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Preparing Mainstream Teacher Candidates to Work with English Language Learners: Dissonance and Care Developing Agency

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Abstract: The increase of English language learners (ELLs) in the United States of America (USA) public school classrooms and the diversification of the global education landscape urges initial teacher preparation programs to equip mainstream teachers with appropriate skills, knowledge, and dispositions to teach ELLs. This paper reports findings from a focus group study on elementary teacher candidates' (TCs') field experiences with ELLs. Based on interviews with four groups of TCs who completed their two practicums with ELLs, the study illustrates how mainstream TCs perceive their field experiences as future teachers of ELLs. The findings suggest that TCs recognize dissonances and develop care toward ELLs through their engagements in ELL-specific field experiences. The study also demonstrates how the recognition of dissonances led to changes in TCs' beliefs and values, which was observed through their imagination. Informed by their field experiences with ELLs, TCs began forming professional agency as future teachers by imagining specific teaching strategies, methods, and approaches they would like to implement with ELLs. Implications and future directions of teacher education programs are also discussed.

Keywords: *Elementary teacher candidates, English language learners, dissonance, field experience, teacher agency.*

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Introduction

Globalization has significantly altered the global education landscape, including the level of diversity observed in the K-12 student demography. Given the pace of diversification and the increasing number of English language learners (ELLs) in K-12 schools in the USA, providing appropriate academic, linguistic, and cultural support to ELLs becomes a pressing matter. Due to the increasing number of ELLs placed in mainstream classrooms rather than specialized or sheltered English as a second language (ESL) classrooms, preparing mainstream teachers to work with ELLs effectively is an urgent task in teacher education. Despite such urgency, mainstream teachers are not well-prepared or equipped with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to teach ELLs in their classrooms (Brisk, 2018; de Jong & Harper, 2005; Lucas, 2011). Furthermore, due to the homogenous demography of current mainstream teachers in the USA, preparing teachers to be culturally and linguistically responsive teachers has been more challenging (Athanasios & Wong, 2018).

In order to prepare future teachers to work effectively with ELLs, previous studies have explored current teacher education programs in various aspects. However, limited research investigates mainstream teacher candidates' (TCs') ELL-specific field experiences and how their previous experiences inform them as future teachers of ELLs. This study attempts to contribute to the on-going discussion and address the gap in the literature by exploring how elementary TCs describe and perceive their field experiences with ELLs. This study also aims to examine how ELL-specific field experience has contributed to TCs' conceptualization of teaching ELLs in the future.

Literature Review

ELL-specific Field Experience in Teacher Preparation Programs

Previous studies explored different approaches and curricula in teacher education programs that prepare prospective teachers to work with ELLs. These ELL-specific teacher preparation approaches and curricula include practice-based learning such as internship or tutoring experiences (e.g., Bollin, 2007; Chang et al., 2011; Daniel, 2014; Kayi-Aydar, 2015;

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Uzum et al., 2014), micro-teaching (e.g., Amobi & Irwin, 2012; Saban & Çoklar, 2013), or preservice teacher inquiry (e.g., Athanases & Wong, 2018; Banes et al., 2016; Wong et al., 2017). In particular, practice-based curricula, such as field experience, internship, service-learning, and tutoring practicum, allow TCs to interact with ELLs. These practice-based experiences with ELLs are highly promoted in teacher preparation programs because they provide opportunities to construct ELL-specific knowledge, develop positive beliefs and attitudes, foster care and empathy, and advance TCs' self-efficacy.

The following studies highlight the interconnectedness between ELL-specific course contents and field experience that can shift TCs' beliefs and attitudes. As TCs develop knowledge related to ELLs through field experiences, they display positive changes in attitudes and beliefs (e.g., Kolano & King, 2015; Lee et al., 2018), challenged their negative attitudes (e.g., Chang et al., 2011; Markos, 2012), and exhibited greater awareness of their changed attitudes (Warren et al., 2010). These studies illustrate how initial teacher preparation programs supplemented with field experiences can create positive perceptions in terms of TCs' beliefs and attitudes toward ELLs.

Clinical field experiences focused on ELLs can develop TCs' care and empathy toward ELLs. Bollin (2007) explored the dynamics of service-learning of 80 elementary education TCs, which showed how interactions with immigrant families and students made TCs develop empathy toward immigrant students' situations and the injustice in schools. Similarly, Daniel's (2014) research conducted on four TCs and Kayi-Aydar's (2015) research of three TCs in their internships discovered how building relationships with ELLs had played a major role in TCs' development of empathy and care. The findings of these studies also emphasize TCs' increased confidence to interact with ELLs after building a relationship with the students through clinical experiences.

