Examining Secondary Content-Area Teachers' Identity Positionings as Teachers of ELs

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The number of English learners (ELs) in secondary classrooms in U.S. schools is growing rapidly. Much of the responsibility for teaching ELs lies with secondary content-area teachers. However, scarce attention has been paid to secondary content-area teachers as teachers of ELs. Drawing on positioning theory, this qualitative study aimed to examine the influence of a graduate-level teaching English as a second language (TESL) course on three secondary content-area teachers' identities in relation to ELs. Findings indicated that the course provided context for developing new understandings for the teachers and contributed to their teacher identity through improving their knowledge of EL education. However, except one, the course did not play a significant role in the teachers' identities in relation to ELs. The findings suggest promoting EL inclusive teacher identity as a goal of teacher preparation programs so that teachers can identify and position themselves as teachers of ELs.

Keywords: teacher identity, English learners; secondary content-area teachers; positioning

In an era marked by increasing linguistic diversity in U.S. K-12 classrooms, creating equitable education settings and providing effective education to students who speak languages other than English at home is a significant issue for schools and school districts. Many of these students are identified as English Learners (ELs) and they make up a sizable and fast-growing subset of the U.S. K-12 student population (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2018). In the last decade, the EL population grew by 60%, in comparison to 7% growth of the general student population (Grantmakers for Education, 2013). Despite the EL population is mainly concentrated in California, Texas, Florida, Nevada, and New York, many rural areas and a growing number of states historically not accustomed to serving ELs in their schools have been experiencing increase in the number of ELs (Kreck, 2014; NCES, 2018). The unprecedented growth of EL population suggests that if not all, most teachers will have the responsibility of teaching ELs at some point in their teaching careers.

Recognizing the increasing number of ELs in mainstream classrooms, Wenger et al. (2012) pointed out that it is imperative to understand "who teachers are: their identities, and how these identities influence how they teach and learn" (p. 2). Yet, although a great deal of literature has highlighted the importance of teacher identity and its influence on teachers' roles, expectations, classroom practices and students' learning in teacher education research (Beijaard et al., 2004; Flores & Day, 2006; Mockler, 2011; Timmerman, 2009), literature on secondary content-area teachers' identities as teachers of ELs is scarce. Given that many ELs at the secondary level spend all or most of their school day in content-area classrooms and the enduring achievement gap between ELs and non-ELs (Bravo & Cervetti, 2014), it is critical to focus on secondary content-area teachers and explore their teacher identities as teachers of ELs. The purpose of this study, therefore, was to examine the impact of a semester long, graduate-level

Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) course on the secondary content-area teachers' identities as teachers of ELs as well as working with ELs in mainstream classroom settings.

Literature Review

Defining Teacher Identity

In the field of teacher education, scholars have defined teacher identity in different ways. For example, Flores and Day (2006) viewed teacher identity as a dynamic entity and ongoing process "which entails the making sense and (re)interpretation of one's own values and experiences" (p. 220). Kelchtermans (1993) emphasized the role of teachers' conceptions and beliefs about themselves as teachers and defined the notion as teachers' "conception about themselves as a teacher and a system of knowledge and beliefs concerning 'teaching' as a professional activity" (p.447). According to Philipp (2007), teacher identity is "an embodiment of an individual's knowledge, beliefs, values, commitments, intentions, as they relate to one's participation within a particular community of practice" (p. 259). Similarly, Hsieh (2010) viewed teachers' beliefs, values, and commitments as central aspects of teacher identity and defined the notion as "the beliefs, values, and commitments an individual holds toward being a teacher (as distinct from another professional) and being a particular type of teacher (e.g., an urban teacher, a beginning teacher, a good teacher, an English teacher, etc.)" (p.1).

In the present study, we opted to employ Philipp's (2007) definition to examine the teacher identities of three secondary content-area teachers in relation to ELs. We chose Philipp's (2007) definition because our aim was to understand the influence of a graduate-level TESL course on secondary teachers' *knowledge*, *practices*, *beliefs*, *values*, as well as *intentions* and *commitment* with regard to ELs and working with ELs. Philipp's (2007) definition identifies the aforementioned essential components and aspects of the notion of teacher identity.

Importance of Teacher Identity

Teacher identity has been acknowledged by many scholars as a significant factor in teachers' philosophies, instructional beliefs, decision-making, classroom practices, motivation and actions in and out of their classrooms (Beijaard et al., 2004; Chong et al., 2011; Day & Kington, 2008). Regarding the critical importance of teacher identity, Danielewicz (2001) claimed that "what makes someone a good teacher is not methodology, or even ideology. It requires engagement with identity, the way individuals conceive of themselves so that teaching is a state of being, not merely ways of acting or behaving" (p. 3). The importance of teacher identity is also highlighted by Varghese et al. (2005) who claimed that teachers have a crucial role in the constitution of instructional practices in classroom and they further noted that "the teacher's whole identity [is] at play in the classroom" (p. 22). Thus, if we want to understand teachers' classroom practices and students' learning, it is essential to examine teachers' identities and their identity positionings.

Teacher Identity and Teaching English Learners

Teaching linguistically diverse students in the mainstream classrooms effectively requires more than simply implementing a number of EL instructional strategies. It is essential for teachers of ELs "to not only engage in pedagogical practices conducive toward these students' academic and language development, but also identify as teachers of ELs" (Martin, 2018, p.18). That is, teachers of ELs need to construct a vision of teaching that is inclusive of linguistically diverse students, position themselves as teachers of ELs, and view themselves responsible for promoting both academic language and content learning of ELs in their classrooms (Lucas & Villegas, 2011; Martin, 2018).

