"I Think You Have to Be a Fighter"

Novice ESL Teachers' Descriptions of Advocacy for Emergent Bilinguals

Stephanie Garrone-Shufran

Abstract

In this qualitative case study, six novice English as a second language (ESL) teachers in a graduate course were asked to describe how they had enacted advocacy for emergent bilinguals. Data were gathered from pre- and post- surveys and semi-structured interviews conducted after the semester ended. While the ESL teachers in this study were willing and able to advocate for emergent bilinguals in certain ways, their understanding of the systemic inequities that necessitate advocating for emergent bilinguals was not made clear in the data collected. To improve the focus on advocacy in ESL teacher education, explicit study of how the systems of our schools and society serve to reinforce stereotypes and disadvantage emergent bilinguals should be included in coursework. Additionally, programs should create intentional mentorship pairings of novice ESL teachers with experienced teachers who act as strong advocates for their students.

Introduction

Research on students who are learning English in school is often framed around educational outcomes, creating the idea of an "achievement gap" between

Stephanie Garrone-Shufran is an assistant professor of education at Merrimack College, North Andover, Massachusetts. Email address: GarroneShufS@merrimack.edu

these students and their native-English-speaking peers; however, the focus should be on the educational inputs, which would show "deficiencies in the foundational components of societies, schools, and communities that produce significant differences in educational—and ultimately socioeconomic outcomes" (Welner & Carter, 2013, p. 3). Students learning English in school tend to face segregation based not only on their home language(s) but also on their ethnicity and socioeconomic status (Gándara, 2013). The hegemony of English still prevails in schools, silencing students with rich linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Benton, 2022). Terms such as *English learner* (EL) and *nonnative English speaker* are used to further marginalize and place these students outside of the mainstream of American education. The use of these terms by school personnel "discount[s] the home languages and cultural understandings of these children and assume[s] their educational needs are the same as a monolingual child" (García et al., 2008, p. 6). Using asset-based terminology can help to shift the beliefs about and positioning of students learning English in school (Colombo et al., 2019). In this article, the term *emergent bilingual* will be used to refer to these students, although alternate terminology remains in other authors' quotations.

The role of the English as a second language (ESL) teacher, whose designated responsibility it is to promote the school success of emergent bilinguals, is much more complex than simply delivering the right strategies or the most recent, theory-based language instruction. Because emergent bilinguals still face barriers in accessing equitable educational opportunities in public schools, ESL teachers must assume the role of advocate (Linville, 2016). As Athanases et al. (2018) wrote, "teaching ELs is not just 'business as usual' but a process of monitoring for inequities, of seeing oneself as capable of agency, and of making change" (p. 4765).

There have been multiple definitions of advocacy for emergent bilinguals in the literature. Staehr Fenner (2014) defined the concept of advocacy for emergent bilinguals as "working for ELs' equitable and excellent education by taking appropriate actions on their behalf" (p. 8). Dubetz and deJong (2011) highlighted the responsibility of advocates to "recognize and celebrate the linguistic and cultural resources" (p. 251) of emergent bilinguals. According to deOliveira and Athanases (2007), advocates for emergent bilinguals implement instruction that meets the needs of all learners, work toward the fair distribution of resources to emergent bilinguals, examine curriculum for and assessment of emergent bilinguals, and develop an understanding of language policy.

For teachers to become advocates for emergent bilinguals, teacher education programs must prepare them to engage in this work (Athanases et al., 2018; Linville, 2020). However, more research is needed to discover exactly what elements of the preparation of ESL teachers most clearly shape their advocacy beliefs and actions. Because experienced ESL teachers have been found to be more likely to advocate for their students (Linville, 2020), it is also important to determine how novice teachers conceptualize and enact advocacy as they enter the field. Teachers

newer to the profession often focus on simply making it through their first years in the classroom, which might impact their ability, and possibly their desire, to engage in acts of advocacy (Athanases & deOliveira, 2008). Both the preparation of ESL teachers to become advocates for emergent bilinguals and the advocacy actions of novice ESL teachers in the field are areas of interest that have yet to be fully explored.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to explore how a small group of novice ESL teachers described the advocacy actions in which they engaged in their teaching contexts and to explore the different sources from which teachers learn about and gain insight into advocating for emergent bilinguals. This study was conducted over the course of one semester, collecting participants' reports of actions both at the start and end of a course focused on becoming advocates for emergent bilinguals, while these teachers were also working in the field and gaining experience working in real contexts with emergent bilinguals. The research questions for this study were as follows:

1, In what types of advocacy actions do novice ESL teachers report that they have engaged in their professional lives?

2. What factors do novice ESL teachers cite as influential in their development of ideas about advocacy for emergent bilinguals?

Advocacy in the Literature

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this research was created by bringing together two ways of discussing advocacy. To create a more holistic view of advocacy, advocacy actions were considered in terms of not only the *what* and *where* (Athanases & deOliveira, 2008) but also the *how* (Peters & Reid, 2009). To determine the *what* and *where*, Athanases and deOliveira's (2008) categorization of teachers' advocacy actions in terms of the sites in which they take place was utilized. Although multiple systems have been devised for this purpose (e.g., Dubetz & deJong, 2011), Athanases and deOliveira's (2008) categorization was used, as it offered the most specificity in terms of naming sites. Each advocacy action can be described in terms of the location in which it occurred. Athanases and deOliveira named four sites, depicted as nested circles. In the center circle is the classroom, which is the teacher's immediate sphere of influence. From there, radiating outward, are the school, families and community, and larger sociopolitical structures.

