

## **Integrating Language Diversity into Teacher Education Curricula in a Rural Context: Candidates' Developmental Perspectives and Understandings**

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This study took place at the University of Wyoming, located in the rural mountain West. The University of Wyoming, with approximately 13,000 students, is the only four-year university in the state. The teacher education population of the College of Education is about 600, and demographically, this population is about 90% White, predominately female, and from rural communities across the state and other states that border Wyoming. Likewise, most school districts in the state of Wyoming are less diverse (ethnically, racially, and linguistically) than the national averages. Given this context, the College of Education has tried to address issues of diversity at the program level over the last decade or so. The inclusion of topics related to issues of diversity in education has been evident in many courses across different departments in the College. Still, most of these efforts were largely made

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at the course level, as opposed to being made collaboratively at the program level to assure a continuity of diversity components across courses.

For example, in our educational studies (foundations) department (EDST), individual faculty members chose content they believed was the best for their course. With regard to language diversity, there was a discontinuity among EDST courses. While some courses in the department included relevant knowledge and skills that allow teacher education candidates to make sense of current politics of English as a Second Language (ESL) in a larger context, others dealt with this topic in a superficial manner. Working for the state department of education on an ESL endorsement initiative for inservice teachers, one of the authors of this article proposed that EDST department members collaboratively develop and integrate progressively interconnected diversity components into our teacher education courses.

### **Background**

This article provides an account of a curriculum development, integration, and implementation initiative in the EDST. The content to be integrated in the program focused on language acquisition, a critical need given the urgency for teachers to support and honor rapidly growing populations of English language learners (ELLs) in the state, region, and nation. Given the need to develop and implement curricula and pedagogy that support learning for all children, including those who speak languages other than English, we felt morally and professionally compelled to begin to consider the ways we might prepare our students, teacher education candidates,<sup>1</sup> for the language diversity they are sure to experience in their careers. This challenge is especially unique in our context, a rural state with a rapidly increasing ELL student population and an unfortunately small number of teachers with ELL credentials and/or experience working with second language learners. It is our hope that in creating and sharing this account, we are able to advance understandings about the role teacher education can play in preparing the next generation of teachers for the linguistic diversity in our PreK-12 schools.

### **The Need to Address**

#### **Language Diversity in Teacher Education**

The number of students in the United States (U.S.) who are ELLs continues to increase substantially. According to the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition (2007), the number of English learners attending schools in 2005-2006 was just over five million. This number represents a 57% increase from the numbers in 1995-1996, over a time the general student population increased a sparse 3.7%.

Despite the need for highly qualified teachers for the increased presence of ELLs, the national picture looks less than satisfactory. While over 40% of all U.S. teachers reported having ELLs in their classrooms, only 12.5% of those teachers

had at least eight hours of professional training around language diversity within a three-year period (U. S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2002). The recent push to mainstream ELLs out of bilingual or ESL programs and into “traditional” academic classroom settings makes this lack of preparation even more significant. Consider that nearly two-thirds of all ELLs are enrolled in English-only classes and those receiving support (e.g., English as a Second Language) are quickly mainstreamed into traditional content classes (Hopstock & Stephenson, 2003). Often, these students will be neglected until the teachers sense the students are linguistically ready for instruction (Faltis, 2001).

Teacher preparation for language diversity is important. Even as ELLs become classified as English proficient, they are still learning English (Evans, Arnot-Hopfer, & Jurich, 2005). This is because indicators of English proficiency are often minimal, focused on lower level conversational skills, and may not include high ability in academic English. As teachers are the most important variable impacting students’ academic and personal success (Elmore & Burney, 1999), it becomes clear that the preparation of teachers to positively and productively work with these students is both essential and compelling.

While some states and regions have experienced and attempted to address the needs of ELLs for decades, the ELL population growth and subsequent goal of educating teacher candidates to positively support these students and their learning is a relatively recent phenomenon in many rural contexts. The increase in the number of ELLs in our rural<sup>2</sup> state in which this research study was conducted has been dramatic. From 1998 to 2003, the numbers nearly doubled (up 89%) at a time that the overall state student population was decreasing (by 13%) (Kindler, 2003). However, the number of teachers with credentials to work with these students was less than 10. Academic achievement for this group was, correspondingly, low with less than 13% of ELL students reaching the norm on state assessments (Kindler, 2003).

The rurality of this context is a significant factor impacting ELL students’ experiences. Within the larger community, demographically they often find themselves few in number. Geographically, they often find themselves in ethnic specific enclaves within the community and thereby isolated from the majority (Chavez, 2005). Socially, they are isolated from the larger community purposefully or inadvertently from local events when, for example, translation services, transportation, and child-care services are not provided. The net result is that ethnic and cultural minorities often feel “othered” in these settings while being perceived as not wanting to integrate by long-time residents in these tight-knit towns.

We believe, however, that the presence of ELL students in schools and local communities provides an impetus for us to develop, strengthen, and refine the teaching skills of preservice teachers associated with linguistically/culturally responsive pedagogy. Beyond central ideas and repertoires of pedagogical practice related with this pedagogy, recognizing that they may not enter schools set up to respond to the

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needs of ELLs, we also need our preservice teachers to be resourceful, imaginative, hopeful, and persistent.