TCs' increased self-efficacy through field experiences with ELLs was also recognized in previous research. Similar to the development of care and empathy, TCs' increased self-efficacy was influenced by their relationship with ELLs. Reyes (2009) examined what education major TCs learn as they engage in their service-learning experience and found out how interactions with ELLs through a tutoring/mentoring program empowered TCs in terms of knowing the nature of teaching ELLs. Salerno and Kibler (2013) also reported that education major TCs were able to learn and understand ELLs better in their student-teaching, which helped them interact with ELLs in the future.

Previous studies have proven that clinical field experiences with ELLs benefit mainstream TCs greatly in various aspects. However, Bodur (2012) asserts that providing field experience in a linguistically and culturally diverse setting is insufficient to support TCs in making connections between course contents or research-based theories and teaching practices. Salerno and Kibler (2013) also indicate that TCs may fail to make pedagogical suggestions related to ELLs' linguistic needs after the student-teaching experience. The previous research suggests areas not yet explored in terms of the effects of ELL-focused field experiences and urges to examine ways to strengthen the teacher preparation curriculum. This study attempts to bridge the gap in the literature by analyzing TCs' holistic experiences in ELL-specific courses and practicums beyond a single semester's coursework.

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Teacher Candidates

The importance of diversifying the teaching workforce as well as preparing culturally and linguistically diverse TCs has been emphasized to meet the diverse student needs in today's classrooms (Cochran-Smith & Villegas, 2015; Goldhaber et al., 2019; Villegas & Davis, 2008). A few studies paid attention to culturally and linguistically diverse mainstream TCs. These studies highlight mainstream TCs' strong motivation and unique instructional decisions influenced by their diverse personal experiences.

In previous studies, culturally and linguistically diverse TCs expressed their motivation and willingness to be role models to students and provide the support they never received in their former schooling. Two life history studies conducted by Gomez and colleagues (Gomez et al., 2008a, 2008b) illustrate Latino/a elementary education TCs' willingness to provide an equitable education to other Latino/a students. Participants in these studies demonstrated their commitment to supporting young Latino/a students in their practicum classroom by spending outside-of-school time with the students, communicating with families, and trying to build relationships with the students who share the same cultural and language backgrounds. Similarly, in a cooperative inquiry study conducted by Bower-Phipps et al. (2013), participating TCs and teacher educator who identified themselves as "other" demonstrated their willingness to serve students and be role models for students who might have encountered similar challenges as the "other". These studies illustrate how TCs from diverse linguistic, cultural, gender, or ethnic backgrounds are motivated to support students from diverse backgrounds.

A few studies underscore the impact of culturally and linguistically diverse TCs' personal experiences on their field experience and instructional decisions. Kauchak and Burbank's (2003) case studies of two secondary education minority TCs explore the influence of personal background knowledge and contexts in their student teaching experiences. Findings reveal how the two participants utilized their linguistic backgrounds differently and stress the importance of recognizing unique voices and perspectives from minority TCs in a teacher education program. In another study, Gomez and Rodriguez (2011) explore one Latina prospective elementary teacher's view of her identity and the way others viewed

her strengths. The participant, Patricia Maria demonstrated her commitment to supporting students like herself, a Spanish-English bilingual from an immigrant family, by building relationships and forming a community with students.

Furthermore, studies examining clinical field experiences paid attention to culturally and linguistically diverse TCs' efforts to alter the curriculum and make instructional decisions informed by their personal experiences. Téllez (1999) explores four Mexican-American TCs' student teaching experiences and their interactions with culturally diverse students with a specific focus on their cultural competency and implementation of their cultural knowledge. Findings suggest that although the participating TCs' Spanish language proficiency was at varying levels, they all demonstrated their commitment to including their cultural knowledge. Haddix's (2010) investigation of two racially and linguistically diverse TCs' linguistic and teacher identities uncovers their awareness of societal attitudes toward standard English and their ability to code-switch intentionally depending on their roles and contexts. The study highlights the importance of valuing TCs' racial, cultural, and linguistic identities in teacher education programs to promote hybrid discourses and transform dominant discourses.

Previous research suggests that teacher education programs need to be more responsive and provide space for culturally and linguistically diverse TCs who exhibit stronger motivation and commitment to meet diverse students' needs. These TCs tend to alter the curriculum and make culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogical decisions. However, limited studies paid specific attention to bi-/multilingual mainstream TCs and how their diverse linguistic backgrounds influenced their teacher education and field experiences. This study attempts to contribute to the discussion about culturally and linguistically diverse TCs' linguistic resources and their reflection after participating in ELL-specific field experiences.

Methodology

Research Context and Setting

The research was conducted at a large, public university located in Florida, USA. According to Florida Consent Decree, an agreement developed in 1990, teachers are required to complete professional development courses related to second language teaching and learning called an English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) endorsement. Since 2001, colleges and universities in Florida have been required to incorporate ESOL content in teacher preparation courses for TCs with high language demands (i.e., English and Language Arts, Elementary Education, Early Childhood Education, and School Counseling). TCs in the areas with high language demands need to graduate with an ESOL endorsement by meeting the ESOL teacher performance standards in five areas: (a) applied linguistics, (b) cross-cultural communications, (c) ESOL methods, (d) ESOL curriculum and materials development, and (e) ESOL assessment.

