chong, Huan, and Quck (2008) explained the difference between collective teaching efficacy and personal teaching efficacy. They wrote that collective efficacy addressed the group of teachers and their efficacy as a profession, whereas personal efficacy is the individual teacher’s efficacy (Yeo et al., 2008). In addition to self-efficacy, the value of collective efficacy also plays a part in the field of education (Klassen, Usher, & Bong, 2010). Klassen et al. (2010) defined collective efficacy as “a group’s shared belief in its conjoint capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given levels of attainments” (p. 465).

In order to measure a teacher’s perceptions of a group’s collective efficacy, the teacher will be questioned about the effectiveness of the group of teachers (Klassen et al., 2010). When Klassen et al. (2010) studied groups of teachers from North America, Korea, and Canada, they found that American teachers emphasized more individualistic teacher efficacy than collective efficacy. Yeo et al. (2008) noted that teacher efficacy is context specific and “that a teacher’s competence has meaning only within the context of real world teaching duties and demands” (Yeo et al., 2008, p. 193).

There are many advantages of high efficacy, which include that efficacious teachers tend to address individual students’ needs and devise instructional methods to benefit the students (Yeo et al., 2008). In their research, they studied a group of secondary teachers, and how they perceived their efficacy and relationships with low-achieving students. Yeo et al. (2008) found that teachers with more teaching experience
reported higher levels of personal efficacy. However, they also found that the more experience the teacher had, the lower their perceptions of their relationship with the students (Yeo et al., 2008). Yeo et al. stressed the importance of professional development that not only covers pedagogical information but also helps teachers revitalize their passion for teaching all students.

On the surface, teacher efficacy may not seem very complicated, but there is a dual nature to efficacy. Tschannen-Moran, Hoy, and Hoy (1998) explained that one angle of teacher efficacy is self-efficacy, which is different from self-worth or self-esteem (Tshannen-Moran et al., 1998). Self-efficacy is how well a person believes he or she can do a specific task (Tshannen-Moran et al., 1998). Because teachers can have high efficacy in one area and not another, it is important for the teacher to be asked a specific question in regard to efficacy (Tshannen-Moran et al., 1998). Tshannen-Moran et al. (1998) explained that since the Rand Corporation’s discovery of the conceptual framework of teacher efficacy, many other researchers have molded their own ways of measuring efficacy. For example, instruments have been created to measure efficacy in the areas of special education, classroom management, subject matter instruction, and more (Tshannen-Moran et al., 1998).

Teacher efficacy encompasses two dimensions: (a) the teacher’s internal feelings and (b) external factors. The teacher’s internal feelings, or personal teaching efficacy, are how competent the teacher feels. The second factor, which has been debated, includes the construct of external factors like the outcome of the teaching, the students’ reactions, or other consequences of the teaching (Tshannen-Moran et al., 1998).
This understanding of efficacy is applicable in the following areas of (a) instruction, (b) behavior management, (c) academic expectations, (d) motivation, (e) social cohesion, and (f) inter-classroom dynamics (Yough, 2008). Yough (2008) defined instruction as the teacher’s belief in his or her ability to work with ELL students in reading, writing, and oral communication skills. He added that this term includes the teacher’s sense of efficacy in helping ELL students receive high scores in achievement tests.

The teachers’ level of confidence in their ability to impact learning can depend on past experiences or the school’s culture (Prothero, 2008). Thus, the more experience a teacher has working with an individual student or a population group, the more confidence he or she has in helping these students (Prothero, 2008). Bandura (1997) called these experiences performance accomplishments. One of the forerunners in this field, Bandura argued that experience, as with many things, made people more comfortable with their jobs.

Teacher efficacy is also important in the area of behavior management, which is defined as “one’s ability to convey expectations of behavior, to control disruptive behavior, and to get students to follow rules” (Yough, 2008, p. 5). Another component of the teacher efficacy construct is social cohesion, which refers to teachers’ abilities to encourage “their ELL students to interact with their peers and the extent to which they can get native English-speaking students to accept the other ELL students” (Yough, 2008, p. 6). As for social cohesion, Prothero (2008) wrote that teachers can be successful in this area by designing lessons that allow students to work collaboratively or even to discuss
different cultures. One important fact to note about these areas of self-efficacy is that teachers may vary in their feelings toward the different areas such as (a) instruction, (b) behavior management, (c) academic expectations, (d) motivation, (e) social cohesion, and (f) inter-classroom dynamics (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998).

Teacher Self-Efficacy with ELL Students

Today’s teachers have a daunting challenge ahead of them, but improving teacher perceptions of their self-efficacy would be an important step in improving ELL education. Many times educators have perceptions or biases of which they are not even aware. Lee, Butler, and Tippins (2007) explored how teachers come to their classrooms with preconceived knowledge, values, assumptions, and life experiences on diversity. Lee et al. (2007) explained how their case study of an early childhood teacher evaluated the teacher’s perceptions of ELL students and how her feeling of self-efficacy waned due to her lack of experience. Although the teacher, “Tiffany,” in their case study did struggle in the challenge of teaching her ELL students, she also expressed a feeling of accomplishment and her satisfaction when seeing her ELL students learning.

These experiences can work to build a teacher’s sense of efficacy. Vollmer (2000) conducted a qualitative study, collecting discourse from teachers in a California high school to demonstrate the teachers’ perceptions of the typical ELL student. The questions Vollmer explored were: Is there a school-constructed identity for the typical ELL student? Are there assumptions underlying these constructs? How do teachers’ assumptions impact the ELL students’ behavior and performance? Vollmer (2000) elaborated on previous studies that proved that teacher assumptions can affect classroom
climate to illustrate how these assumptions, which teachers often do not even recognize, can dramatically affect student-teacher interactions and the classroom’s educational cultural climate. One ideology disclosed by Vollmer (2000) is that the “designation of ‘typical ELL student’ lies embedded in a broader discourse about the process of assimilation into American culture and what it means to be an ‘American’” (p. 54).

Vollmer’s (2000) study involved teacher and student interviews and field observations. The ELL students in this study were Russian students. The purpose, according to Vollmer, was to examine the Russian students’ educational experience, from both the perspectives of teachers and students. The interviews Vollmer (2000) collected proved to vocalize some surprising comments from the teachers. For example, in response to how the Russian students were adjusting to their new home, one teacher said,

“Yeah, I would say the Russians seem more confident…One of the things, I think, it’s that their culture prepared them…to fit in here more than other cultures. They were used to demanding to get things and having to wait in lines.” (Vollmer, 2000, p. 58)

The teachers’ assumptions and hidden stereotypes were obvious in their comments, though the teachers did not mean to sound ethnocentric. Vollmer (2000) concluded by explaining that educational issues cannot be separated from dominant ideologies, especially when teachers are not aware that they exist.

When addressing these biased attitudes and discrimination in American schools, one must not only research teacher biases. American textbooks also must be evaluated for
cultural sensitivity, Ndura (2004) explained, since “instructional materials significantly affect students’ development of knowledge and their perceptions of self and others” (p. 143). In her analysis of textbooks in western United States, Ndura (2004) studied how the selected textbooks affected students’ attitudes toward their culture and others’ cultures.

She examined six ELL textbooks in elementary and secondary schools. After analysis Ndura (2004) found seven forms of (a) bias, (b) invisibility, (c) linguistic bias, (d) stereotyping, (e) imbalance, (f) unreality, (g) fragmentation and (h) cosmetic bias. Ndura provided examples like the textbook that illustrated males in stereotypical occupations, using computers and saws, while women were depicted cooking and sewing. Another example of bias was in the area of invisibility, or the lack of illustrating an important part of culture (Ndura, 2004). None of the textbooks, according to Ndura’s analysis, portrayed any type of church or worship, which is an important part of many cultures. The problems with these biases for ELL students are that textbooks portray a skewed view of their new community and culture, as well as confuse them.

To combat biased textbooks, Ndura (2004) said educators should be sensitive to these biases and purchase curriculum or books that come from multicultural perspectives. Also, teachers should supplement textbooks with diverse teaching materials. Teachers need to realize these students are people who live in the real world and should not avoid these topics. Ndura (2004) concluded with providing teachers with professional development opportunities to improve their awareness of cultural sensitivity.

Just as Ndura (2004) mentioned the lack of cultural diversity in the students’ textbooks or curriculum, Watson, Miller, Driver, Rutledge and McAllister (2006) added
to this conversation, researching the lack of cultural diversity in education textbooks. Watston et al. (2006) provided important statistics regarding teacher preparation of ELL students. Citing the National Center for Education Statistics, they said that 41% of teachers have had ELL students in their classroom, but only 13% of those teachers reported having any training or education in this area. Watson et al. studied a collection of textbooks for pre-service teachers, searching for the amount of the material that was dedicated to teaching ELL or culturally diverse students. They found that in the 25 textbooks they selected the percent of content per text ranged from 0 to 3%. Therefore, Watson et al. concluded that many teacher education courses fail to address this area of education.

Besides not feeling prepared to teach this student population, another concern for teachers with ELL students is the amount of time to prepare individual instruction for the ELL student(s). With a heavy influx of new immigrants in New York City within the past ten years, addressing the increasing ELL populations have become extremely complicated (Fu, Houser, & Huang, 2007). Fu et al. (2007) acknowledged the dual nature of the ESL dilemma. Mainstream teachers struggle to understand the ELL students’ frustration and wish these students could move faster (Fu et al., 2007). On the other hand, the ELL teachers wish the mainstream teachers would address the needs of the ELL students on a more individual basis. Fu et al. (2007) shared the study of two teachers who collaborated to enhance ELL students' language and writing development. During their collaboration, the two teachers observed each other’s classes, and planned and improved curriculum. At the end of the year, the two teachers reflected that the outcomes were
rewarding, they witnessed significant growth in their ELL students’ learning (Fu et al., 2007).

The teachers’ attitudes and self-efficacy influence student behavior and student success as well (Tong & Perez, 2009). Although teachers’ overall self-efficacy is important, people’s self-efficacy can vary depending on situations. Topkaya (2010) wrote, “A generalized sense of self-efficacy (GSE), which can be defined as ‘situation-independent competence belief,’ a global confidence in one’s abilities in different situations, has been conceptualized” (p. 144). Therefore, in order to understand teachers’ perceptions with ELL students, one must examine their level of efficacy with this specific population of students.

Not surprisingly, teachers are significantly less confident in teaching students who are ELL when compared to their confidence in teaching non-ELL students (Tong & Perez, 2009). They conducted research among large urban schools in southeast Texas with significant ELL populations and found that one factor in teachers’ attitudes and efficacy was their feeling of not being prepared to instruct or to assess ELL students’ needs (Tong & Perez, 2009). They studied teacher efficacy and attitudes toward ELL students to see if there was a correlation between teacher efficacy and differences in teachers with varying backgrounds. Tong and Perez (2009) found that teaching experience did have an impact on the participating teachers’ self-efficacy with ELL students.

