Tackling a Tough Task: Teaching Today's Teachers to Teach English Learners

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There is a critical need in the United States to understand how to best prepare preservice teachers for effectively teaching the steadily growing number of PK-12 English learners. The study described in this article, situated in a teacher preparation program in a small, private college in a largely monolingual, monocultural area of the northeastern United States, expands the extant research around this urgent conversation. Specifically, the effects of a set of research-based learning experiences on the readiness of 18 White preservice teachers to create culturally responsive teaching and learning environments for English learners were investigated. Results suggest that carefully constructed learning experiences can positively affect future educators' preparation for teaching English learners, even in largely monocultural, monolingual geographical areas. Outcomes will interest teacher educators in homogeneous areas who strive to prepare future educators for teaching culturally and linguistically diverse school-age learners in principled ways in countries with growing numbers of children who speak other languages.

In the U.S., English learners (ELs) are a steadily growing number of the PK-12 public school students, numbering more than 5.5 million (Zong & Batalova, 2016). English learners are diverse in terms of socioeconomic status, cultural and linguistic background, country of origin (including born in the U.S.), educational experiences, and first and second language literacy strengths (Valdés & Castellón, 2011; Walqui, 2005). As well, growing numbers of ELs now attend PK-12 schools in largely monolingual geographical areas with previously small immigrant populations (Cho, Rios, Trent, & Mayfield, 2012). Yet the majority of U.S. teachers are still not adequately prepared to effectively teach ELs (de Jong & Harper, 2011; Lucas, 2011), and research on how to effectively prepare teachers to teach ELs is still in its infancy (Bunch, 2013; Lucas & Grinberg, 2008).

Compounding this reality is the fact that most U.S. state departments of education have only begun to require teacher preparation programs to include at least one course focused on learning to teach ELs since 2001 (de Jong & Harper, 2011). In the northeastern state in which the present study took place, the requirement to take one course to prepare to teach PK-12 ELs only became a mandate in January 2011. Numerous teacher competencies to be addressed in this one course include valuing ELs' languages and cultures as bridges to optimal instruction, learning research-based instructional strategies that support diverse ELs' in meeting grade-level academic content and language goals, becoming familiar with formative and summative assessment practices, knowing the laws and policies governing teaching and learning with ELs, and communicating effectively with ELs' families.

Teacher educators have an ethical and professional obligation to make principled decisions based on extant research to design coursework that will support preservice teachers in gaining the confidence and expertise to teach PK-12 ELs with equity and excellence. This goal involves preparing preservice teachers to design culturally and linguistically responsive instruction that supports diverse PK-12 ELs in progressing toward the same grade-level academic content and language goals as their non-EL peers (Walqui, 2006).

The study described in this article reflects my effort as a teacher educator in a four-year teacher preparation program to join the critical conversation about how to best prepare preservice teachers to teach and serve diverse PK-12 ELs (Galguera, 2011; Jimenez-Silva & Olson, 2012; Kibler, Walqui & Bunch, 2015). This conversation is relevant for teacher educators in all countries who prepare preservice teachers to effectively teach language-minority children, especially given the increasing amount of refugees fleeing to safer countries around the world.

The present study, conducted with 18 PK-4, middle level, and secondary preservice teachers in a private college in a rural and largely White, monolingual area, was designed to gauge participants' readiness to teach ELs after taking one mandated course designed with this focus. I investigated the way specific learning experiences may have strengthened participants' readiness to teach PK-12 ELs. In addition, I queried participants' perspectives about the way each specific learning experience may have contributed positively to their preparation to teach culturally and linguistically diverse children.

I begin with a review of the literature that shaped my decisions around which learning experiences to include in the course that could bolster future teachers' readiness for teaching diverse PK-12 ELs. Answering this question is particularly important for teacher educators situated in largely monolingual and monocultural geographic areas in the U.S. and abroad who are responsible for preparing future teachers to effectively teaching language-minority children.

Making Principled Decisions Based on the Literature of the Field

Learning from Language and Literacy Scholars

As outlined by Bunch (2013), the extant research around preparing teachers to provide effective instruction for ELs has been influenced by theoretical perspectives ranging from systemic functional linguistics (SFL) (Achugar, Schleppegrell, & Oteiza, 2007; Brisk & Zisselsberger, 2011; Gebhard & Willet, 2008) to sociocultural and sociolinguistic theories (Walqui, 2011) to new perspectives on second language acquisition and bilingualism (Garcia & Kleifgen, 2010; Valdés, Kibler, & Walqui, 2014). In SFL-based approaches to teaching and learning, language-minority learners are carefully apprenticed to gain control of the academic language resources that function to create meanings in various genres in order to both critically read and successfully write in school (Brisk, 2012, 2015; Fang & Schleppegrell, 2008, 2010; Gebhard, Harman & Seger, 2007; Schleppegrell, Greer, & Taylor, 2008; Rose & Martin, 2012). The notion of equity for all children through access to academic literacy practices lies at the core of this perspective.

The sociocultural conceptualization of language as action values teaching academic language and content simultaneously through high-challenge instruction that affords ELs frequent opportunities for meaningful engagement with their non-EL peers (Heritage, Walqui, & Linquanti, 2015; Kibler et al., 2015; Walqui & van Lier, 2010). Heritage and colleagues (2015) argued that teachers must know how to engage ELs and other learners to collaborate to learn content and language through *analytical practices*, or constructing explanations, arguing from evidence, and critiquing the reasoning of others.

Lucas and Villegas (2011) and de Jong and Harper (2011) described well-articulated frameworks that offer guidance for designing teacher preparation coursework for future teachers of ELs. These frameworks outline the specific *orientations*, or dispositions, as well as knowledge and skills that linguistically responsive teachers of ELs must possess. Knowledge and skills include learning about ELs' language backgrounds and educational experiences, being able to identify the language demands of classroom tasks, and scaffolding instruction appropriately (Lucas & Villegas, 2011).