Thus, elementary TCs in this study are required to complete a minimum of 300 hours of professional development in the area of ESOL, which precludes ELL-specific course credit hours, field experience hours, and course credit hours from ESOL infused courses. These infused courses are general teacher preparation courses that infuse ESOL-related knowledge and skills to teach specific content to ELLs. TCs in this study have completed two ESOL-specific courses; a foundational course taken in the first semester of their senior year and a methods course taken in the last semester of their senior year. TCs completed their first ELL-specific practicum during the ESOL foundational course, which required observing a mainstream class in a rural district with ELLs in the classroom. All participants in the interviews have also completed their second ELL-specific practicum during the ESOL methods course. They work with ELLs through tutoring or small group sessions for a minimum of 10 hours during the 16-week-long semester.

Data Collection

Using a focus group methodology, this study aims to gain an in-depth understanding of mainstream TCs in their ELL-specific field experiences. Focus group interviews allow the researcher to understand a specific group of people's interpretations, opinions, and attitudes toward a specific set of topics (Hennink, 2007; Kitzinger, 2005). The focus group interview data were collected as part of a larger study examining how ELL-specific field experiences contribute to elementary TCs' development to work with ELLs (see Lee et al., 2018). Data sources included a questionnaire, field experience reflection, and focus group interview sessions.

In this paper, we present findings from the focus group interview data. Specifically, this study was guided by the following research questions: (a) *How do elementary TCs make sense of their two ELL-specific field experiences as future teachers of ELLs?* (b) *Are there any differences between TCs who reported high proficiency in a language other than English and those who considered themselves English monolinguals?*

Focus group interviews are helpful means to understand TCs' perceptions because hearing what others think can help them recognize their own thoughts and ideas (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009). Furthermore, given participants' shared field experiences, a focus group discussion invites varying perspectives and provides a safe space to engage in dialogues with their peers (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005). Among 180 participants, TCs who have completed two ELL-specific practicums were asked to volunteer in the focus group interview. A total of 22 participants volunteered and were divided into four groups. Three groups were formed with participants who identified themselves as monolingual English speakers, and one group was formed with participants who identified themselves as proficient speakers of more than

one language. Each focus group included five to six participants except for Group 4, which had four participants (Table 1). Group 4 included participants who identified themselves as bilingual speakers and confirmed that they could speak and teach in Spanish. In each focus group interview session, Min (pseudonym), the facilitator, and the researcher (second author) who took notes were present, and each focus group discussion lasted about 30 minutes.

Table 1. Focus Group Participants.

Group	Participants (Pseudonyms)
Group 1	Kerry, Britta, Daphnie, Bryana, Mareesa, Kaeley
Group 2	Tamara, Rayna, Kate, Shelia, Arline
Group 3	Cassie, Cara, Leena, Alice, Emily, Stacy
Group 4	Andrea, Alexis, Caroline, Chloe

Focus group interview data are mainly responses to questions about their ELL-specific field experience, ESOL-specific course work, and whether these experiences have impacted them as future teachers of ELLs. Sample questions include: (a) How would you describe your ESOL field experiences? (b) What have you learned about ELLs from your field experiences? (c) What challenges have you encountered when you were working with ELLs? (d) What experiences were rewarding to you while working with ELLs? (e) Based on your ESOL field experiences, how do you feel about teaching ELLs in the future? (f) In what ways do you think the field experiences have prepared you to teach ELLs in the future? Each focus group discussion was audio-recorded and transcribed line-by-line.

Analyzing of Data

Qualitative data from focus group interviews were transcribed and analyzed thematically. Theories of dissonance and teacher agency were employed as analytical lenses in the thematic analysis process. A preliminary round of coding was conducted (Saladaña, 2013) to record the conversations in each focus group. After preliminary coding, Creswell's (2005) multi-step design analysis was employed to read the transcripts and generate general codes. Next, major categories were identified to generate a codebook with a specific focus on the research questions and the analytical lenses. Transcripts were re-coded and analyzed using the major categories and themes in the codebook. Major categories in the codebook included (a) noticing problems/gaps, (b) analyzing consistency and expectations, (c) positive experiences, (d) self-efficacy/preparedness, and (e) imagining future teaching with ELLs. Under each major category, approximately 2-10 sub-categories and/or themes were generated and analyzed.