The more experience with ELL students the mainstream classroom teachers had, the more confident they were in their ability to educate the students. In addition to
experience, Tong and Perez (2009) found that the teachers’ education and training in the area of ELL education was related to their sense of efficacy. They explained that teachers who had been certified through alternative routes admitted lower levels of efficacy than those who completed regular certification processes, which may have been because those teachers did not have adequate training in the area of dealing with non-English students (Tong & Perez, 2009). Tucker et al. (2005) agreed that teacher efficacy is one important characteristic of a teacher that has a direct impact on student learning. They researched a teacher-education program designed to promote teacher efficacy with culturally diverse students. Teachers involved in the study were from six southeastern schools who had all received a “D” grade on students’ statewide comprehensive assessments.

Before and after the workshop, teachers completed an assessment regarding their attitudes toward and efficacy when working with culturally diverse populations. Tucker et al. (2005) found that after the training teachers demonstrated an increased level of empowerment on the post-workshop surveys. In addition to finding a correlation between efficacy and student outcomes, they found the teacher-training program successful in improving efficacy with ELL students (Tucker et al., 2005).

Professional development can make a tremendous impact on teachers’ attitudes toward ELL students (Karabenick & Noda, 2004). Karabenick and Noda (2004) assessed a district’s collective teacher attitude toward having ELL students in their classrooms and the differences between teachers who were more accepting of ELL students in their classes. Karabenick and Noda’s (2004) study consisted of data from 729 teachers in one school district. The teachers responded to a Likert scale survey that included 70 questions
related to their experience with ELL students. While 70% of the respondents agreed that ELL students would be welcome additions in their classroom, 43% of the teachers said that they would prefer to have specialized training prior to the ELL students being placed in their classrooms (Karabenick & Noda, 2004).

Also, a significant number of the teachers admitted that they had unfavorable attitudes toward ELL students (Karabenick & Noda, 2004). Fitzgerald (2009) addressed the need for multiculturalism to be included more in the university level curriculum, especially for educators. Since most teachers at some point have an ELL student, Fitzgerald (2009) explained more diverse cultural experiences will prepare English-speaking natives to be more successful in relating to and communicating with ELL students. She questioned the kind of training current students were gaining in this area. An example Fitzgerald (2009) provided was that of a service-learning approach that would require students to volunteer to tutor ELL students.

In-depth teacher education and professional development can help to prepare teachers for the diverse classroom (DeJaeghere & Yongling, 2008). DeJaeghere and Yongling (2008) asserted, “Studies have shown that education programs affect teachers’ beliefs and attitudes about culture and race, but fewer studies have been conducted to assess the effects (or lack thereof) of educational programs on teachers’ classrooms behaviors, or pedagogy” (p. 255).

To assess teachers’ intercultural competence or their perceptions of competence at one school, DeJaeghere and Yongling (2008) applied the M.J. Bennett’s Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (2000). Bennett (as cited in DeJaeghere & Yongling, 2008)
proposed this model to explain how people perceive cultural difference. Intercultural sensitivity is defined as “the ability to discriminate and experience relevant cultural differences” (DeJaeghere & Yongling, 2008, p. 256). Intercultural competence, on the other hand, is “the ability to think and act in interculturally appropriate ways” (DeJaeghere & Yongling, 2008, p. 256). The Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI; as cited in DeJaeghere & Yongling, 2008) was used to measure participants’ responses. Their study found that professional development impacted the teachers’ levels of perceived intercultural competence scores.

Another hindrance for teachers of ELL students can be the teachers’ perception of bilingualism (Brown & Souto-Manning, 2004). The teachers’ negative perceptions of these ELL students can cause these students to be not as successful as they would if the teachers had more confidence in their abilities, according to Brown and Souto-Manning (2008). Brown and Souto-Manning (2008) advised teachers to embrace cultural diversity after assessing personal narratives and institutional discourses to determine social constructions of how different ethnic groups interact in American schools. In one piece of dialogue between an ESL student and his mother, the mother expressed a perception that there are negative connotations with being in an ESL program and that there is shame in having difficulty speaking English. These perceptions led to a deficit for the students because the students then tend to neglect their original heritage and language, instead of accepting and maintaining their first language (Brown & Souto-Manning, 2008).

Three schools found a way for Latina students to become more successful in the American classroom by helping the students embrace their heritage (Borrero, 2009).
Borrero explained that the 30 participants, who were all from immigrant families with Mexican heritage, became bilingual translators for their families and tutors for other English Language Learner students. Because the teachers who participated in the study explained the strengths of being bilingual, the students were more apt to improve their English proficiency. One eighth grade participant said, “Now I can help my dad if he goes to the bank” (Borrero, 2009, p. 61).

To demonstrate their new positions as translators, the students conducted the parent-teacher conferences, helping their non-English speaking parents communicate with their teachers, and were more involved around the classroom (Borrero, 2009). Gordon and Debus (2002) addressed the relationship between teacher efficacy and effectiveness with ELL students. They wrote, “Teachers’ experience and perceptions of their teaching efficacy will moderate their implementation of teaching processes, as will their perception of their students’ capacity to manage learning tasks and their perceptions of overall workload” (Gordon & Debus, 2002, p. 485).

According to their research, their teachers’ self-efficacy has dramatic implications for their choice of pedagogy, their response to students’ attempts to learn, their ability to control their behavior, their use of classroom discussions, their level of stress on the job, and their level of satisfaction with their job. Because teacher efficacy has been found to be connected with improving a teacher’s effectiveness, it is reasonable to state that teachers with higher levels of efficacy are more effective with more difficult students, including ELL students (Gordon & Debus, 2002).
Implications for Teachers of ELL Students

As was found in the literature review, teachers are instrumental in students’ success, especially ELL students. In order to make their transition smoother, McLaughlin (2002) suggested educators who dispel common myths about ELL students could help teachers to better approach their instruction. The following myths were contradicted: (a) children learn new languages easily, (b) younger children learn faster, (c) students should spend more time in a second language classroom, and (d) all children learn new languages in the same way. These myths are explained in greater lengths to guide American teachers in how to help the ELL be more successful in language attainment, as well as other subjects. Educational reform is necessary to make this melting of cultures more appreciated, McLaughlin (2002) wrote. Instead of focusing on the negative implications of having ELL students in the classroom, teachers should appreciate the diversity their presence brings.

Understanding the importance of teacher efficacy has direct implications for students’ academic success in American schools. One purpose of the Tucker et al. (2005) study was to provide teachers and administrators with information that they can use to improve teacher attitudes and effectiveness with ELL students. As they noted:

“By developing an understanding that multiple external factors (e.g., social, cultural, economic, political, school, neighborhood, family, parent) can impact academic and social behaviors of children, teachers can come to appreciate that each child must be taught to achieve under whatever conditions exist.” (Tucker et al., 2005, p. 32)
Understanding a student’s culture can make them feel more welcomed in the school building and more comfortable with their teachers (Miller & Endo, 2009). Miller and Endo (2009) agreed with the significance of teachers understanding their students’ cultural background. They added, “Regardless of what they choose as their approach to teaching, teachers should be sure to provide structure in the form of clear directions and to communicate with students individually” (Miller & Endo, 2009, p. 789).

There are several recommendations that teachers can use at any grade level classroom with diverse populations (Taras & Rowney, 2007). First, educators need to be aware of the diversity and how that might look in the classroom. Also, educators should listen to all thoughts and comments, and encourage students to do the same, so as to prevent groupthink and to encourage diversity (Taras & Rowney, 2007). The instructor should be sure to create diverse student groups and to not segregate groups based on nationality or ethnicity. Finally, students should be instructed to do all of their assigning and brainstorming as a group, and to avoid working too independently (Taras & Rowney, 2007).

In America’s schools, there is a continuing controversy revolving around cultural pluralism (Brandon, Baszile, & Berry, 2009). By painting the demographic picture of America’s education force, which for the majority includes a monolingual White group of teachers, Brandon et al. argued that current teacher education curriculum is ill prepared for the multicultural, multilingual demand of the American student population. Also, they postulated the negative implications of ethnocentric educational practices that belittle
other languages or cultures by suggesting other languages might hinder a student’s academic future. Brandon et al. wrote:

By framing our critical linguistic moments as critical race counterstories, we are attempting to not only challenge the view of language—especially one’s home language—as an expression of cultural/racial identity, but to also emphasize the importance of encouraging prospective and practicing teachers to interrogate their own linguistic experiences and the ways in which they might influence one’s understanding of and approach to linguistically diverse students.” (p. 50)

Gaining pre-service experience is critical for teachers who will work with ELL students, Fitzgerald (2009) wrote. She suggested that college students enrolled in teacher education programs receive more focus on educating ELL students. Education programs could add courses to the curriculum that would provide this information and experience, or programs should offer novice teachers an opportunity to work in the community with ELL residents. She also added that on-site or clinical hours could include time spent with ELL students in the ELL or mainstream classroom (Fitzgerald, 2009). Gatbonton (2008) echoed the importance of teacher preparation no matter what student group is being taught. She studied the novice and experienced teachers’ pedagogical knowledge and found that although both had similar in knowledge in the area of teaching ELL students, the two group’s efficacy was different. More experienced teachers expressed higher efficacy because they had experience in this area. More experience during college could help future educators feel more comfortable with ELL students.
Another recommendation for educating ELL students is to use certain responses to help ELL students increase language learning (Reading Today, 2007). Teachers might encourage ELL students to elaborate upon their answers, especially if they give a wrong answer. The ELL student may know the answer but provide the wrong English term (Reading Today, 2007).

Students should always be allowed to use their native language in the classroom, if they are comfortable doing so. Karathanos (2009) wrote that teachers should allow students to embrace their native language to ensure understanding of content knowledge. Because most mainstream teachers are not bilingual, they may not know how to use this primary language. Karathanos (2009) recommended that teachers obtain teaching materials in the primary language or use new technology to aid the students. For example, the Internet can provide numerous sites to help students in nearly any language. Also, teachers should also allow ELL students to be silent. Their silence may not be evidence that they do not understand, but that they do not understand how to respond in English (Reading Today, 2007).

Overall, it is apparent that teachers cannot be too prepared before they enter the classroom, especially if they will have ELL students. The conversation of exploring ELL students’ cultures and how to approach their differences can, in fact, bring teachers and students together.

Summary

Overall teachers’ approaches to their ELL students can have a major impact on students’ attitudes and academic outcomes. The teacher who gains more experience will
have an increased sense of effectiveness in educating ELL students. As rural school
districts gain more ELL students, these teachers need to be prepared for the challenges
that come with these students, as well as the gift of diversity. Thus, teacher efficacy in
regard to ELL students is a critical issue in American education today and the educational
process of all classrooms of tomorrow. In Chapter Three, the researcher will share the
design and methods of the mixed-method study conducted in three school districts in
rural Missouri.
CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

As rural school districts experience the demographic shift, classrooms are becoming more inclusive communities for ELL students. Brooks, Adams, and Morita-Mullaney (2010) explained that in many schools the ELL students have been and are viewed as the responsibility of the primary ELL teachers. However, with accountability standards and the increasing trend for inclusion of ELL students, mainstream classroom teachers are held just as responsible for the pedagogy of ELL students and their academic growth (Brooks et al., 2010).