Recognizing the vital role of teacher identity of teachers for ELs' learning and academic success, Lucas and Villegas (2011) suggested that all teachers of ELs need to adopt a linguistically responsive teaching perspective that involves developing affirmative orientations (i.e., an appreciation for linguistic diversity, an inclination to advocate for ELs) and possessing specific language related knowledge and skills (i.e., applying the key principles of SL learning, scaffolding to facilitate ELs' academic performance and identifying the language demands of the classroom tasks). Further, Turkan et al. (2014) pointed out that effective teachers of ELs "have the essential specialized knowledge base to make content accessible" (p. 24) and acknowledge their roles as teachers of ELs.

Although teacher identity plays a critical role in educational experiences of ELs, only a few studies have explored the secondary content-area teachers' identities in relation to ELs. For example, Yoon (2008) investigated how three middle school classroom teachers' views of their roles, identities, and positionings impacted their classroom practices and their ELs' participatory actions to engage in the classroom activities. The findings revealed that the teachers' identity positionings (being a teacher for all students, being a teacher of a specific content-area, for instance) shaped their instructional practices. Findings by Yoon (2008) also highlighted that the teachers' identities influenced not only their teaching practices with ELs but also ELs' "sense of themselves as learners" (p. 499). Similarly, Reeves (2009) examined the process by which a secondary English teacher (Neal) invested in ELs' identity as a means to negotiate his own teacher identity. Neal positioned himself as a highly competent content-area teacher whereas he interactively positioned ELs like any other student. As a result, he did not make any linguistic modifications to support his ELs' linguistic development in his English language arts classroom and treated them the same as English-speaking students. Reeves' (2009) findings revealed how

teacher identity influences teachers' perceptions regarding effective ways of teaching ELs in secondary content-area classrooms. Both Yoon's and Reeves' studies clearly documented how content-area teachers' identities impact their classroom practices with ELs. This study aims to contribute to the existing limited literature by exploring the impact of a semester-long TESL course on three secondary-content-area teachers' identities as teachers of ELs.

Theoretical Framework

Positioning theory can be defined as "one way to uncover how individuals construct and enact identities during moment-to-moment interactions" (Vetter et al., 2013, p. 233). Van Langenhove and Harré (1999) defined the notion of positioning as "the assignment of fluid 'parts' or 'roles' to speakers in the discursive construction of personal stories that make a person's actions intelligible and relatively determinate as social acts" (p. 17).

There are different modes of positioning, such as self and other positioning. Self-positioning can be defined as "reflexive positioning in which one positions oneself" (Davies & Harré, 1990, p. 48). According to Davies and Harré (1990), an individual perceives the world from a certain perspective or position. Thus, an individual's self-positioning, reflexive positioning, guides the way in which that individual acts and thinks about his/her roles, assignments, and duties in a given social context. For instance, a science teacher who positions herself as a teacher of a homogenous student population might fail to employ instructional strategies to promote the academic language development of ELs in her content-area classroom, which could adversely impact ELs' ability to develop the content knowledge (i.e., science content knowledge) and academic language (i.e., academic language of science) required to engage in classroom activities and practices (Martin, 2018).

In this study, positioning theory was relevant as our aim was to explore the impact of TESL course on secondary content-area teachers' identities as teachers of ELs. Furthermore, given that teachers' positionings, how they view their roles, as teachers of ELs might influence their pedagogical approaches, beliefs, instructional decisions, which in turn could enhance or restrict ELs' both academic language and content learning in classroom context (Reeves, 2009; Yoon, 2008); positioning theory is appropriate for understanding how secondary content-area teachers' positionings could inform their roles and responsibilities as secondary content-area teachers of ELs.

Methodology

Identity "is a dynamic phenomenon, it should be studied with a methodology that is dynamic both in philosophy and in practice" (Hansen & Liu, 1997, p. 573). Therefore, this study adopted a qualitative approach to explore the impact of a graduate-level course on the three participant teachers' identities in relation to ELs and working with ELs in content-area classroom settings. A qualitative approach was appropriate for this study as it is a dynamic methodology that provides "careful description and analysis of phenomena" (Hatch, 2002, p. 43).

The larger study from which this study was drawn investigated the five teachers' identities and explored primary considerations came into play in the teachers' identity development (Turgut, 2017). This study focuses on the three secondary content-area teachers' identity positionings as teachers of ELs in the TESL course context. We only chose three out of the five participants for this current study because two of the teachers left the profession and decided not to work as teachers.

Participants

Cheryl, Patrick, and Davorka (all names are pseudonyms) were the three participant teachers of this study. Cheryl and Patrick were born in the U.S. and identified themselves as monolingual speakers of English. Davorka was born in a country in Europe, moved to the U.S. at a very early age, and identified herself as bilingual in Serbo-Croatian and English. Additionally, Patrick and Davorka self-identified themselves as White and Cheryl self-identified herself as African American.

All three participants were secondary content-area teachers in Title I, high minority, low-income schools and were in their second year of teaching at the time of the study. Patrick and Davorka taught mathematics and Cheryl taught history as full-time teachers. All participants had at least ten Spanish-speaking ELs in their secondary classrooms and had no professional development experience in teaching ELs. All participants were pursuing their master's degrees in education at the time of the study.