Emotional and cognitive dissonances were identified through the data analysis process, including TCs' development of empathy and recognition of a gap between theory and practice. Many prospective teachers experience emotional and cognitive dissonances due to the new knowledge and experiences contradicting their previous knowledge and experiences. TCs often enter a teacher education program believing they would be told how to teach, which is not the experience they receive (Richardson, 1996, 2003). As TCs' engagement in the program progresses, they realize that what they know is different from what they learn, which causes dissonances. TCs receive their first-hand experience of being a teacher through their field experiences. Positioned between university and school, TCs encounter conflicts, and they need to navigate different expectations and practices during their field experiences (Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1985; Zeichner, 2010).

The sense of contradiction, also known as dissonance or disequilibrium, appears among TCs in many multicultural or diversity-related courses, including ESOL courses (McFalls & Cobb-Roberts, 2001). In Reiman's (1999) review of research in a Piagetian framework, the dissonance is explained with the notions of equilibration and disequilibrium. Reiman interprets disequilibrium, or cognitive dissonance, as an introduction of new experiences forced into the existing structure, which changes the process of equilibration. Loughran (2005) states that everyone is a "living contradiction" (p. 7), and recognizing such contradictions can change and improve teaching practices. Dissonances can be essential because the tensions created by dissonances are productive for TCs to develop ideological and philosophical visions of their future teaching (Smagorinsky et al., 2004). Recognition of emotional and cognitive dissonances can be a major driving force in teachers' development (Golombek & Johnson, 2004).

Dissonance and disequilibrium are central processes in teacher education programs that act as opportunities for development, construction of strong professional identities, and shifts in knowledge and practices (Fanghanel, 2004; Reiman, 1999; Roth & Lee, 2007). Cognitive and emotional dissonances can function as an opportunity to restructure and change TCs' knowledge and practices as they learn to teach. In other words, as TCs experience cognitive and emotional dissonances, their professional teacher agency is formed in response to these dissonances being subverted due to external factors (Delaney, 2015). Teacher agency is understood as TCs' capacity to make choices and take stances based on their interpretation of the experiences (Eteläpelto et al., 2013; Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2013). Data analysis consisted of categories and themes reflecting teacher agency, such as TCs' imagination of future teaching with ELLs and their reflection of self-efficacy and preparedness as teachers of ELLs.

Findings

Pedagogical Dissonance

Pedagogical dissonance involves tensions between the ideal or previous conceptions contradictory to reality. Two pedagogical dissonances emerged as major themes in our data analysis. The gap TCs' previous conceptions of ELLs that differ from the ELLs they met in real classrooms and the gap TCs observed between theory and practice.

Previous conceptions of ELLs vs. new experiences

Dissonance regarding ELLs' variability was mentioned by many TCs. While they expected to meet ELLs at a beginner level, they often interacted with ELLs at high-proficiency levels, which created dissonance between their previous conceptions of ELLs and the actual ELLs they met through field experiences.

Shelia: My first-semester placement, I didn't really find it beneficial at all. The two ESOL students we had were very high level, so he didn't do any accommodations at all for them. And then my fourth-semester placement, we were in kindergarten, so a lot of the visuals and stuff that you would do for ESL's she was already doing anyways because of it being kindergarten.

Rayna: We did our fourth semester at the same time in that kindergarten classroom, and yeah, it's been beneficial actually seeing, because my third semester, it was kind of the same thing. They were very high. They didn't make any accommodations for them. And for the most part, the kids really didn't seem to struggle. [Group 2_coded, p. 2]

Cognitive dissonances occurred between the TCs' previous conception of ELLs and the ELLs they met in the real classroom. As discussed by Shelia and Rayna in Group 2, a classroom with high-proficiency ELLs was not a beneficial field experience because they believed accommodations are not necessary for high-proficiency or exited ELLs. ELLs in lower grade levels, such as a kindergarten level, were also understood as the same approach to ESOL accommodations.

In addition, TCs made connections between the variability of ELLs and accommodations they learned in ESOL-specific courses. In Group 3, Emily and Leena mentioned the challenge to complete their lesson plan assignments in the course because the accommodations for high-level ELLs were not observable to make connections with the course contents.

Emily: And then I've pretty much had the same thing to say as all three of them. It's difficult when most of the ELL students are very high-performing, so one of the issues that I faced was that it was hard to explicitly see which differentiation was for ELL students, which was just for struggling students in general. Because this semester, in particular, they've asked us to design a lot of our lessons, like what would you do to differentiate specifically for English Language Learners? And I don't see that in the classroom because they'll add like in differentiation, but not really specifically for English Language Learners, but just for all learners. So that's something that we don't really connect with.

Leena: Yeah, on that, in our class, we're talking about, you know, good teaching is good, but it's not enough, and that's not what we see in the class. We're seeing teachers who believe that just good teaching practices are enough to help their ELLs. [Group 3_coded, p. 3]

Emily and Leena point out that the conceptions of ELLs practicing teachers hold in real classrooms are different from what they are taught in their teacher education courses. TCs suggested opportunities to meet ELLs in all different proficiency levels in future field placements, including beginning-level ELLs. Without explicit and observable accommodations provided for beginning-level ELLs, TCs had a hard time finding the field experience beneficial.