This study aimed to provide insight into the perspectives of the mainstream classroom teachers and their sense of self-efficacy with educating ELL students. This study sought to examine the conceptual measure of teacher self-efficacy by measuring teachers’ perceptions of their strengths and needs in relation to ELL students, and to collect their different experiences in teaching this student population. This chapter will outline the research design and methodology to seek these perspectives. The researcher will discuss the research problem and explain the purpose of the study. Next, the researcher will state the two research questions that she aims to address. Third, the researcher will share the research design, including the participants and the
instrumentation to be used. Finally, the researcher will explain how she plans to analyze the data.

Research Problem

As the population of ELL students increases in rural schools, educators struggle with how to better educate these children. Many studies have targeted urban school settings or the students with their ELL teachers. However, as Yough (2008) found, past studies have focused on teachers’ attitudes and perceptions of ELL students in the mainstream classroom. He added that he had difficulty uncovering studies that focused on the teachers’ sense of self-efficacy in relation to this particular student population. Not only is the body of research on this particular subject lacking, but so are the state’s education programs in regard to preparing teachers to educate ELL students. DeJaeghere and Yongling (2008) asserted, “Studies have shown that education programs affect teachers’ beliefs and attitudes about culture and race, but fewer studies have been conducted to assess the effects (or lack thereof) of educational programs on teachers’ classrooms behaviors, or pedagogy” (p. 255).

Another missing area in this body of research is teacher self-efficacy in rural schools. Cobb (2004) explained how recent research indicates the majority of studies in the area of teacher efficacy with ELL students have been conducted in urban areas or parts of the country that have been directly impacted by the influx of ELL populations, such as Texas and California. Although it is important to understand the urban teachers’ perception, rural teachers may have entirely different views on ELL students (Cobb, 2004). Because teachers in rural schools are experiencing this demographic phenomenon as well as urban teachers, this study allowed them to express their experiences.
Purpose of the Study

With the increase of ELL students in rural areas, such as central and southwestern Missouri, there is a need to learn more about the teachers in these areas and their sense of self-efficacy in regard to minority student groups. Therefore, this study focused on the mainstream teachers and rural schools to add to the body of literature on this topic.

Another purpose of this study is to provide a foundation for future studies in this area. As the student population of ELL students increases in rural schools, this study will lead administrators and educators in the direction of addressing the area of self-efficacy in which the teachers express they need the most help or additional information.

Research Questions

The researcher’s goal when designing this study was to seek answers to the following research questions:

1. What are the perceived levels of self-efficacy beliefs among mainstream teachers of ELL students in rural schools in the following areas:
   a. Instruction
   b. Classroom management
   c. Academic expectations
   d. Motivation
   e. Social cohesion
   f. Inter-classroom dynamics

2. How do teachers in rural schools describe their experiences with ELL students?
Research Design

The design for this study was a mixed-method approach, which included both qualitative and quantitative data collection. This study focused on mainstream teachers in three rural school districts in Missouri. Woolfolk (as cited in Shaughnessy, 2004), who has studied teachers’ sense of self-efficacy for more than 20 years, advised researchers studying this topic to widen their data collection to include both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. She wrote that, “each approach can tell us some things and not others” (as cited in Shaughnessy, 2004, p. 155). Using both methods researchers could collect more valuable information than by using only approach.

This particular mixed-method study, which Mertens (2009) called a “portrait,” (p. 5) was in the form of a cross-sectional survey. The researcher used a modified form of Yough’s (2008) instrument, the Teacher Efficacy of Teaching English Language Learners (TETELL; see Appendix A). The voluntary survey collected quantitative data in the forms of descriptive data, teachers’ responses to various statements regarding self-efficacy, and the demographic information provided by the participants (Yough, 2008).

To collect qualitative insight as well, the researcher modified Yough’s survey by adding open-ended questions (see Appendix A). This qualitative data was necessary for the researcher to collect the participants’ perspectives. Mertens (2004) explained the value of phenomenological research for the purpose of “understanding and describing an event from the point of view of the participant” (p. 240). In this study, the survey format was especially appropriate so as to understand the various perspectives on the teachers’ sense of self-efficacy. The researcher found it necessary to collect individual commentary
on the topic (Shaughnessy, 2004). These open-ended questions provided an opportunity for the teachers to share their beliefs about their individual effectiveness and attitudes toward educating ELL students. Their insight was needed to portray their realities and experiences with this sub-group of students.

Participants

The participants in this study included teachers from three Missouri rural school districts, the School District A, School District B, and School District C. Approximately 851 teachers altogether, 432 from School A, 290 from School B, and 129 from School C, were invited to participate in the study.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of School District</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
<th>Number of ELL Students</th>
<th>Percentage of Student Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>District A</td>
<td>4,139</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District B</td>
<td>5,960</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District C</td>
<td>1,292</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Data provided by participating school districts.

First, these participating schools were selected because the school districts in which they were located were categorized as the demographic size the researcher was seeking, which was rural. Another reason these districts were selected was because they were convenience samplings, and the researcher was located near the districts. Fink
(2009) defined convenience samplings as samplings where participants are available and willing to take the survey. A third reason these districts were selected was each participating school also had a significant population of ELL students in relation to the school’s size, which ensured that most of the teachers had experience with ELL students at some point in their careers. Each of these schools also had unique situations that contributed to the ELL population growth.

School District A

School District A is located in central Missouri and is home to approximately 18,000 people. The school district presently has 73 ELL students from kindergarten to 12th grade, which has doubled from the previous school year of 2010-2011. The district employs one full-time ELL teacher and two ELL teachers’ aides. The one ELL teacher admits that she feels strained to maintain a close relationship with all of the ELL students she services.

The city of School District A is home to a university. Many of the ELL students in this district have connections with the university. This past year, the university had an enrollment of 960 international students from 40 countries. Many of these international students pursue graduate degree programs and bring their families to the United States with them, which results in international students enrolling in District A. The university personnel predict a continued increase in the international student population in the upcoming years, since the international population has increased 63% in the past decade. Thus, it is very possible that School District A will also experience an influx in ELL students in the future.
School District B

School District B presently has 91 ELL students. The district employs two ELL teachers who travel to the district’s different elementary and middle schools providing services for the ELL students. The ELL students spend the majority of the day in their regular classrooms. The town in which School B is located has a population of approximately 4,000 people. The district is unique in that it serves the surrounding communities, as well as the dependents of a military installation. According to district’s superintendent, of the 91 ELL students these students speak 22 different languages, representing a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds.

School District C

School District C, is by far the smallest school district in the participating pool, but it serves a large population of ELL students, even more than the previous two districts. The school has 140 ELL students and employs 3 ELL full-time teachers. The district’s city is home to 4,000 residents. Ten percent of the school’s students qualify as ELL. Piacentini, Valentine, and Cockrell (2007) explained that many of the school’s ELL students are children of the migrant workers who live in the area to work at a local factory.

Instrumentation

The researcher obtained the data by administering the modified Teacher Efficacy of Teaching English Language Learners (TETELL) survey (see Appendix A) designed by Michael S. Yough (2008). The researcher collected data of how teachers perceive their effectiveness and ability to teach ELL students. This instrument included items based on Tschannen-Moran and Woolfak Hoy’s Teachers’ Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES)
(Yough, 2008). Yough (2008) took these particular items and modified the statements to ask participants to consider ELL students. The teachers’ ratings on the TETELL provided quantitative data that allowed the researcher to analyze the teachers’ perceptions of their effectiveness with ELL students.

Subscales of the TETELL were: (a) instruction (19 items), (b) behavior management (8 items), (c) academic expectations (4 items), (d) motivation (3 items), (e) social cohesion (8 items), and (f) inter-classroom dynamics (5 items). Questions from each subscale asked participants to rate their ability on a Likert scale from one to five, ranging from “Nothing” to “A Great Deal.” These questions asked participants to rate their sense of self-efficacy in regard to helping their ELL students catch up with their peers in reading, writing, or oral communication skills, and prepare them for state-mandated standardized achievement tests (Yough, 2008).

Yough built validity for his survey after testing his instrument during a study at a Midwestern school. He issued the survey to 92 teachers, and then performed a Cronbach’s alpha to determine inter-item reliability to find that the respondents did answer similarly to the connected items (Yough, 2008). After creating the instrument, Yough (2008) performed analysis in the form of a Cronbach’s α to determine inter-item reliability. He also conducted a principal components analysis with varimax rotation to determine the presence of different factors operating within the measure. His analysis of the Cronbach’s α indicated very high inter-item reliability (.973). The varimax rotation identified eight factors accounting for 77.788% of the variance. Yough explained that he excluded the
eighth variable as his analysis found that the eighth factor did not reveal any clear patterns with only two items having correlations > .40.

It is important when selecting an instrument since the instrument should have content that is valid. Mertens (2005) explained how researchers should be concerned with their chosen instrument’s content validity, to ensure the instrument covers the appropriate content. The author chose the TETELL as the survey questions the teachers in the varying strands of teachers’ self-efficacy, providing a depth of inquiry.

In addition to Yough’s TETELL (2008), this researcher added open-ended items to allow participants to express their concerns and opinions on this topic (see Appendix A). The following are the two open-ended responses the survey asked participants:

1.) What training or professional development have you completed to help in your instruction of ELL students?

2.) What are some experiences in teaching ELL students? Feel free to give specific examples.

The first open-ended question on the survey addressed the first research question regarding teacher efficacy. This question collected insight from teachers regarding their professional development experiences in the area of ELL education. The teachers’ responses to this question provided background into the experience of the teacher, which may have an impact on the teachers’ sense of efficacy.

The second open-ended question addressed the second research question. This question provided teachers with the opportunity to give anecdotal data unique to their
personal experiences with ELL students. The open space allowed teachers to share stories about their classroom experiences. These personal examples cannot be found in a number selection, but are varied and highly individualized.

These two open-ended items gave participants the opportunity to provide specific information and experiences. They also allowed for a more qualitative data collection so that the research would include rich, descriptive data. Mertens (2005) added that qualitative data, especially in the form of open opportunity for participation allowed the researcher to provide authenticity, or the “balanced view of all perspectives, values, and beliefs of the participants” (p. 257). At the same time, the researcher took the participants’ time into consideration while writing the open-ended section of the survey by only adding two questions to the TETELL (see Appendix A).