While advocacy may seem to be a simple act undertaken by a caring educator, without understanding of the larger issues of social justice, advocacy may actually be a way of reinforcing the deficit perspectives that are so prevalent in schools

(Haneda & Alexander, 2015). True advocates for emergent bilinguals understand not just the *what* and *where* of advocacy but also the *why*. Was the action taken meant to provide a short-term or a long-term solution? Was it an immediate response to an individual situation or a planned course of action to combat a larger problem? According to Peters and Reid (2009), "advocacy-in-action is both tactical and strategic; that is, it focuses on the immediate (i.e., day-to-day classroom teaching) as well as the indirect/larger issues connected to social justice and equity concerning teaching and learning in schools (e.g., school funding issues)" (p. 556). Tactical advocacy actions are important, and they are required to assist emergent bilinguals in gaining access to opportunities, but action is also required to push back against and remedy the larger systemic causes that have denied them that access for so long. This conceptual framework was designed to explore advocacy actions in multiple dimensions and to turn a critical eye to the ways in which aspiring teachers are and are not prepared to be advocates for emergent bilinguals. The literature review, organized in terms of Athanases and deOliveira's (2008) categories, includes examples of advocacy-in-action that are both tactical and strategic (Peters & Reid, 2009).

Advocacy in Classrooms

In their own classrooms, novice teachers "can feel some agency and control," suggesting that they may be more likely to act as advocates in this setting (Athanases & deOliveira, 2008, p. 77). Transformation of teaching practice is often manifested in a teacher's own classroom. Using an antibias curriculum and materials was viewed as an important act of advocacy by aspiring teachers in a teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL) program (Linville, 2016). Teachers may include curricular topics related to inequities and social justice issues and work to foster a sense of agency in students (Agarwal et al., 2010; Whipp, 2013). Dubetz and deJong's (2011) review of the literature found that teachers in bilingual programs designed curriculum and instruction that included nonmainstream perspectives and multicultural and multilingual texts. These teachers included explicit instruction for emergent bilingual students on navigating mainstream society and engaged students in discussion on difficult subjects, such as racism and prejudices toward other students. Additionally, bilingual teachers' use of students' native language in the classroom was viewed as an act of advocacy, especially in schools where policies encouraged the use of English (Dubetz & deJong, 2011).

Advocacy in the School

Teachers advocate for emergent bilinguals at the school level "when the teacher asks how school policies and practices do and do not serve ELs" (Athanases et al., 2018, p. 4765). Advocacy actions at the school level may involve transforming the teaching practices of others, such as finding and implementing new reading and math curricula that would better address student needs (Whipp, 2013). Advocacy

may also be enacted through mentoring and offering support to mainstream colleagues who teach emergent bilinguals (Dubetz & deJong, 2011). The TESOL standards emphasize collaboration between ESL teachers and their colleagues as a necessary part of advocating for emergent bilinguals (TESOL International Association, 2019; Whiting, 2019). Linville (2019) found that relationship building was one of the most important "advocacy skills" (p. 6) highlighted by ESL teachers both experienced and novice. In Linville's (2020) survey, 90% of in-service teachers reported collaborating with other teachers to improve instruction for emergent bilinguals. However, ESL teachers have reported feeling a lack of respect as they attempt to collaborate with general education teachers, describing teachers treating them as paraprofessionals or teaching assistants; these types of experiences have led some ESL professionals to choose to collaborate only with those classroom teachers who are viewed as lower in status than they are, that is, younger and less experienced teachers (Linville, 2019). The ESL teachers in Linville's study also weighed advocating for students against the risks of speaking out to those above them in the school hierarchy "because administration always wins" (p. 11).

Teachers exercise their power when they question and initiate changes in school policies that promote inequities in opportunities for emergent bilinguals (Dubetz & deJong, 2011; Whipp, 2013). It is important to note that these types of advocacy actions are often undertaken by an individual teacher (Athanases et al., 2018; Dubetz & deJong, 2011). An example of a teacher engaging independently in advocacy was Rena, a bilingual teacher who created an after-school technology club to give more access to computers to Spanish-speaking students at her school (Athanases & deOliveira, 2008).

Advocacy With Families and in the Community

Building and maintaining relationships with the families of emergent bilinguals may be a way for teachers to both disturb preconceived notions about family engagement and offer direct support to the families of emergent bilinguals. Differences in culture have led some teachers to believe that the families of emergent bilinguals are not interested or involved in children's school lives (Arias & Morillo-Campbell, 2008). Outreach from caring educators can help to empower families who are otherwise ignored or viewed in negative ways (Dubetz & deJong, 2011). Helping parents and guardians to gain social capital, which may help them to navigate schools and other governmental agencies, is one way to advocate (Lopez et al., 2001). Teachers can also advocate with and for families by building ways to communicate consistently (Albrecht, 2021; Panferov, 2010) and proposing alternative settings and times for meetings that are more convenient and comfortable for families (Souto-Manning & Swick, 2006).

Teachers can link up with community organizations and create opportunities for students to receive additional school support or enrichment (Dubetz & de-

Jong,2011). As illustrated by the teachers featured in Athanases and deOliveira's (2008) research, parent outreach was often undertaken by native speakers of the language(s) that families in the community spoke. However, there needs to be more research on whether a teacher's ability to speak an additional language directly impacts their likelihood to conduct outreach with families and communities. Haneda and Alexander's (2015) findings suggest that bilingual teachers are more likely to be advocates for emergent bilinguals, while Linville's (2020) findings did not illustrate a strong connection between advocacy and multilingualism.

Advocacy in Larger Sociopolitical Structures

This realm had been the focus of little discussion in the field (Athanases et al., 2018). Dubetz and deJong's (2011) research mentioned advocating for bilingual programs and organizing or participating in groups that advocate for bilingual education in wider society. Nieto (2017) suggested attending a school board meeting as a way to begin to engage in the sociopolitical sphere. In Harrison and McIlwain's (2020) research, teachers reported being involved with state TESOL organizations via serving on boards or attending conferences. Teacher educators have worked together with students to critique and bring public attention to proposed state regulations regarding the education of emergent bilinguals (Hesson & Toncelli, 2019).

TESOL teacher candidates did not believe that advocacy in the larger sociopolitical sphere was as important as advocacy in the other sites discussed (Linville, 2016). In-service ESL teachers reported engaging in political actions aimed at changing policy far less often than school-based ones (Linville, 2020). It is possible that teachers view actions that directly affect their emergent bilinguals as more impactful and practical than actions in the distant and slow-moving political realm (Suarez & Dominguez, 2015).