Context

The context for this study was a graduate level semester-long TESL course offered by a large, research-intensive state university in an urban city in the Southwest U.S. The state where the study took place ranked fourth in the U.S. in the percentage of ELs in its school systems.

The TESL course was a three-credit hybrid course and part of a teacher education program. Hybrid courses combine traditional face-to-face classroom sessions with online supplemental teaching. This particular course included nine face-to-face meetings and six online meetings through the online platform, Webcampus. The course aimed to prepare in-service teachers to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate instruction for ELs in K-12 contexts. The course was divided into four main interrelated modules: History, laws, and policies related

to ELs; sociocultural dimensions of educating English learners; second language acquisition; and planning and implementing effective instruction for English learners. The course activities and assignments included weekly readings (textbook and several supplemental readings), weekly participation in online threaded discussions (requirements included one response to the discussion prompts and responses to at least two classmates), lesson plan reflections and presentation, one scholarly research paper, and the final exam. The table in Appendix A shows the course structure.

Data Sources and Analysis

Data collection lasted six months and consisted of the following three methods: (1) three sets of semi-structured in-depth one-to-one interviews, (2) online focus group discussion, and (3) pre- and post-course written reflections.

Data sources

We conducted semi-structured, one-on-one interviews at the beginning of the TESL course, about halfway through the course, and after the completion of the course. Appendix B lists the three sets of interview questions. In total, we conducted nine interviews with the participants. Each of the interviews lasted between 75 to 90 minutes depending on the participant. The first author conducted and transcribed all the interviews that were audio-taped.

We also conducted an online focus group discussion at the end of the TESL course that followed a semi-structured format. We created a folder and shared the questions with the participants in the form of a Word document in Google Docs. The document was open to editing and available for a week, which provided plenty of time for the participants to reply to the questions, respond to each other's comments and engage in dialogue with each other.

In addition, we collected written reflections before and after the TESL course to support the lines of data coming from the individual interviews. The written reflections helped us better understand the teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and assumptions regarding ELs and EL instruction and helped to determine whether each teacher's knowledge, beliefs, understandings changed after the course.

Data analysis

We employed the Lichtman's (2013) three C's of analysis: coding, categorizing, and identifying concepts or themes to explore the teacher identities of secondary content-area teachers in relation to ELs. Both authors were involved in data analysis and interpretation of results. First, after transcribing the interviews, each author individually read the interview transcripts and written reflections multiple times to get familiar with the data and identify initial codes. Second, we placed all of the initial codes into categories individually. During this stage, we also searched for emergent patterns or themes for each participant's case. After identifying the themes, we met and shared the identified themes during a meeting and discussed the interpretation of each theme. Throughout data collection, we met to add and remove codes as new concepts and themes began to emerge. We then combined the existing and new codes into broader meaningful categories (e.g., knowledge, beliefs, challenges, perceptions of roles, intention and commitment). After gathering data from the post-course written reflections and online focus group discussion, we returned to the codes, reformulated and reviewed the themes and removed redundancies to identify significant elements. As the final step, we organized the key themes/concepts that reflected the meaning of the gathered data according to the purpose of the study. We classified the main themes that emerged from data under the following four dimensions: the impact of a semester-long TESL course on three secondary-content-area

teachers' (1) perceived level of knowledge of EL instruction; (2) beliefs about ELs and EL

instruction; (3) values about linguistic diversity; and (4) intentions and commitment to work with

ELs.

Trustworthiness

We established trustworthiness by using three common techniques, namely: triangulation,

member checking, and incorporation of direct quotations. Triangulation is "using multiple

investigators, multiple sources of evidence, or multiple methods" (Merriam, 1998, p. 204) to

ensure trustworthiness. In this present study, we employed three different data collection sources

(one-to-one interviews, written reflections, focus group discussion) to triangulate the data.

Additionally, Lincoln and Guba (1985) claim that member checking is the most critical strategy

to establish trustworthiness in qualitative research studies. In member checking, the researcher

shares the collected data with the participants and invites them to "review the material for

accuracy and palatability" (Stake, 1995, p. 115). In this study, we implemented the member

checking strategy to ensure the credibility of the data. During the interviews, the first author

asked additional questions to the participants to confirm the preliminary interpretations and

ensure that their opinions were represented appropriately and accurately. In addition, after

transcribing the individual interviews, the first author emailed the copies of transcripts to the

participants and invited them to review and provide further information on unclear issues.

According to Guest et al. (2012), the incorporation of direct quotations improve transparency and

provide a powerful contribution to reliability in qualitative research because "quotes lay bare the

emergent themes for all to see" (p. 95). Therefore, we provided the direct words of the

participants to present our findings and enable the readers to see how we made our

interpretations from the collected data.

Role of the Researchers

The first author was a doctoral student and the second author was a faculty member at the university where the study took place during the time of this study. Therefore, we were both familiar with the culture of the university and teacher education program, which adds to the trustworthiness of the study. Our familiarity with the context of the study in some way positioned us as insiders. Even though there are some advantages to being an insider in the research, we were also aware of biases that we would bring to the study. It was possible that our biases impacted our interpretations of the data; which we tried to minimize with the use of two strategies suggested by Noble and Smith (2015). We utilized member checks by the participants and gathered and triangulated data through interviews, an online focus group discussion, and written reflections to minimize bias and subjectivity.