### **Research Questions**

The following specific questions guided the inquiry:

- How do candidates in our teacher educational program describe their essential understandings of language diversity and their perspectives on teaching ELLs?
- To what extent do candidates in initial level courses differ from those in upper level courses in their understandings, ideas, and dispositions specific to language diversity in education?

### **Perspective(s)/Theoretical Framework**

This project tracks the evolution of teacher education curricula to better integrate language acquisition concepts. Education and schooling (generally) and language acquisition (specifically) are vastly complex social constructions, each consisting of multiple conceptual fibers woven inextricably into a contextual tapestry in which elements are mutually dependent. We acknowledge this study takes place within this larger context, but our purview in this inquiry is limited to language diversity in the teacher education curricula.

Within a teacher education program where democracy is an explicitly stated value and culturally responsive curricula a stated professional aim, attention to language difference and development are not optional but rather are professional and moral obligations.

### **Language, Language Acquisition, and English Language Learning**

We recognize that English language acquisition is a developmental process that rests upon the maintenance and development of a student's primary language (Cummins, 2001). However, English language development is a necessary but insufficient component of the education of ELLs. It is necessary in that English is a language of power and privilege which is central to opening doors of opportunity to almost all residents of the nation. It is insufficient since we believe strongly in the importance of primary language development for ELLs as an agent in the acquisition of the English language and also as an important asset (bilingualism) in its own right as well as a human right (Ruiz, 1988). Thus, any preparation for English language development (including English as a Second Language-ESL) must assure that candidates place high value on ELLs' primary language development, either through implementing primary instruction when they share the same language as the student or via primary language support (providing reading materials in the primary language, peer-tutoring, allowing students to use the primary language in

the classroom and school, providing translations to critical materials, etc.) when they don't share that language.

Other principles guiding this work include:

- Candidates need a clear understanding of current theories of language acquisition and how to put them into practice (Valdes, 2004; Wong-Fillmore & Snow, 2000);
- There is a deep connection between linguistic and cultural diversity (Faltis, 2008);
- A commitment to continued professional development around language diversity throughout one's career must be an outcome of teacher education programs (Tellez & Waxman, 2005); and
- At heart, teaching and learning are deeply political, moral, and human endeavors (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Salazar, 2008).

We also believe that strategies specific to supporting ELLs are an essential part of teachers' repertoire. In curricular terms, English language acquisition curricula (for teacher education) needs to provide pedagogical strategies/guidance undergirded by language acquisition and multicultural education theory (see Cline & Necochea, 2003). These strategies include content-specific, language sensitive instruction that can be evidenced via a variety of accepted instruction models, e.g., SDAIE (Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English), SIOP (Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol), or GLAD (Guided Language Acquisition Design).

We believe that the acquisition of strategies to effectively teach ELLs and beliefs that affirm linguistic diversity should be explicit elements of teacher education. To do otherwise would be a disservice to our candidates and their future students. Initial teacher preparation should be based on the understanding that "the new 'norm' is precisely the wide diversity of language, culture, and class that teachers are likely to meet in public schools" (Commins & Miramontes, 2006, p. 240). As starting points, Commins and Miramontes (pp. 241-245) provide 10 recommendations for teacher education including these three:

- Organize instruction to build on the relationship between students' learning in their first and second languages and value what they bring with them from home;
- Make a firm commitment to standards-based instruction that is focused on, and driven by, the needs of students; and
- Use strategies that increase comprehension through opportunities for interaction.

These strategies and values should be discussed, unpacked, and practiced in

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developmental ways across pre-service programs. Additionally, we assert current policies and political debates around bilingual education, English as a second language, and English-only language acquisition should be topics teacher educators and their candidates understand and debate broadly.

#### ***Language Diversity and Ideology***

The ideological orientations that candidates bring to our programs are also an issue of focus as we prepare them to work with ELLs. In discussing ideological orientation, we mean one's "ideas, ideals, values, and assumptions" (Cochran-Smith, 2004). Ideology is described by Fairclough (1992) as "an implicit philosophy which governs practice and is often a taken-for-granted assumption linked to common sense, contributing to sustaining existing power relations and dominant discourses" (p. 4). While all philosophies have ideological elements, usually one is more powerful and that is the philosophy that serves the interests of the most dominant social group. Candidates need to explore and problematize ideological questions. In our program, we are asking candidates to consider questions specific to serving second language learners; e.g., what biases and assumptions do we bring to working with ELLs? What are our moral obligations to ELLs and their families? How might our orientations include viewing bi/multilingualism as an academic and cultural asset?

Skilton-Sylvester (2003) found an interconnected set of ideological assumptions operating in multilingual classrooms in the U.S. She outlined several assumptions teachers held about learning English and about ELLs in her research: a prevailing "language-as-problem" orientation was widespread; English was seen as "the solution"; an emphasis on subtractive bilingualism was widespread in ideology and in policy; immigrant and refugee rights to native languages were questioned because of their newcomer status; and a belief that other languages are useful only if they serve a pragmatic, instructional function. This ideological assumption has been largely attributed to current conservatives "dismissive" of the value of bilingualism (Ovando, 2003, p. 12). Ovando points out:

Such antipathy, especially toward strong forms of bilingual education, is rooted in nativistic and melting pot ideologies that tend to demonize the 'other.' Because bilingual education is much more than a pedagogical tool, it has become a societal irritant involving complex issues of cultural identity, social class status, and language politics. Is language diversity a problem? Is it a resource? (p. 14)

California's 1998 Proposition 227 serves as a good example of trends against bilingualism. Proponents argue that ELLs are staying too long in bilingual programs and that bilingual education creates "dependency on the native language and discourages the acquisition of English" (Ovando, 2003, p. 15). An accompanying belief that ELLs learn second language with native-like pronunciation, effortlessly and without pain, is naïve and inappropriate. Buying into this general misconcep-

tion, many teachers, both inservice and preservice, show similar conservative and uninformed views on bilingual education in general and ELLs in particular.