Additionally, ELs' teachers should understand key principles of second language learning. These principles include understanding the way conversational language proficiency differs from academic language proficiency, how affective concerns influence learning, and why interaction for authentic purposes fosters learning for ELs (Lucas & Villegas, 2011). Moreover, all teachers need to know how to make content and language

concepts comprehensible for ELs with diverse literacy strengths and should understand the way that first language (L1) literacy and learning skills support the development of these skills in English.

Similarly, de Jong and Harper (2011) articulated the knowledge, dispositions, and practices that ELs' future teachers should explore in initial teacher preparation. These concepts include awareness of the language demands inherent in curricula and ways to leverage ELs' funds of knowledge (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005) in instructional design. Other research about building preservice teachers' culturally and linguistically responsive teaching practices comes from teacher educators in higher education.

Learning from Other Teacher Educator Researchers

One common goal in research by teacher educators who prepare preservice teachers to teach ELs is building future educators' confidence in their professional preparation to meet these learners' needs (Jimenez-Silva & Olson, 2012; Durgunoğlu & Hughes, 2010). Other goals include guiding preservice teachers to examine existing beliefs and attitudes toward ELs (Coronado & Petrón, 2008; Markos, 2012), transforming or "interrupting" deficit views of ELs (Gainer & Larrotta, 2010), building the specialized knowledge needed to create optimal instruction for ELs (Galguera, 2011; Durgunoğlu & Hughes, 2010), and fostering empathy for ELs (Gainer & Larrotta, 2010; Jimenez-Silva & Olson, 2012; Zhang & Pelttari, 2014).

Many of these studies integrated all of these goals while others recommended the inclusion of specific experiences in teacher education coursework. For example, Jimenez-Silva and Olson (2012) described how to create Teacher-Learner Communities (TLCs). In the TLCs, preservice teachers participated in a case study with a PK-12 EL to learn firsthand about the ELs' background, interests, and language and literacy skills, and they used this experience as a platform for exploring their roles as future teachers of ELs.

Galguera (2011) made a strong case for supporting preservice teachers to see beyond the EL label by focusing on designing instruction that builds all PK-12 students' academic language and literacy practices in every classroom. Galguera advocated including participant structures (Philips, 2009) and professional learning tasks (Ball & Cohen, 1999) in coursework. This effort involves the development of preservice teachers' pedagogical language knowledge through learning experiences that explore the role of language in conveying knowledge in academic texts (Galguera, 2011). For example, Galguera opened a space for preservice teachers to experience one way to scaffold academic language development by using an extended

anticipation guide to read and discuss an academic text in Spanish. After this experiential task, the preservice teachers reflected on the activity from both a student's and a teacher's perspective.

Along these same lines, other teacher educators have emphasized including experiential learning that allows preservice teachers to experience the hurdles ELs often face to comprehend complex oral and written texts while learning content in mainstream classrooms. Coronado and Petrón (2008) suggested including simulation activities, such as listening to a radio broadcast or reading and summarizing a text in a foreign language. To promote preservice teachers' empathy for the confusion and alienation ELs often experience, Zhang and Pelttari (2014) exposed participants to a 15-minute oral presentation in Dutch. Following this experience, participants documented their emotions, noted the strategies the professor used to support comprehension during the mini-lesson, and identified the most critical needs for ELs in classrooms. Fostering empathy for ELs' potential struggles to learn content and develop academic language practices is an important notion for teacher educators to include in coursework.

Other teacher educators have highlighted the importance of requiring preservice teachers to directly interact with learners from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Jimenez-Silva & Olson, 2012; Gainer & Larrotta, 2010; Walker & Stone, 2011). Gainer and Larrotta (2010) argued that preservice teachers' direct exposure to other cultures and languages is necessary to disrupt subtractive schooling practices (Valenzuela, 2002), such as transmission-style instruction, that fail to acknowledge the unique needs of culturally and linguistically diverse learners, thereby alienating these students (Nieto, 2000). Recognizing and countering subtractive schooling practices are particularly important given that most U.S. preservice teachers are White, middle class, monolingual English speakers (Gainer & Larrota, 2010; Gay, 2005).

Walker and Stone (2011) responded to the large influx of resettled refugee ELs in Minnesota to design a one-credit course for preservice teachers grounded in research about effective professional development (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). Fundamental principles include personalized active learning, working in collaborative learning communities, exploring the rewards and challenges of teaching ELs, and anchoring learning with real students in actual classroom settings (Walker & Stone, 2011).

This extant research can support teacher educators in making principled decisions about the specific learning experiences to include in coursework that aims to prepare preservice for teaching ELs. Designing effective preparation can be particularly challenging in teacher education programs situated in largely monolingual and monocultural geographic areas in the U.S. and in other countries

I now turn to the methodology of the present study. First, I describe the instructional context and the participants. Next, I highlight selected focal learning experiences and the rationale for their inclusion in the course. Then, I share qualitative analyses of the data that illuminated participants' perceptions of the way these learning experiences may have contributed to their readiness to effectively teach PK-12 ELs. Finally, I discuss these results in order to expand the ongoing conversation initiated by other teacher educators (Gainer & Larrotta, 2010; Jimenez-Silva & Olson, 2012) about how to best prepare future PK-12 teachers to equitably and effectively teach diverse ELs.

The research questions addressed in this study were:

How did participants perceive the way that the overall course affected their confidence in and preparation for effectively teaching PK-12 ELs?

To what degree did participants perceive that specific learning activities supported them in gaining the specialized knowledge necessary for effectively teaching PK-12 ELs?