Results

This study explored the impact of a graduate-level TESL course on three secondary content-area teachers' identities. Following Philipp's (2007) definition of teacher identity, we present the findings based on the influence of the TESL course on three secondary content-area teachers' (a) perceived level of knowledge of EL instruction; (b) self-reported instructional practices with ELs; (c) beliefs about ELs and EL instruction; (d) values about linguistic diversity; and (e) intentions and commitment to work with ELs.

Knowledge of EL Instruction

All three teachers began the TESL course with very little knowledge of issues pertaining to EL instruction. Prior to the course, the participant teachers reported that they had not taken any courses or professional development specific to EL education and felt ill-prepared to work

with ELs as content-area teachers. The lack of knowledge of EL instruction played a part in the ways the participant teachers defined their initial teacher identities as teachers of ELs.

Prior to the TESL course, Cheryl positioned herself as "ineffective" as a teacher of ELs and added: "I do not feel capable of constructing lesson plans that meet their [ELs] needs" (Interview 1). Although Patrick positioned himself as a "successful" mathematics teacher, he reported that he felt "powerless" and "unsuccessful" as a teacher of ELs: "I feel powerless as a teacher to teach ELs. There is one classroom, there are more ELs in it than all other classes I teach. It is extremely challenging; I don't feel like I am doing a good job" (Interview 1). Similarly, Davorka also felt ill-prepared as a mathematics teacher of ELs and positioned herself as an ineffective teacher in relation to ELs: "I don't think I am very effective teacher for my ELs. I am not well-prepared to teach them effectively. I feel like I am not doing a very good job for my EL students" (Interview 1).

Upon the complementation of the TESL course, all three teachers reported that the course led to changes in their knowledge of EL instruction. For instance, as a history teacher, Cheryl reported that she developed an awareness of the importance of integrating academic language into her teaching practices to support ELs' academic language development. In addition, she perceived that she learned how to identify content and language objectives as a content-area teacher when designing her lesson plans: "Before the course, I didn't think of language, or language objectives ever. The course made me realize that I have to focus on more language... I learned how to write language objectives and combine language and content instruction" (Interview 3). The knowledge Cheryl gained from the course also improved her confidence as a teacher of ELs which in turn, appeared to challenge her initial teacher identity positioning as an "ineffective" teacher of ELs. In the third interview and post-course written reflection, Cheryl

assigned powerful positions to herself as a teacher of ELs because she felt that she grew

"tremendously as a teacher of ELs" due to the knowledge she acquired from the course (Post-

course written reflection).

Similar to Cheryl, Patrick and Davorka perceived that the TESL course enhanced their

knowledge of EL instruction. For instance, in the third interview, Davorka reported that she

learned some "useful EL strategies" such as pairing ELs with a more proficient peer, using

visuals, and creating word walls to make the content more comprehensible for ELs in her

mathematics classrooms (Interview 3). Similarly, Patrick also reported that he had learned a

number of instructional strategies such as focusing on key vocabulary, using visual

representations and cognates to help his ELs grasp mathematical concepts. Before the course,

Patrick positioned himself as a mathematics teacher by stating "I teach math…it's my primary

job" and did not consider the teaching of academic vocabulary to be his role and responsibility:

"Teaching math is already hard to do, and also trying to teach vocabulary or reading at the same

time, so why not leave that to other classes? Why not leave the mix in English classes?"

(Interview 1). In Patrick's following statement, however, he seemed to acknowledge the

importance of literacy and academic language in mathematics as a result of his participation in

the course: "I never thought about integrating language into math instruction. The course made

me realize they [ELs] need to read and understand math problems, they need to be able to write

and have that language as a part of mathematics" (Interview 2). He also expressed that he had

gained a better understanding of the SL development process and how to identify his ELs'

proficiency levels in the English language. Thus, he had come into the realization that ELs are

not a homogenous group of students but "vary in their levels of proficiency in English"

(Interview 3).

Nevertheless, the new knowledge of EL instruction did not improve Patrick and Davorka's confidence and perception of themselves as teachers of ELs. Unlike Cheryl, they could not take on powerful positions in relation to working with ELs after their participation in the TESL course. For instance, reflecting back on her TESL course experiences, Davorka reported, "The TESL course helped me a lot. I learned useful strategies but I am still struggling to teach ELs… I don't feel that effective… I don't do a good job, it [teaching ELs] is a challenge for me" (Focus group discussion).

Self-reported Classroom Practices with English Learners

Cheryl perceived that as a result of her TESL course experiences, she acquired a new way of thinking and understanding as a teacher which led her to build a new perspective and identity as a content-area teacher of ELs: "The course made me rethink, think like a language teacher, reprogrammed how I approach teaching ELs as a teacher. I am not just a history teacher anymore (Interview 3). Taking on a new identity position as "a language teacher" influenced Cheryl's teaching practices with ELs: "I teach them [ELs] the language. I focus more on academic words, focus more on the parts of speech. I spend more time in class actually going through the language, focusing on key words" (Interview 3). Cheryl's statement "not just a history teacher anymore" illustrated her awareness about the vital role of language in order to promote ELs' language learning endeavors in the content-area classrooms and her transition from being a content-area teacher to being a content-area plus language teacher. In her interview, she further explained how she modified her lessons to integrate the four language skills as follows:

> I try to include all four language skills into my teaching every day. I mostly start with
> some speaking or listening activities, then reading, and writing. Sometimes, I focus on

more speaking, I encourage them to speak in pairs or groups. I also put them in circles and give them sentence frames to help them build more confidence in speaking English.