To elaborate, a survey of 191 regular classroom teachers' social psychological attitudes on linguistic diversity revealed attitudes were largely negative (Byrnes, Kiger, & Manning, 1996). More recently, a study in a preservice teacher education program demonstrated a similar result showing that many White, middle-class preservice teachers see ELLs as a problem and the solutions as being other people's business (Gutierrez & Orellana, 2006). Factors involving psychological insecurity, political conservatism, or the broad deployment of a deficit model applied to minority learners, among other things, are convergent with the taken-for-granted assumption that the prevailing "language-as-problem" orientation can only be resolved by the use of English as the dominant standard language. Thus, many preservice teachers mistakenly assert that classroom management would hardly be an issue if *all* students speak and understand English in the classrooms (Curran, 2003).

Haddix (2008) investigated two White, middle-class preservice teachers' developmental learning processes of how their cultural and language backgrounds affected their future students. The author collected qualitative data from a variety of sources such as field notes, class assignments including autobiographies and reflection papers, and interviews. As the two participants came to deconstruct their given cultural and linguistic privileges in the monolingual American society, the Haddix concludes, "[w]ithout seeing, hearing, and experiencing their own cultural and linguistic heritage, White preservice teachers remain in danger of not understanding their own positions of White privilege, reinforcing boundaries that keep their 'marked' and 'non-native speaking' students from full participation in society" (p. 262). Unpacking deep-seated beliefs and understandings about language, power, and ideology is evidenced as one of the participants demonstrated that she was beginning to think about "how her beliefs and attitudes towards linguistic variation, if left unquestioned, might carry negative consequences for her future students" (p. 266). To challenge standard language and color-blind ideologies, it was concluded that preservice teachers must be provided with opportunities to critically delve into a wide variety of evolving issues specific to multiculturalism and multilingualism.

de Courcy's (2007) study with candidates in Australia found that they often confused dialects with "correct" versions of English language; the former, including indigenous English, were considered "bad English." Her candidates located agency exclusively in the teacher and saw students as essentially passive subjects. This included the idea that ELLs were a problem that the teacher had to "do" something about. The candidates also used "distancing" language (them, those children, etc.) that conveyed their assumptions about who belonged and who was "Australian." As was similarly shown above in Gutierrez and Orellana's (2006) study in the U.S. context, many research findings indicate an "othering" (positive self, centering self, negative others, distancing others). The candidates also expressed anxiousness/fear about working with these ELLs. While candidates were amenable

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to readings where ELLs were shown in a positive light and schools with positive practices were highlighted, de Courcy wondered whether the few readings may have reinforced negative stereotypes or given candidates a false belief that their learnings were enough to make them competent with ELLs.

Thus, we expected to see some of these same ideological orientations in the thinking our candidates would bring to our initiative aimed at integrating language diversity into teacher education. More hopefully, candidates might see language diversity as a resource, understand the robust connection between language and student identity, and recognize their own preparation for language diversity as a key component of ELL student success. A question remains: are these ideological orientations as described by Haddix (2008), de Courcy (2007), and Skilton-Sylvester (2003) malleable or fixed and unchangeable? Our response is that, like conceptual misconceptions, these orientations can be changed, but doing so requires a persistent, systematic approach over time. One shot, decontextualized lessons and workshops are typically ineffective in achieving this aim.

#### **Programmatic Context**

As noted above, the research setting is a mid-sized, land grant, research I university with predominately White candidates and faculty situated in a relatively rural Western mountain state. Our candidate population, in line with national demographics, is largely female.

All candidates begin the teacher education sequence by taking courses in the EDST department. These include a developmental psychology course (EDST 2450: Human Lifespan Development), an educational foundations course (EDST 2480: Diversity and the Politics of Schooling), a general curriculum and instruction course (EDST 3000: Teacher as Practitioner), and a general educational assessment course (EDST 3550: Educational Assessment).

Importantly for this study, EDST 2480 deals extensively with philosophical, socio-cultural, historical, and political issues of schooling in which politics, minority learners, and power and hegemony are addressed. Through readings and class discussions, candidates involve themselves in uncovering different elements of racism as well as social and educational inequalities experienced by diverse learners. Candidates learn these even as they are encouraged to express their opinions surrounding language diversity.

After successful completion of these courses, candidates take courses in either elementary or secondary education methods depending upon their area of study. Finally, to finish the teacher education program, candidates complete a semester-long residency/student teaching experience.

#### ***Curricular and Pedagogical Interventions around Language Diversity***

Many faculty members in our department have attempted to incorporate language

diversity in their courses for years. However, these efforts have been uneven across various instructors and sections of courses. Our aim then was to make these efforts coherent, conceptually sound, informed by data, and available to teacher educators inside and outside our program. An explicit curricular initiative designed to better incorporate language acquisition (and appropriate accompanying pedagogical strategies) into the EDST classes began this work.