During the first course session, the study's purpose and participants' right to decide whether to participate as well as to withdraw from the study at any time were explained verbally and in writing. All 18 students consented to participate in the study. Participants were ensured that their pre- and post-course responses would be anonymous and would therefore not affect their grade in any way.

Method

The Institutional Context

This study took place across a 15-week semester with 18 White preservice teachers in a teacher education program situated in a small, liberal arts, private college in a rural area of the northeastern U.S. All preservice teachers were required to take this three-credit course to prepare to teach PK-12 ELs. This course met face-to-face twice weekly for 90-minute sessions, and I was the instructor. Opportunities for the participants to interact with PK-12 ELs in schools during field experiences in other education courses were virtually nonexistent. Notably, a few students at the beginning of each semester typically expressed not having been aware that they would teach ELs in the future, a not atypical belief among preservice teachers (Walker & Stone, 2011).

Thus, a principal goal of the course was for participants to learn to regard ELs as highly capable students and to view their unique cultural and linguistic backgrounds as assets in classrooms. Another key goal

Table 1
Participants' Demographic Information

Demographic Category	Number of Participants n=18
Gender	
Male	10
Female	8
Year in College	
Seniors	8
Juniors	7
Post-baccalaureate	3
Teaching certifications pursued	
PK-4	4
Middle level ELA	3
Middle level social studies	2
Secondary history	2
Secondary English	2
Secondary Mathematics	2
K-12 Foreign Lanuage	2
K-12 Environmental Science	1

was for participants to gain confidence in creating culturally and linguistically responsive teaching and learning environments with diverse ELs. This goal embodied learning to design interactive, carefully scaffolded, high-challenge instruction for reaching grade-level academic content standards while developing academic language and literacy practices (Walqui, 2006).

Course Overview

I used the textbook *Making Content Comprehensible for English Learners: The SIOP Model* (Echevarría, Vogt, & Short, 2013) as the foundational text. Empirical research suggests that Sheltered Instruction Observational Protocol (SIOP) features support ELs in achieving academically in mainstream classrooms (Echevarría et al., 2011; Short, Echevarría, & Richards-Tutor, 2011).

This textbook includes descriptions of research-based instructional practices, teaching and differentiating ideas, and real lesson scenarios from varied grade levels and content areas. The SIOP features (Echevarría et al., 2013) provide a concrete foundation for exploring the theoretical frameworks informing the knowledge, skills, and dispositions described in the literature review that all teachers of ELs need to develop (de Jong & Harper, 2011; Lucas & Villegas, 2011).

To illustrate, Echevarría and colleagues (2013) emphasize consistently planning contextualized reading, writing, listening, and speaking opportunities that foreground ELs' active use of language through interaction with non-EL peers (Lucas & Villegas, 2011; Walqui & van Lier, 2010). Attention is given to explicit cognitive, metacognitive, and language-learning strategy instruction (Dymock & Nicholson, 2010; Walqui, 2006) and to verbal, procedural, and instructional scaffolding to support ELs' in actively learning content and developing academic language practices simultaneously (Walqui, 2006).

Furthermore, Echevarría and colleagues (2013) draw attention to the strong correlation between oral language development and reading proficiency (Genesse & Geva, 2006), the way that L1 language skills can foster L2 language development (August & Shanahan, 2006), and the use of multiple assessment measures to gather data about ELs' academic content and language learning progress (Lenski, et al., 2006; Vogt & Shearer, 2011). Importantly, an entire chapter is devoted to issues of reading difficulties ELs may face and to the critical distinction between language learning processes and specific learning disabilities (Klingner & Harry, 2006).

This textbook's focus on theoretically informed instructional practices, grounded in the work of real teachers with ELs in real schools, make this a useful foundational textbook for preservice teachers who are just beginning to envision themselves as future teachers of ELs.

The Participants

The participants were 18 White preservice teachers enrolled in the course. Table 1 presents participants' demographic information.

Table 2
Learning Experiences of Focus and Rationale

Learning Experiences	Rationale
Conducting instructional conversation around text with college-level EL peers	Practice supporting reading comprehension of complex text with explicit attention to academic language resources
	Make connections to course topics in authentic scenario
Watching instructor model directions in Spanish with and without supports	Simulate ELs' in-school experiences to create empathy for ELs
	Model supports that provide comprehensibility of verbal input
Viewing and discussing video excerpts of teachers' instructional moves with ELs in real classrooms	Build awareness of effective instructional practices in real classrooms
	View ELs as intelligent, capable students
Writing written reflections connected to culturally responsive teaching	Synthesize learning from class texts
	Promote reflection and create affordance to imagine oneself as future teacher of ELs
Creating two sequential lesson plans for content classroom with Level 2 ELs	Apply learning by designing standards-aligned, high-challenge, appropriately scaffolded instruction with formative assessments in mainstream classroom with six beginning level ELLs
Discussing the SIOP features in pairs and groups	Model sociocultural practices
	Open space for experiential learning

As Table 1 demonstrates, participants were pursuing initial teaching certificates in various grade levels and content areas and were in the latter half of their teacher preparation program. None of the participants had any direct experience with PK-12 ELs during field experiences in other courses.

Learning Experiences of Focus

To investigate which aspects of the course may be useful in supporting preservice teachers' readiness for teaching PK-12 ELs, I focused on six specific learning experiences, grounded in the research described in the literature review. Table 2 provides the research-based rationale for each focal learning experience.

An Instructional Conversation

One unique learning experience was a focused interaction between the participants and six international ELs on campus around reading and discussing a complex text. Direct interaction with ELs is an essential component of efforts to prepare future educators of ELs (Gainer & Larrotta, 2010; Jimenez-Silva & Olson, 2012; Walker & Stone, 2011). I included this experience given participants' lack of opportunity to engage in an academic task with PK-12 ELs. I hypothesized that this interaction would provide the participants valuable insights into the challenges of supporting comprehension of complex texts with ELs.