Data Collection

To administer the survey, the researcher utilized an on-line survey tool, www.zoomerang.com. Mertens (2005) wrote that on-line tools are becoming increasingly more popular since they are convenient for the participants, and they allow researchers to quickly receive data and analyze the survey results. In this study, the researcher constructed the survey using the items from the TETELL. In addition to the TETELL items, the survey asked participants to provide the number of years of teaching experience and the level at which the educator teaches. There were open spaces on the on-line survey instrument for each of the open-ended questions detailed previously. Participants were permitted to respond in as much detail as they wanted on those particular questions.
As Mertens (2005) advised, the prototype of the instrument was piloted prior to sending the survey to the three school districts. The researcher administered the on-line survey to a group of middle school teachers to ensure the instrument was valid and reliable before an e-mail was sent to all of the participants. To administer the surveys to all teachers in the three districts, the researcher first requested and received permission from the appropriate school district officials (see Appendix B).

Mertens (2005) also suggested that researchers send a request to participants before administering a survey. The researcher created three e-mail groups, one for each participating school district. The three school districts were placed in their own e-mail group, enabling the researcher to track the teachers’ school locations. The researcher sent an e-mail invitation requesting the teachers’ participation along with an explanation of the researcher’s purpose and a link to the electronic survey (see Appendix C). This tool was convenient for the participants since it was in electronic form and did not involve mailing the responses back to the researcher. By creating three different groupings, this allowed the researcher to ensure the teachers’ data was reflected in their school district’s data. At the same time, this tool ensured confidentiality since names were not submitted with the surveys, and there was no way of tracking the respondents’ exact names.

Each respondent received a sampling number to help keep the results organized and to protect the anonymity of the participants. After giving the participants one week to respond to the survey, the researcher sent all participants a reminder e-mail (see Appendix D) requesting they complete the survey, if they had already not done so. The researcher also left refreshments in the teachers’ workroom in each participating school to express gratitude for their participation.
After allowing the participants two weeks to finish their surveys, the researcher printed the results from the on-line data source and stored them in a locked filing cabinet prior to analysis. The teachers’ agreement to participate in the on-line survey was an implied agreement, so there were no signed agreements to shred. Once the results were established, the researcher forwarded the study’s results to all participants who had requested the findings.

*Human Subjects Protection and Other Ethical Considerations*

Throughout the research process, the researcher strictly adhered to the University of Missouri-Columbia’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) guidelines. This was particularly important because the study involved human subjects. Prior to conducting the research, the researcher requested permission through the University of Missouri’s IRB process and was granted the appropriate permission. The researcher requested permission from each of the three participating school districts, following each district’s research policy (see Appendix B).

After receiving permission to conduct the research, the researcher followed IRB policies, protecting the anonymity of the participants and ensuring that the participation was voluntary. In addition to the on-line survey, all participants received an informed consent letter (see Appendix E), which explained that if they chose to complete the survey, they were giving an implied consent. The researcher followed ethical considerations during this study as well, including the fact that participants had the option and right to stop the survey at any time during the questioning.
Data Analysis

Since this study followed a mixed-method approach, the researcher collected quantitative data in the form of statistics and survey results, and the qualitative data of the participants’ responses to open-ended questions. To analyze the bulk of the quantitative data, the researcher received data from the on-line survey tool, which configured the data for each question, giving total participants’ responses for each survey item. Next, the researcher categorized the responses for each subscale together to discover descriptive statistics, more specifically in the area of means for each subscale. Yough (2008) constructed the instrument so that the questions for the different subscales, such as behavior or instruction, could be extracted and grouped according to their specific area of efficacy. The researcher used the on-line survey tool to extract the questions and to group so that research question number one could be answered for each area of efficacy.

After receiving the data, the researcher used the computer program Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) to analyze the data. The data was imported from the on-line survey. To seek answers to the first research question, which addressed the perceived levels of self-efficacy beliefs among mainstream teachers of ELL students in rural schools, the researcher was then able to determine if teachers had a higher level of efficacy in any of the noted areas or if the teachers expressed low efficacy in any of the areas, (a) instruction, (b) behavior management, (c) academic expectations, (d) motivation, (e) social cohesion, or (f) inter-classroom dynamics.

In order to find this, the researcher used the program to calculate the means for the subscales and present the data for the subscales in ascending order. First, this was done for each of the three individual schools, so that each district had its own list of
subscales in ascending order. This allowed the researcher to find which areas of efficacy in which the teachers in each district felt the strongest and the weakest.

Also, the researcher analyzed the data to find a mean for each subscale for all of the districts combined. The three districts’ data were then input as one collective group so as to calculate the means for each of the subscales. These means were also presented in ascending order, so that the researcher could identify which subscales were the highest and lowest for all of the participating teachers. This information answered the first research question.

In order to seek answers to the second research question, which was how do teachers in rural schools describe their experiences with ELL students, the researcher collected the participants’ answers to the two open-ended questions on the survey. The teachers’ responses helped to describe their experiences working with ELL students and provided more anecdotal data for the researcher. To analyze the qualitative data, the researcher used Miles and Huberman’s (1994) sequence of steps for qualitative data analysis. The researcher was searching the data to find how teachers in rural school districts described their experiences with ELL students.

These steps were as follows:

1. The researcher gave codes to the first set of field notes retrieved from the online data source.
2. The researcher noted personal reflections in the margin.
3. The researcher sorted and sifted through the materials to identify similar phrases, relationships between variables, patterns, and common themes.
4. The researcher identified patterns and processes, commonalities, and differences within all of the participants’ responses.

5. The researcher began elaborating a small set of generalities after recording consistencies discerned in the on-line database.

6. The researcher examined those generalizes in light of a formalized body of knowledge in the form of constructs related to teachers’ sense of self-efficacy while teaching ELL students.

After conducting the quantitative and qualitative data analysis separately as described above, the researcher then conducted a mixed-method data analysis by reviewing each districts’ lists of means for the teacher self-efficacy subscales. These subscales, such as instruction, behavior management, etc., were compared to the districts’ common themes that emerged in the qualitative piece of the study. This provided a more thorough portrait of the teachers’ perceptions in this area and found whether or not there were commonalities between the quantitative and qualitative pieces of the survey. Finally, the researcher reviewed the highest and lowest area of efficacy for the entire collection of teachers and compared this data with the common themes that emerged in their open-ended responses.

The additional demographic information collected during the study was kept organized with the other data in case it was needed. The modified version of Yough’s (2008) TETELL allowed the researcher to collect detailed data on the teachers’ perception of self-efficacy in the seven areas. Using a mixed-method instrument and method of analysis provided significant input into educators’ views on educating ELL students.
Summary

This research provided insight into the teachers’ self-perceptions of their efficacy in regard to ELL students. This data could be significant for administrators as they approach the issue of how to handle the increase of their ELL student population and how to provide professional development opportunities to improve teacher efficacy. This data also could be powerful for teachers to inform them in what areas they struggle with efficacy and ELL students.

The next chapter, Chapter Four, includes an analysis of the data collected during this research. In Chapter Five, conclusions from this research and future implications of the study’s outcome will be noted.
CHAPTER FOUR
PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Introduction

Presented in this chapter are the findings from the study and a statistical analysis of the data received pertaining to the research questions discussed in Chapter Three. This research was conducted to collect the teachers’ perceptions of their teaching experience with ELL students. The researcher modified Yough’s (2008) TETELL, which allowed educators to reflect on their efficacy with ELL students. The Likert scale items were imported into an on-line survey program, Zoomerang, so that educators could respond on their computers. The researcher added two open-ended items to the survey allowing educators to elaborate on personal experiences with ELL students.

This chapter outlines the results of the study. First, the chapter is anthropomorphic, providing an organization of data analysis and describe the participants from the three school districts. Next, the chapter reviews the research questions. Finally, the chapter includes the analysis quantitative and qualitative findings of this study.

Demographic Data

To organize the data, the researcher analyzed the data from each participating school district independently. After analyzing the individual school district’s results, the researcher combined the findings to create one large group of participating educators. First, the researcher examined the descriptors of the participants to understand who
responded to the survey from each school district, which included their level of teaching, educational background, and years of teaching experience. After collecting the demographic data, the researcher exported the raw data from the Zoomerang program into the SPSS program so that the researcher could analyze the data.

Finally, after analyzing the quantitative data, the researcher followed Miles and Huberman’s (1994) sequence of steps for qualitative data analysis to search for common themes in the participants’ responses. Again, the participants’ responses were analyzed by individual school district and then analyzed as one large pool of answers to examine commonalities amongst the three. This chapter presents the researcher’s findings for both research questions.

Overview of Study

This research, which involved an on-line survey through Zoomerang.com, was delivered in the form of three survey links, one to each school district. The instrument allowed teachers to provide demographic information about themselves prior to answering questions, such as years of experience, the grade level they teach, and education level. Altogether, 210 educators responded to the surveys, which included 105 from School District A, 68 from School District B, and 39 from School District C.

School District A

Approximately, one-half of the participants in this study were from School District A. Of the 271 teachers in School District, 105 teachers responded. The participants had a range of educational background and teaching experience. For participants’ teaching experience, see Table 2.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1-5 Yrs.</th>
<th>6-10 Yrs.</th>
<th>11-15 Yrs.</th>
<th>16-20 Yrs.</th>
<th>More than 20 Yrs.</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Data provided by survey.*

Just as the participants’ teaching experience varied, the teachers’ levels at which they taught also did. The majority of the participants teach at the middle school and junior high school levels, while the other half teach at elementary and high school levels. In addition to mainstream teachers, two ELL teachers and three administrators completed the survey, so the study collected their perspectives as well. See Table 3 for grade level of teaching for participants from School A.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ELL (K-4)</th>
<th>Elementary (5-9)</th>
<th>Middle School (10-12)</th>
<th>High School</th>
<th>Admin.</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Data provided by survey.*

Of the 105 participating educators, 66 (62.9%) participants admitted they have never had any formal training, college courses, or professional development in the area of educating ELL students. The others who noted training cited a few mini-sessions in
college classes, in-house training with their school’s ELL teacher, or their own teaching experience as training.

School District B

From School District B, which has approximately 240 teachers, 68 educators (28%) responded to the survey. The years of teaching experience and levels at which the participants taught were varied. The teachers’ experience in School District B were balanced with nearly the same number of teachers in each category of experience (See Table 4).

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching Experience for Participants from School District B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Years of Teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Data provided by survey.*

As for the participants’ grade level of teaching, the majority of teachers from School B were elementary teachers. In addition to mainstream teachers, three ELL teachers and two administrators chose to complete the survey; thus, their perceptions were included as well. See Table 5 for grade level information about the participants.

Table 5

Grade Level of Teaching for Participants from School District B

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ELL (K-4)</th>
<th>Elementary (5-9)</th>
<th>Middle School (10-12)</th>
<th>High School</th>
<th>Admin.</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Data provided by survey.*
Of the 68 participants, 36 (52.9%) said they had little or no formal training with educating ELL students. The other educators who noted training expressed experience with professional development training or a college course at the undergraduate level during their education coursework.