We developed a curricular matrix (see Table 1) to help us identify the key concepts we wanted to emphasize in our department's courses. Additionally, the matrix identified readings for candidates, readings for faculty above and beyond those for the candidates, and suggested class activities/projects/assignments. These resources were then assembled in binders and disseminated to all department faculty. It has been our intention that this curriculum map and related resources evolve as candidate and faculty data and documentation inform subsequent adaptation and revision.

**Table 1**  
**Integrating Language Diversity into Educational Studies**

Concepts/ Resources	Key Concepts	Articles (Students)	Articles (Faculty)	Resources & Activities	Enhance
<b>Courses</b>					
EDST 2450	* 1st and 2nd language development * Commonalities and Difference between L1 and L2 language learning	* Ch. 4, Lessow-Hurley, Language Development	* Terrell, "The Natural Approach"	* Venn diagram of 1st/2nd language development * List stages of L2 development; students brainstorm instructional implications	
EDST 2480	* Basic Concepts of Language Learning: CUPS/SUPS, BICS/CALPS, Threshold (Cummins); 5 Hypotheses (Krashen) plus role of social interaction (Wong Fillmore) * Review stages of L2 development * Connection between language and culture	* Ch. 3, Diaz-Rico & Weed, "Learning about Second Language Acquisition"	* Cummins (Ch. 1, The Role of Primary Language...; 1st half) * Krashen (Ch. 2) * Walqui, Scaffolding Instruction for ELLs	* Read; Draw pictures w/o using words to describe concepts * Fear & Learning at Hoover Elementary (video) * Video, Lily Wong Fillmore and Victor Villesenor; Dear Teacher, If only you knew	* Historical, political and legal issues of L2 learning
EDST 3000	* Review concepts from 2480 (briefly) * Language Sensitive instruction	* SDAIE, Necochea & Cline * Walqui, Scaffolding Instruction	* Making Content Comprehensible for ELLs (Echevarria, et. al). * 50 strategies for teaching ELLs, Herrell * 10 questions, Carey	* SIOP Model (video) * GLAD (Guided Language Acquisition Design) * 4 poems (Walqui activity demonstrating scaffolding) * Planning instruction for ELLs	* CALLA Update, Uhl Chamot, 2006 * Program models
EDST 3550	* Assessing Second Language Learners	* Ch 7, Diaz-Rico & Weed, Language and Content Area Assessment * Through Different Eyes, Ch. 7, Assessment	* Authentic Assessment for ELLs, Gottlieb (2006) Ch 1	* The Cultural Literacy Test * Post-test: What you know about ELLs	* Placement of ELLs

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The matrix outlines our aims specific to language diversity and teaching for each required EDST/foundations course. The initial required course (EDST 2450, the development psychology course) introduces candidates to the importance of addressing language diversity and focuses on stages of language development. The diversity and schooling course (EDST 2480) introduces candidates to foundational principles of second language acquisition. The curriculum and instruction course (EDST 3000) prepares candidates to plan for and implement language sensitive instruction. Finally, the assessment course (EDST 3550) discusses and describes language appropriate assessment.

#### **Researching Candidate Perspectives and Understandings**

As we engaged in professional conversations and related curricular adaptations, we realized we needed to hear from our candidates regarding what they already understood regarding language diversity. We recognize that candidates bring initial constructions related to diversity (broadly) and to language diversity (specifically) from their own school experiences which impact their personal theories of learning (Tsang, 2004). We were confident that given previous curricular revisions as well as their institutional manifestation (course names, course descriptions, faculty assignment to courses, etc.), a strong emphasis on diversity generally might impact our candidates' understandings. We also knew that some of the candidates, again depending upon the instructors they had for their courses, were being exposed to important concepts related to language diversity specifically. And finally, we were beginning efforts to more systematically integrate language diversity into our courses, as described in Table 1, and wanted an initial gauge of what our candidates were learning with respect to this topic. The aims were to hear and understand the perspectives of the involved candidates, to utilize these understandings to inform our efforts at revising the teacher education curricula, and to share our experiences with others that may benefit from this contribution to the conversation about language diversity specific to educating teachers.

Toward that end, we began a research initiative designed to help us assess what our candidates understood in terms of language diversity.

#### **Methods**

Surveys were given to students in sections of the identified classes. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were utilized to collect data for this research. As noted below, adapted Likert scale and open-ended survey data sources were used to ascertain candidates' attitudes and understandings about language diversity learning.

#### **Surveys and Data Analysis**

This inquiry utilized data from a survey focused on candidates' attitudes, values and understandings of language acquisition and teaching second language learners.

The survey instrument is included in Appendix A. Explanatory nine items were developed to connect to four domains: (1) *expectation and competence* (# 1, # 4), (2) *language and cognitive development* (# 2, # 3, # 5), (3) *learners and language instruction* (# 5, # 7), and (4) *diversity and ideology* (# 6, # 8, # 9). The survey started with adapted Likert scale questions that asked candidates to agree, mostly agree, disagree, or mostly disagree with a series of statements. The Likert items were loaded into SPSS and analyzed using Chi-square testing and descriptive statistics. As with inferential and descriptive statistical analyses, we were able to figure out how candidates at upper level courses (EDST 3000 and 3550) made sense of issues of language diversity different than those at lower level ones (EDST 2450 and 2480). To know more about the explanations for their ratings, the surveys offered the candidates opportunities to explain their rationales for individual responses.