The international ELs, three from Brazil and three from China, were enrolled in an intensive year of building academic English skills to prepare to take

credit-bearing courses. The international students were not participants in this study; therefore, no data were collected about their insights around the interaction.

The international ELs all possessed strong L1 literacy practices and could read and write in English. However, they had been in the U.S. less than one year and were still developing proficiency in spoken English. I wanted the preservice teachers to experience firsthand the way that even well-educated ELs would be likely to encounter difficulties around unfamiliar vocabulary and cultural concepts when reading a complex text in English. The goal was to spark the participants' thinking about the even greater challenge of supporting text comprehension with school-age ELs, some of whom may have less academic and general background knowledge and less-developed L1 literacy skills.

The preservice teachers and the international ELs interacted in small groups during one class session to read a perspective news article written by national columnist Nicholas Kristof titled "The American Dream is Emigrating" (2014). The participants were asked to conduct an extended instructional conversation (Goldenberg, 1992-1993; Wong-Fillmore, 2009) around this complex text with their college-age EL peers. Prior to the interaction, participants answered guiding questions (see Appendix A) in order to prepare to read this complex text with ELs (Walqui, 2006). These questions included specific attention to the academic language resources of a news article text (Rose & Martin, 2012).

Simulation Activity in Spanish

Simulation activities can help preservice teachers to empathize with the challenge many ELs face to understand a teacher's verbal input without sufficient supports (Coronado & Petrón, 2008; Zhang & Peltarri, 2014). The notion that ELs require support to make instruction comprehensible is an important one for preservice teachers of future ELs to understand (Lucas & Villegas, 2011). Thus, I included a simulation experience to model supports for making oral input comprehensible.

To begin the simulation, I explained in English that I would pretend to be a fourth grade teacher and that the preservice teachers would pretend to be fourth grade students. I stated that I would speak in Spanish without supports to explain a typical school event followed by a repetition of the explanation in Spanish using comprehensible techniques.

I explained in fast-paced Spanish that students would take turns going to the nurse's office for a short hearing test. I asked them to follow a posted schedule, take the hall pass, go directly to the nurse's office, complete the hearing test, return quickly to the classroom, and give the hall pass to the next student. I stated that in the nurse's office, they would wear a pair of headphones and listen for a series of tones, or "beeps," raising the hand on the side of the ear in which they heard the "beep." I added that some "beeps" would be softer than others. At this point, I paused to ask the students what I had explained. Except for two participants seeking K-12 Spanish certifications, none of the participants, including those who had studied Spanish in school, had understood what I said.

Next, I repeated the activity in Spanish but slowed down my speech while pointing to a visual with a picture of a school nurse, an ear, and the schedule to follow. Using a pair of headphones connected to a CD player (simulating the testing instrument), I demonstrated how to listen for the "beeps," making the "beeps" both softly and loudly, while pointing to the corresponding ear and raising the correct hand. I referred to the schedule, modeled taking the hall pass, and acted out going quickly to and from the nurse's office. After this scaffolded repetition, all of the preservice teachers could explain the gist of the verbal input to a partner. In a debriefing, participants shared the frustration they felt during the first explanation as well as the way the supports had served to help them understand the second time.

Video Excerpts of Teachers in Action with ELs

Walker and Stone (2011) noted the importance of affording preserve teachers with opportunities to observe and reflect on effective teaching practices with ELs in real teaching and learning contexts, including through video observations. Participants viewed two particular videos portraying effective instructional practices and conveying insights vocalized by the video teachers. These videos depicted ELs as the intelligent, capable students that they are.

One video centered on a close reading of a science text conducted by a second grade English language arts teacher (https://www.teachingchannel.org/videos/ask-answer-questions-nea?utm_campaign=digest&utm_medium=email&utm_source=digest), and the other offered a glimpse into project-based learning taking place in various secondary classrooms in international high schools in New York (https://www.teachingchannel.org/videos/deeper-learning-for-ell-inps). The preservice teachers wrote a one-page reflection to identify culturally responsive teaching practices in the videos and explained the benefits of these instructional practices for ELs.

Writing Reflections Connected to Culturally Responsive Teaching

Twice during the course, the participants wrote three-to-four-page written reflections in response to specific

prompts (see Appendix B) around key course ideas. These reflections invited participants to imagine how to apply course concepts in their future classrooms with ELs. Opportunities to reflect on coursework experiences can be an important learning tool for preservice teachers (Galguera, 2011; Jimenez-Silva & Olson, 2012).

Reading and Discussing the SIOP Text

Walker and Stone (2011) recommended providing preservice teachers with many structured opportunities for reading and discussing proven practices for ELs. Using the SIOP textbook (Echevarría et al., 2013) opened a space for embedding collaborative, experiential learning tasks around effective instructional techniques in classrooms with ELs.

To illustrate, SIOP Feature 9 is "Key Vocabulary Emphasized" (Echevarría et al., 2013, p. 68). Understanding that ELs need ample, scaffolded, contextualized opportunities to learn and use academic vocabulary is an important concept for preservice teachers to explore (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2013; Saunders & O'Brien, 2006).

To practice creating contextualized vocabulary instruction around academic words that often have multiple meanings in various contexts, participants from different disciplinary areas worked in pairs to develop a four corners vocabulary chart (Vogt & Echevarría, 2008) for an assigned academic word. For instance, one pair demonstrated how the verb *interact* has distinct meanings in science and English language arts. Another pair illustrated the different meanings of *radical* in social studies and mathematics. Multiple exposures to, and opportunities to use, academic vocabulary contributes to supporting reading comprehension and academic success for ELs and other students (Beck et al., 2013). This learning experience enabled the preservice teachers to explore a technique for introducing academic vocabulary to ELs or for ELs to use in collaboration with non-EL peers to demonstrate knowledge of these words.

