Mainstream Teachers and ESL Preparation: Considering contextual Factors

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Context

- Nationally, most teachers are inadequately prepared to teach ELLs (Gándara et al., 2005)

  - Karabenick and Noda (2004) report that teachers lack basic foundational knowledge about ELL issues, despite the fact that 88% teach ELLs

- Florida has had requirements to prepare mainstream teachers of ELLs through inservice since 1990, and through preservice since 2001
ELLs in Florida

- FDOE reported 231,801 ELLs in 2009-2010 (8.8% of total enrollment).
- Additionally, FDOE reported 204,287 former ELLs in 2009-2010 (7.7% of total enrollment).
- Most ELLs (66%) are enrolled in the elementary grades, including 40% enrolled in grades K-2.

Teacher education programs have prepared candidates through an “infused” ESOL endorsement program since 2001:

- Minimum of 2 ESOL stand-alone courses taught by ESOL faculty
- ESOL Performance Standards must be addressed and assessed in the program
- 45 hours of Professional Development required for instructors teaching “ESOL-infused” courses
- Field experience requirement
Project DELTA

Developing English Language and Literacy through Teacher Achievement

- Project DELTA is a post-training assessment project designed to examine the impact of an ESOL-infused elementary education program on ELL achievement through teacher practice.
  - 5-year (2007-2012) mixed-methods study
  - Results intended to improve elementary ESOL-infused teacher preparation program
Project DELTA Goals

- **Goal 1** – to understand the relationship between the ESOL-infused Elementary ProTeach program and the academic achievement of ELLs
- **Goal 2** – to understand the variables that influence teachers’ implementation of effective practices and the achievement of ELLs in Florida elementary classrooms
- **Goal 3** – to use findings obtained from the study to modify and enhance the UF ESOL-infused teacher preparation program and to inform teacher educators, policymakers, and educational administrators about study findings at state and national levels
ESOL-Infused Teacher Preparation Program at UF

- Two-course ESOL-infused elementary teacher preparation program approved since 2001; satisfies 300-hour ESOL endorsement requirement

  - Course I *TSL 3520: Foundations of Language and Culture in the Elementary Classroom*
  
  - Course II *TSL 5142: Curriculum, Methods, and Assessment*

- Infusion of ESOL Performance Standards across key ‘general education’ courses
Project DELTA
Data Collection Design

- Surveys
- Interviews
- Case Studies (Focus Teachers)
- Education Data Warehouse (EDW)
FOCUS ON CASE STUDIES
Case Studies

- **Purpose:** To understand how graduates facilitate instruction with ELLs in diverse elementary mainstream classrooms.

- **Research questions:**
  - How do graduates specifically address ELLs’ linguistic and cultural differences in Math and Reading?
  - What factors influence their pedagogical choices?
Case Studies
Data Collection and Analysis
Data Sources

- Surveys
- Teacher Interviews: Pre, Follow-Up/Stimulated Recall, Post
- Teaching Observations: Math, Reading Classes
Importance of Context in Evaluation Research
Exploring Context

- Erickson & Shultz (1984): Socially constructed environment including teacher behaviors and factors influencing teacher behaviors
- Activity Theory (Engestrom, Leon’tiev): Analytical framework used to understand the role of teachers’ beliefs/preconceptions and contextual constraints on teachers’ practices within a “situated activity system.”
Findings

Contextual Variables

- Curriculum
- Program
- Teacher Role/ Identity
- Grouping
Curriculum
Program
Teacher Role/ Identity
Grouping
Curriculum

- LT1 open curriculum - open choice
- ST1 ‘Success for All’- school-restricted
- AT1 – open choice
Curriculum

- T: I think here the nice thing about it is we have the books and we have what’s called a scope and sequence and the scope and sequence talks about where we should be at certain times of the year or your know for the week, Curriculum, book and T guide so we’re supposed to do multiple meanings for example one week and prefixes and suffixes, so this whole thing is our scope and sequence for fifth grade and then you teach it how you please, you pull in what resources you want to do.
Curriculum

- T: (Sigh) There’s pros and cons to it, I think in the big picture, the kids might be learning more academics, but I think overall it’s not worth it, I think it would be better to learn a smidge less in a year and have a little bit more freedom and the ability to be kids because you know they’re nine and ten years old, and they do a remarkable job of staying focused and you switch up your presentation, you let them move around, and you do all those things to keep them focused, but they still I mean like we don’t get to have recess, you know, it’s unheard of, you know and I can’t imagine, I think of myself and how much I needed that time.
Program

- Different organization of ELL services and opportunities for collaboration with ESL teachers
Program

- It's hard, kids are being pulled all over. I mean we even, and even with I mean during her reading intervention that my class is here, she, look in math intervention she goes to another group, during reading intervention with me she goes to Rosetta Stone and she gets pulled for that time as well.
I think that you know we have to teach the same math lessons on approximately the same day as everybody else on our team, there is a little bit of fluctuation, you know, allowed, the presentation is still pretty much our discretion so that’s you know an area that we have that choice, and writing as of right now, we still have, that’s where we still have the most discretion, but with a couple of meetings we have had recently I think they are trying to bring us more on the same page in that area, so that will be interesting.
Teacher Role/Identity

- ESOL teacher responsibility for teaching English explicitly varies

- ST1 Upper elementary: Math & Reading disciplinary focus

- LT1 Upper elementary: Learning strategies focus

- AT1 Lower elementary: Developmental literacy focus
Grouping practices in response to number of ELLs

Different responses:
- ST1 Ability grouping, influenced by testing mandates for reading and math
- AT1 Learning Centers, influenced by balanced literacy curriculum (multi-age; ability level)
- LT1 Small group work

Common rationale: Purpose of grouping is content learning
Grouping

- I am looking at, fluency, umm, I’m looking at how quickly the children can read, student reading fluency.
- And of course it’s a behavior issue, making sure that I’m not gonna make anyone that’s too talkative or off task.
- The way I have that, I have my team groups selected based on their math abilities, and so based on what I saw in the first week of school, and based on some test scores if they were here last year, I ability-grouped for math.
Discussion/Conclusion

Teacher application of ESOL expertise (knowledge, skill) varies in response to contextual variables:

- Curriculum choices, e.g., textbook adoption, literacy programs
- Available ELL language delivery options and how they interact with mainstream classroom program
- Teachers’ roles with the school
- Number of ELLs
Implications

- Teacher preparation programs must pay attention to future contexts for which they prepare their teachers with a focus on language and cultural needs
  - Connect theory to context of practices
- Evaluation of teacher preparation programs must account for variation of contexts of implementation as mediating variables between teacher education and student achievement