Preparing Novice Teachers to Be Advocates

An emphasis on equity-focused teaching in teacher education coursework has a noticeable impact on teaching practice (Athanases & Martin, 2006; Whipp, 2013). Novice teachers who could recall specific course content related to advocacy were more likely to enact advocacy in their practice (Whipp, 2013). The ability to engage with their classmates around issues of equity and to support and collaborate with their peers around action research projects were highlighted by teachers as essential in their development of an advocacy stance (Athanases & Martin, 2006; Burrell Storms, 2013).

Exposure to diversity and access to mentors who can model acts of advocacy for emergent bilinguals are crucial to preparing advocates. Teachers who act as advocates are more likely to have participated in cross-cultural experiences either in the United States or abroad (Haneda & Alexander, 2015; Whipp, 2013). Fieldwork placements in diverse settings during their teacher education programs was another

element that was found to impact teachers' advocacy beliefs and actions (Athanases & Martin, 2006). Fieldwork supervisors who provide models of advocacy can encourage aspiring teachers to become advocates themselves (Athanases & Martin, 2006). Additionally, support from mentors, administrators, and colleagues during the first years of teaching assisted novice teachers to continue integrating acts of advocacy into their teaching practice (Whipp, 2013).

Methods

Context

The research was conducted in the graduate education program at a mid-sized Catholic college in the Northeast. The school offers a number of master's degrees in education, including ESL (PreK–6). Many of the graduate teacher education students participate in a 1-year program in which their tuition is paid for by a local school district in exchange for their work in the district as an "intern" during that school year.

This research focused on aspiring ESL teachers in one course in the ESL graduate program, a course designed to cover current issues and trends in ESL education. The first half of the semester was spent discussing some of the issues that impact emergent bilinguals and their schooling opportunities: identity (including race), immigration/immigration status, trauma, discrimination, and English proficiency. In the iteration studied, participants read Suarez-Orozco et al.'s (2008) *Learning a New Land*, along with supplementary readings from a variety of sources, to gain insight into these topics. This part of the course was meant to address the *why*—why do emergent bilinguals in American schools require advocates? The second half of the semester was explicitly focused on advocacy actions for emergent bilinguals, using Staehr Fenner's (2014) *Advocating for English Learners* as a primary text. Participants wrote two reflections, each focused on a specific issue that they felt was impeding their emergent bilinguals' access to educational opportunities in the schools where they were teaching. The final course assignment asked them to choose one of the issues they identified in a reflection and to create an advocacy project in which they described an action plan for ameliorating that issue in their context.

Research Design

The focus of this descriptive case study is a bounded unit, the aspiring ESL teachers enrolled in the course described in the previous section in spring 2018. As Harrison and Prado (2019) noted, advocacy is clearly part of an ESL teacher's responsibilities, yet there has been "limited research" (p. 22) on the advocacy actions of this population.

Participants

Six ESL licensure students enrolled in the course consented to having assignments from the course collected and analyzed and to sit for one interview in the month after they completed the course. The pseudonyms for the six participants are listed in Table 1. All participants were female native English speakers who identified themselves as White. Ally and Kate both reported speaking "conversational" Spanish, but neither was fluent. No other participants reported speaking a language other than English. Lucy had lived for a time in the Czech Republic. The other five participants had not spent a significant amount of time outside of the United States.

Lucy was the only participant who was employed as a teacher of record. The rest of the participants were in the internship program. They had been working in their internships for 4 months when the course began and 8 months when it ended. With the exception of Ally, the interns worked as coteachers alongside licensed ESL teachers either in self-contained ESL classrooms or in push-in/pull-out models. Ally functioned as one school's push-in/pull-out ESL teacher with a small caseload of students. The six participants in the internship program were completing their last semester; Lucy had one more course and her practicum left to complete.

Data Sources

The data sources for this research consisted of a pre- and post- survey completed on the first and last day that the course met. Participants completed the surveys using Qualtrics. Participants were not reminded of their earlier responses when they completed the post- survey. The survey questions were as follows:

1. In your own words, describe what it means to be an advocate for emergent bilinguals.

2. Have you ever had an opportunity to act as an advocate for an emergent bilingual/emergent bilinguals? Explain the situation and the action you took (to protect privacy, do not name the school and use general terms for people: for example, "third grade boy" or "school administrator").

Table 1

Research Participants' Teaching Positions

Participant	Internship program	Position/responsibilities
Lucy	No	Pull-out ESL teacher
Kate	Yes	Coteach in ESL classroom
Cara	Yes	Push-in ESL teacher
Dani	Yes	Coteach in ESL classroom
Nora	Yes	Push-in ESL teacher
Ally	Yes	Push-in/pull-out ESL teacher

Note. ESL = English as a second language.

3. How do ESL teachers learn about being advocates for emergent bilinguals?

4. How have you been prepared to advocate for emergent bilinguals? Describe any previous experiences you have had learning about this topic.

Participants also sat for one semistructured interview (see the appendix). They were asked to answer the same questions as had appeared on the survey in order to solicit more detailed information. While asking the same questions in the interviews as in the written documents allowed me to seek more detail from participants, it also helped to provide multiple sources of data from which to make interpretations and inferences about a complex phenomenon (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

These 30-minute, digitally recorded interviews took place in the month after the conclusion of the spring 2018 semester. Five of the interviews took place in person in my office on campus. Dani's interview had to be conducted over the phone due to a scheduling conflict.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed as individual sets first, looking at changes in an individual's responses from the beginning to the end of the semester, then data from all participants were examined to determine the trends in the group's descriptions of advocacy actions. First, the data were arranged into sets—pre- survey, post-survey, and interview. I transcribed the interviews myself; repeated listening to and transcribing of the participants' voices allowed me to start ruminating on the data and the messages contained therein.

Deductive coding was used to determine how emerging themes from the data fit into the definition of advocacy-in-action from Peters and Reid (2009) and Athanases and deOliveira's (2008) framework of sites of advocacy. Actions reported on the pre- and post- surveys were labeled as tactical or strategic in terms of their impact and in terms of the site where they took place: in the classroom, in school, with family/community, or in the sociopolitical realm.