Finally, candidates were asked to respond to a series of related open-ended questions. The narrative responses that accompanied the individual Likert questions and the open-ended questions at the end were analyzed using qualitative coding to uncover themes that describe candidates' essential understandings/perspectives about language diversity (Corbin & Strauss, 2007; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006; Riessman, 2008).

## **Findings**

This inquiry sought (1) to illuminate teacher education candidates' essential understandings of language diversity and their perspectives on teaching ELLs, and (2) to determine to what extent candidates' understandings specific to language diversity in education in initial level courses differ from those of candidates in upper in upper level courses.

Our primary findings from quantitative analysis and interpretation of the Likert scale items on the language learning focused survey are presented below. While the instrument items were designed to allow for examination of degrees of agreement/disagreement, we focused on the primary split between candidate responses that agree with particular statements and those that disagreed. Our quantitative analysis involved the use of Chi-Square and descriptive statistics. The former points out how candidates who take upper level courses (EDST 3000 and EDST 3550) differently perceive these issues in comparison with those who take lower level ones (EDST 2450 and EDST 2480) while the latter shows a general view of our candidates regarding issues related to language diversity.

Together, this quantitative analysis is accompanied by candidates' explanations for their ratings. The qualitative data analysis of the open-ended items of the survey helps substantiate and extend our understanding of the quantitative responses. The implications of these findings, interpretations, and understandings collectively are discussed in the "conclusion/next steps" section of this article.

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**Quantitative Findings—Language Learning**

One hundred forty one (141) candidates completed the survey. Table 2 presents the results of a Chi-square test in which two dichotomous variables were factored in: (1) lower vs. upper level courses and (2) agreements vs. disagreement. That is, Chi-square testing examines statistical differences on percentages of agreements and disagreements between candidates who took lower level courses and those who took upper level ones.

Only two items proved statistically significant wherein candidates in the lower level courses differed from those in upper level courses: Q 1: “I am looking forward to working with second language learners in my classroom” and Q 9: “Just being immersed in English in a classroom does not guarantee academic and/or linguistic success.” Candidates in the upper level courses were more enthusiastic about working with ELLs *and* better understood that these students had distinct curricular and instructional needs when compared to candidates enrolled in lower level courses. For the other seven items, there was no statistical difference between the two groups according to Chi-square testing.

These results suggest mixed implications. It is, on one hand, desirable because the presence of no statistically significant differences on seven out of nine items indicates that our candidates, regardless of the course levels they were taking, had begun to develop some important understandings with respect to language diversity. On the other hand, it is troubling because the level of understanding for candidates in upper level courses was not significantly different on many items from those at lower level courses, despite intentions to extend candidates’ understanding of language diversity. Faculty and instructors who teach upper level courses in our department put substantial efforts on discussing and engaging issues of ELLs in schools but

**Table 2**  
**Chi-Square Test**

Percentages	Q1*	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9*
Lower Level Courses with Disagreement	21.2	20.0	5.1	16.5	14.1	23.5	48.5	20.0	11.1
Lower Level Courses with Agreement	36.5	38.5	52.6	40.6	43.0	35.3	7.7	38.5	45.9
Upper Level Courses with Disagreement	8.8	9.6	4.4	10.5	14.8	11.8	39.2	11.1	2.2
Upper Level Courses with Agreement	33.5	31.9	37.9	32.3	28.1	29.4	4.6	30.4	40.7
Chi-square	.043*	.169	.770	.573	.213	.170	.585	.361	.015*

\* Chi-square testing shows statistical significances on Q1 and Q9 at <.05 level.

these efforts, at least according to this measure, aren't yet yielding substantially deeper understandings. Alternatively, we were encouraged and surprised to know that candidates at lower level courses expressed very enthusiastic attitudes around language diversity.

More specifically, consider the two items proven statistically significant by examining the open-ended responses. For item # 1, candidates are generally looking forward to working with second language learners in their classrooms. 70% of respondents agree/mostly agree (from both groups of candidates), yet a significant percentage (30% disagree/mostly disagree) assert they are "fearful/anxious" about working with ELLs. Candidates who rated this highly frequently described this as a professional "challenge" that will help them grow; they also tended to value diversity. Candidates who claimed they are not looking forward to working with ELLs questioned, "why should I work with students who don't speak English and/or who are academically unprepared for the mainstream classroom?" Again, candidates in the upper level courses were more eager to work with ELLs than those candidates in lower level courses.

For item # 9, a strong majority of candidates from both groups (86.6%) agreed that an immersion approach alone will not guarantee academic or linguistic success. Most candidates recognize that "there has to be extra-instructional efforts to help their students to learn English"; "they won't learn English by merely sitting in the classrooms." Beyond understanding that there are more variables related to language learning, they recognize that there are instructional elements they can incorporate to facilitate both language and content learning. As our statistical analysis showed, those in upper level courses especially understood the need for these instructional and curricular modifications.

In the rest of this section, we review other noteworthy findings of our candidates' thinking about language diversity and teaching ELLs indicated by the quantitative data.