School District C

As the smallest district of the three, it was expected that this would be the smallest participant pool; 39 of 98 teachers responded to the survey. Thus, 40% of the teachers in School District C responded to the survey. The majority of teachers from School District C had more than 11 years of teaching experience. For background information on the participants from School District C, see Table 6.

Table 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching Experience for Participants from School District C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-5 Yrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Data provided by survey.

The majority of teachers from this district who completed the survey also taught from middle school through high school. In addition to mainstream teachers, two ELL teachers and one administrator completed the survey. See Table 7 for grade levels taught by participants.
Table 7

Grade Level of Teaching for Participants from School District C

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ELL (K-4)</th>
<th>Elementary (5-9)</th>
<th>Middle School (10-12)</th>
<th>High School</th>
<th>Admin.</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Data provided by survey.

Twenty of the 39 (51.3%) teachers said they have never had formal training or professional development in educating ELL students. The other participants who said they had training either received training in college coursework or through professional development offered by their school district. Four of the participants who said they did have training indicated it consisted of one-on-one or small group training with their district’s ELL teacher.

Table 8

Education Level of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
<th>Number with Bachelor’s</th>
<th>Number with Master’s</th>
<th>Number with Specialist</th>
<th>Number with Doctorate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>District A</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District B</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District C</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Data provided by survey.
Results

After providing participants adequate time to respond to the on-line survey regarding teacher efficacy with ELL students, the researcher printed the web site’s reports to analyze the data. The participants’ responses to each question were made on a 5-point Likert scale. The modified TETELL provided ample data to answer both research questions. After gathering the quantitative and qualitative data from the instrument, the researcher exported the data from Zoomerang.com, into an Excel document. The data was then imported into SPSS so that the various analyses could be performed using the computer program.

Research Question One

The study sought to answer the research question: What are the perceived levels of self-efficacy beliefs among mainstream teachers of ELL students in rural schools in the following areas: (a) Instruction, (b) Classroom management, (c) Academic expectations, (d) Motivation, and (e) Social cohesion, and (f) Inter-classroom dynamics.

The researcher organized the survey questions as they pertained to each of those following sub-scales of teacher efficacy. The data was analyzed so that the results were placed on the 5-point Likert scale, similar to that of the participants’ survey. The statistical program arranged the data so that the mean of the participants’ responses for the sub-scales were placed in ascending order. The numerical data was then translated into the original meaning of the number (1=Nothing, 2=Very Little, 3=Some, 4=Quite a Bit, and 5=A Great Deal). The findings were as follows for the three participating districts.
School District A

In School District A, the area in which the teachers expressed the lowest level of self-efficacy was that of instruction. According to the survey results, the lowest mean was Instruction with 3.036 and a standard deviation of 0.083 (see Table 9), which refers to “Some”. The participants responded below 4.0 in the other five sub-groups as well. Applying the definition the researcher originally used for instruction, the 3.036 rating implies that the participants felt that they could impact their ability to work with ELL students to help them catch up with their peers in reading, writing, and oral communication skills to some extent.

The participants expressed their highest area of self-efficacy was in the area of Classroom Management with a mean response of 3.944, which represented “Quite a Bit” or that the participants were confident in their “ability to convey expectations of behavior, to control disruptive behavior, and to get students to follow rules” (Yough, 2008, p. 5). The participants expressed levels of efficacy in the other sub-scales between “Some” and “Quite a Bit.” Participants’ responses ranged from 3.036 to 3.944. On an average, their responses to the all questions were “Some,” with their responses to Classroom Management closest to “Quite a Bit.” Therefore, overall, participants did not express high efficacy in any area related to educating ELL students.
Table 9

Means for each sub-scale from School District A

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-Scale</th>
<th>Mean Result</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instruction</td>
<td>3.036</td>
<td>0.803</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interclassroom Dynamics</td>
<td>3.413</td>
<td>0.705</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Cohesion</td>
<td>3.493</td>
<td>0.657</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Expectations</td>
<td>3.525</td>
<td>0.789</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>3.750</td>
<td>0.713</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Management</td>
<td>3.944</td>
<td>0.737</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Data provided by survey. Means were out of a Likert scale of 5. 1=Nothing, 2= Very Little, 3=Some, 4=Quite a Bit, and 5=A Great Deal.

School District B

After calculating the means of each sub-scale for School District B, the list was arranged in ascending order. The area in which the educators from District B expressed the least amount of efficacy was instruction (see Table 10). The average mean response for participants from School District B was 3.050, which represents the response of “Some.” Again, the participants indicated that they could impact ELL students’ instruction to some extent, but there is room for improvement in this area. The mean responses for all of the sub-scales ranged from 3.050 to 3.929, so it is understood that on an average, participants responded between “Some” and “Quite a Bit.”
Table 10

*Means for each sub-scale from School District B*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-Scale</th>
<th>Mean Result</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instruction</td>
<td>3.050</td>
<td>0.840</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interclassroom Dynamics</td>
<td>3.390</td>
<td>0.790</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Cohesion</td>
<td>3.500</td>
<td>0.704</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Expectations</td>
<td>3.515</td>
<td>0.813</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>3.773</td>
<td>0.771</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Management</td>
<td>3.929</td>
<td>0.777</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Data provided by survey. Means were out of a Likert scale of 5. 1=Nothing, 2= Very Little, 3=Some, 4=Quite a Bit, and 5=A Great Deal.

*School District C*

At School District C, the sub-scale the teachers expressed the least amount of efficacy in was instruction. The mean result for the participants was 3.249 with a standard deviation of 0.814 (See Table 11).
Table 11

*Means for each sub-scale from School District C*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-Scale</th>
<th>Mean Result</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instruction</td>
<td>3.249</td>
<td>0.812</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Expectations</td>
<td>3.329</td>
<td>0.887</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interclassroom Dynamics</td>
<td>3.395</td>
<td>0.877</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Cohesion</td>
<td>3.521</td>
<td>0.714</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>4.000</td>
<td>0.629</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Management</td>
<td>4.026</td>
<td>1.075</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Data provided by survey. Means were out of a Likert scale of 5. 1=Nothing, 2= Very Little, 3=Some, 4=Quite a Bit, and 5=A Great Deal.

To interpret the numerical data, the researcher applied the original designation to the numbers. In the area of Instruction, the educators’ mean response was 3.249, which is an average response of “Some.” Therefore, participants expressed that they felt that they held some effectiveness in this area, but there was definitely room for growth. Responses from School District C reflected an overall perception of being able to do “Some” to “Quite a Bit” in all six sub-scales. None of the values from the overall participation pool reflected a mean of “A Great Deal” in any of the sub-scales.
Distances Combined

After analyzing the survey results by individual school districts, the data was combined. The sub-scale of Instruction was the lowest, with an overall mean of 3.249 and a standard deviation of 0.814. The following table (Table 12) represents the overall means in the six sub-scales in ascending order.

Table 12

Research Question 1: What are the perceived levels of self-efficacy beliefs among mainstream teachers of ELL students in rural schools in the following areas?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-Scale</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instruction</td>
<td>3.249</td>
<td>0.814</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Expectation</td>
<td>3.328</td>
<td>0.887</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interclassroom Dynamics</td>
<td>3.395</td>
<td>0.877</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Cohesion</td>
<td>3.522</td>
<td>0.714</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>4.000</td>
<td>0.628</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Management</td>
<td>4.026</td>
<td>0.876</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Data provided by survey. Means were out of a Likert scale of 5. 1=Nothing, 2= Very Little, 3=Some, 4=Quite a Bit, and 5=A Great Deal.

As the researcher reviewed the results from the three participating school districts, a pattern emerged from the study’s findings. In every district, instruction was the first sub-scale on the list, meaning that this was the area in which the educators felt the least
self-efficacy. The mean of the combined districts’ responses was 3.249, which represents the response of “Some.”

The last sub-scale on the lists was Classroom Management with ELL students, meaning that the educators feel the most self-efficacy in this area. On an average, the combined mean for Classroom Management was 4.026, representing the response of “Quite a Bit.” Thus, the participants felt comfortable in the area of managing ELL students’ behavior. The next figure (Figure 1) demonstrates how closely the results were in each of the three school districts, as well as the combined districts’ means.

Figure 1. Means of Teachers’ Perceptions of Self-Efficacy in Each Sub-Scale. Teachers responded 1 to 5 on a Likert scale. 1=Nothing, 2=Very Little, 3=Some, 4=Quite a Bit, and 5=A Great Deal.
Research Question Two

The second research question was as follows: How do teachers in rural schools describe their experiences with ELL students? The researcher included an open-ended prompt at the end of the survey asking teachers to describe their experiences with ELL students. To analyze the qualitative data from the teachers’ responses, the researcher first analyzed their responses according to their school district. As the researcher read and coded the responses, three common themes emerged in each district. Overall, four themes emerged from the three districts. The most dominant theme in all three school districts was frustration, which was directed at a lack of resources and training. Other lesser themes that emerged from the participants’ responses were (a) making connections, (b) diversity, and (c) positive experiences.

School District A

Teachers were asked to describe their experiences in teaching ELL students. This question gave teachers the opportunity to express their personal experiences. In their responses, teachers listed a variety of nationalities represented in this school district, which included students from Libya, Mexico, Morocco, Korea, Niger, China, and France. After reading and coding the responses, three themes emerged from School District A’s data, which were (a) frustration, (b) making connections, and (c) thinking positive.

Frustration. The most prominent theme in the teachers’ responses from School District A was one of frustration. Participants responded with words like “struggle,” “challenging,” and “unprepared.” Of the 71 participants who responded to this question, 19 shared some feeling of negativity. One middle school teacher who has taught more than five years said, “I have had both positive and negative experiences. I do know how it
feels to try to be the best teacher for my ELL student, but also feeling guilty taking the time away from other students.”

One high school teacher went so far as to write that he or she did not think ELL students should be allowed to attend public schools until they can speak English. This teacher wrote, “It can be frustrating to know that you are to teach students who do not understand the English language.” Another teacher was also brutally honest. The middle school teacher, who has taught in between 16 and 20 years, wrote:

I have had several and coached a few in sports too. Sometimes the ELL kid is his biggest problem. One student had me for half a year and was reading well, but was lazy in general…These kids aren’t perfect either. Just like their classmates, some of them are just little con artists, spoiled babies, or kids with a rotten home life.

A sub-theme under frustration was that participants were frustrated with having little time to prepare adequately, having little support, or having little means to communicate with the ELL students. Several teachers mentioned “little support,” “very little help given to teachers,” or something similar. One elementary teacher with more than 16 years of experience shared his or her feeling of inadequacy. He or she wrote:

Basically, they [ELL students] are put in your room and you are supposed to wing it and do the best you can. They may be taken out 30 to 60 minutes on a good week for ELL instruction. It could be overwhelming for a new teacher.

One junior high teacher, who has taught more than 20 years, also agreed that having more support would be helpful. He or she wrote:
Our ELL teacher’s caseload is way too large and she travels between buildings. She often is in another building at the time her students here need her. She is stretched way too thin, so I don’t count on her for anything.