When describing the changes Cheryl made in her classroom practices based on her TESL course experiences, Cheryl also credited the ongoing support and guidance from her mother who had more than 20 years of experience in teaching ELs as a secondary mathematics teacher. Cheryl explained that she constantly interacted with her mother on the phone and online in order to adjust her teaching practice to the academic needs of ELs whenever she "felt lost" (Interview 1) as a novice teacher working with ELs. Cheryl explained: "She gave me lots of suggestions about how to teach, design my lesson plans, activities and pacing. She was like you need to give them more examples, use pictures, maps…" (Interview 1). She also mentioned her mother's ongoing guidance and professional support as an experienced teacher helped her cope with the challenges she experienced with ELs, apply the knowledge she gained from the TESL course, and develop "a better understanding and better awareness of ELs' language learning" (Interview 3).

Both Patrick and Davorka also reported that their participation in the course led to some changes in their teaching practices. For instance, during the focus group discussion, Patrick shared that the TESL course encouraged him to "focus more on ELs" in his classrooms and explained how he modified his classroom instruction for his ELs as follows: "I am putting a lot more effort into making my instruction more comprehensible for ELs through using visuals, diagrams and graphs. I also use cognates to help my ELs, I didn't know about that" (Focus group discussion).

Nonetheless, both Davorka and Patrick admitted they did not make any changes in their lesson plans and did not focus much on academic language in their mathematics classrooms.

They also reported that they struggled with integrating academic vocabulary into their mathematics instruction and "did not know how to do it" successfully (Davorka: Interview 2). Unlike Cheryl who received ongoing guidance and support from an experienced content-area teacher of ELs, Patrick and Davorka reported they did not receive any support and guidance in regard to EL instruction in their school contexts and thus, they both felt "isolated" and "helpless" (Interview 2). It appeared that Patrick and Davorka's teacher identities as teachers of ELs were not encouraged and supported outside of the TESL course context which seemed to affect their professional growth and teacher identity positionings as teachers of ELs.

Beliefs about English Learners and English Learner Instruction

The participant teachers brought to the course a wide range of beliefs regarding the EL population and EL instruction. Findings revealed that the preexisting beliefs of the participant teachers served as filters to drive their knowledge about working with ELs, which in turn, influenced and reshaped how they viewed their roles and responsibilities with respect to working with ELs in their classrooms.

Findings revealed that The TESL course appeared to influence the participant teachers' preexisting beliefs about the characteristics of effective teachers of ELs. For instance, prior to the TESL course, Cheryl believed that effective teachers of ELs were "welcoming, patient" and "hold high expectations for ELs" (Interview 1). Similarly, Davorka also defined effective teachers of ELs as "caring", "welcoming" and "patient" (Interview 1). Patrick also used the words such as "patient" and "caring" when describing effective teachers of ELs. Unlike Cheryl and Davorka, Patrick also believed that effective teachers of ELs "speak the language of ELs" (Interview 1) and highlighted the importance of language several times in his first interview and pre-course written reflection.

After participating in the TESL course, participant teachers continued to argue for the importance of having certain personal traits such as being caring, welcoming and patient. However, they seemed to become cognizant of the importance of having specific knowledge and skills regarding the EL education to successfully instruct ELs. For example, in the third interview, Davorka described effective teachers of ELs as those who know how to "assess EL students' learning" and "scaffold and differentiate instruction" for ELs [Interview 3]. Yet, Patrick remained consistent in his belief that effective EL teachers "speak the same language of ELs" (Interview 3; Focus group discussion). Patrick's perception of effective EL teachers influenced not only his current positioning but also his future image as a teacher of ELs. Patrick believed that he would not be an effective teacher and never able to provide a successful education to ELs in his classrooms because he could not "speak their native language" (Interview 3).

With respect to inclusion of ELs in mainstream classrooms, the participant teachers' prior beliefs remained unchallenged after the TESL course. Cheryl entered the course with the belief that EL inclusion created a positive classroom environment and she supported EL inclusion in mainstream classrooms throughout the TESL course. However, Davorka and Patrick remained consistent in their beliefs that ELs should not be included in content-area classrooms, especially if they had low levels of English proficiency. In the first interview, Davorka voiced concerns about ELs with low English proficiency in her classrooms stating, "They don't understand anything which is wasting their time in my class because they don't understand my teaching" [Interview 1]. Throughout the course, Davorka continued to believe that "it's not a good idea" to place ELs with low levels of English proficiency in English-only mainstream classrooms (Focus group discussion). Similar to Davorka, Patrick also did not support EL inclusion: "I think

mainstreaming ELs, especially those ELs who do not know much English, is just very unfair for

mainstream teachers and ELs" (Interview 3). He further shared: "Throwing in ELs in mainstream

classrooms; it makes the situation more difficult for teachers and ELs. So, having an ESL or

bilingual teacher would make that easier or maybe ESL or bilingual teachers should educate

ELLs in different classroom, that'd be better" (Interview 3).

Values about Linguistic Diversity

The participant teachers perceived that their participation in the TESL course did not

influence the values they had about linguistic diversity and linguistically diverse individuals. All

three teachers positioned themselves as teachers who value linguistic diversity. In addition, all

three teachers reported that to show their ELs that their languages were valued and welcomed in

their content-area classrooms, they encouraged their ELs to use their home language at home and

with their peers during classroom activities and group discussions. All three teachers also

criticized teachers who do not allow ELs to use their home languages in the classroom.