With the interview data, the analysis was carried out a bit differently. After reading through all the transcriptions, one of Ally's statements attracted my attention. She said, "I think you have to be a fighter," which became both an inductive and an in vivo code (Saldaña, 2014). Through Peters and Reid's (2009) definitions of advocacy-in-action, I interpreted this statement in terms of what it means to advocate for emergent bilinguals. With this idea in mind, I read through all the data and coded them in terms of both how these aspiring teachers reported on the advocacy actions in which they had engaged (e.g., "fighting for emergent bilinguals' access to desks in homerooms") and what factors helped or hindered them in their "fight" for their emergent bilinguals ("being a monolingual ESL teacher"). Categories were generated to encompass the themes present across the data set. HyperResearch software was used to group the coded sections of text into categories.

Research Lens

As Merriam (1998) wrote, "the investigator as a human instrument is limited by being human—that is, mistakes are made, opportunities are missed, personal biases interfere" (p. 20). I needed to consider how my roles as both researcher and course instructor, as well as my own personal views on the concept of advocacy for emergent bilinguals, might have influenced the interpretations I made about the data collected.

When I chose to become an ESL teacher, I was not fully aware of the ways in which our society marginalizes nonnative English speakers and prevents equitable access to education through policies both written and unwritten. I am a White native English speaker who was raised in a predominantly White, lower-middle-class area. I became an ESL teacher because I loved linguistics and I thought that I understood the role that language played in being successful in school. However, it was in my own experience teaching immigrant students in an urban middle school classroom that I was made fully aware of the ways in which emergent bilinguals were discriminated against, segregated, and prevented from reaching their full potential in school.

It is my goal that the ESL teacher education program in which I work be infused with the concept of advocacy for emergent bilinguals from beginning to end. I conducted this study to discover both what effect (if any) my course had on how these students conceptualized advocacy for emergent bilinguals and also what sort of experiences in the field might be part of their advocacy journey. Although I was hopeful that the participants would be able to consider whether they had engaged in any acts of advocacy, I was not and am not naive enough to believe that one course can change a participant's thoughts and actions in long-lasting and substantive ways. I built the research into this final course in the program to gauge students' understandings and enactments of advocacy as they existed in that moment.

Their responses on the pre- and post- surveys may have been impacted by their desire to do well in the course, as it was presented as an in-class activity. Another possible source of my influence on the results was the close relationship I had formed with the participants, all of whom had taken multiple courses with me during that year. While there is the issue of the unequal power dynamics between the participants and me, in the interviews, they made negative (but honest) comments about the course, such as how they all hated a reading presentation assignment because, as Ally said, it "felt like a book report," and admitted their continuing misconceptions and misgivings about advocacy. To mitigate the effect of my own biases and interpretations somewhat, I have included as much direct quotation from the participants as possible. While my biases and beliefs have likely shaped my interpretations of the data, I believe that by being human, by making the mistakes that Merriam (1998) mentioned, I can reveal more about the complexities of teaching and teacher education.

Results and Discussion

Novice Teachers' Reported Advocacy Actions

On both the pre- and post- surveys, all six participants were able to report an action that they felt met their definitions of advocacy (Table 2). Athanases and deOliveira's (2008) suggestion that classroom acts of advocacy might be more prevalent in the practice of novice teachers was not clearly discovered in this research study, as the highest proportion of reported advocacy acts took place at the school level.

Actions in the Classroom

Although classroom-level acts of advocacy are often associated with choosing materials and curriculum (Athanases & deOliveira, 2008), the three advocacy actions reported in this study do not involve those elements of teaching. On the pre- survey, Dani addressed an issue of discrimination she witnessed among students in her class:

> One student in a mainstream class was discussing the differences in a Chinese student's physical appearance compared to everyone else in the class. . . . I talked to this small group and discussed how everyone is different in many different ways.

Dani's advocacy was related to discussing prejudices toward other students,

Table 2
Participants' Reported Advocacy Actions

Site	Pre- survey		Post- survey	
	Action	*Participant(s)*	*Action*	*Participant(s)*
Classroom	Address discrimination	Dani	Support a newcomer in class	Ally, Cara
School	Attend team meetings	Cara, Nora	Assist colleague	Dani, Nora
	Conversations with teachers	Ally	Request desks in homeroom	Kate
	Intervene in mainstream incident	Kate		
Family/ community Sociopolitical structures	Assist parent	Lucy	Assist parent	Lucy

an action mentioned by Dubetz and deJong (2011). In Dani's case, there is a need for more explicit education in terms of discrimination and prejudice in that class or school. This discussion could have led to a unit on diversity and discrimination with students' voices being heard and new perspectives being gained. However, the question on the survey asked only for them to describe "an opportunity to act as an advocate for an emergent bilingual/emergent bilinguals," which may suggest that the answer should be a one-time action rather than an ongoing conversation or opportunity for further learning.

Also on the classroom level, Ally and Cara described supporting individual newcomer students and assisting them in acclimating to school. Both participants reported helping in nonacademic ways, with Ally giving her student time and space in her classroom "to recover his emotions" and Cara helping her student to learn "what to say to her peers as an invitation to play or request to play with others" at recess. Ally's and Cara's actions were aimed at helping newcomer students to navigate the new environment of school, like Dubetz and deJong's (2011) finding that advocacy might entail instruction on how to navigate society. Both Ally and Cara were tending to the social-emotional well-being of their students, a topic not explicitly addressed in previous research. While Ally and Cara helped individual newcomer students, the larger issue of how best to support students new to the country and the school system is still unresolved in their schools and districts. Each time a new student enters, an ESL teacher is dispatched to meet their individual needs for a day or more, to the detriment of the other students that teacher is supposed to educate. A more effective solution for acclimating newcomer students could be put in place to reduce the upheaval to the ESL teacher's schedule of highly regulated service delivery.