For item # 2, candidates (70.4 %) generally believe allowing students to use their native language promotes both cognitive and academic growth. Most feel "speaking a native language is good cognitively and culturally" but some questioned the politics of bilingualism: "Students in the U.S. should speak English and assimilate." Those at upper level courses noted that learning content will promote academic progress in English. Equally important, these upper level candidates seemed to have a stronger anti-assimilation perspective than those at the earlier levels of the program.

For item # 4, candidates generally felt competent to teach ELLs in their particular content areas (72.9% agree/mostly agree). We are pleased to see high levels of confidence, but we temper this with the realization that most candidates also claim few experiences actually working with ELLs and several acknowledge that they still have much to learn in this regard (recall, they have more courses and field experiences after leaving the department). Candidates in earlier phases of the

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program interpret this competence as their own sense of efficacy speaking English; of course, teaching ELLs involves so much more than knowing English. Candidates in the upper level courses recognize that knowing English is not enough and that teachers need to know specific instructional strategies to work productively with ELLs. We also saw a greater variability in confidence levels for candidates in the upper level courses. Perhaps the more nuanced and complex understandings create a greater sense of uncertainty with respect to efficacy.

For item # 6, candidates generally agree (64.7%) that a student that speaks a language other than English is at an advantage in our society. Most candidates in lower level courses see it as an advantage *but only if* it includes speaking English as well. An important group of candidates at both levels recognizes that the US makes it difficult on speakers of languages other than English. This includes valuing bilingualism in its own right, unconnected to an ability to speak English.

For item # 8, candidates (68.9%) believed a student's cultural background will influence his/her ability to learn English. Candidates in lower level courses mostly don't recognize the strength of the connection between language and culture. Rather, for them, it is mostly about "desire to learn" and culture is not a central factor. Even for candidates in the upper courses, culture creates a context for learning a new language but it does not influence it.

Importantly, our candidates' responses on items #1, #2, #4, #6, #8, and #9 are aligned with those in the extant literature/research around second language learning regarding the difference between social and academic language abilities. However, item # 5 (a student who speaks "everyday" English is capable of understanding "school" English) is not supported by the literature around second language learning; 71.1 % agree/mostly agreed that if students understand everyday English, they can understand school English. This seems to indicate that candidates believed Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) equals Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency Skills (CALPS) because the process of learning academic English, for them, happened unconsciously. We know these two differ. Engaging content at higher cognitive levels requires extensive content-specific vocabulary and developed conceptual understandings. Positively, student misconceptions on this topic diminish in higher levels of the program.

We close our quantitative findings and analyses by mentioning two items that stood out as being especially important. For item # 3, a large percentage of candidates (90.5 %) believed learning a second language is mostly different than learning a first language. At the lower levels of the program, one variable mostly accounted for this difference: *age*. The candidates at these levels held the belief that it is more difficult to learn another language when you are older. They also believed that the first language would *negatively* interfere with learning a second language. Candidates in the upper level courses asserted that there were many more variables (social, cognitive, political, etc.) that influenced a person's ability to acquire another language.

For item # 7, a large percentage of candidates (87.7%) *disagree* that it is best to focus on teaching English language without worrying about academic content. It appears candidates understand the importance of teaching both language *and* content, with a sizeable number stating the importance of learning content as a central goal. Candidates at the upper levels see the two more fully connected and see how content can be used to teach English. This supports our efforts to teach content-based, language sensitive approaches in teacher education that combine language and content learning.

### **Qualitative Findings: Language Acquisition**

Analysis of candidates' qualitative, narrative responses to the open-ended aspects on the language learning survey deepened and extended our understandings of the statistics shared and discussed above. We see our candidates responding in developmental ways across our language learning data. We also believe that our explicit, deliberate attempts to better integrate knowledge and skills necessary for working with ELLs will deepen and expedite this developmental progress. Candidates are moving (politically) from orthodox explanations of phenomena toward more transformative understandings. Additionally, candidates are moving (pedagogically) from being outsiders of education toward developing teacher abilities and a sense of fairness. Our interpretations yielded four themes that correspond to a moral claim, a political claim, a pedagogical claim, and a professional claim.

As a *moral claim*, candidates increasingly feel more responsible and committed to ELLs. They recognize the importance of addressing the needs of ELLs and one that is connected to their teaching. Candidates in early program courses provided responses like:

I have not thought about this question at all.

I am nervous to see how well I do ...

Candidates' in higher level courses provided the following representative responses:

I will emphasize improving native language and I will ensure the students learn to speak proper English.

They need help and I want to get them 'up to par' to be able to learn with the rest of the class.

It is as much the responsibility of the teacher to help teach second language learners the English language as it is our responsibility to teach traditional English speakers to read or correctly perform math functions.

Second, for our candidates over time, as a *political claim*, the hegemony of "English-only" gives way to affirming students' linguistic *and* cultural diversity. Candidates in the earlier courses made remarks like:

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... it [learning English] will help students with jobs when they are older.

... as a society, we expect everyone to speak English.

But candidates in the upper level courses made comments like:

... speaking two languages is extremely well respected, and for jobs speaking two languages is high demand.

Language is shaped/effected by culture, and vice versa.

Third, with respect to the *pedagogical claim*, our candidates' progressive focus moves from an exclusive focus on "language" to one that focuses on instructional strategies and resources as well as language. That is, the candidates, over time, come to see this as a curriculum and instruction issue, not solely a language issue. Candidates in the early phase courses made the following comments:

Our role is to meet their (ELLs) needs but English should be learned by all citizens of this country.