In Group 4, TCs discussed at length how their deficit-oriented views have changed through the ESOL-specific field experiences.

Caroline: I feel like the most important thing that I learned, I think, before going into any ESOL stuff I just always assume that I went into it with a deficit base looking at the students and looking at things they couldn't do...I really appreciate that language ability has nothing to do with the cognitive ability...

Chloe: Yeah, I agree...I used to think the same thing...I'm like, they need practice doing more basic things. But, the teacher...gave them our grade-level work, and she just provided a lot of support for them to do it...

Alexis: I agree with that, too...I really learned instead of looking at them with a deficit...they know two languages at such a young like, more skills than I fully have...to see the peers talk badly if they don't know. So, I think it's important to get rid of the deficit within us and the other students. [Group 4_coded, p. 2]

The bilingual TCs in Group 4 demonstrated a shift in their perception and expressed empathy and enthusiasm about the deficit views that teachers should dismantle. The ESOL-specific field experience created conceptual and emotional dissonances among bilingual TCs and developed a stronger sense of care and empathy toward ELLs.

Theory vs. practice

TCs reported that what they learned in their ELL-specific course was not practiced in the classes they observed. This entails limited to no accommodations provided to ELLs and replacing accommodations with computer software. For instance, in Group 2, Kate and Arline describe how the field experience did not allow them an opportunity to learn because the mentor teachers in the classroom made no accommodations for ELLs.

Kate: Honestly, the only thing I've learned was what I did myself. Cause like I said, there were no accommodations whatsoever. And so, I took it upon myself to go work one on one with the student who spoke little to no English because I haven't been able to work with a student like him.

Arline: Yeah. Definitely, the one classroom I had, there was one ESOL student who was very proficient and was probably one of the most higher performing students in the class. So the teacher didn't do anything for her so that ... I didn't learn anything in that one. [Group 2_coded, p. 3]

TCs experienced cognitive dissonances as they walked into their ELL-specific practicum and noticed the ESOL theories and methods were not applied in real classrooms. Similarly, Group 1 discussed how computer software was used to replace accommodations in the classrooms they visited for field experiences.

Daphnie: That's what I heard from both of my teachers, and then, just kind of supporting the ELL with whatever the assignment was additionally. But, I haven't really seen a lot of changed assignments for English language learners, though it may be necessary.

Mareesa: Yeah, I agree with everyone. I haven't seen any specific accommodations for my ELLs in both semesters. Last semester there were lower-level ELLs in my class, and they were sent to a lab to do Rosetta Stone, so that was their accommodation. [Group 1_coded, p.3]

Daphine was told by her mentor teachers that the accommodations for ELLs are embedded in the curriculum, which did not resonate with her because there were no observable accommodations targeted specifically for ELLs. There were also specific comments regarding the assignment or test accommodations that they learned from their course as an essential part of accommodations but were not practiced in reality.

Cassie: So, I got to observe a lot of the lack of accommodations, and the only thing that I was ever allowed to do was I was allowed to repeat spelling words to her, but for a comprehension test, she was forced to do it by herself, and I know that if I would have been able to read it to her, she's very intelligent. So, the issue isn't cognitive, it's, she doesn't even know her alphabet. So, you know, she can't really show what she knows. [Group 3_coded, p. 4]

TCs noticed that even though ELLs know academic content well, the test accommodations are limited to evaluating ELLs' knowledge in an equitable manner. Furthermore, they expressed frustration because they could not provide further accommodations if the mentor teacher did not allow them. From all these instances, TCs demonstrated cognitive dissonances between theory and practice, which also led to emotional dissonances for many TCs as they developed care and empathy toward ELLs. This finding will be discussed further in the following sections.

Positive Relationships Developing Care

In the focus group interviews, all four groups reported positive experiences in their ELL-specific field experiences. In addition to the opportunities, they got to apply course contents and theories through field experience; major themes include the sense of accomplishment they felt upon completion of field experience and an opportunity to understand how ELLs feel in a mainstream classroom.

Displaying a sense of accomplishment

TCs in all focus groups recalled positive field experiences in terms of getting to know ELLs. By applying what they have learned in ESOL-specific courses, TCs expressed a sense of accomplishment when the ELLs understood what they had explained or when the ELLs showed progress over time.

Kate: When I taught with the ESL pull-out class, we went to the computer lab, and we read books with the children and one of the kids, that he had only come two weeks and he barely spoke any English. And to help him read a book, I felt was very rewarding and to sit there and see him sound out the words and get the words and actually be able to say them, I thought was really rewarding and being able to answer the question...I thought that was very rewarding.