In these instances, Dani, Cara, and Ally were concerned for the well-being of a student or students in their classroom. They acted to ameliorate a difficult situation in the moment. These actions would fall more on the "tactical" side of advocacy-in-action (Peters & Reid, 2009). That term is in no way meant to diminish the assistance that was offered or the care given by these teachers but is simply a way to name a more short-term solution or more localized response to an issue facing emergent bilinguals in classrooms.

Actions in the School

Advocacy actions at the school level had the highest number of occurrences in the study. Some of the responses mentioned ways of collaborating with other teachers, which is a key component of school-level advocacy (Dubetz & deJong, 2011; Linville, 2019; Whiting, 2019). On the pre- survey, Nora and Cara stated that they attended team meetings to advocate for emergent bilinguals' access to services. Ally wrote that she was "in constant conversation with [her] students' classroom teachers about what they need to succeed in the classroom."

In the more specific responses, participants described instances in which they spoke directly with individual colleagues about emergent bilinguals. Nora and Dani tried to assist colleagues in understanding how to promote the success of emergent bilinguals. Nora explained how she was attempting to change the views of "a very old school teacher" who made negative comments about emergent bilinguals. Dani told a similar story about a student who had "been put on the back burner in his classroom because of his 'poor motivation and bad attitude.'" She met with the teacher and "talked about comprehensible input and his affective filter."

Kate explained her intervention in an incident in a mainstream classroom where one emergent bilingual was being treated in a way that she felt was unfair. Kate wrote,

> There was one time where a student was being yelled at by another teacher for not doing their work, and they did not know that this student could not speak much English, so I made sure to step in and tell the teacher and explain to the upset child in my conversational Spanish that she was OK and that the teacher did not know and that I would help her.

On the post- survey, Kate reported another interaction with a mainstream teacher, though in this one, she requested for emergent bilinguals to have desks in their homeroom, even though they spent a large portion of the day in a separate classroom. She believed that having their own desks would help the emergent bilinguals to feel a sense of belonging in their homeroom.

The actions Nora and Dani took in talking to mainstream colleagues about what their emergent bilingual students needed could help to combat the deficit perspectives that some mainstream teachers hold (Haneda & Alexander, 2015). While this assistance was very important and their collaboration may have helped to shift an individual teacher's thinking, neither Nora nor Dani discussed the ways in which the larger society has shaped the way emergent bilinguals are discussed by monolingual teachers or the shift in culture that would be necessary to improve outcomes for emergent bilinguals across the school. The same explanation would apply to Kate's assisting the emergent bilingual in a mainstream classroom and her request for desks in the students' homeroom. For these reasons, the actions described would all fall into the category of tactical advocacy-in-action (Peters & Reid, 2009).

It is interesting to note that the one example of strategic advocacy-in-action in this study was enacted at the school level by an experienced teacher and was described by Nora in her interview. She said that the ESL teacher supervising her in her internship "advocated for her students last year and said, 'You know what—my students are missing too much of the content when I pull them out.' . . . She suggested that they do the push-in model this year." This teacher's focus on changing school policy to benefit not just one or a small group of emergent bilinguals but the whole school exemplifies the type of advocacy that is concerned with "indirect/larger issues connected to social justice and equity" (Peters & Reid, 2009, p. 556), such as

emergent bilinguals' access to content. While this may not be a perfect example of a larger societal issue for which to advocate, it is the most strategic advocacy action included in these data.

Advocacy and School Hierarchy

In their interviews, all six participants acknowledged that acting as an advocate for emergent bilinguals, especially as a newer, less experienced teacher, could be challenging. As Lucy explained, "it's still hard to talk to a lot of older teachers that have been there for a while and may not have the same views. So, I think that might just come with experience and just me being more confident." Kate expressed her hesitation in speaking to a more experienced teacher:

> I really struggled the other day in saying something to that teacher with the desks because I knew that wasn't necessarily my place—being an intern and speaking to a teacher about things that maybe I shouldn't speak to them about. But I also knew that it was the right thing to do.

Kate also said that building relationships with colleagues is an important first step in becoming a more confident advocate, echoing the findings of Linville (2019), because building relationships over time allows others to "see you have knowledge that is valid and that you have suggestions."

In the participants' teaching contexts, they encountered, as Nora said, "old school" teachers who had not received training in working with emergent bilinguals and who struggled to integrate emergent bilinguals into the life of the school. In this statement, Nora seemed to acknowledge the power differentials present in schools, placing more experienced general education teachers above push-in ESL teachers in terms of power (Linville, 2019). Those participants who collaborated with or confronted their colleagues recognized the challenge in doing so but acknowledged that, as Kate put it, "it was the right thing to do."

The willingness of most of the novice teachers in this study to advocate for emergent bilinguals at the school level, despite their relative newness in the field, might be a result of both their position as interns and the roles that most of them adopted in push-in/pull-out contexts. While Athanases and deOliveira (2008) noted that novice teachers might be more focused on their own survival in the classroom, most participants in this study were not considered teachers but interns. It might seem that this title and the lack of authority it conveys would be an impediment to these novice teachers acting as advocates, as they might feel uncomfortable exercising their power alongside their more experienced colleagues. However, these participants often worked in coteaching situations, giving them fewer direct responsibilities for managing a classroom, making the need simply to get through the year less intense. This position may have also afforded them opportunities to view the classroom and school contexts from a different perspective than a novice teacher responsible for taking on the sole

responsibility for the management and instruction of a full classroom on his or her own.

Actions With Families and Communities

Lucy was the only participant to report on advocacy related to family involvement. She described the same situation on both the pre- and post- surveys. Lucy assisted a parent whom teachers believed was "uninterested to come to the school." She "fought to get someone who could speak Spanish to call home. The mother was very happy to come in and requested a translator." The parent in Lucy's example was helped to communicate with her child's teachers, but Lucy did not seem to push back on the reasons for not seeking a translator in the first place. The other teachers' mistaken belief about an emergent bilingual's family being "uninterested," as Arias and Morillo-Campbell (2008) described in their research, was being used as an excuse for excluding the mother from discussions about her own child. While Lucy clearly cared that this parent be included in the education of her child, she did not comment further on the discrimination that seemed to be evident in this situation or on how a situation like this could be prevented in the future. The focus on helping a single student leads to the categorization of this action as tactical (Peters & Reid, 2009).