... students need to experience it [English] for more than a few hours a day.

Candidates in the higher level courses in the program, however, provided comments that illustrated increasingly broadened, richer perspectives:

It is up to us to provide a good learning environment as well as tools to help them [ELLs] (supply supplementary materials, aids, etc.).

... you need/should test them [ELLs] in their native language to show what they really have learned. Second language learners have a difficult time learning in the second language. Be patient and understanding of second language learners. It is our responsibility as teachers to provide every possible way for second language learners to succeed. We need to use every resource possible.

... more teaching practices and personal case study activities need to be included so we as future teachers gain experience analyzing and appropriately responding to the individual educational needs.

Finally, with respect to the *professional claim*, candidates move toward more sophisticated context-content-language connections wherein they develop understandings that more skills and more experiences will help them to build efficacy. Candidates in early phases of the program focus on things *others* can do:

I believe it is our responsibility to provide either translators or people to teach in the second language.

Candidates in upper level courses provide suggestions and ask for support so that *they* will be able to support ELLs' learning at cognitively demanding levels. Representative comments included:

... require pre-service teachers take a foreign language course.

... have specific [required] class dedicated to it [teaching second language learners].

... have professional/experienced ESL teachers teach us, more information about ESL learners/teachers.

Many of these candidates recognize the importance of multiple professional opportunities and field-based experiences such as more field experiences with ELLs, use of professional videos of teachers employing language sensitive instruction, and immersion experiences in schools with substantial cultural and linguistic diversity.

## **Discussion**

Teacher education curricula must evolve to accommodate changing educational landscapes. This account documents explicit attempts to integrate linguistic diversity into department level teacher education courses in a rural public university context. Resultant findings/understandings from initial data collection and analysis have yielded both positive findings and findings of concern.

Chi-square testing showed statistical differences on two dimensions: (1) To a greater degree, candidates in the upper level courses were “looking forward to working with second language learners,” and (2) Upper level candidates better understood that an “immersion approach alone will not guarantee academic or linguistic success.” Upper level candidates recognized ELL students have specific curricular and instructional needs, and that immersion alone will not adequately support these students’ learning.

We are pleased our upper level candidates exhibit these deeper understandings, and for our program the implication is clear: we need to ensure that our candidates have those skills and ideological orientations that enable them to provide content-specific, language sensitive instruction. Further, as we know our candidates have limited experience working with ELLs, and we know they’ll likely find little ELL expertise in schools around the state, we need to find ways to afford them opportunities to practice, receive feedback, and evolve their instruction.

Though not statistically significant, we have drawn implications from the other seven items. Descriptive statistics show that there is still a relatively high percentage of agreement (from 64.7% to 90.5%) between candidates in upper and lower levels of the program on these seven items. These agreements between the two groups are split with slim to moderate margins ranging from .7% to 14.7%. These quantitative data can be used as a baseline on which qualitative data are merged into the aforementioned four developmental claims.

The findings reported in the previous section indicate that candidates’ ideological perspectives around certain aspects of language diversity are malleable and that they change over time. Influencing these changes are the candidates’ own psychological and social maturity, the developmental sequence of the teacher education curriculum

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around language diversity to which they are being exposed, their experiences in diverse field settings, and learning gleaned from courses outside of the College of Education.

Generally, we see evidence of movement from simplistic understandings about language learning to more nuanced understandings where many factors, and factors in interaction with each other, influence a student's ability to acquire English. We see movement to take greater responsibility for ELLs in their class (moral claim), to value and affirm language diversity (political claim), to understand the importance of culturally and linguistically affirming curriculum and instruction in support of ELLs (pedagogical claim), and to value professional development experiences which will help candidates refine their skills and abilities (professional claim).

We see our departmental level effort as a starting point where candidates can take a first step in developing educative and caring eyes that keep a particular goal of education in sight, that is to say, education for ALL in a global multicultural society. Nonetheless, we are cautious in that there may be a possibility that our candidates are over-estimating their sense of efficacy on language diversity given the relatively little knowledge and skill development they have received in the program at that particular point.

### **Next Steps**

Importantly, these findings will inform our future curricula, pedagogy, and assessment practices. Like the commonly presented cyclical model in which practice is continually informed by data/assessments, our ultimate aims in this project are to utilize different research strategies to conduct candidate and teacher focus groups, to enact peer observation and critique, and to evaluate candidate work samples to guide course level practices. In EDST department meetings, we discuss and reflect on candidate and faculty learning and make revisions to course curricula and resources as needed.