Student: I completely agree. Being able to work one on one with a student who barely spoke any English and being able to provide him manipulatives and having him speak in his native language and also in English and just watching him being able to go from very confused on what to do to by the, by the time I was finished working with him he could kind of complete a problem on his own. [Group 2_coded, pp. 5-6]

One-on-one interaction and personal relationships with ELLs gave positive images to TCs in terms of reflecting on their field experience and interactions with ELLs.

Bryana: When I worked with him a few times, I would allow him to, like, I would say, "Okay, well, what's the answer in Spanish?" And then I would Google Translate it. And it was correct, so I could tell that he felt good about that because he was like, "Oh, ..." "I know, ..." and you can see that I know it." And then I would talk about, like, "Oh, you taught me a new Spanish word today," and he was really excited about that because he felt like...both learning and both teaching each other "Thank you." I loved it. [Group1_coded, p. 7]

Similar to Bryana's reflection, TCs reported positive experiences and relationships they built with ELLs, which gave them a sense of accomplishment. As TCs formed a positive relationship with ELLs, they recognized dissonances between theory and practice, which encouraged TCs to care more about ELLs' learning in mainstream classrooms.

Understanding ELLs

TCs also reported how helpful it was to observe ELLs closely in mainstream classrooms and understand the difficulties ELLs face every day. Chloe and Caroline discuss their experiences of sitting next to ELLs and noticing the struggles that have changed their own perspectives.

Chloe: Last semester, whenever I would work with the students one-on-one, I'd get to see how they interact in the class, and it was interesting to see things that they struggled with. They wouldn't really participate, and they were more quiet and more reserved, and they only did it when they had to participate like they were called on; they didn't want to offer information.

Caroline: Yeah, I agree, I feel like the entire thing was very enlightening for me...but to go and see it actually happening with the students is really different and it gives a different perspective to it, and you can kind of appreciate the struggles that they have, too. [Group 4_coded, p. 1]

Chloe and Caroline's ability to speak an additional language as English-Spanish bilingual speakers also made their relationships with ELLs closer and more meaningful compared to monolingual TCs. Later in this conversation, Chloe and Caroline describe how the field experience was insightful and enlightening because they could see things in different perspectives and closely observe how ELLs are participating or interacting in class. Similar perspectives were provided by other TCs when they described their frustrations because the mentor teachers were not paying enough attention to the ELLs.

Leena: At some point, I think it's not like she would raise her hand often to answer a question, and I'm pretty sure the teacher probably just was like, "Oh, she might not know how to answer it, so I'm just not going to worry about calling on her," or something like that, so I think it's important as the teacher to not forget about those students...there's actually one time where the student she did have her hand raised to answer a question, and she didn't end up getting called on, so the rest of the time, she didn't raise her hand at all. [Group 3_coded, p. 3]

As illustrated in Leena's description, ELL-specific field experience allowed TCs to see and care about ELLs because they noticed missed opportunities and less attention given to ELLs. Seeing the reality and developing empathy toward ELLs created cognitive and emotional dissonances, which led to TCs developing a sense of advocacy for ELLs. They wanted ELLs to receive appropriate accommodations and receive sufficient attention from the teachers to succeed in school. These imagined challenges also demonstrated TCs' agency as future teachers of ELLs who are in the process of constructing their professional identities.

Imagination and Agency

ESOL field experience and course work facilitated TCs' imagination, allowing them to orient themselves as future teachers of ELLs and explore all future possibilities. Through ESOL-specific field experiences, TCs were able to anticipate challenges in their future as teachers of ELLs. Britta imagined the challenges of accessing resources in her future as a teacher of ELLs.

Britta: I think I would have to agree with that because...What if you don't have the resources? What if you don't have an ESOL teacher or specialist at your school because the district doesn't have money for it? What are you going to do then, you know? Because it could be hard for you trying to have this set, okay, this is her home language; how can we translate it over to this when we may not have those resources? [Group 1_coded, p. 8]

In Britta's imagination, the possibility of having limited resources or no access to community support was recognized as a challenge. Similar to Britta, Kate imagines the challenges in her future that require different accommodations for ELLs at varying levels.

Kate: I learned so much just by even being there for an hour and a half, two hours. Seeing things that she did and having...just talking to her about how she gets ESOL students every single week and they come from all different countries, and she has to do all these different accommodations for them, that was very helpful. [Group 2_coded, p. 8]

From a conversation with a teacher in her field placement, Kate learned the challenges a teacher can face when a new ELL enters the classroom every week. These imagined challenges, such as limited resources, welcoming new students frequently at varying levels, and not having tools equipped to accommodate ELLs, were posed as challenges by the ESOL-specific field experience.

Imagining future practices

TCs illustrated different approaches and practices they would like to apply in their future classrooms. Chole and Caroline mention how they plan to learn and search for available resources in their school district as future teachers of ELLs.

Chloe: If all of your strategies just aren't working, I can see where you would get really frustrated, and then, you know, maybe look to someone who maybe can help me.