Just as the mainstream classroom teachers wrote that they would prefer more help for their students, the district’s ELL teacher seemed as if he or she wanted to be more helpful. In response to the same question, the ELL teacher expressed a reciprocal frustration with the mainstream classroom teacher. He or she said, “It is hard to get all of the teachers to use the recommended accommodations with their ELL students. It would be nice if teams of teachers would work with ELL teachers more.”

Another sub-theme under the umbrella of teacher frustration was the teachers’ perception that they lacked preparation for educating ELL students. Teachers mentioned taking just one class in college or that no training has been offered to them. One middle school or junior high teacher of more than 11 years wrote, “I feel like I need additional professional development to do a better job, but I am not aware of opportunities for further training in this area.”

Making connections. The next theme noticeable in the educators’ responses was that teachers emphasized the importance of building relationships with the ELL students in order to improve their impact on them. Of the 71 responses, 12 commented on the importance of making connections with the students, whether it be with their families or their cultures. Several educators commented on how important it was to meet the ELL students’ parents and to learn more about the students’ culture.

One elementary teacher stressed the importance of getting to know the ELL student as an individual and making connections between cultures. He or she wrote, “You
must build a relationship with the student. Find out their language and life. This goes a long way toward getting them excited about our way of life.”

Another middle school teacher, with more than 11 years of teaching experience, wrote how remarkable he or she thought it was that these students learn the classroom material, as well as interact with their English Proficient peers “despite the complex nature of a classroom environment.” In addition to explaining the importance of making connections with the ELL students, one participant wrote about the importance of helping ELL students make connections with their peers. A 20-year-veteran teacher at the junior high level said that he or she has the same expectations of all students. He or she wrote:

In my class, it is essential for my students to respect themselves, others, and property. They are expected to be positive and helpful to others. I instill in my students the sense of family in that they are supposed to support each other no matter what their background may be.

Participants also mentioned ways they have to make connections with ELL students in their classrooms. One teacher wrote that he or she tries to learn words from the ELL student’s native language. Another teacher wrote that he or she pairs ELL students with English Proficient students, using the “buddy system.”

Positive Experience. The final theme that emerged, a less dominant theme than the other two, was that despite the challenges, many of the teachers said that having ELL students in their classrooms was still a positive experience. Of the 68 who responded to this question, 11 of the participants responded with positive anecdotes or kind words about their past ELL students. Several teachers commented on the positive experience of watching the academic and social growth in their ELL students. One teacher wrote:
I had a student from Korea with no English from the past, who left my class reading on a third grade reading level. This year I have a student from Libya who spoke no English until August and is now reading on a second grade reading level.

One junior high teacher with nearly 20 years of experience said, “They are some of the most fun kids in class. I love watching them interact with other students and being successful in my class.” Other teachers wrote that many times their experiences with ELL students have showed them that these students have a strong work ethic, learn quickly, and enjoy working in small groups.

School District B

In School District B, 52 out of the 68 participants chose to respond to the open-ended question that provided them the space to share their personal experiences. After reading and coding all of their responses, the three commonalities within the responses were that of (a) frustration, (b) the wide diversity within their ELL student population, and (c) making connections.

Frustration. Similar to School District A, many teachers in School District B wrote how challenging it is to teach ELL students. Approximately 19 of the participants expressed a negative perception of their teaching experiences. Educators used words like “frustrating,” “struggle,” “impossible,” “challenge,” “difficult,” and “lack of information.” One teacher wrote:

Teaching ELL students is becoming more difficult as the years pass. We are expected to cater to them and less is expected of the student and the student’s family to help them adjust and learn. In most cases, ELL students shouldn’t be put
into classes until they can speak and comprehend a certain amount of the English language, appropriate to their grade level. In my experience, it impedes the other students’ learning.

A sub-theme related to the participants’ frustration was their lack of time and support in this area. Similar to participants in School District A, several teachers said they would like more support. One elementary teacher with between 11 and 15 years of experience wrote, “We don’t have time in our over crowded rooms, with numerous students needing one-on-one time, to give one-on-one time to a student just because they do not speak the language.” Another teacher repeated this sentiment, writing that large class sizes make individual accommodations very difficult for teachers. He or she wrote:

One student I had before spoke limited English. His native Arabic required that I type out text and use an online translator. Unfortunately, I fell behind and didn’t get much done for him due to my need to prep for all of my other students.

One of the school district’s ELL teachers expressed frustration, along with the mainstream classroom teachers. He or she wrote:

We actually only see our ELL students once or twice a week due to large numbers and a shortage of ELL personnel. I sometimes feel like we have to abandon our newcomers due to time constraints and our caseload…I do try to regroup my students in regards to their language levels, but I am split between two schools and have limited time.

Overall, many teachers shared that their frustration stemmed from lack of preparation, lack of time, or lack of self-efficacy with ELL students. Another teacher
explained how her previous experience in Texas contrasted with her recent experience in a rural school. He or she wrote:

My experience in Missouri has been very different. Maybe it being a new program in the district is the reason. The perception of ELL is different as well and not well received by all. Maybe due to lack of information or required professional development for the regular classroom teacher.

*Diversity.* The second theme that emerged from the data was the diversity of the ELL students in the district. Out of the 52 respondents, 12 made reference to the range of diversity of the district’s ELL population. Participants explained in their responses that their students were from all around the world and spoke many different predominant languages, including Arabic, French, Spanish, Chinese, Korean, and German.

Because of this district’s proximity to a military installation, the background of their ELL student population was more varied than the other two participating school districts, and several participants made mention of this fact. One teacher wrote:

We often get non-English speaking children in our district, and they can be from anywhere in the world. Often the parent available does not speak English either. The district pulls the student a little bit each week to have the ELL teacher work with them, but there is no support in the classroom.

The diverse ELL population not only resulted in difficulty in linguistics, but it also meant that teachers have to be prepared for the multiculturalism. Participants from School District B repeated the importance of understanding how the ELL students are often from different cultures. One elementary teacher wrote that he or she even had a student who moved from a jungle in Panama and did not speak or read English. The
teacher said this new student had never even seen a computer, and he was scared to use the restroom or go to the cafeteria because there were so many other students.

*Making connections.* The third theme with School District B’s responses was regarding teachers’ efforts to make connections, with 11 participants commenting on this area. The teachers responded about how they found ways to make the ELL students feel welcome despite the language barrier. One teacher wrote, “We need to let ELL students know that they are not alone in the classroom. If they feel secure with you or with their class, they will perform better.”

Another teacher wrote specific ways he or she has made connections with ELL students. He or she explained:

The activity that I have the most success with is Show-N-Tell. We also make “passports” and visit the country where my ELL student is from so the other students can learn about their culture. This week we are in China.

The elementary teacher who had the new student from a Panama jungle also shared a unique experience. He or she wrote:

This student came from a village where there were only 20 other students and most of the other students were his cousins. One day during lunch, another teacher picked up a piece of paper and drew a tic-tac-toe board on the paper and laid it down in front of him. The ELL student’s face lit up with excitement, and I finally saw the first smile since he had come to school. He quickly drew an “X” on the board. It seems that all that this student needed was something familiar…After that I knew what I had to do to get him to come out of his shell.
Despite the students’ grade levels or the teachers’ years of teaching experience, the teachers shared assorted ways they have approached educating their ELL students. Some teachers wrote about using peer mentors, while others wrote that using on-line translators have been helpful. One common strategy that many mentioned using was that of visual aids. By playing show-and-tell or consistently using photographs, teachers felt like they were able to connect better with their students.

_School District C_

Of the 36 participants, 25 responded to the open-ended questions to provide their experiences with ELL students. After reading and analyzing the participants’ responses from School District C, three common themes emerged, (a) frustration, (b) making connections, and (c) positive experiences.

_Frustration._ The first theme was the expression of frustration, with seven participants expressing negative emotions regarding their experiences with ELL students. The word “difficult” was used seven times throughout the responses. Other words educators used to express their frustration were “limited,” “trouble,” “struggling,” and “disappointment.”

One source of the teachers’ frustration focused on the difficulty of instruction. Several participating teachers echoed the difficulty of teaching when the students “lacked the vocabulary” needed to understand the teachers’ lessons or to speak in class. One teacher remarked on the annual assessment students are required to take. He or she wrote, “I think it is unrealistic to think that we can have them ready for a standardized test in a year. It takes more time than that for them to truly understand our English vocabulary.”
One sub-theme that emerged under the guise of frustration was the difficulty teachers experienced in finding materials and in finding time to make accommodations. One teacher wrote that he or she has experience with ELL students who spoke no English and limited English, but she was frustrated that it took so long to obtain appropriate reading level materials. “It took me five years to get a book for them,” she wrote.

Other teachers explained that they would appreciate more training or professional development in working with ELL students. Several educators commented on how helpful their district’s ELL teacher has been, when he or she was available. One teacher wrote, “It has been difficult trying to figure out the strategies that will be the most effective and productive.” It appeared that many teachers learned how to educate their ELL students through trial and error or by observing of their district’s ELL teacher.

**Making connections.** In another theme the responders discussed their feelings of making connections with their ELL students, with six educators contributing to this theme. Several participants from School District C addressed the importance of providing ELL students with a sense of community. In the responses, participants addressed the need for educators to relate to ELL students by getting to know them as individuals. One elementary teacher expressed how disappointed he or she was at first when an ELL student would not show up for the Math Club meetings. However, the teacher discovered that this student could not attend the meetings because his father worked at the local food processing plant, and there was no way for the student to get a ride home.

Another teacher described his or her experience fostering a relationship with the ELL students and their families. The teacher explained how he or she began a program entitled a Family Literacy Home Visit program that enabled teachers to visit students’
home to emphasize socialization and to improve the partnership between school and home. The teacher said, “This has been the most powerful activity I have developed. The children and parents are most generous and appreciative to see the general education and ELL teachers visiting them in their cultural environments.” Building relationships was important to another educator who wrote that getting to know the students better and relating to them helped their ELL students to open up and to interact more with their peers.

Positive Experiences. Although the educators expressed their frustration, they also expressed their opinions that their school district was improving in its instruction of ELL students. A third theme that five participants seemed to agree on was that they have had positive experiences with their ELL students. One elementary teacher gave credit to his or her school for making positive strides in this area. He or she wrote:

My experience has been overall good…better than it was before. Numbers are numbers no matter what the language. In addition, we have been blessed with good ELL teachers in this building. Working with these teachers can accomplish a great deal.

Another teacher expressed similar sentiments. He or she wrote:

In the past, I have felt that our ELL program is a joke. Students seemed to have played while in ELL, rather than doing their work. Now that there is more push-in with our ELL students, I feel the focus has narrowed and the students are working harder.
Many of the educators expressed the encouragement they find in watching their ELL students grow academically. “I have always enjoyed teaching ELL students. It is a joy to see them catch on to new words daily,” one teacher wrote.