Creating Two Sequential Lesson Plans

For this assignment participants imagined that six ELs from various cultural and linguistic backgrounds were in their future classrooms alongside the non-EL students, an increasingly realistic scenario in U.S. PK-12 classrooms. The scenario included that the six ELs were recent arrivals in the U.S. who possessed well-developed L1 oral language and literacy skills appropriate to their grade level. Yet these imaginary ELs were determined to be at an emerging level (Level 2) of English language proficiency (ELP) as indicated by a widely-used standardized placement test, the W-APT (www.wida.us) to assess new ELs' academic ELP through reading,

writing, listening, and speaking tasks related to ELA, social studies, mathematics, and science.

The development of two sequential lesson plans required the preservice teachers to design instruction anchored in grade-level state academic content standards. Moreover, this learning experience obligated the preservice teachers to enact understandings about critical components of instruction for ELs. Such instruction includes tapping into ELs' funds of knowledge, creating high-challenge, appropriately scaffolded interaction with non-EL peers, integrating the four language modalities, and embedding formative assessments (Genesse et al., 2006; Walqui, 2006; Zwiers, O'Hara, & Pritchard, 2013).

Data Collection

Various data were collected to address the research questions. The first data source was a 12-item pre- and post-course survey, adapted from Durgunoğlu and Hughes (2010), designed to gauge changes in participants' confidence in their readiness to teach PK-12 ELs. Survey responses were based on a 4-point Likert scale: strongly disagree, disagree, agree, or strongly agree. The survey items (see Appendix C) addressed preservice teachers' confidence in their knowledge of specific instructional skills (e.g., creating formative assessments), their understanding of salient constructs (e.g., leveraging ELs' funds of knowledge), and their overall capacity to implement culturally responsive instruction with ELs from diverse cultural, linguistic, and educational backgrounds.

Another data source was a post-course measurement tool (see Appendix D). The first part comprised three open-ended questions inviting participants to explain any changes in their perceptions of ELs and in their understanding of culturally responsive teaching practices. The third question asked participants to explain what they had learned through conducting an instructional conversation around the news article with the college-level ELs. Additionally, the post-course measurement tool required participants to explain the degree of helpfulness of the other five focal learning experiences.

Data Analysis

The 12-item survey data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to determine the percentage of participants who disagreed or strongly disagreed and the percentage of participants who agreed or strongly agreed pre- and post-course with each survey item.

Participants' responses to the three open-ended questions administered post course were analyzed to determine initial codes reflecting any changes in the preservice teachers' perceptions of ELs and knowledge

about teaching and learning with ELs. These initial codes were then organized into core categories and analyzed for patterns, or themes, that emerged (de Jong & Harper, 2011; Huberman & Miles, 2002). For example, participants' responses to the question "How did your understanding of culturally responsive teaching practices change during this course?," that were related in any way to changed perceptions about using knowledge of ELs' cultures, beliefs, interests, or experiences in lesson design were assigned to the category, "Use ELs' funds of knowledge to help them learn." The number of responses in each category was used to determine prevalent themes in the data (de Jong & Harper, 2011).

The third data set representing participants' perceptions of the degree of helpfulness of five of the focal learning experiences was analyzed in terms of participants' ratings of each task on a continuum from "very helpful" to "not very helpful." A Likert scale was not provided for these responses in order to provide participants with greater freedom to identify how helpful each learning task was. Thus, responses that included adverbs such as "very," "extremely, and "immensely," in front of the adjective "helpful" were counted as a "very helpful" response. Responses simply containing the word "helpful" were counted as a "helpful" response, and responses indicating degree such as "kind of," "sort of," or "a little bit" helpful were counted as a "somewhat helpful" response.

Open-ended responses based on why each learning experience was perceived to be helpful or what had been learned from each learning task were analyzed in terms of the initial codes, categorization, and theme determination described above. These analyses allowed for triangulation of data through the emergence of similar patterns in each data set.

Results

Pre- and Post-Course Survey Responses

Table 3 below reflects the changes in percentages pre- to post-course on the 12 survey items gauging participants' readiness to teach ELs. These data reveal that the preservice teachers' confidence around teaching ELs and knowledge of salient concepts about features of effective instruction for ELs increased markedly pre- to post-course.

Particularly notable are increased levels of confidence around building on ELs' funds of knowledge in designing lessons, appreciating the process of second language acquisition, differentiating instruction in a way that accounts for ELs' needs, and keeping the cognitive challenge high while scaffolding ELs' participation in instructional tasks.

Responses to Three Open-Ended Questions

The second data set revealed participants' responses to three open-ended questions (see Table 4 below). Table 4 presents the themes that emerged in the data after initial coding and categorizing. The number in parenthesis following each theme represents the number of participants' responses related to that theme. Some participants wrote lengthier responses reflecting more than one theme.

Several responses to the first question focused more on what participants had learned about teaching ELs and their feelings about becoming teachers of ELs than on shifts in perceptions about ELs. For example, comments included, "ELs' success depends on the teacher's ability," and "It's not as scary to think about teaching them now." However, responses also included comments such as, "ELs are just as smart as other students," and, "They have skills in their L1—they're capable."

Responses to the second question aligned with the preservice teachers' perceptions of confidence in their preparation to teach ELs suggested by the survey items. Written comments related to ELs' funds of knowledge included, "Ask ELs about their culture," and "culture and learning go hand-in-hand." Importantly, responses also reflected that effectively teaching ELs must go beyond connecting to ELs' cultures. One participant noted, "It's more than just culture. Everything you do to get your message across matters." Others wrote, "Use different techniques," "Create meaningful activities," "Use scaffolding techniques," and "Involve ELs' parents." These responses suggest that some of the participants had understood that culturally responsive teaching includes planning well-designed instruction that is responsive to ELs' academic needs.