Caroline: And I think even just tempting sometimes when those strategies you're using aren't working, I think it's tempting as a teacher. Anytime you have a problem with a student, it's like, "Oh my gosh I just don't wanna deal with this. I just don't feel like it."...and I think just knowing the resource you have available to you at your school, or in your district are really important. [Group 4_coded, p. 11]

After participating in their ESOL-specific field experience, TCs learned that there are resources and professionals to help them in the future. In Group 4 with bilingual TCs, they also discussed the difficulty of incorporating ELLs' L1 in the classroom, especially when students speak languages other than Spanish and English. While utilizing their bilingual assets, TCs were hopeful to learn other potential resources available in languages other than Spanish. The ESOL-specific field experiences helped TCs to learn the possibility of finding future resources and encouraged them to envision their future teaching practices that include ELLs.

Although many TCs commented negatively on their field experiences because they did not see enough accommodations provided to ELLs, this also encouraged TCs to think about what not to do in the future.

Rayna: I can't really think of the exact word I want to use but maybe thoughtful. When I went in there, I was thinking of strategies that maybe I could see the teachers using and try to pull some of that. And also, strategies I could use and implement with the children, so like always thinking about those strategies.

Min: So even if she's not using it, you're thinking about it.

Rayna: Yeah! I was thinking about it in the classes and the strategies that could be implemented.

Tamara: And I guess I would just use like non-example, you know...And I guess just to realize that when I go into my own classroom, not to do what everyone else is doing. And definitely switch it up and don't fall into that. [Group 2_coded, p. 8]

Observing non-examples facilitated TCs' empathy toward ELLs and formed their agency to take a stance as an advocate of ELLs. As TCs made future plans to support ELLs' learning through the non-examples, they also learned that a one-size-fits-all model does not work for ELLs. These experiences affirmed their beliefs that it is important to accommodate ELLs' specific learning needs. TCs learned how to apply specific strategies in the future or expressed their plans to apply specific strategies to ELLs.

Discussion

This study's purpose was to explore elementary TCs' ELL-specific field experiences and how their field experiences had contributed to their future teaching of ELLs. Through their field experience, TCs encountered cognitive and emotional dissonances by recognizing the gap between theory and practice and their previous conception of ELLs that differed from the actual ELLs they met. Building relationships with ELLs gave TCs a sense of accomplishment, and they were able to develop care toward ELLs despite the challenges and limitations of the ESOL-specific field experiences. Encouraged by their field experiences, TCs began to imagine their future practices and challenges as teachers of ELLs.

The findings of this study revealed how dissonances led to TCs' cognitive restructuring as future teachers of ELLs. Causey et al. (2000) state that cognitive restructuring begins by recognizing dissonances. Due to the pedagogical and conceptual dissonances, TCs developed their agency as future teachers of ELLs. They were able to express their stances as they were seeing no accommodations in mainstream classrooms and experiencing inconsistency in their field experiences. TCs clearly expressed what was limiting in their ESOL-specific field placement and hoped for different approaches in the future. They exhibited the development of their teacher agency by imagining ways to close the gap between the ideal ESOL practices and the reality in classrooms. This agency was carried through TCs' imagination as they envisioned how they would apply accommodations in their future classrooms. By recognizing dissonances, TCs changed and developed professional identities as future teachers of ELLs, which was described in their future imaginations.

Field experience, course assignments, and focus group interviews also allowed opportunities for TCs to exercise self-reflexivity. Some TCs, particularly bilingual TCs, mentioned their previous biases and stereotypes of ELLs and how the field experience changed their perceptions. One participant, Chloe expressed how she was grappling with issues, such as

to what extent accommodations can be helpful rather than spoon-feeding answers and whether testing in schools is promoting equity to meet the purpose of evaluating students. Although TCs mentioned the limitation of field experience and described that they only learned non-examples, this recognition of dissonances allowed TCs to plan different practices in their future, which means these were not necessarily lost experiences.

A different level of care and empathy was observed in the bilingual TCs. Confirming previous research, bilingual TCs exhibited stronger motivations to support ELLs in the classroom (Gomez et al. 2008a, 2008b; Bower-Phipps et al., 2013). Bilingual TCs illustrated richer experiences and interactions with ELLs compared to other TCs who identified themselves as monolingual English speakers. Their rich experiences pertain to closer relationships and interaction with ELLs due to their ability to speak the ELLs' first or home language, Spanish. These experiences led to bilingual TCs building higher sensitivity and higher quality of relationship with ELLs, which promoted stronger dedication and advocacy toward ELLs. A few distinctive themes also emerged specifically from the TCs who identified themselves as proficient speakers of an additional language to English. Although valuing ELLs' L1 was mentioned in other groups, only the bilingual group carried this topic to a lengthy discussion regarding how bilingual materials are in need in schools to affirm ELLs' bilingual identities. Bilingualism was not mentioned in groups other than one or two TCs mentioning the value of L1 to interact with ELLs.