Building relationships with families and encouraging family involvement may hinge on the ability of the teacher to speak another language. As Cara said in her interview, "it is sometimes difficult when they speak Spanish or Arabic or whatever other language. How do I communicate with them? I feel like that's another big question I've been struggling with still." Lucy was aware of how to contact a translator to meet a family's needs. Dani described in her interview how she reached out to parents using an internet tool that translates messages to parents into multiple languages; she also said that she asked her supervising practitioner, who did speak Spanish, to make phone calls for her. While Haneda and Alexander (2015) found that bilingual teachers were more likely to advocate for emergent bilinguals, understanding how to get translations or translators, whether through the school system, colleagues, or technology, may impact a teacher's willingness or ability to reach out to emergent bilinguals' families.

Actions in Sociopolitical Structures

There were no mentions of the political dimension of advocacy in the survey or interview data. In Linville's (2020) research, more politically minded teachers tended to identify as a race other than White, to have years of teaching experience, and to teach at the secondary level. These teachers' demographics differ greatly from the White, novice, elementary-level teachers who participated in this research. The lack of acknowledgment of the sociopolitical dimension by the participants, coupled with the types of advocacy actions they described, suggested that they were more concerned about the immediate needs of their students, as Suarez and Dominguez

(2015) found. The reports they gave about their advocacy did not include any pushback to or acknowledgment of larger, more systemic causes for the situations they sought to remedy and no strategic advocacy to address the inequities of the school system and society.

Factors Impacting Advocacy

In the interviews, Lucy, Cara, and Nora named other specific courses in which they felt that they had learned about advocacy. All three said that a course on multicultural literature had taught them to integrate diverse literature and multiple cultural perspectives into their instruction. Lucy and Nora also recalled that a course on assessment had included notions about fairness and the importance of advocating for fair assessments for ELs. Cara felt that a course on teaching content to ELs had reinforced the importance of incorporating language objectives and the responsibility of ESL teachers to support mainstream teachers in teaching and assessing language. The other three participants said they could not remember much, if anything, about advocacy from other courses they had taken. Because teacher education coursework, especially that which explicitly addresses advocacy and social justice, has been shown to impact aspiring teachers' practice, these findings suggest that the program must strengthen its focus on ways to transform practice to improve educational outcomes for emergent bilinguals (Athanases & Martin, 2006; Whipp, 2013).

Mentorship, another important feature of teacher education for advocacy (Athanases & Martin, 2006; Whipp, 2013), was cited by Lucy and Nora. They both reported that seeing other teachers provide equitable access to educational opportunities for emergent bilinguals impacted their beliefs and practices. Lucy said,

> I was a paraprofessional in a newcomers' class for the last 3 years before I was a teacher so that really influenced me because I had two really good mentor teachers that showed how to do all those things in the classroom. One was really good at community of classroom. . . . The other woman did a really good job of differentiating and expecting high-level of work from her students.

Lucy had witnessed firsthand the types of practices that could be used to support emergent bilinguals. A teacher enacting these practices is advocating for his or her emergent bilinguals by creating an atmosphere in which diversity is valued and students' strengths are highlighted.

Nora reported that the supervising practitioner in her undergraduate practicum experience was an example for her. On one of her first days, the teacher taught her how to modify assessments for the one EL in the class:

> Just to see my teacher doing that and jumping the gun and doing this immediately and saying we're not going to let him struggle through the first series of tests, see how he does, and then start modifying. She was immediately like this needs to be done. And that's my first sight of advocacy.

The action Nora described this teacher taking is a clear example of advocacy. This teacher knew her students, she believed in their potential, and she made it possible for them to be successful in her classroom. Nora had also been made aware of, as described in a previous section, the impact the ESL teacher with whom she worked in her internship had on her school's practices for educating emergent bilinguals.

Both Lucy's and Nora's experiences seeing advocacy actions in practice reinforce the importance of finding advocacy role models to mentor aspiring teachers (Athanases & Martin, 2006; Whipp, 2013). Their ability to see what advocacy looks like in practice impacted them, and they were grateful to and inspired by the women who had modeled these actions for them.

Advocate as Personality Type

Ally and Dani both suggested that their willingness to advocate was part of their personalities. Dani said,

> I feel like a lot of people are afraid to push and be persistent sometimes and reach out to the other staff members and advocate for emergent bilinguals. And I know I won't be one to say, "Oh, I don't know, maybe I'll just wait until next year or the year after until I feel more comfortable."

Ally said, "If you aren't fighting for [emergent bilinguals], then nobody is, and that I feel falls on the ESL teachers. And if you don't have the personality for it, I think that could be quite challenging." Dani's and Ally's statements suggest that advocates are born and not made. Additionally, Ally's statement about being the only one fighting for emergent bilinguals mirrors both the findings of Dubetz and deJong (2011) and the findings of this study: Individual teachers tend to engage in advocacy actions on their own.

Implications

In this research, novice ESL teachers were found to be developing the necessary qualities to act as advocates for emergent bilinguals. Whether their ability to act as advocates for emergent bilinguals was influenced by the content of this one specific course was not clearly demonstrated by the data collected. However, despite competing concerns and a lack of seniority, novice ESL teachers can engage in advocacy actions in their classrooms and schools. Participants did acknowledge the challenges of advocating, yet they did not seem to let these stop them. While previously held beliefs about novice teachers may have prevented teacher educators from emphasizing the need for advocacy, focusing these teachers' attention on the advocacy actions they are already performing and helping them to understand the range of advocacy actions needed may increase their confidence and allow them to grow into their advocate role. In addition, mentorship was mentioned as an influence. Mentors who can model advocacy for novice teachers are necessary if ESL

teachers are to fully embrace their roles as advocates. Teacher education programs ought to seek out mentors for aspiring ESL teachers who can demonstrate the types of advocacy that make a difference in the school success of emergent bilinguals. Mentors who enact advocacy for emergent bilinguals in all spheres—classroom, school, family and community, and sociopolitical—would be the most desirable.