Cheryl indicated that as a teacher she always viewed linguistically and culturally diverse

students as an "asset" rather than an obstacle to overcome in mainstream classrooms (Interview

3; Focus group discussion). In her interview, she further elaborated on how her racial identity, as

a Black woman, affected her values about minorities, including ELs:

> As a black woman in this country, when I go through history, I see the struggles of my
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> identity, being marginalized, being told that 'You don't belong here', 'This is not the
>
> space for you', and my personal identity, my background allows me to understand and
>
> value minorities, immigrants, and ELs.

Cheryl also valued the cultural and linguistic diversity that ELs bring as a positive feature

of her classroom as a history teacher: "History is nothing but perspective, and history is different

depending who you are, it's what you see. My classroom discussions are richer with ELs because they bring their identities, cultures, languages and perspectives in my classroom" (Interview 1).

Cheryl also mentioned that in order to make her ELs feel valued and part of her classroom community, she had been trying to learn some basic words and phrases in Spanish: "I try to show my ELs I value their languages so I try to learn some Spanish words every day. I downloaded an app and use it to learn Spanish. Sometimes I ask the Spanish-speaking teacher to help me" (Interview 1).

Patrick also reported that he had valued linguistically diverse individuals prior to the TESL course. He attributed his positive attitudes towards linguistically diverse individuals to his Spanish language learning experience when he was in college and his experiences with an undocumented student in his first year of teaching. Patrick admitted that he had had "more strict perspectives about immigration and immigrants" when he entered into the teaching profession (Interview 3). However, he described how his experiences with an undocumented EL had challenged his perspectives about undocumented immigrants in the U.S. in his third interview as follows:

> One of my students was an EL and he was an undocumented immigrant. My relationship with him opened my eyes to an entirely different world. If you had asked my opinions about immigrants a few years ago, I would have had different opinions till I met him. He came here for a better life and he deserves more than an American [student who] doesn't appreciate the things he has. He appreciates what he has here in the States, the opportunity here. I have a lot of respect for that kid. I am having conversations with an immigration lawyer to help him.

Patrick also criticized some of the states that had passed English-only education laws and indicated that he highly valued bilingual education programs: "I am fully supportive of bilingual instruction because bilingual education has great benefits. If ELs had a teacher who could speak their language and English, there is nothing better than that" (Interview 2).

Similar to Cheryl and Patrick, Davorka also indicated that as "a child of immigrants and former EL student", she entered the TESL course with positive attitudes towards linguistically diverse individuals. Davorka highlighted that she viewed ELs' home languages as an asset and commented that ELs' home languages should be maintained and supported in school contexts: "Teachers shouldn't bury their ELs' home languages. I believe that ELs should be encouraged to maintain their home languages and culture because their home languages and culture are part of their heritage" (Interview 1).

Positioning herself as a bilingual speaker of Serbo-Croatian and English, Davorka also seemed to be cognizant of the interrelatedness of language, culture and identity. In the first interview, Davorka shared: "I think their home languages are a significant part of their identity so I hope my students maintain their language and culture. If they lose their home language, then they become like everyone else, you know. It's important to be unique and different because it brings diversity" (Interview1).

Intention and Commitment to Work with English Learners

The TESL course seemed to reinforce Cheryl's intention and commitment to work with ELs as a content-area teacher; however, the course did not seem to influence Patrick and Davorka's intention and commitment to work with ELs as teachers in their future classrooms.

Cheryl was the sole participant who felt that her TESL course experiences improved her knowledge and confidence regarding working with ELs, which in turn, played a part in her

commitment and intention to teach ELs as a content-area teacher in future. Cheryl entered the

course with a strong belief that all students regardless of "race, ethnicity, language background

and immigration status deserve good quality education" (Interview 1); however, she was

concerned due to her limited knowledge of EL education before participating in the course. In

the third interview, she reported that the TESL course improved her knowledge of EL

instruction, which in turn, influenced her confidence and strengthened her intention and

commitment to work with ELs in future classrooms:

> I definitely see myself teaching in a class with a high number of ELs in the future
>
> because the exposure I gained from the course helped me feel more confident and
>
> passionate. It can be challenging to teach ELs, you need to spend more time on designing
>
> your activities, lesson plans, but it is my job... I am willing to work with ELs because it is
>
> rewarding, inspiring.
>
> In addition to the TESL course, Cheryl's following statements demonstrated that her

identity as a minority Black woman also played a significant role in her commitment and

intention to work with ELs: "I am a minority and I know how it feels to be the minority. So,

teaching ELs in my classrooms is one hundred percent my job, my responsibility" (Interview 1).

Cheryl's positioning of herself as a minority teacher appeared to influence not only how she

viewed her current positioning but also her future teacher self with regard to ELs.

Patrick reported that he benefited from the TESL course and shared that his knowledge of

the education of ELs improved. However, he preferred not to work with ELs in his future

classrooms because he perceived his linguistic identity as a monolingual speaker of English as a

barrier to be an effective teacher for ELs and provide a "fair education" to ELs in his

mathematics classrooms: "if I want my ELs to have a fair education, I would need to speak

Spanish" (Interview 2); "I've come to realize that the only way my EL students will succeed is if I learn Spanish. I think all teachers need to speak Spanish fluently if they want to teach in schools with high populations of ELs" (Interview 3). Furthermore, Patrick felt that he was "gonna hurt those students" (Interview 3) as a monolingual English-speaking teacher and positioned Spanish-speaking bilingual teachers as being at an advantage over monolingual English-speaking teachers with regard to teaching ELs.