Bilingual TCs' also exhibited more critical reflection in their focus group discussion compared to other groups. TCs in the bilingual focus group spent a lengthy amount of time reflecting on the deficit-views they might have had in the past and the mentor teachers' biases affecting their practices. Although TCs in other focus groups discussed their previous stereotypes and biases briefly, critically analyzing their own or others' deficit orientations was a conversation only carried by the bilingual TCs. Bilingual TCs were also detailed in a way that they would recall specific phrases or expressions mentioned by the teacher that seemed offensive to their point of view. Although bilingual TCs mentioned the value of bilingualism and showed advocacy toward ELLs, they also strongly emphasized the importance of English language learning. This appears to relate to bilingual TCs' own experiences and understanding of linguistic hierarchy as well as the mentor teachers' emphasis on using only English.

In addition, bilingual TCs' prior experiences and interpretation of the teacher education program appear as essential assets that need further exploration. Palmer and Martínez (2013) argue that previous research mostly positions learners as the problem rather than encouraging monolingual TCs to question their language ideology that assumes using English as the norm. Besides bilingual TCs' focus group discussion, the matter of bilingualism or language dynamics was not discussed as a primary topic. When the teacher education program values and leverages such bilingual TC resources, there is a potential for other positive impacts on monolingual TCs.

Overall, focus group interviews demonstrated TCs' ability and potential to learn from and build on each other's ideas. Whether what they shared were negative or positive comments, the shared experiences or the extended reflection were influenced by the topic of discussion at hand. In other words, the focus group discussion may look very different depending on the members participating in a particular conversation. This indicates a potential synergy effect by organizing focus group discussion and reflection with TCs from varying linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

Conclusion

This study provides insights into field experiences focusing on preparing mainstream teachers for ELLs. Bodur (2012) asserts the opportunity to transform TCs' beliefs and attitudes is limited if we do not go beyond simply providing field experiences in a culturally and linguistically diverse setting. Our findings indicate that although changes were noticed among TCs, many expressed fear and unpreparedness as future teachers of ELLs. Many TCs observed ineffective practices and non-examples rather than exemplary practices in their ESOL-specific field experiences. Furthermore, although they experienced conceptual dissonances between their previous conception of ELLs and ELLs in actual classrooms, they were unable to observe appropriate accommodation provided for high-proficiency ELLs. Such limitations in field experiences were missed opportunities to advance TCs' pedagogical orientation and approaches.

Previous research claims that there are changes teacher education programs could make in a single course with a well-structured curriculum, including critical self-reflection to further impact mainstream TCs (Markos, 2012; Uzum et al., 2014). As the findings of this study demonstrate, there are opportunities to transform TCs into linguistically and culturally responsive teachers of ELLs with continuous guidance and an intentionally designed teacher education curriculum. The teacher education program needs to be more cognizant of ESOL-specific field experiences and provide space for bilingual TCs to share their diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds in a critical, self-reflective group discussion.

Recommendations

The study suggests critical implications and recommendations for future research and teacher education practices. For future research, exploring the impact of mainstream bilingual TCs on preparing a predominantly monolithic teaching workforce can shed light on effective ways to develop teacher education curricula. Bilingual TCs demonstrated confidence and illustrated positive experiences more than other focus groups in this study. The rich field experience and close relationships they built with ELLs contributed to their positive feedback and had a stronger impact on constructing

linguistically responsive professional identities as teachers of ELLs. Considering how bilingual TCs show distinctive differences, particularly in their feedback on ESOL-specific field experiences and the critical reflection they shared, exploring methods to leverage their resources would be an essential task for future research.

For future teacher education practices, more intentional field placements with increased collaboration between the practicum site and teacher education courses are needed. Many TCs described the non-examples they found in field experiences and the difficulty of finding the benefit of interacting with ELLs with a higher level of English proficiency. An intentional field placement that will allow TCs to observe exemplary accommodations and teaching practices will allow mainstream TCs to make clear connections between theory and practice. Furthermore, TCs will be able to advance their pedagogical approaches and transform their beliefs or attitudes if there were spaces to critically reflect and discuss TCs' ESOL-specific field experiences in their corresponding courses.

Limitations

Study findings from this research could contribute to knowledge and practices regarding mainstream teacher preparation to work with ELLs. However, the limitations of this research should be noted. TCs in this study were from one teacher education program in the USA. Since teacher preparation programs could vary in each state and university, several findings in the current study may differ from study findings in other teacher preparation programs. Thus, larger-scale research can provide additional insights related to TCs' field experiences working with ELLs.

Authorship Contribution Statement

Kim: Conceptualization, design, analysis, drafting manuscript, critical revision, editing/reviewing. Lee: Editing/reviewing, conceptualization, data acquisition. de Jong: Supervision, reviewing.

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