**Districts Combined**

As the qualitative data from all three school districts were combined, it was apparent that the participants’ responses paralleled three themes, (a) frustration, (b) making connections, and (c) positive experiences. However, one districts’ participants expressed an additional theme, (d) diversity within the ELL student population.

First, many of participants from the three districts wrote that teaching ELL students is difficult and, at times, frustrating. Of the combined 148 responses to this open-ended question, 45 educators expressed frustration. In all three school districts, participants responded with similar terms like “frustration,” “difficult,” “challenging,” and “impossible.” Their frustration focused on four sub-themes. Teachers expressed frustration with lack of resources, lack of time to adequately prepare for ELL instruction, and lack of support. Teachers also expressed they would like more training in the area of ELL instruction so they could serve their students better.

A second theme that emerged consistently throughout all three districts was making connections. Of the 148 responses, 30 participants stressed the importance of building relationships with their ELL students. They also wrote about different strategies they found to be effective during their experiences allowing their ELL students to share their cultures and ethnic backgrounds with their peers. Educators’ responses explained how they have discovered the influence of building relationships with ELL students, whether this would be by discussing their cultural backgrounds or by visiting their
homes. Two sub-themes emerged related to the theme of making connections. Participants in all three districts stated that making connections with the ELL students’ families was important for the students, their parents, and the teachers. Another sub-theme that emerged was that of making connections with the ELL students’ cultures. Participants related that they felt relating to the diverse cultures benefited the ELL students and their English Proficient peers.

A third theme recurring in all three districts was that despite the difficulty of teaching ELL students, many educators were positive about having them in their classroom. Of the 148 responses, 16 people added a positive note to their remarks. Their positive comments also shared that they thought that their schools were working on improving their ELL instruction, even if the districts could be more proactive in this pursuit. This was a positive outlook despite the common frustrations the educators seemed to share. There were two sub-themes related to positive experiences. One was that participants shared positive experiences with the students. The second was that the teachers were positive about future training in the area of ELL instruction.

Finally, the fourth theme that emerged during the study, which was mainly contributed by School District B, was that of diversity. Of the 52 responses from District B, 12 remarked on the district’s diverse demographic student population. The two sub-themes related to diversity were that participants acknowledged their ELL students’ diverse education backgrounds and their ELL students’ diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

A description of the common themes is provided in Figure 2.
Summary

After reviewing the quantitative and qualitative data, the researcher found common patterns between the responses from three school districts. Although the three districts were in different parts of Missouri and have a different demographic population of ELL students, the teachers’ experiences were similar. In Chapter Five, the researcher will investigate the findings from the research analysis and discuss the relationship between this study’s findings and previous research addressing this topic. The researcher will also provide recommendations for future research. Appendixes also will available as
attachments to the paper following the list of references. The appendixes will include graphs displaying additional data from the study.
CHAPTER FIVE
FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This researcher set out to discover teachers’ perceptions of their efficacy with English Language Learners and their personal classroom experiences. In this study, the researcher collected and analyzed more than 200 on-line surveys from educators in rural Missouri to provide insight into education of ELL students from the teachers’ perspectives. Analyses of the participants’ responses were investigated in this study to discover areas of low self-efficacy and to explore their personal experiences with ELL students in the mainstream classroom.

Restatement of the Problem

As the ELL population continues to grow in rural school districts, teachers are challenged to offer each student a quality education (Brooks, Adams, & Morita-Mullaney, 2010). Teachers make a tremendous impact on students’ performance and academic experiences, so teachers’ perspectives were invaluable to this body of research. Teacher efficacy can influence both teachers’ performance and students’ academic experience (Yough, 2008). As the population of ELL students increases in rural schools, educators struggle with how to better educate these children.

Another aspect to the problem is that many studies targeted urban school settings or the students with their ELL teachers, but it is difficult to find any studies that focus on teacher perceptions in rural school districts. Another missing link in the past research is
to focus on the teachers’ attitudes and perceptions of ELL students in the mainstream classroom.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to find the perceived levels of self-efficacy beliefs among mainstream teachers of ELL students in rural schools in the following areas: (a) Instruction, (b) Classroom Management, (c) Academic Expectations, (d) Motivation, and (e) Social Cohesion. There may be future implications for how to prepare future educators by learning how teachers perceive their effectiveness in these areas. This knowledge could also be used to guide professional development for educators already in the classroom.

Another purpose of this study was to investigate how teachers’ perceived their experiences with ELL students in their classrooms. The purpose of the qualitative piece of the study was to paint a narrative of these teachers and their interpretation of the happenings in their classrooms with ELL students. By collecting the multiple perspectives and analyzing their responses, the researcher found that common themes emerged.

Findings of the Study

*Research Question One*

After analyzing the quantitative data of this study, the researcher found that the teachers expressed the lowest perception of self-efficacy in the area of instruction. This area encompasses how effective they feel about their teaching, their instructional strategies, and their ability to assess their students’ learning. As a collective whole, the teachers expressed a perception that they can have “Some” impact in the area of
Instruction. Close behind, though, were three more areas that teachers expressed a mean of “Some,” which were Academic Expectations, Interclassroom Dynamics, and Social Cohesion. The participants, on an average, expressed that they felt they could impact the final sub-scale of Classroom Management with ELL students “Quite a Bit.”

Research Question Two

In response to the second research question, the researcher found that the teachers echoed several themes. These themes were found in all three school districts and were related to their perceptions regarding experiences with ELL students. First, educators expressed frustration with their experiences, whether it be due to lack of preparation, lack of time, lack of training, or lack of attention from school officials. Participants also expressed frustration with having to devote more time and resources to ELL students, while taking time away from their other students who did not need the same services. One participant even stated that ELL students should not be allowed to enroll in public schools until they were proficient in English. Many of the responses from the three districts echoed the responses of participants from different districts.

Another theme that emerged was that the educators found value in making connections with their ELL students. Two sub-themes under making connections participants shared were the value of making connections with the ELL students’ families and with their cultures. One teacher related their idea of teaching her class about the ELL students’ culture so that they can understand his or her culture better and appreciate the student’s background.

Third, educators expressed positive experiences, despite their frustration. Participants expressed positive experiences in the classroom with their ELL students, and
they also expressed positive viewpoints on receiving more training in the area of ELL instruction.

Finally, several participants commented on the diverse group of ELL students their district serves. Several teachers from all three school districts listed the diverse nationalities of their ELL students, which included Korean, Japanese, Chinese, Arabic, Spanish, and Panamanian. Teachers described their students’ diversity in ethnicity as well as diversity of educational background.

Limitations and Assumptions

Although steps were taken to minimize the effects of this study from being skewed by limitations and assumptions, a few were noted. This study was impacted by the following factors:

1. The study was limited to the participants of the three rural school districts in Missouri, and the participants were educators from the districts the researcher selected.

2. The study was limited to the educators who chose to complete the survey. The survey was optional, therefore, only those who took the time to respond were included in the study.

3. The assumptions and biases of the researcher must be noted because the researcher was a teacher prior to conducting the researcher. The researcher had experiences with ELL students in the mainstream classroom.

4. The study was limited to the assumption that all the responses given by the participants from rural Missouri school districts were factual and accurate.
5. The study was limited to the perspectives of the educators in the districts. The study did not share the perceptions of the ELL students and/or their parents in regards to the education in rural Missouri.

Conclusions

The results of this study indicate that many teachers believe they can affect the instruction of ELL students to some extent. However, many of the teachers admitted that they could do more to improve their efficacy and their instruction of ELL students. The findings indicate that the participants questioned their effectiveness in other areas as well, including their impact on social academic expectations, interclassroom dynamics, and social cohesion. The participants expressed that they perceived that they had room for improvement in these areas as well. This could have implications in the classroom since, as Yeo et al. (2008) wrote, there are advantages to high efficacy, which include more effectiveness with students and that efficacious teachers tend to address students’ needs more.

Another interesting conclusion of this study is that teachers expressed a dichotomous perspective of their experience with ELL students. On one hand, the teachers wrote about the challenge of teaching these students along side their English Proficient students, and the educators’ frustration with the lack of preparation and resources they received from their school districts. On the other hand, most of the teachers also wrote about how rewarding it was for themselves and their EP students to have ELL students in their classrooms. The educators commented on the ELL students’ cultural contribution to their rural classrooms. From these mixed messages from the participants, the conclusion was drawn that the educators would improve their self-
efficacy with additional communication on this topic and training in how to improve their
instruction with ELL students.

Discussion

Research Question One

The first research question reflected the educators’ perceptions of their efficacy
with ELL students. The teachers’ lowest area of efficacy in all of the districts was in the
area of instruction. This study’s findings echoed the previous research, which emphasized
the difficulty of educating students whose predominant language is not English.

One component of instruction has to do with assessments and standardized evaluations.
The survey asked participants how effective they feel in preparing ELL students for
standardized testing. On an average, teachers responded “Some” on these particular
items, revealing their insecurity in this area. Bernhard, Diaz, and Allgood (2005)
discussed the impact of standardized testing on ELL education, and how the government
and teachers’ perceptions on this matter differ. This study’s findings are similar.

Research Question Two

The open-ended questions at the end of the survey provided participants the
opportunity to share their personal experiences with ELL students. Most of the
participants answered the questions with detailed accounts of their classroom
experiences. Although there were a handful of responses that were unique, overall, many
of the responses echoed other participants’ experiences. After collecting responses from
all three school districts, the researcher found four themes: (a) Frustration, (b) Making
Connections, (c) Positive Experiences, and (d) Diversity.
The most common theme amongst the teachers’ responses was one of frustration. Many of the teachers wrote that their frustration came from a lack of preparation or training to prepare them to educate ELL students. This finding reflected Karabencik and Noda’s (2004) study which found that nearly half of the teachers polled stated they would like to have more training prior to receiving an ELL student in their classroom. Durgunoğlu and Hughes (2010) also asserted how prevalent teachers’ uncertainty of how to educate ELL students is in the classroom today.

Another point of frustration was the annual standardized assessment of ELL students and how the school districts are accountable for their performance. One teacher said he or she did not think it was possible for the students to be successful on these tests when they are just beginning to learn the English language and the cultural norms that come with learning. Harper and Jong (2009) wrote about teachers’ perceptions of standardized tests and historically, ELL students do score lower than their EP counterparts on standardized tests. Another contention regarding ELL students taking standardized tests is the fact that although the ELL students may be learning to read the English language, this does not mean they are now fluent readers or fully understand what they are reading (McClure, 2009).

One of the most dramatic statements of this study was made by one teacher who wrote about his or her belief that ELL students should not be allowed in American public schools until they can speak English proficiently. Although the response was the participant’s opinion, it was an example of Vollmer’s (2000) ideology. He wrote that many teachers in America may not even realize it, but they have biases toward their ELL
students and believe in American assimilation, or the idea that students should be more “American” before they can receive an American education (Vollmer, 2000).