Davorka was the only bilingual teacher in the study; however, similar to Patrick, she failed to acknowledge her ELs' linguistic assets and felt that she would not be an effective teacher of ELs due to the language barrier. She further expressed that she preferred not to work with ELs in future as a content-area teacher: "I don't believe that I will provide them effective teaching. I don't speak Spanish…I cannot be the best teacher for them" (Interview 3). Additionally, by positioning herself as a linguistic outsider as a non-Spanish speaking teacher, Davorka charged bilingual Spanish-speaking teachers with the responsibility of educating ELs: "The language barrier is the biggest thing. They don't understand my lesson; they don't understand the content… They should be in a classroom with bilingual teachers…that's more supportive, more focused for ELs rather than any math class" (Interview 3).

Discussions and Conclusions

Although there have been several studies on teacher identity, there has not been much research completed on secondary content-area teachers' identities as teachers of ELs. This study aims to close this gap by examining the influence of a TESL course on secondary content-area teachers' identities in relation to ELs. Findings revealed that the TESL course shaped the teachers' identities partly by providing them with knowledge and strategies necessary to work with ELs as secondary content-area teachers. Yet, of the three participants, only Cheryl

negotiated real changes in her teaching identity, particularly coming to realize that as a content-area teacher, she was responsible for teaching ELs. She took on a linguistically responsive teacher identity through her participation in the TESL course. Yet, Davorka and Patrick could not reflexively position themselves as effective teachers of ELs and charged bilingual or ESL teachers with the responsibility of educating ELs. Our findings pointed out that the teachers' reflexive positionings in relation to ELs influenced not only their learning in the course but also professional growth as teachers of ELs.

Aligned with the previous literature on the impact of teacher education courses on EL instruction (Hutchinson, 2013; Markos, 2012; Peter et al., 2012), we found that the TESL course provided a context for developing new understandings for the secondary content-area teachers who had no previous teacher education experiences specific to ELs. The course challenged some of their misconceptions and beliefs about working with ELs. In particular, Cheryl perceived that the knowledge she gained from the course changed her thinking as a secondary content-area teacher and enabled her to "think like a language teacher" (Interview 3). Taking on a language teacher identity also led to changes in Cheryl's lesson plans and classroom practices with ELs as a secondary content area teacher: "The course challenged me to kind of construct lesson plans that are specifically targeted toward ELs. I feel like I have grown tremendously as a teacher of ELs" (Post-course written reflection). These findings suggest that teacher learning, teacher practice, and identity are all interrelated and change for one affects the others (Kanno & Stuart, 2011). Therefore, specific courses on EL education have a positive impact on the teacher identities of teachers of ELs as these courses can equip content-area teachers with the specific knowledge and skills which facilitate the construction of teacher identities as teachers of ELs.

Though the TESL course improved the three teachers' knowledge of EL instruction and challenged some of their prior deficit beliefs regarding working with ELs, the course did not challenge Davorka and Patrick's initial teacher identity positionings in relation to ELs. It appeared that both teachers' deficit beliefs with respect to language differences between them and ELs played a role in how they reflexively positioned themselves as "ineffective" teachers in relation to working with ELs. Our findings also revealed that by taking on non-powerful positions as teachers of ELs, unlike Cheryl, Patrick and Davorka could not move beyond just implementing a few EL instructional strategies and failed to adopt linguistically inclusive pedagogy to support their ELs in their secondary content-area classrooms. Additionally, by positioning themselves as ineffective teachers of ELs, both Patrick and Davorka reported they prefer not to teach ELs in their future classrooms and charged Spanish-speaking bilingual teachers with the responsibility of teaching ELs. This finding supports Kayi-Aydar's (2015) claim that in teacher identity development, "when non-powerful positions become more dominant, teachers may simply avoid teaching ELLs" (p.101). Clearly, such positioning is problematic and alarming. Both teachers did not consider themselves responsible for teaching ELs as secondary content-area teachers even though they had ELs in their classrooms at the time of the study and would have ELs in future classrooms. These findings suggest that although providing specific courses on EL instruction is crucial and necessary to facilitate teacher identities attentive to ELs, merely providing coursework does not mean that teachers will take on powerful positions as teachers of ELs and develop an EL teacher identity automatically. As Bullough (1997) highlights, "teacher education must begin by exploring the teaching self" (p. 21). Therefore, courses on EL education must aim to go beyond providing the knowledge on EL education and equipping teachers with the instructional strategies needed to teach ELs. Teacher

education courses on EL education need to include guided reflective activities and learning experiences (e.g., journals, reflective teacher logs, discussions) for content-area teachers to explicitly and critically examine their initial teacher identity positionings and misconceptions with respect to ELs and working with ELs in order to engage them in a process of identity construction. Teacher educators can facilitate secondary content-area teachers' identity development and challenge their deficit beliefs by providing them opportunities such as collaborative discussion platforms and critical self-reflection activities. Through engaging in well-designed, purposeful self-reflection learning experiences, teachers can recognize how their misconceptions, beliefs, and positionings impact their teacher identities and classroom practices with ELs.