However, without an understanding of the systemic inequities that led to the need for advocacy for emergent bilinguals in the first place, the advocacy enacted may not focus energy on the appropriate areas or make lasting changes for large groups of emergent bilinguals. That element, that clear focus on the why of advocacy, still seems to be missing in the data gathered from the participants in this study. All the specific advocacy actions described in this research were aimed at ameliorating an immediate need and did not work toward disrupting or dismantling systemic inequities, supporting the idea that teachers are more likely to enact advocacy in practical ways within their sphere(s) of influence (Athanases & deOliveira, 2008; Suarez & Dominguez, 2015). The participants did step in to support emergent bilinguals; however, they did not, in surveys or interviews, describe any follow-up actions to address the reasons that advocacy was necessary in each situation. Based on this research, I removed Suarez-Orozco et al. (2008) from the course and replaced it with three personal narratives written by/about young adults who had immigrated to the United States. By providing these aspiring teachers with a firsthand account of experiences that may resemble those of their emergent bilinguals or their families, my hope is that these teachers will begin to gain empathy for emergent bilinguals and their families while also beginning to realize how the systems of our schools and society serve to reinforce stereotypes and disadvantage this population.

Reinforcing the findings of Dubetz and deJong (2011), the participants in this research seemed to enact advocacy as individuals. Adopting the notion of "transitive advocacy" from Harrison and McIlwain (2020), though, could frame these advocacy actions more positively. From that vantage point, individual acts of advocacy may seem limited in their effects and scope; however, they may impact colleagues, who in turn may advocate for emergent bilinguals, leading to better outcomes over time. Because most of the reported actions took place at the school level, the chance that these acts of advocacy impacted colleagues is better than if participants had enacted more classroom-based advocacy.

To encourage advocacy at the family and community level, there needs to be a clearer focus on this type of advocacy within teacher education programs. In programs with high concentrations of monolingual English-speaking teachers, faculty should introduce teachers to new technologies that allow for multilingual communication. Aspiring ESL teachers should be made aware of the organizations that serve the communities in which they teach and encouraged to connect with these organizations, as they might assist with family outreach (Harrison, 2019).

There is still the question of advocacy in the sociopolitical sphere. If there are few examples in the literature, how do teacher educators teach and model this type of

advocacy for novice teachers? In practice, the involvement in the political aspects of teaching ESL may be a matter of open and reflective discussion on political beliefs and issues. ESL teachers who, as Harrison and Prado (2019) wrote, "will be 'first responders' to the after- and ongoing effects of this destructive political climate" (p. 25) must engage in study and reflection on how the ideology and rhetoric of the government impact their students in large and small ways. Although some teacher educators may shy away from engaging in political discussions, Nieto (2006) wrote, "teaching is inherently political work" (p. 1). This statement is especially important to consider when preparing teachers who will work with students who have traditionally been disadvantaged by society's systems and practices.

Conclusion

Returning to the quotation from Ally, being a "fighter" is not easy; the word fight suggests struggles and challenges, advances and setbacks. The novice ESL teachers profiled in this study were willing to fight. They were inspired to fight for their students after seeing the challenges they faced in school every day. There is nothing wrong with fighting for individuals or small groups of students in what Peters and Reid (2009) would call this "tactical" way. Ally's statement that no one other than the ESL teacher is fighting for emergent bilinguals seems to be supported by the research; most advocates are working alone (Athanases et al., 2018; Dubetz & deJong, 2011). Fighting is exhausting, and fighting by oneself is doubly so. The question then becomes, How do we keep novice teachers from fighting themselves into exhaustion in their first years of teaching?

First, advocates need community. They need to know who their allies are and what organizations and resources are there to support them in their fight. This spirit of collaboration and community building should begin in teacher education programs. Additionally, as teacher educators, it is our responsibility to provide our fighters with the armor they need to continue fighting. Teacher education programs must help aspiring teachers to have a sense of mission and purpose in their fight. Teacher educators can begin by helping them to recognize the underlying inequities at play and by modeling for them how to engage in advocacy for emergent bilinguals by fighting for social justice in schools and society.

References

Agarwal, R., Epstein, S., Oppenheim, R., Oyler, C., & Sonu, D. (2010). From ideal to practice and back again: Beginning teachers teaching for social justice. *Journal of Teacher Education, 61*(3), 237–247. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487109354521

Albrecht, D. L. (2021). The journey from traditional parent involvement to an alliance for empowerment: A paradigm shift. *Theory Into Practice, 60*(1), 7–17. https://doi.org/10.1080/00405841.2020.1827897

Arias, M. B., & Morillo-Campbell, M. (2008). *Promoting ELL parental involvement: Challenges in contested times*. Great Lakes Center for Education Policy and Research. http://

www.greatlakescenter.org/docs/Policy_Briefs/Arias_ELL.pdf

Athanases, S. Z., & deOliveira, L. C. (2008). Advocacy for equity in classrooms and beyond: New teachers' challenges and responses. *Teachers College Record, 110*(1), 64–104. https://doi.org/10.1177/016146810811000101

Athanases, S. Z., & Martin, K. J. (2006). Learning to advocate for educational equity in a teacher credential program. *Teaching and Teacher Education: An International Journal of Research and Studies, 22*(6), 627–646. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2006.03.008

Athanases, S. Z., Sanchez, S. L., & Bronte Gray, C. M. (2018). Teacher advocacy. In *The TESOL encyclopedia of English language teaching* (1st ed., Vol. 7, pp. 4761–4767). Wiley. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118784235.eelt0269

Benton, R. C. (2022, January 19). English hegemony as an issue of justice. *Language Magazine*. https://www.languagemagazine.com/2022/01/19/english-hegemony-as-an-issue-of-justice

Burrell Storms, S. (2013). Preparing teachers for social justice advocacy: Am I walking my talk? *Multicultural Education, 20*(2), 33–39.