*Making connections.* Another common theme that emerged from approximately 30 participants was the importance of making connections. Taras and Rowney (2007) wrote about how paramount it is for ELL students to have teachers who accept their diversity, and who appreciate them as individuals and not based on their predominant language. By making connections with ELL students, teachers give these students a more comfortable association with school. Chang (2008) concurred, explaining how teachers who connect with their students decrease a cultural conflict the ELL students may be experiencing.

In this study, several teachers wrote about their ideas for making connections with their ELL students. One teacher shared an idea to learn about the student’s native country, so the whole class will know about his or her previous home. These examples exemplify Perez and Holmes’ (2010) advice, since they found that making connections with ELL students’ culture can increase motivation, class attendance, and the students’ confidence.

*Positive Experience.* This study found the teachers were proud of their students’ achievements, and they were glad to see them learn. Like these findings, Lee, Butler, and Tippins (2007) discovered that one of the subjects in their case study, “Tiffany,” also felt a sense of accomplishment after watching her students learn new concepts. Many of the participants in this study responded like Tiffany and reported the joy of having the multiculturalism in their classroom and having the experience of getting to know ELL students.
Diversity. The fourth theme, and the least prominent, was the discussion by teachers the diversity of their ELL population. In Participant B’s surveys, more than 10 nationalities were represented, and a school official from District B reported the district having more than 90 different languages represented. Just as the participants in the study expressed, Flynn and Hill (2005) wrote about the difficulty mainstream teachers can have teaching students of different languages. Teachers in this study expressed the more increased challenge of teaching a classroom that may have five ELL students, who all speak a different language, have different cultural norms, and who are at varying levels of English proficiency.

Implications for Practice

Educators and leaders at rural schools should use these findings to understand the importance of providing training to mainstream teachers in the area of ELL instruction. All teachers should be trained to implement differentiated instruction and effective strategies that would benefit ELL students. At some point, most educators will have an ELL student in their classroom. This study provided the teachers’ perspective on this matter, and many of the participants expressed frustration in not having more experience or training with ELL students. Many of the participants also noted that there were no professional development opportunities in their regions to help them gain efficacy.

Another implication that educators should take from this study is that university officials should consider their teacher preparation courses and seek to meet the teachers’ need to learn how to educate ELL students. This could mean an additional required course for college students preparing to become teachers or altering the curriculum of a required course to include guidance in how to teach ELL students.
A third implication for practice is in the area of addressing teachers’ frustration in the field of educating ELL students. Although ideally professional development would provide guidance in this area, many districts are suffering from budget cuts in all areas, including professional development funding. To address the need for teachers to overcome their frustrations with lack of resources and lack of training, school districts could provide in-house training within their buildings so that teachers who have found effective instructional strategies with ELL students can share their experiences with other teachers who may need assistance. Many times, as one expressed in the teachers’ responses in this study, there are teachers who have backgrounds or previous experiences with ELL students who could share their ideas with other teachers.

In addition to frustration with their lack of training, many educators who participated in this study admitted that their school districts are understaffed in the area of ELL. Districts with a significant ELL population should respond to this situation by hiring additional ELL teachers to lighten the load of the mainstream teachers and to provide better services for the ELL students.

Recommendations for Future Research

During the research process, the researcher found little research in this area of efficacy with ELL students; therefore, there are many ways future researchers could use to approach the topic. Because of this hole in research, there are many opportunities for future research, which might include exploring the ELL students’ parents perspective of their sons or daughters education in rural American schools. Another idea for future research would be to seek the ELL students’ perception of their education, as well as their
teachers’ perceptions. The researcher could compare and contrast the perceptions to find commonalities within the ELL experience.

With the increasing levels of accountability, another idea for research would be to analyze the teachers’ perspectives, similar to this study, and compare their experiences with their ELL students’ performance on standardized testing. One test the state requires of all ELL students is the Accessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State (ACCESS) for ELL students. A researcher could use the results of the districts’ ACCESS scores to compare and contrast to the teachers’ levels of efficacy with ELL students.

Another possibility for future research expands the topic into the area of higher education. Just as these K-12 school districts experience an influx of ELL students, universities are experiencing rapid growth in their international student population (Chen, 2011). Most of the international students are not proficient in the English language, and they present similar challenges to the university professors (Chen, 2011). A future study could explore the professors’ sense of self-efficacy with this ELL population.

Finally, another potential study would be for a researcher to explore the ELL students’ perception of their education as a qualitative study. The researcher could hold a focus group or interviews to discover students’ insight into their experiences. Overall, a researcher interested in this topic would be providing valuable research into an important area of education, since at this time there is a limited body of literature on this topic.
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Viel-Ruma, K., Houchins, D., Jolivette, K., & Benson, G. (2010). Efficacy beliefs of


Yough, M. (2008, October). *The development of the Teacher Efficacy for Teaching the
English Language Learner (TETELL) scale. Poster session presented at the annual Ohio TESOL Conference, Columbus, OH.
Appendix A

Below is the print version of Yough’s (2008) Teacher Efficacy of Teaching English Language Learners (TETELL). The researcher used the on-line survey tool, www.zoomerang.com, to administer the survey to participants electronically.

How many years have you been teaching?

___ 1-5 years  ___ 6-10    ___ 11-15     ___16-20      ___ more than 20 years

At which level of education do you teach?

_____ ELL Teacher     _____ Middle School 5-8     _____ Administrator

_____ Elementary K-4   _____ High School 9-12     _____ Other

Educational Background

_____ Bachelor’s Degree     _____ Master’s Degree

_____ Specialist’s Degree    _____ Doctorate

Ethnicity (optional)

_____ White       _____ African-American     _____ Asian

_____ Middle-Eastern  _____ Native American    _____ Other

Age ____________
Directions: The intent of this survey is to help researchers better understand the kinds of challenges in teaching English Language Learners (ELL) students. Please rate how certain you are that you can do each of these things described below. Please answer based on your ability today. Your answers are confidential and anonymous.

How much can you do to ......

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nothing</th>
<th>Very Little</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>Quite a Bit</th>
<th>A Great Deal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

control the disruptive behavior of your ELL students in the classroom?

motivate students who show low interest in school work?

motivate your ELL students to interact with native English speakers in the classroom?

motivate your ELL students to believe they can do well in school?

help your ELL students to value learning?

instill in your ELL students a sense of belonging in your school?

motivate your ELL students to follow classroom rules?

engage an ELL student who is excessively shy?
How much can you do to....

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nothing</th>
<th>Very Little</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>Quite a Bit</th>
<th>A Great Deal</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

in a single year, prepare ELL students to take state-mandated, standardized achievement tests?

O O O O O

calm an ELL student who is loud or disruptive in class?

O O O O O

courage your ELL student to join an extracurricular activity?

O O O O O

establish a classroom management system with each group of ELL students?

O O O O O

adopt new instructional techniques for ELL students that local or state administration wants you to implement?

O O O O O

influence/impact the instructional approach your peers take toward ELL students?

O O O O O

motivate your native English-speaking students to understand what it is like to live in an environment where their language is not the language predominantly spoken?

O O O O O

119
How much can you do to ......

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Nothing</th>
<th>Very Little</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>Quite a Bit</th>
<th>A Great Deal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>assure your ELL students will stand up for themselves out on the playground?</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>assure that your ELL students will be accepted by their native English-speaking peers outside of the classroom?</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>assure that your ELL students will stand up for themselves on the bus or on the way to or from school?</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>assure that ELL students will be accepted by their native English-speaking peers inside the classroom?</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>convey your expectations for academic performance to ELL students who have arrived to the U.S. with no previous formal education?</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>implement strategies to ELL students who are unable to read or write in their native language?</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>assess the performance of ELL students who are unable to read or write?</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
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</table>
For the following two questions, please write any response that comes to mind regarding your experiences with ELL students. Please be open and honest with your answers.

*What training or professional development have you completed to help in your instruction of ELL students?

*What are some of your experiences in teaching ELL students? Feel free to give specific examples.
Appendix B

Dear Superintendent and Participating School District:

I am a doctoral student with the University of Missouri-Columbia. I am writing to request permission to conduct research in your school district. My research aims to seek teachers’ perceptions of their teaching experiences with English Language Learners in rural Missouri. This topic is important to education as more ELL students are enrolling in schools in rural communities, and I know that your school district has experienced this phenomenon as well.

Upon your permission, I will send an e-mail to the teachers in your school district, requesting their participation in this study as well a link to the on-line survey. The teachers will have the opportunity to answer questions about their own self-efficacy with ELL students. I will be sure to protect the anonymity of the teachers during my research, and I will strictly adhere to the University of Missouri-Columbia’s IRB research guidelines throughout this process. After my research is completed, I would be more than happy to share this data with your district.

If you would like any additional information or have questions, please contact me at (573) 201-3868 or jodi-elder@hotmail.com. To grant your permission, please sign the bottom of this form and fax the letter back to me at (573) 458-0124.

Thank You,

Jodi Elder


I, ___________________________, grant Jodi Elder to conduct her research in our school district.
Appendix C

Dear Educator:

My name is Jodi Elder, and I am a doctoral student with the University of Missouri-Columbia in the final phase of the Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis program. I am writing to ask you to participate in providing research for my dissertation. The topic of my research is teacher efficacy with English Language Learners, and I hope you will take the few minutes to complete the following survey:

http://www.zoomerang.com/Survey/WEB22EKBN3RHJ2

The survey will only take a few minutes of your time, but will provide you with the opportunity to participate in valuable research. By completing the survey, you are providing an informed consent. Your anonymity will be protected during this research process. I will organize the data according to the school district in which you are employed, but your name will not be included at any time. Please respond to the survey by February 10, 2012 to be included in this research.

Thank you for taking part in this research process,

Appendix D

Good morning! This is your friendly reminder to take a few minutes to complete the following survey: http://www.zoomerang.com/Survey/WEB22EKB3RHJ2

Your input in this research topic is valuable to me and the field of education. Please respond by February 10, 2012, if you have not already done so.

Thank you for your time!

Jodi Elder

University of Missouri-Columbia
VITA

Jodi Elder was born in Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, to James and Vatrinia Thompson, in 1979. She grew up in rural Missouri with one sister, Jami Leanne, and two brothers, James David and Joshua Paul. Throughout her childhood, Jodi always loved school and forced her siblings to play school many times. As the oldest of four children, of course, she was the teacher and principal.

Today, Dr. Elder is an assistant principal at Rolla Middle School in Rolla, Missouri. She has a Bachelor’s Degree in Communications and English from Southwest Baptist University in Bolivar, Missouri, a Master’s Degree in Curriculum and Instruction from Drury University, and a Master’s Degree in Educational Administration from Missouri State University. This dissertation was the final phase of Educational Leadership Policy Analysis program for Dr. Elder, as she completed her Doctorate in Education from the University of Missouri-Columbia in 2012.

She is married to Robert Elder, and they have one daughter, Elaina Jo.