In particular, we found ourselves acknowledging the fact that our future study needs to be more closely associated with a race/ethnicity variable that is now seen as inseparable from understanding issues of language diversity. Recently, Liggett (2008) reported how White female, middle-class teachers were baffled at first and then chose ambiguous frames of reference in responding to race-related questions brought by ELLs of color in the teaching and learning process:

The tendency to minimize the negative racial comments made to English language learners (ELLs) was a prominent theme ... [T]his minimization indicates the key role that teacher education courses can play in further developing teacher candidates' knowledge regarding race and the influence of white racial identity on teaching. (p. 387)

Certainly, the inseparability between race/ethnicity and ELLs is evident in the assertion noted above. Likewise, Lucas, Villegas, and Freedson-Gonzales' (2008)

principles for LRPP (Linguistically Responsive Pedagogical Practices) provide an implication for our future EDST curricula, one that requires teacher race/ethnicity/identity to be addressed up front in curriculum and planning for diverse classroom contexts. For this connectedness of race/ethnicity to language diversity to happen, we must, as faculty members, first examine the possibility of critical race praxis for/with ELLs to see if we have, intentionally or unintentionally, adopted “racist, reductionist, and overly-simplified metaphors” (Katsarou, 2009, p. 253) in our courses and practices. And second, faculty members will need to continue to incorporate an inquiry approach as EDST curricular efforts on language diversity continue to evolve.

Realizing ELL learners and their families are often marginalized in rural communities, candidates, with faculty support, will need opportunities to explore the complexity of local curriculum development with students and community members who know the historical and cultural antecedents of their school and communities (Katsarou, 2009). In essence, our teacher candidates need to be prepared not just for the language diversity they’ll encounter in their classrooms, but also to positively address the unique rural contexts in which their students and their families live.

Lastly, short-and long-term strategies for sustaining department level teacher education curricular and pedagogical efforts specific to language diversity must be pursued. Appendix B shows our short- and long-term strategies intended to help candidates continue to critically reflect on language diversity during our program and ultimately to develop instructional plans appropriate for ELLs.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Herein referred to as “candidates” to distinguish them from the PreK-12 students they will teach.

<sup>2</sup> We use “rural” to describe a place small in size, relatively economically undeveloped, and isolated from a major metropolis (Atkins, 2003).

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## Appendix A

### Anticipatory Guide Survey—Language Learning

Read the statements and decide whether you agree-disagree using the following scale. Explain why you hold that view. Then complete the prompts regarding second language learners.

Statement	Explanation
	4=Agree; 3=Mostly Agree; 2=Mostly Disagree; 1=Disagree
Q1: I am looking forward to working with second language learners in my classroom	I rate this a _____ because...
Q2: Allowing students to use their native language promotes cognitive and academic growth	I rate this a _____ because...
Q3: Learning a second language is mostly different than learning your first language	I rate this a _____ because...

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Q4: I feel “competent” in teaching English language learners in my content area I rate this a \_\_\_\_\_ because...

Q5: A student who speaks “everyday” English is capable of understanding “school” English I rate this a \_\_\_\_\_ because...

Q6: A student who speaks a language other than English is at an advantage in our society I rate this a \_\_\_\_\_ because...

Q7: It’s best to focus on teaching English as a language and not worry about academic content I rate this a \_\_\_\_\_ because...

Q8: A student’s cultural background will influence her/his ability to learn English I rate this a \_\_\_\_\_ because...

Q9: Just being immersed in English in a classroom does not guarantee academic and/or linguistic success I rate this a \_\_\_\_\_ because...

Open Ended Questions:

What prior experiences have you had that have influenced your knowledge and attitudes about working with second language learners?

What are three key ideas/concepts you have learned thus far in the program related to second language learners?

What questions do you have about teaching second language learners?

In what way, if at all, is it our responsibility as teachers in schools to meet the needs of second language learners?

What recommendations do you have for the teacher education program to improve future teachers’ ability to meet the needs of second language learners?

Self Information:

Last 4 #'s of Student ID:

Course number at point you completed this survey:

Education Major (check) \_\_\_\_\_Elementary \_\_\_\_\_Secondary

Specific Content Area: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender (Circle one): Female Male

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**Appendix B**

**Short-Term and Long-Term Curricular Strategies**

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Short-term Strategy	Continuous course revision; Use of classroom level examples for all EDST courses	Continue to push our candidates to view diversity as a social asset and a human right and get them to question both the hegemony of English and “American” cultural assimilation Use classroom level examples related to support strategies and hidden curriculum
	Purposeful arrangement of Curricula and learning experiences and development of formal course assignments in EDST 3000 and 3550	Arrange curricula and learning experiences in EDST 3000 and EDST 3550 in a spiral manner: a. Place a weekly topic of language diversity in the early semester in EDST 3000 to contextualize teaching and learning practices b. Place a weekly topic of language diversity in EDST 3550 in the middle or later semester to construct and justify fair assessment practices c. Develop formal course assignments
	Dissemination of our effort to faculty teaching methods courses in other departments	Inform faculty teaching methods courses of our curricula and learning experiences on language diversity
	ESL Endorsement	Early, active advertisement and advocacy of ESL Endorsement Program offered by our Department
Long-term Strategy	Longitudinal Data Collection through focus group interviewing	Solicit candidate perspectives at a point of fall semester to conduct a longitudinal research project. Collect data about a. What is being learned b. How a level of critical thinking skills of candidates on politics of the hegemony of English and “American” cultural assimilation is deepened over time
	Service Learning	Provide candidates opportunities to engage in and observe schools and classrooms that serve ELLs specifically and diverse populations generally. a. Include a Service Learning Component in EDST 3000 to figure out how authentic field experiences, coupled with quality readings, discussions, and other in class activities, serve as a cornerstone that links theory and practice; b. Encourage candidates to conduct a mini-action research project with their mentor teachers during student teaching; c. Develop a website linked to the ESL Endorsement homepage to store select findings/stories to share with larger community members