The preservice teachers commented extensively about what had been learned from reading a complex text with their international EL peers. These responses suggest that this interaction represented a powerful learning experience about effective instructional techniques, ELs' characteristics as learners, and critical dispositions for teachers of ELs to have. For example, participants wrote, "Chunk the text—break it down," "Discuss the text and ask questions while reading," "Graphic organizers really help," and "Allow the ELs to ask questions" as evidence of learning about effective instructional practices.

Awareness about ELs as learners was evidenced by comments such as, "Sometimes they pretend to understand when they don't," "They have varying levels," "They want to practice speaking," and "They are motivated to achieve." Others commented on important teacher dispositions, such as "Be animated and motivated when teaching," "The ELs expect the teacher to assist," and "The teacher must listen closely."

It is noteworthy that numerous comments centered on what the preservice teachers noticed about the relationship between vocabulary knowledge and text comprehension during this experience. Many participants commented that, along with academic

Table 3
Changes in Participants' Readiness to Teach ELs

Statement I feel confident . . .	Pre/ Post	Percent Disagree or Strongly Disagree	Percent Agree or Strongly Agree
#1 that I can use research-based techniques to scaffold instruction for ELs at various English language proficiency (ELP) levels.	Pre Post	61% 0%	39% 100%
#2 that I can differentiate instruction in a way that is attuned to ELs' ELP levels.	Pre Post	83% 0%	17% 100%
#3 that I can modify and adapt assessments for ELs at different levels of ELP.	Pre Post	56% 6%	44% 94%
#4 that I can embed formative assessments in lessons with ELs to measure their progress toward learning objectives.	Pre Post	56% 0%	44% 100%
#5 in my overall ability to implement culturally responsive teaching practices in my future classroom.	Pre Post	14% 6%	61% 94%
#6 that I have an understanding of the difference between social language and the academic English needed for success in school.	Pre Post	33% 0%	67% 100%
#7 that I know how to leverage ELs' funds of knowledge in lesson design.	Pre Post	94% 6%	6% 94%
#8 that I have a fundamental understanding of the continuum of second language acquisition.	Pre Post	94% 17%	6% 83%
#9 that I can write both content and language objectives connected to the CCSS and state academic content standards.	Pre Post	61% 11%	39% 89%
#10 that I am knowledgeable about the challenges ELs may face to comprehend informational texts in different content areas.	Pre Post	39% 0%	61% 100%
#11 that I can design instructional tasks that are cognitively challenging for all learners while providing appropriate scaffolds for the language demands of the instructional tasks according to ELs' ELP levels.	Pre Post	67% 0%	33% 100%
#12 that I am fundamentally prepared to teach ELs from a wide variety of linguistic, cultural, socioeconomic, and educational backgrounds.	Pre Post	100% 6%	0% 94%

Table 4
Participants' Responses to Three Open-Ended Questions

Open-Ended Question	Themes Emerging from Data
Q#1 In what ways, if any, did your perception of ELs change during this course?	Perceptions related to: Challenges ELs Face and How Teachers Can Help (10) ELs Intelligent like English-Speaking Peers (7) Less Anxiety about Teaching ELs (5)
Q#2 How did your understanding of culturally responsive teaching (CRT) practices change during this course?	Understanding related to: Use ELs' Funds of Knowledge to Help Them Learn (10) CRT Means More than Just Connecting to ELs' Cultures (6) Teachers' Instructional Decisions Matter (7)
Q#3 What did you learn from the session with the college-level ELs around reading and discussing a text?	Awareness related to: Challenge of Academic Vocabulary (5) Need to Explain Basic Vocabulary (10) Need to Ask Frequent Questions (5) Amount of Time Needed to Read Text (4) ELs' Characteristics as Learners (6) Instructional Techniques that Work (16) Teachers Beliefs/Attitudes/Dispositions (9) ELs' Specific Skills/Needs (5)

words, basic vocabulary words were unfamiliar to the ELs and required explanation. Revealing comments about vocabulary included, "Highlight and explain challenging words," and "Multiple-meaning words need explained." Others noted, "ELs can decode but might not know the meaning," "If they can't pronounce it, they probably don't know the meaning," and "Vocabulary is a serious challenge even if they have good English skills."

Finally, Table 5 below presents participants' perceptions related to the degree of helpfulness of five focal learning experiences included in the course. The degree of helpfulness is indicated as "not very helpful" (NVH), "somewhat helpful" (SH), "neutral" (N), "helpful" (H), and "very helpful" (VH), followed by the number of participants choosing each response. The table highlights principal themes that emerged from the preservice teachers' explanations of why a particular learning task was helpful and/or what had been learned and includes the number of participants' responses related to each theme. Responses representing opinions such as, "I didn't like my grade on the reflections," "The lesson plans took too much time," and "I prefer to listen to the instructor talk" were not considered as related to a theme.

The preservice teachers' perceptions of why these learning experiences were helpful and what they had learned about teaching ELs served to triangulate findings from the other data sets. That is, data suggest that these particular learning experiences contributed to growth in participants' readiness to teach ELs in the future.

Pointedly, responses to discussing the SIOP textbook with peers suggest an appreciation for coursework that foregrounds a sociocultural approach to sharing understandings about course content. For example, comments included that discussion with peers allowed participants to "unpack the information in the text," "explain ideas and what we learned," and "share my ideas as well as learn from others to further my knowledge."