The findings also demonstrated that in addition to coursework, engaging in professional interactions with experienced EL teachers might aid secondary teachers in the development of professional identities as teachers of ELs. We found that Cheryl's interactions with her mother who taught ELs for more than 20 years was conducive to her teacher identity construction in relation to ELs. Cheryl's case supports Vygotsky's (1986) sociocultural theory with regard to learning leading to development that presupposes that learning occurs through interactions with experienced others and teacher identities "emerge through interactions with others" (Urzúa & Vàsquez, 2008, p. 1936). Unlike Patrick and Davorka, Cheryl had the opportunity to refine her teacher identity as a teacher of ELs and "reconceptualize and recontextualize" (Johnson & Golombek, 2003, p.735) her knowledge and beliefs with respect to teaching ELs through engaging in professional interactions with an experienced other outside of the TESL course context. This finding suggests that collaborating and engaging professional interactions with experienced EL teachers and/or specialists would afford teachers dialogic spaces where they

engage discussions to negotiate and develop their understandings and remold their beliefs and misconceptions regarding teaching ELs.

We are well-aware that teacher preparation programs are already overwhelmingly laden with core certification requirements. Nevertheless, given the growth of ELs in secondary classrooms and the lack of preparation of content-area teachers for teaching linguistically diverse students, teacher education programs should aim to produce a teacher workforce that can identify themselves as teachers of ELs through providing well-designed coursework on EL education enriched with reflective practices to bolster their teacher identities as teachers of ELs so that they can position themselves as teachers of ELs, view themselves responsible for teaching ELs, and provide equitable instruction to this increasing linguistically diverse student population.

Limitations and Future Directions

This qualitative research study was conducted with three secondary content-area teachers of ELs. Therefore, the findings are not generalizable to larger populations. A similar study conducted with a larger number of teachers would be beneficial.

Another possible limitation of this study could relate to the fact that this study relied on the participants' self-reported teaching experiences and practices with ELs in their classrooms. Further research studies could utilize classroom observations of teachers as a means of data collection in order to have a more comprehensive understanding of how secondary teachers' identities influence their teaching practices with ELs in their classrooms.

Finally, there is a general lack of scholarly investigation on teacher identity of mainstream teachers of ELs in the literature. This research contributes to understanding of teacher identities of secondary content-area teachers of ELs. Nevertheless, given the increase in the number of ELs, more research studies are needed to understand how mainstream teachers'

identity positionings impact ELs' learning and engagement in classroom activities. Such line of

research could be helpful for teacher education practice to promote a culturally and linguistically

responsive teacher workforce.

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Appendix A

Table 1

TESL Course Structure

Week	Topic	Assessments
1	Course Introduction	
2	The History of Serving ELs in the U.S.	Activity & Discussion
3	Educational Standards for ELs	Activity & Discussion
4	What is Culture?	Reading Discussions
5	Sociocultural Challenges of ELs	Activity & Discussion
6	Culturally Sensitive Curriculum	
7	Second Language Learning	Reading Discussions
8	Content-Based Learning	Activity & Discussion
9	SIOP & CALLA	
10	Linguistic Dimensions of Learning	Activity & Discussion
11	Language Objectives & Assessments	Lesson Plan Presentations
12	Visuals in EL Lessons	Lesson Plan Presentations
13	Interaction During EL Lessons	Lesson Plan and Reflection
14	Academic Conversations	Research Paper
15	Final Exam	Final Exam

Appendix B

Individual Interview Questions 1

1. Tell me about yourself. What were your first experiences with linguistic diversity?
2. Tell me about your experiences working with ELs. Tell me about the ELs in your classroom.
3. How do you describe 'being an effective teacher' for ELs?
4. How confident are you as a teacher of ELs? Describe any challenges you have faced while teaching ELs.
5. How confident are you as a teacher of ELs?
6. What kind of support or guidance have you received regarding teaching ELs as a content area teacher?
7. How would you describe the characteristics of effective teachers of ELs?
8. Would you teach in a classroom with high number of ELs, if given the choice?
9. What strategies do you employ to support your ELs? How do you create a classroom environment that supports ELs?
10. What do you expect from this course? What was your motivation for enrolling this course?

Individual Interview Questions 2

1. Tell me about the school environment you work.
2. What strategies do you use to teach ELs?
3. How would you describe your growth in teaching ELs through your experiences in the course thus far? (knowledge, dispositions, and skills)
4. What have you learned about teaching ELs?
5. Has the course affected your teacher identity? Why, why not? How?
6. Are you making connections between the course topics and your experiences as a content area teacher? How? Examples?
7. How would you describe your growth in teaching ELs through your experiences in the course thus far? (knowledge, dispositions, and teaching skills)
8. In what ways (if any) have your beliefs about ELs, teaching ELs, changed this semester?
9. What extent you feel comfortable working with ELs?
10. What impact did your course experiences have on your understanding of teaching ELs?

Individual Interview Questions 3

1. Do you feel your teaching style has changed as a result of your experiences in the course? How? Can you give me some examples?
2. How would you describe the characteristics of effective teachers of ELs?
3. Have you ever felt powerless in terms of providing effective instruction for ELs as a content area teacher? Can you give me some examples?
4. What are your concerns about having ELs in your classroom as a content area teacher?
5. In what ways (if any) have your perspectives about ELs, or teaching ELs changed during your teaching career?
6. What course components influenced your perspectives regarding EL education?
7. What impact did your course experiences have on your understanding of teaching ELs?
8. Would you teach in a classroom with high number of ELs, if given the choice?
9. How would you evaluate your teaching ability regarding teaching ELs?
10. Is there anything I have not covered that you'd like to discuss?