Colombo, M., Tigert, J., & Leider, C. M. (2019). Positioning teachers, positioning learners: Why we should stop using the term English learners. *TESOL Journal, 10*(2). https://doi.org/10.1002/tesj.432

deOliveira, L. C., & Athanases, S. Z. (2007). Graduates' reports of advocating for English language learners. *Journal of Teacher Education, 58*(3), 202–215. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487107299978

Dubetz, N. E., & deJong, E. J. (2011). Teacher advocacy in bilingual programs. *Bilingual Research Journal, 34*(3), 248–262. https://doi.org/10.1080/15235882.2011.623603

Gándara, P. (2013). Meeting the needs of language minorities. In P. L. Carter & K. G. Welner (Eds.), *Closing the opportunity gap: What America must do to give every child an even chance* (pp. 156–168). Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199982981.003.0011

García, O., Kleifgen, J., & Falchi, L. (2008, January). *From English language learners to emergent bilinguals* (Research Review No. 1). Equity Matters.

Haneda, M., & Alexander, M. (2015). ESL teacher advocacy beyond the classroom. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 49*, 149–158. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2015.03.009

Harrison, J. (2019). Building advocacy capacity in a teacher training program. In H. A. Linville & J. Whiting (Eds.), *Advocacy in English language teaching and learning* (pp. 44–56). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351036665-4

Harrison, J., & McIlwain, M. J. (2020). ESOL teachers' experiences in their role as advocate: Making the case for transitive advocacy. *TESOL Journal, 11*(1), 1–18. https://doi.org/10.1002/tesj.464

Harrison, J., & Prado, J. (2019). Problematizing advocacy: Definitions, alignments, and expansions. In H. A. Linville & J. Whiting (Eds.), *Advocacy in English language teaching and learning* (pp. 18–28). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351036665-2

Hesson, S., & Toncelli, R. (2019). Making the path by walking together: A collaborative approach to equity. In H. A. Linville & J. Whiting (Eds.), *Advocacy in English language teaching and learning* (pp. 147–157). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351036665-12

Linville, H. A. (2016). ESOL teachers as advocates: An important role? *TESOL Journal, 7*(1), 98–131. https://doi.org/10.1002/tesj.193

Linville, H. A. (2019). Advocacy skills for teachers: "A real careful little dance." In H. A. Linville & J. Whiting (Eds.), *Advocacy in English language teaching and learning* (pp. 3–17). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351036665-1

Linville, H. A. (2020). A closer look at ESOL teacher advocacy: What we do and why. *TESOL Journal, 11*(3), e00508. https://doi.org/10.1002/tesj.508

Lopez, G. R., Scribner, J. D., & Mahitivanichch, K. (2001). Redefining parental involvement: Lessons from high-performing migrant-impacted schools. *American Educational Research Journal, 38*(2), 253–288. https://doi.org/10.3102/00028312038002253

Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education.* Jossey-Bass.

Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2016). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation* (4th ed.). Jossey-Bass.

Nieto, S. (2006, Spring). *Teaching as political work: Learning from courageous and caring teachers* (ED497692). ERIC. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED497692.pdf

Nieto, S. (2017). Becoming sociocultural medicators: What all educators can learn from bilingual and ESL teachers. *Issues in Teacher Education, 26*(2), 129–141.

Panferov, S. (2010). Increasing ELL parental involvement in our schools: Learning from the parents. *Theory Into Practice, 49*, 106–112. https://doi.org/10.1080/00405841003626551

Peters, S., & Reid, D. K. (2009). Resistance and discursive practice: Promoting advocacy in teacher undergraduate and graduate programmes. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 25*, 551–558. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2009.02.006

Saldaña, J. (2014). Coding and analysis strategies. In P. Leavy (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 581–605). Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199811755.013.001

Souto-Manning, M., & Swick, K. J. (2006). Teachers' beliefs about parent and family involvement: Rethinking our family involvement paradigm. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 34*, 187–193. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-006-0063-5

Staehr Fenner, D. (2014). *Advocating for English learners: A guide for educators.* Corwin.

Suarez, M., & Dominguez, M. (2015). "Carrying that weight": ESL teacher negotiations toward advocacy and equity. *Radical Pedagogy, 12*(2), 46–67.

Suarez-Orozco, C., Suarez-Orozco, M. M., & Todorova, I. (2008). *Learning a new land: Immigrant students in American society.* Harvard University Press. https://doi.org/10.4159/9780674044111

TESOL International Association. (2019). *Standards for initial TESOL pre-K–12 teacher preparation programs.* https://www.tesol.org/docs/default-source/books/2018-tesol-teacher-prep-standards-final.pdf

Welner, K. G., & Carter, P. L. (2013). Achievement gaps arise from opportunity gaps. In P. L. Carter & K. G. Welner (Eds.), *Closing the opportunity gap: What America must do to give every child an even chance* (pp. 1–10). Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199982981.003.0001

Whipp, J. L. (2013). Developing socially just teachers: The interaction of experiences before, during, and after teacher preparation in beginning urban teachers. *Journal of Teacher Education, 64*(5), 454–467. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487113494845

Whiting, J. (2019). Beyond the philosophy statement: Bringing advocacy center stage in TESOL teacher education. In H. A. Linville & J. Whiting (Eds.), *Advocacy in English language teaching and learning* (pp. 31–43). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351036665-3

Appendix
Interview Questions

1. Reflection on coursework

   a. What are your most important takeaways from this course?

   b. Considering the course's focus on being an advocate for emergent bilinguals, what were the most effective assignments/tasks/activities in the course? Why?

   c. Considering the course's focus on being an advocate for emergent bilinguals, what were the least effective assignments/tasks/activities in the course? Why?

2. How have you applied material from this course in your current teaching context?

3. Learning to advocate for emergent bilinguals

   a. What did you learn about advocating for emergent bilinguals in other courses in the ESL program?

   b. What did you learn about advocating for emergent bilinguals from any other sources (professional development, undergraduate coursework, etc.)?

   c. How prepared do you feel to act as an advocate for emergent bilinguals?

   d. What do you still feel you need more instruction/guidance with in terms of advocating for emergent bilinguals?