Limitations

The small number of participants and descriptive nature of this study do not permit broad generalizations of the findings. Yet with a dearth of research on preparing teachers to teach ELs, descriptive studies can provide valuable insights (Bunch, 2013). In addition, the preservice teachers' increased readiness to effectively teach ELs may not be solely attributable to taking this course. Although other education courses provided only cursory attention to ELs, if at all, other salient aspects of teaching and learning were explored in participants' other education courses.

Discussion

The goal in this study was to contribute to the extant research around preparing educators to teach and serve ELs with excellence and equity (Lucas & Villegas, 2011; Walker & Stone, 2011). Specifically, I aimed to join the conversation initiated by teacher

Table 5
Degree of Helpfulness of Focal Learning Experiences and Rationale

Learning Experiences	Degree of Helpfulness	Reason Why Task Was Helpful/What Was Learned
Observing the instructor give directions in Spanish without any supports and then again in Spanish with supports	VH = 13 H = 4 NVH = 1	Visual Aids/Gestures Critical (12) Increased Empathy for ELs (4) Use Voice as Tool (2) Slow Down Speech (1)
Watching and discussing excerpts of videos of teachers' instructional practices in real classrooms with ELs	VH = 7 H = 10 SH = 1	Showed How SIOP techniques work (8) Gave Teaching Ideas by Good Teachers (5) Showed Reality of Teaching (4) Showed how to Integrate Language and Content (1) Appealed to me as Visual Learner (1)
Writing reflections connected to major course themes	VH = 2 H = 12 N = 1 SH = 3	Helped me Realize what I've Learned (8) Learned about My Own Teaching Style (2) Intellectual Exercises Important (1) Liked Thinking about Techniques to Use as Future Teacher (1)
Creating fully adapted lesson plans for level 2 ELs	VH = 11 H = 7	Good Practice for Real Teaching w. ELs (4) Way to Apply What I Learned (3) Made me Think about What I Know about Lesson Planning (3) How to Scaffold w/o Simplifying Content (1) Increased My Confidence (2) Detailed Lesson Plans are Important (1)
Reading SIOP textbook and discussing in class in pairs and groups	VH = 6 H = 9 SH = 3	Hearing Opinions/Getting Ideas from Others Helps Me Learn (9) Discussion Matches My Learning Style (1) Think-Pair-Share Works (2) Great Book with Good Strategies (1)

educator colleagues (Gainer & Larrotta, 2010; Galguera, 2011; Jimenez-Silva & Olson, 2012) around potentially powerful learning experiences that can foster preservice teachers' confidence in, and specialized knowledge for, creating optimal teaching and learning environments for PK-12 ELs.

Research suggests that teacher preparation coursework can positively influence the knowledge, dispositions, and skills critical for teaching and serving ELs (Busch, 2010; Sowa, 2009; Walker & Stone, 2011). Well-articulated frameworks (de Jong & Harper, 2011; Lucas & Villegas, 2011) enable teacher educators to make principled decisions around course design. Results from the present study affirm that research-based learning experiences can positively enhance preservice teachers' foundational readiness to teach ELs even when teacher education programs are situated in largely monolingual, monocultural areas.

Interaction with PK-12 ELs is a key experience for preservice teachers (Gainer & Larrotta, 2010; Jimenez-Silva & Olson, 2012). Enabling such interaction can be hindered by the geographical location of a teacher education program. This small study suggests that "thinking outside the box" to create interaction between preservice teachers and international ELs on a college campus can spark analogous understandings about teaching and learning with ELs that can be applied in the PK-12 context.

Teacher educators are responsible for continually learning about and creating learning experiences that build preservice teachers' confidence in, and specialized knowledge for, meeting ELs' affective and academic needs (Durgunoğlu & Hughes; Galguera, 2011, Jimenez-Silva & Olsen, 2012). We can respond to the call to design and implement future action research that expands the knowledge base about the specific kinds of learning experiences that may enable

preservice teachers to develop the knowledge, disposition, and skills to create optimal learning environments for PreK-12 culturally and linguistically diverse learners (TESOL International Association Research Agenda, 2014). This research should include a focus on ways that coursework can foster preservice teachers' explorations of their own cultural practices as a bridge to understanding the ways that ELs' cultural and language identities can influence teaching and learning (Jimenez-Silva & Olsen, 2012).

As teacher educators we are further charged with enacting the reflective practices and commitment to lifelong learning that we promote with preservice teachers. In particular, conducting this study has challenged me to contemplate how to incorporate the kinds of learning experiences that can more deeply foster preservice teachers' pedagogical language knowledge (Bunch, 2013; Galguera, 2011). Certainly this notion has implications for teacher educators in varied contexts around the world.

I am also inspired to consider a reconceptualization of pedagogy for supporting ELs to engage in analytical practices through language in action around content concepts with non-EL peers (Heritage et al., 2015; Kibler et al., 2015; Zwiers et al., 2013). Teacher educators have a responsibility to learn about this reformulation of pedagogy and to design learning experiences for preservice teachers that build future educators' preparedness to enact such practices in real schools with PK-12 ELs. Providing an excellent, equitable education for PK-12 ELs in U.S. schools and language-minority children around the world may hinge upon teacher educators' commitment to this responsibility.

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Appendix A

Preparing to Conduct an Instructional Conversations around a Complex Text

Text: The American Dream is Emigrating   By Nicholas D. Kristof
        Source: Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, 10/28/14

1. How would you set a purpose for reading this article? That is, what do you expect readers to understand or be able to discuss during reading?

2. What background building around American cultural/societal concepts would you need to do <u>before</u> reading this text with SVC ESL students?

3. How would you explain the language features in this news article? That is . . .

    What genre does it fall in—is it a report of information? A persuasive piece? A compare and contrast text? A problem/solution text?

    Who is the audience? Why is the topic important to the audience?

    Is the text in chronological or does it "switch" between past and present? Why?

    Is the text a mixture of fact and opinion or one or the other? How can we help ELs distinguish between "fact and opinion" in this text?

4.   In a nutshell, what's the main argument in this text? How does the author support his argument?

5. Study the list of key words and phrases in the chart below. How would you explain their meanings? Which words/phrases would you explain *before* reading? *During* reading?

Important Vocab/Phrases to Explain in this Text	*How might you explain/illustrate the meaning of these key words and phrases?*
The American Dream	
Education as the escalator to opportunity	
Education as the lubricant of social and economic mobility	
Egalitarian (or mass) education	
Growing gap between rich and poor	
Civil rights challenge	
An ethos that was born in America	

6. At which points in the text would you "check for understanding?" What exactly will you ask to decide whether the ELs have sufficient comprehension to continue reading? Make a list of Qs that you will ask during reading:

7. How can you invite the ELs to share their own experiences, thoughts, and opinions while reading this text**?** What's your opinion about Mr. Kristof's argument? Do you agree or disagree with him? How will you explain your opinion to the ELs?

Appendix B

Prompts for Written Reflections

Prompt for Written Reflection #1:

Explain your understanding to date of what you will need to do as a future teacher to design and deliver effective, high-quality instruction for English learners (ELs) from diverse educational, cultural, and language backgrounds. What is your understanding to date of the way ELs' backgrounds may influence the instructional decisions that you will make in your future classroom? That is, what will you need to know about your ELs in order to make sound decisions around instructional design? Why is this effort important?

Based on what you have learned thus far, which specific instructional practices will you incorporate into your teaching at the grade level and in the content area that you aspire to teach? How will these instructional practices support ELs in your future classroom in learning academic content and strengthening their academic English proficiency?

Be sure to support the main points that you decide to develop with examples and explanations from the text(s) you've read AND from your own thinking!

Prompt for Written Reflection # 2:

Since the last written reflection, we have read about and discussed the important SIOP features of strategy instruction, student-to-student interaction, Accountable Talk, creating opportunities for students to practice and apply what they have learned, and conducting Instructional Conversations around texts.

Write a reflection to explain *how* you will employ some of these instructional features as a future teacher of diverse ELs. Be sure to explain *why* these features are essential for supporting the academic achievement of culturally and linguistically diverse learners. That is, include an explanation of the way that employing these instructional practices can contribute to creating a *culturally responsive* teaching and learning environment in your future classroom.

Appendix C

Pre-Course and Post-Course Survey

Please circle the number that corresponds to your own personal level of agreement with the following statements:

1. *I feel confident that I can use research-based techniques to scaffold instruction for ELs at various English language proficiency levels.*

1		2	3	4
strongly disagree	disagree	agree	strongly agree	

2. *I feel confident that I can differentiate instruction in a way that it is attuned to ELs' English language proficiency level.*

1		2	3	4
strongly disagree	disagree	agree	strongly agree	

3. *I feel confident that I can modify and adapt assessments for ELs at different levels of English language proficiency.*

1		2	3	4
strongly disagree	disagree	agree	strongly agree	

4. *I feel confident that I can embed formative assessments in lessons with ELs to measure their progress toward learning objectives.*

1		2	3	4
strongly disagree	disagree	agree	strongly agree	

5. *I feel confident in my overall ability to implement culturally responsive teaching practices in my future classroom.*

1		2	3	4
strongly disagree	disagree	agree	strongly agree	

6. *I feel confident that I have an understanding of the difference between social language and the academic English needed for success in school.*

1		2	3	4
strongly disagree	disagree	agree	strongly agree	

7. *I feel confident that I know how to leverage ELs' funds of knowledge in lesson design.*

1		2	3	4
strongly disagree	disagree	agree	strongly agree	

8. *I feel confident that I have a fundamental understanding of the continuum of second language acquisition.*

1		2	3	4
strongly disagree	disagree	agree	strongly agree	

9. *I feel confident that I can write both content and language objectives connected to the Common Core State Standards and state academic content standards.*

1		2	3	4
strongly disagree	disagree	agree	strongly agree	

10. *I feel confident that I am knowledgeable about the challenges ELs may face to comprehend informational texts in different content areas.*

1		2	3	4
strongly disagree	disagree	agree	strongly agree	

11. *I feel confident that I can design instructional tasks that are cognitively challenging for all learners in the grade level I aspire to teach while making appropriate adjustments to the language demands of the instructional tasks according to ELs' English language proficiency levels.*

1		2	3	4
strongly disagree	disagree	agree	strongly agree	

12. *I feel confident that I am fundamentally prepared to teach ELs from a wide variety of linguistic, cultural, socioeconomic, and educational backgrounds.*

1		2	3	4
strongly disagree	disagree	agree	strongly agree	

Appendix D

Post-Course Open-Ended Survey

Please write a brief response to each question below:

1.   In what ways, if any, did your perception of ELs change during this course?

2.   How did your understanding of *culturally responsive teaching* practices change during this course?

3.   What did you learn from the session with the college-level ELs around reading and discussing a text? Please make a very specific list about everything you learned from this experience:

4.   Please explain which specific learning experiences you found helpful in preparing you to teach ELs during this course? Major learning experiences are listed in the left hand column. In the right hand column, please briefly explain how helpful each experience was, if at all, and what you learned from the experience if it was helpful. If a learning experience was not at all helpful, please explain why not.

Learning Experience	*Degree of Helpfulness & What I Learned*
A. Observing the instructor give directions in Spanish without any scaffolds and then again in Spanish with scaffolds	
B. Watching and discussing excerpts of videos of teachers' instructional moves in real classrooms with ELs	
C. Writing reflections connected to major course themes	

D. Creating fully adapted lesson plans for Level 2 ELs	
E. Reading SIOP textbook and discussing SIOP practices in pairs and groups in class	